

monga

the monash gazette

#02, 2013



THE OPINION
ISSUE

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And those fabulous people who
submitted their Ball photobooth
photos!

The opinions expressed in MonGa Issue #2 2013 belong solely to the writers and are not necessarily endorsed by Monash University Student Association (MUSA) nor Monash University Malaysia (MUM).

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HANNY,
ADMIN EDITOR

“I seek freedom and liberation for myself, to cast away the chains bound onto me by old notions and traditions. To realize that there are no greater limits than that of your own, and to surpass them are the goals I wish to achieve.”



VINANIE,
ARTICLES EDITOR

“Health, health, health! Mental and physical! Your passion may lie in writing, wine tasting, embalming or golf ball diving, but note, all these passions are ultimately dependent on one factor: your health! So I am unwaveringly passionate about my health, although I do, at times, do an outstanding job at neglecting it. But I do try to be mindful of my health and I suppose that should count for something. A+ for effort!”



BRIAN,
PHOTOG EDITOR

“This opinion issue inhere thoughts and voices from different people, from different perspectives. Perhaps this would widen the horizon of fellow readers. Perhaps it marks the beginning for this community to contemplate, to progress as a whole. Hope you would enjoy this issue as much as I do.”



LESTARI,
LAYOUT EDITOR

“My interests are wide-ranging, from developing the mind to pushing my physical limits, I pursue each of them with intense fervour. But what most fascinates me at the moment is human development and how each being can maximize their potential, without having to exploit another.”

Feature

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This is it, our swan song. Aside from a few more articles on the MonDo website, this is all you'll be getting from the 2013 MUSA Editorial Board, hopefully.

By the end of our first issue of MonGa, the choice of what theme the second would be was an easy one to make. The phrase "student's voice" has been bandied about for more times than can be counted through our term as office-bearers and so what better way to end off the year than to dedicate an entire issue to presenting that very voice.

We'd opened up submissions campus-wide, badgered all whom we know to contribute a piece and even hunted down particularly interesting individuals to add their voices to the publication. And then followed several weeks of high stress, caffeine overdose, little sleep, bad karaoke in the office and of course, much angst over schoolwork.

The articles contained within are writings concerning matters closest to each of the writer's hearts; we'd made our pitch to our contributors with the following words "Write what you feel most passionate about, what makes your blood boil, what moves you". But while writing is the main mode of delivery, photography and art expresses each creator's voice too and thus the cover that we have is a manipulation of Alex Johansen's "3 Wise Monkeys".

At the creative production, we add our voices to the milieu and it centres us in the universe. For once, it is as if our voices are heard out there. MonGa and MonDo are meant to be the platforms through which the student body can conduct this very expression.

We hope that the magazine will entertain, make you think, make you question your own assumptions and perhaps move you to contribute your own voices. Enjoy!

Sincerely,

The Editors
Lestari, Vinanie, Hanny and Brian



My Journey from East to West in a Week

Words and Photos By **Saadi Abdullahi**

As a Monash Golden Key member, I had the privilege to be invited to the **International Scholar Laureate Program (ISLP)** which provides students the opportunity to take part in a learning experience designed to inform and enrich our careers. I was among many international students from diverse backgrounds across the world from prestigious universities to take part in this unique career exploration and leadership program in the United States as business delegates.

Honored by the invitation, I accepted the offer and looked forward to the trip months on end. This journey was to offer me with experience way beyond what a classroom would offer and I stand corrected as the trip was an eye opening experience which I recommend others to partake in. Moreover, this trip gave me the opportunity to enhance my future career development in the field of business and strengthen my leadership skills by engaging in a culturally enriched environment.

The Big Apple experience

During the program the biggest highlight for me was to have the privilege to take part in and witness the ringing of the bell at NASDAQ in New York City and have backstage access and to learn about its operations from a day to day basis. While in New York, I also had the chance to tour the

New York Times Newspaper printing facilities and be fascinated by the advanced systems and the complex technologies that help it operate and still compete with the digital era of our time. Furthermore, while in New York I also had the opportunity to visit Ameriprise corporate HQ and had a site tour to observe the financial corporate culture to have an insight to how to grow your career in a corporate organization. To top all that, I had the chance to attend a talk by Facebook's Global Business Account Manager (Peipei Zhou), who gave us an insight into what it takes to be an entrepreneur and what it takes to reach where she is at Facebook.

The city of politicians

While in Washington I had the opportunity to attend a fascinating lecture by an expert in his field of study, DR. Gary Weaver on the topic "Interacting in the Global Community: Cross Cultural Communication and Leadership". Even more fortunately, I had the chance to visit and tour the World Bank HQ and participate in dialogue on how to eradicate poverty and how the World Bank plays a role in helping to achieving that. All this makes you think as individual, where you stand in the world and how you can make a difference, by thinking globally.

On the bright side it was not all work and no fun. I also had an educational exploration trips to Washington, Philadelphia and New York's land marks that contribute to what the US it is today, such as the White House, Liberty Bell, the Statue of Liberty and so on. This trip has opened my eyes to see how Americans do business and the way they think, was a great insight for my further studies on business. **manga**

The writer in the middle (in blue)



Monash Reloaded: Interview with DJ Reeve and DJ Eva T

Interviewed By **Brian Soong**

Photos By **Derrick Lee**

Brian: *Is this your first time spinning at a campus event?*

Eva T: No. I spinned in Inti Nilai University College.

Reeve: I played in 3 or 4 events this year, among them were Nottingham and Taylors.

B: *What's the main difference between spinning at usual party events and on a campus?*

E: No alcohol is allowed, yet the crowds' still very pumped up. Young people have more energy.

B: *Any upcoming big plans for this year?*

R: There's one thing that's been on my head for a couple of months now, which is the Red Bull Thre3style World Final. That's enough of a headache for now *laughs*

B: *laughs along* *But that's a fun challenge.*

R: Yea.

B: *You are one of the leading female DJs in Malaysia. What is your secret to such success?*

E: I do my best to let people know I'm doing my best.

B: *Which DJ(s) do you idolize?*

E: Swedish House Mafia. I like progressive house. It always gives people the touching-feel, feels like more emotional.

R: Mix Master Mike, from the States. He is the best turntablist I've ever seen.

B: *Random question- good boys or bad boys?*

E: Bad boys *laughs* I don't know, just that bad boys attract me more.

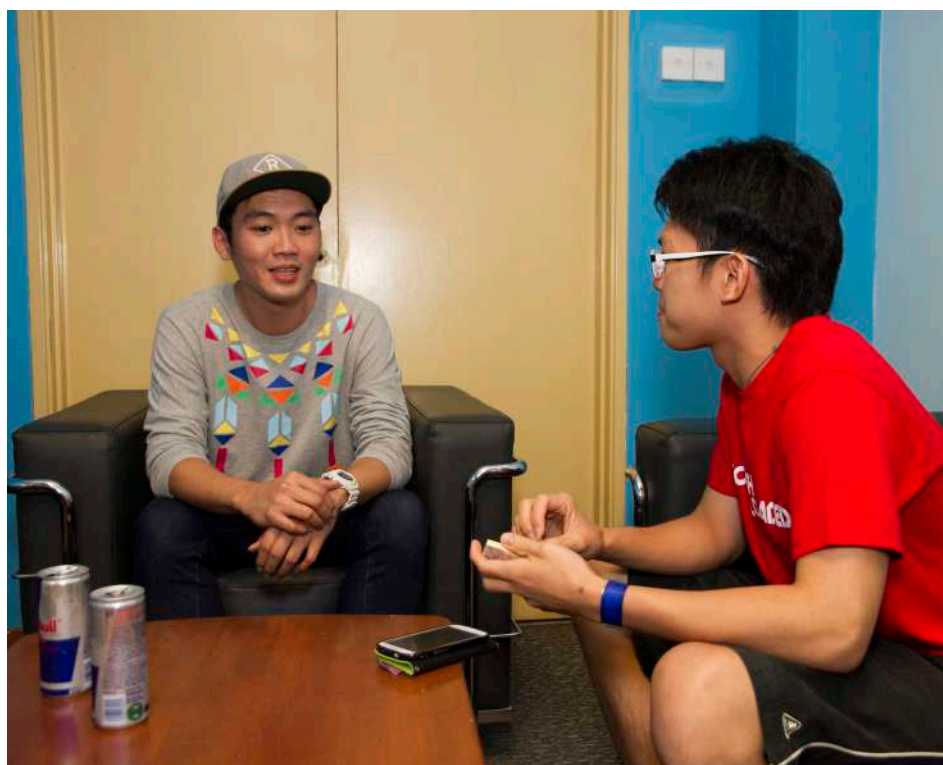
B: *Fish curry or chicken curry?*

R: Fish curry. I looove fish.

B: *Shoutout to Monashians?*

E: Study hard, play hard!

R: Have fun!





MONASH
26TH SEPTEMBER
PHOTOGRAPHY BY





RELOADED
MONASH LAWN
DERRICK LEE





Ivy Summers and her Shadow at critical point

Reach For You: A Review

Words By **Vinanie Wijesoma**

Photos By **Yiow See Yeng**

Monash University Malaysia's Performing Arts Club (MPAC)'s annual fall production, "Reach For You," is an original musical written and directed by third-year Science student, Nisshanthan Dhanapalan. Staged over two-nights (11 and 12 October, 2013), the musical, borrowing heavily from the Glee set list, centres on the familiar narrative of a small town twenty-something-year-old trying to make it big in the city, and true to its form, includes the mandatory heterosexual messy love story.

Nathaniel "Nate" Damien (Tan Calson), the starry-eyed protagonist of Dhanapalan's musical, travels to The City That Never Sleeps (specifically Brooklyn) with only a backpack, guitar, and of course, his singer-songwriter dreams in tow. Upon arrival, Nate and his six new friends, Derrick Trent (Eugene Lin), Tony Gonzalez (Nelson Tio Pei Yuan), Dora Kinsley (Brenda Lim Xin Yee), Sam Renley (Lim Yee Lyn), and Shaquanza (performed in drag by Aric Ting), are selected to perform in rising recording artist, Ivy Summer's (Yap Min Yan) showcase. Ivy, plagued by

professional insecurities and heckled by both her overbearing mentor, Victoria (Jasmine Raja), and her id, Dark Ivy Summers (Samira Imran), seduces Nate in an effort to steal his songs, and goes on to perform the stolen material as her own to phenomenal reception. Betrayed, Nate takes to the streets with a broken heart and his trusty guitar, whilst Ivy struggles to come to terms with her guilt, self-disgust, and elevated success. Nate's eventual serendipitous contract-win with the renowned (and crippled) talent agent, Mr. Stanley Cook (Yip Yao Zhong), showcases one of the musical's most spellbinding and well-executed scenes. Meanwhile, Ivy's superego (her mother played by Grace Au Yong) trumps her fame-hungry id, allowing her to happily shed her alter ego thereby allowing her to return to her small-town unassuming self, Katherine. Following a surprisingly hurried Vocal Showdown between Katherine and Nate, the two lovers reconcile, in a G-rated fashion, amidst the sexually-dissatisfied (frustrated?) rowdy audience pleading for a glimmer of on-stage action ("Kiss! Kiss! Kiss!").

A black and gold New York skyline sprawled on the back wall, a two-foot tall model of the Empire State Building and the Statue of Liberty (albeit awkwardly positioned far stage left), constituted part of the mise-en-scène which effectively complemented the production's New York setting. Imesh Lyanage's, the lighting designer, varied use of lighting artfully complemented many of the scenes on stage; the ominous red glow of the Empire State Building (unassumingly masking the auditorium's lectern) ingeniously enhanced the fiendish presence of Dark Ivy Summers, who as Ivy's alter ego, consistently suppressed the latter's conscience only to further deprave her.

The opening number, Billy Joel's *New York State of Mind*, sung by Calson, revealed Nate's sincere demeanour and fruity vocals, despite being a demure show opener. Calson's two other solo numbers, sombre stripped-to-the-core renditions of Bastille's "Pompeii" and David Guetta ft. Sia's "Titanium," dually conveyed his nimble voice and delightfully captured his character's 'nice guy' disposition. Contrastingly, Nate's betrayer slash eventual unrequited love's vocals fell flat in comparison, most notably heard in her rendition of Jessie J's vocally demanding "Who You Are," which did little to portray Ivy's moral awakening. However, Min Yan's symmetrical East Asian features and not-an-inch-to-pinch body, clothed in a series of tight-fitting dresses, leather pants, and peplum bandeau tops, made it damn near impossible to tear one's eyes away from her.

As previously mentioned, a particular poignant moment of the musical was the transformation of Nate into an indie-pop-sensation. Set to Imagine Dragon's *It's Time*, this meticulously choreographed and executed number undoubtedly elevated the production's aesthetic. Of special note was seasoned MPAC actors' Jasmine and Yao Zhong's take on Rihanna ft. Mikky Ekko's *Stay*. This tender ballad of difficult love (is there any other kind?) softened Victoria's previously brash character, whereas Mr. Stanley's genuine demeanour

added to the emotional poignancy of this ballad number. The warm golden lighting coupled with the gut-wrenching lyrics mesmerisingly furthered the supporting characters' love story. Moreover, Jasmine's portrayal of Victoria and Shaquanza, played by the statuesque Mr. Ting, are the source of the production's humour, eliciting, at times, uproarious laughter from the audience. Jasmine, drawing on the energy (and the numerous tongue-in-cheek remarks) from the crowd, seamlessly improvised through the minute trip-ups. Shaquanza's orange wig teamed with her (his?) black dress was an instant crowd-pleaser, along with her sassy dialogue and twerking.

"Reach For You" makes entertaining use of social media-enabled smartphones, and the musical, at times, albeit ever so implicitly, feels like a tacit meditation on our social media-saturated society. The interrupting text messages and phone calls amidst real human interaction, the employment of social media discourse ("hashtag, aint' nobody got time for that"), the impromptu instagramming, selfies, and tweeting, elicited hearty chortles from the audience, and underhandedly

Small Town boy,
Nate in the Big City



Shaquanza in the
"Let's Have a Kiki"
number

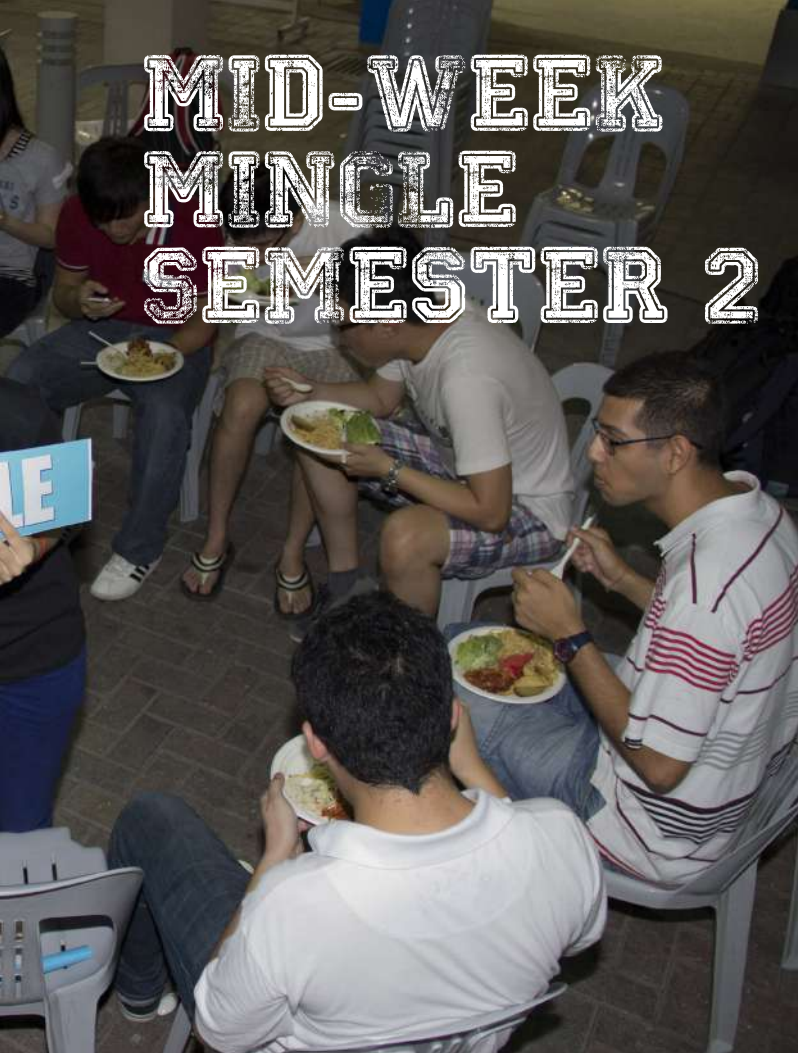


Ivy Summers
performing her musical
hit, stolen from Nate

presented our community's parasitic dependence on social media - the colossal time murderer.

All in all, Dhanapalan's "Reach For You" is a feel-good tale of morality, grit, and love conquering all. This ensemble cast production, including the ten dancers and the talented production team, worked tiresome hours, amidst their mounting assignments and mid-semester papers, to successfully stage this musical. The curtain call was particularly touching as the chemistry between the principle actors, dancers, and the production team was palpable, a result, no doubt, of endless hours spent in each other's company. **monga**







Hence it was only a matter of time before Monash Malaysia organized its first ever Dota 2 tournament. When the school of Information Technology announced it in mid-September (2013), like the rest of the nerd population I was beyond excited. Immediately my friend Jimmy and I began to form a team, busy scouting for talented players on campus while keeping an eye out on potential strong opponents. After days of seemingly endless screenings and convincing, *Team Geli* was finally formed with an almost brilliant lineup: three former professional players, a competitive player's talented brother and a feeder. The night before the competition we discussed about recent competitive scene's hero pick trends and various strategies to counter opponents. The next morning, with our eyes gleaming with confidence knowing that the grand prize was ours, we entered the computer lab, glanced at other teams, proceeded to our seats, set up our equipment and began drafting. The first game was a best of one, which meant that the winners proceed to the next game while the losers got eliminated.

And we were eliminated.

Of course it came as a shock to all of us, but eventually we came to terms with our loss due to our incompetence to train hard and lack of sleep. After that we packed up, had a good meal and the rest headed home. Except for Jimmy and I. What happened after that?

Dota 2: A Feeder's Point of View

Words By **Brian Soong**

Photographs By **Derrick Lee**

Yes, I feed a lot, but that doesn't stop me from enjoying this game loved by more than 6 million gamers worldwide. Unlike its predecessor Dota which runs as a modified map of Warcraft III, Dota 2, created by Valve along with the gamemaster IceFrog, is a brand new block and has all the essential tools for educating both new and experienced players alike about the game. This promotes the humongous gamer population to access and gain more insights into the competitive scenes worldwide. The popularity of Dota 2 is evident when the prize pool of The International 2013, the world's largest Dota 2 tournament, totaled up to \$2,874,381 with \$ 1,274,381 contributed by players via the sale of online compendiums.





We became the commentators for the finale.

The reasoning was that the organizer were still looking for commentators for the final matches. Pretty much high on YOLO mode, I contacted the person-in-charge and convinced Jimmy to join me. And so, on Day Two, at 3pm, along with Jimmy as the co-caster, the feeder with absolute zero commentating skills and shallow in-depth game knowledge blurted his first and last commentaries for the best of three between *TNB* and *YOLOSWAG*. It was then that I realized that while the professional players make the matches amazing it is the casters who make the games truly enjoyable. One must have complete game knowledge and be able to talk NONSTOP throughout the matches, whilst making sure not to repeating themselves. One single mistake, for example a pronunciation error, and the spectators will grab on it (I pronounce medallion as medal-lion). While both of us had a hard time eliminating our Malaysian Chinese accents, Jimmy did a much better job at providing insightful comments and game analyses. I, on the other hand... well let's just say that I didn't really know what I was doing. At last, *TNB* emerged victorious and claimed the championship.

At the end of the day a curiosity arose: why do I play Dota? Is it because of its gameplays with nearly endless possibilities? Is it because of the thrill of hunting and killing your opponents while surviving onslaughts unscathed? Mulling over this question, the answer suddenly dawned on me. The reason I keep playing Dota is not about the gameplay, it is about the people. To me, the diversity of the nature of the heroes represents various human personalities: some

are aggressive in nature, some are brainy and have full of tricks up their sleeves. Some heroes are similar but none are identical, just like us homo sapiens. And even with the same hero, its play styles can differ from player to player. The hero becomes the avatar of the player, representing his personality, character, decision-making abilities and ways of life. When playing a real game, the player devotes his whole heart and mind into the character, making every move as if he is the one in the situation. This is when a person's ability to handle various situations is revealed and his true nature unmasked. Throughout a game, every mask is stripped, every soul is naked.

And when you watch other people playing, you see the development of each character and the progression of a community. When achievements or mistakes are made by the gamers, the audience would observe and learn, and try to attempt or avoid such occurrences in their future games. Playing Dota gives you many chances to err and retry, something that cannot be done in real life. After a value is learnt, one can also practice it in real life and succeed.

But after all this, what makes me truly love Dota is the community. Through Dota, complete strangers become acquaintances. Just from this tournament alone I made a new friend and I also met two other online friends. We are all united by our passion for this very game and then we move beyond the virtual reality. The most important value of Dota is about connecting with friends, no matter who they are and where they are from. The game strips away the differences between us and all we have are each other to defeat the opponents. Trust and faith in each other are put to test after test. From there, friendships bloom and strengthen, forging a bond that no other sport or activity could do. Perhaps this is the very reason why I joined this competition even knowing that I might just lose, because in the end we are all still winners. Perhaps this is the very reason why I still play Dota 2 even though I feed a lot, because it is the life lessons I learn from it that matters. **manga**





MAPCU - MONASH FUTSAL TOURNAMENT 12TH OCTOBER

PHOTOS BY
YIOW SEE YENG





AN INTER-UNIVERSITY TOURNEY ORGANISED BY THE CLUBS & SOCIETIES DIVISION WITH FIRST PLACE GOING TO THE MONASH WOMEN'S FUTSAL TEAM







MONASH
ANNUAL
BALL 2013:
NEW YORK,
NEW YORK!

Words By **Lestari Hairul** Photographs By **Amirah Aidura**



Always hustling for a story to report on, I'd somehow entangled myself in the Monash Confessions Page's "Blind Date Project" and at 6.30 in the evening of the 22nd of September, I was grounded in some hotel located just off Chinatown, running terribly late on the mission. I was supposed to reach the Majestic much earlier just to paste up a sign so that the blind date participants could meet and mingle but some logistical mishaps threw a spanner in the works and I'd possibly, inadvertently, messed up some people's hopeful sexytimes that night.

Darn it, much apologies.

The rest of the night though, was utterly fabulous and definitely lived up to the prediction I made earlier on MonDo, of it being the best ball ever. Because it was, and sucks to be you for missing it. From the well-thought out pre-Ball cocktail hour, where attendees could mingle with their friends over [mock]tails and titbits whilst being entertained by MPAC performers, to the beautiful décor that never went overboard into the domain of a cheesy wedding dinner, the Activities Chairpersons, Aina Nordin and Dexter Teh, certainly steered this ship well. Everything that we could see appeared to be the result of carefully made choices, right down to the aesthetic decisions of the elegant table settings.

It's no surprise then, as it turns out, that Aina herself has actually been working as an event planner off-campus (at Perfect Day Planner) and all of the plans she made earlier,

especially when they were on the brink of being vetoed by the MUSA Council on the grounds of budget constraints, proved to be sound decisions that paid off handsomely in the end. Did you know that for the entire night to go on as it did, without the taint of a "Malaysian Timing" disaster, professional event coordinators were hired? It was details such as this that pulled everything together and made perfect sense once we saw the final product, and no one at that earlier Budget meeting can possibly raise a fuss now.

"...everyone concentrated on eating and photo-taking to block out the bloodbath that was occurring onstage."

Perhaps the only sour note for the night was the sadistic massacre of Broadway classics by the first act, Broadway Malaysia. Anticipating that the night would start off with a bang, especially with the knowledge that this is a professional troupe that has been doing shows for many years, I was certainly not the only one trying to restrain myself from stabbing my eyes and ears out after being treated to the travesty that was the Broadway revue. The troupe appeared largely unrehearsed, many singers were off-key and the dances were executed in a terrifically *blasé* manner. To their credit though, perhaps they realised how bad they were onstage, the performers tried to make up for the lack of rehearsal with some attempts





Broadway Malaysia



Adam Tan of Viva Circus



The Jalapenos


at exuding over-the-top showmanship. But it only served to make the overall effect even more irritating and grating. Carb overdose of the very excellent bread platter appeared to be panacea as everyone concentrated on eating and photo-taking to block out the bloodbath that was occurring onstage. The lines for the popular Fotobox photobooths started snaking round about this time as most chose to entertain themselves instead.

Thankfully, all other performances were brilliant and even the host this time round, Ryan Matjeraie, outshone the opening act with his witty repartee and relaxed banter onstage. Definitely mindful of not repeating the terrible mistake of last year's committee, the choice of Mr Matjeraie as host turned out to be an excellent one, even as he continually referred to the pageant as Mr and "Mrs" Monash. As highlighted in my MonDo article earlier, the food was fabulous and judging from the happy smiles all around, the meal that night satiated the tastebuds of all. This was definitely a case of an event matching the standards of the food-tasting appointment.

The highlight of the night, that got everyone thundering with applause and hoots, was the pole dance performance by members of Viva Circus. Imagine everyone's (all boys?) surprise when a man walked on stage and executed techniques so perfect he drew gasps of awe each time he made the slightest move. Adam Tan probably revolutionised the idea of pole-dancing in the eyes of many that night, especially those expecting a strip-tease performed by sexy girls to porno music. For those who weren't comfortable with the idea of a male pole-dancer, I hope their perceptions were changed by the performance, especially upon seeing that the dance can be more than mere titillation and requires muscular strength and grace that will not be out of place in a sport.

But I don't think I'll be the only one stating that the true stars of the night, was the live band performance by The Jalapenos. Sure, Slaxdan was a hit with everyone on the dancefloor as expected, but the musically perfect and exuberant stage presence of this rock band just blew everyone away as they performed 80's rock classics. As the opening riffs of AC/DC's *Back in Black* ripped through the ballroom, a sea of nodding heads and raised metal salutes begged for a moshpit to be available. Alas, that would bely the formal setting for the night so we simply had to content ourselves with the rest of the Jalapenos' set which included Red Hot Chilli Peppers' *Hump de Bump*, Tower of Power's *Soul with a Capital 'S'* and The Beatles' *Come Together*.

It was great that the performance line-up



was tailored to have something entertaining for everyone; when the MDFC dancers performed to hits from the 90's, all in attendance, queens and stans alike, cheered for the Britney classics. The male dancers, who came out to thunderous applause as they swivelled their hips to boy band numbers, also hammered their way through *U Can't Touch This* with great aplomb and to much delighted laughter as all reminisced over still being 90's kids at heart.

The penultimate act was the crowning of Mr and Ms Monash, Nabil Bin Yusoff and Natasha Menon respectively, with nary an awkward question parlayed by the host, thankfully. After a bout of slow dancing for those coupled up, (to John Mayer's *Edge of Desire* and Darren Ashley's *Fade Away*, naturally) and super awkward interpretive dances on the part of us singles, it was time to make way for much wilder dancing. The ever-awesome Jalapenos prepped us with a medley of Justin Timberlake hits; Daft Punk's *Get Lucky*; and Bruno Mars' *Treasure*, to reflect the noughties era, and this segued nicely into Slaxdan's much anticipated showcase. A friend's prediction that we'd look ridiculous raving in our formal clothes, was cast by the wayside as everyone just jumped and danced, kicking heels aside and not letting the suits and dresses dampen nor hamper our enthusiasm for the thumping beats and dizzying neon lights.

The night ended and all went our separate ways, some to the frankly not that great official unofficial after-party, and others to our hotels or residences. It was a night to remember but for some us, it didn't just end at the Majestic ;) **monga**



Mr Monash 2013, Nabil Bin Yusoff
slow-dancing with his date.



Rave at the Ball, Slaxdan showcase





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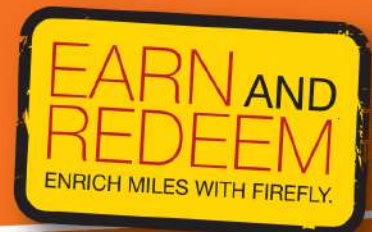
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Words By **Lestari Hairul**

Going by the colourful t-shirts that emerged at the end of the day's events, and the excitement with which each participant greeted their artistic creation, it's safe to say that tie-dyeing shirts was an excellent way to begin the workshop.

Spectrum was organised by Mr. Hazri Haili from Monash University Malaysia's Student Services Department together with the School of Arts and Social Sciences' representatives, Rushanka Ratnayake and Aaron Seth. Led by external facilitators, Ms. Thilaga Pillai and Mr. Philip Gan, those in attendance were first introduced to the concept of gender identity.

Divided into 3 groups, we were handed 2 giant pieces of paper taped together, per group and upon each was drawn a female or a male body. Writing out what we felt makes a man or a woman, including things like "horny" for men and "slender body" for women, the common understanding of a gender binary was turned topsy-turvy when each drawing was separated and mixed up. The paper models now had a mix of female and male qualities.

There was much laughter involved since there were obvious contradictions between the two halves like being "self-centred" and "caring" at the same time but personally, I feel that it encapsulates humanity since each person, no matter their sexual orientation or gender identity, is a bundle of contradictions anyway. And that's just what makes us such interesting and wonderful beings since we aren't automatons who only behave according to

the prescribed categories imposed upon us at birth.

From there we moved to the subject of sexual orientation and stereotypes. I found that the flow of the workshop was really conducive to learning since it started with groundwork on the concept of gender. Many who stereotype LGBT people tend to think along the lines of gay people acting in opposition to the gender on their identity card and by exploring the idea that gender is really a socially-determined identity rather than a biological one, it makes it easier to see stereotypes about LGBT people as what they are: just stereotypes and not instructive on what LGBT people really are.

The facilitators got us to arrange in order, according to who gets discriminated most, a set of different identities that most in attendance had to assume. Those who didn't get an alter-ego had the job of determining who these people are. It was interesting to see whom people thought would be discriminated the most in society and it really begs the question, can we really tell at face value the kind of struggles that each individual is going through? There were, for instance, those who lead double-lives according to the paper identities given; a politician who is secretly gay, a religious woman who is also attracted to women, among others.

The notion of human rights is a necessary issue to raise in any context concerning LGBT groups since they are amongst the most discriminated against in the world today and thus a short lecture on the laws concerning LGBT people

was delivered. Where people can still be executed just for being a man who loves another man; denied medical care for not conforming to the prescribed gender at birth; and sexually assaulted in institutions where justice is supposedly to be upheld, the world really needs to take a good look at how we treat other human beings whose basic rights we deny because we consider them to be lesser than a full human by virtue of their gender identity or sexual orientation.

The videos we watched after, towards the end of the workshop, brought tears to my eyes as they detailed the accounts of those being oppressed and persecuted just for being different. The most amazing quality was the resilience and strength of spirit that each person showed in the face of the most awful discrimination.

I left the workshop feeling that it would really be educational for those whose idea of LGBT people is informed solely by the media and hearsay. I've learnt a lot from the Gender unit I've taken on campus and from interacting with activists and educators but even so, I came away with a greater understanding of the concepts. What would their reactions be, for one who has never been exposed to this?

If we can only see that 'different' is neither to be feared nor to be demonised, we can recognise the humanity and value inherent in the other person. And it is only when we can accomplish that can we truly say that we are an intelligent species worthy of the term 'humane'. **manga**

FEATURE

IN THE FOLLOWING PAGES, WE HAVE A FEW THIRD CULTURE KIDS, A BIT OF POLITICS, GEEKS AND SO MUCH MORE. SOME ARTICLES MAY ELICIT PARTICULAR REACTIONS FROM YOU. DON'T FRET, THIS IS PERFECTLY NORMAL AND IF YOU FEEL A BURNING DESIRE TO RESPOND TO ANY OF THE ARTICLES, DON'T FORGET TO WRITE TO US AT MUSA.EDITOR@MONASH.EDU. BEST IF IT'S A FULL ARTICLE FOR PUBLISHING IN THE MONDO!







walks of life. To hear stories of people so comfortable with their own sexuality and curiosity seemed to overwhelm the small town boy in me but I began to admire these people. Another significant aspect of me coming out was committing to a fling on the Internet with a gay man, which happened to be something very destructive. It was then when I truly accepted myself for who I am. See, when I was with this guy I learned a few things about myself.

Ironically, it was with this somewhat self-reevaluation that I found myself fantasising about a very attractive woman at the train station. So I ditched my usual selection of hunting down free clips of Sean Cody and Randy Blue for some hand-picked straight porn. Hence, I ended that November article stating that I am now balanced, for now I feel I can commit to a man and a woman both emotionally and sexually. But I don't want to conform to society by labelling myself as being either straight or with any one of the letters in LGBT.

What was I thinking? No, I don't think it was fear. Yeah, I am pretty sure that my parents will not truly accept me for who I am because of their very orthodox Indian backgrounds. But that wasn't a concern. I had plans for that; wife or beard, whatever. I have a minimum of five to eight years to figure that out. Was it because of people's perceptions when they finally find out about my true identity after reading my article? Maybe, but I believe the problem really lay out of the box. Like my parents, I too grew up in an orthodox Indian family. I wasn't that special as a child but I was pretty much different. I was always the object of amusement for my cousins. I did not escape school either but I guess what affected me truly was how I would be humiliated by my homophobic kinsmen. I was growing up to be a homophobe myself. I became a bit of a hypocrite you see. I would be happy having a fun time within the confines of my privacy to an exhibition of naked men on my computer screen, but while I was out there at family functions I was making fun of a cousin who I am pretty sure is different too. So my social need to be accepted into family, into a circle of people whom I admire had made me a person who truly denies who I really am.

Leaving the blame game aside, I guess like any first step to true acceptance is facing denial. Some may even call this transition. It is liberating to wake up to the day knowing that you don't have this burden of keeping a

Last November, I wrote an article under this very pseudonym on a friend's blog of how I am attracted to both men and women. I wrote about how as a teenager I was beginning to discover my sexual side and how I could never fantasise about a woman having sex with me because it seemed disrespectful; respecting the decency of a woman was very much drilled into my head at a young age. But like any prepubescent boy, I needed my sexual desires to be fulfilled one way or another. It was also at this time, despite being the social butterfly in school, I realised that I was never really very comfortable with my body and my looks. My one real envy would be the existence of the quintessential male athletes of my school. I would sit at the bleachers during Physical Education (PE) just to see sweat glistening down their almost Greek God-like bodies thinking that if I cannot be like them, I want to "own" them.

It was probably when I was seventeen when I realised that I may just have an emotional attraction for women. But my attraction to men, on the other hand, was like a green-eyed monster with his own favourite sex toy. This, I realised, may have set me apart from the rest of the crowd. I began to question myself. Am I a straight male or am I really a gay male? I wondered if I was the only one on this planet who had these kinds of notions. So as time passed, I progressed to university where I have met a myriad of characters who come from all

"But I don't want to conform to society by labelling myself as being either straight or with any one of the letters in LGBT."

secret with you any longer, but after a while you kind of miss that burden. We humans are funny beings. We somewhat enjoy carrying these burdens with us. It probably makes us feel important, special in some way, or we may even judge ourselves. That was how I felt. From what I can remember, all I have known was this ideology of my sexuality, which I have been trying very hard to keep a secret and at times even trying to fight against it. I realised that I was far more fragile than I thought I was and I had to give my rigid upbringing and familial pressure credit for that.

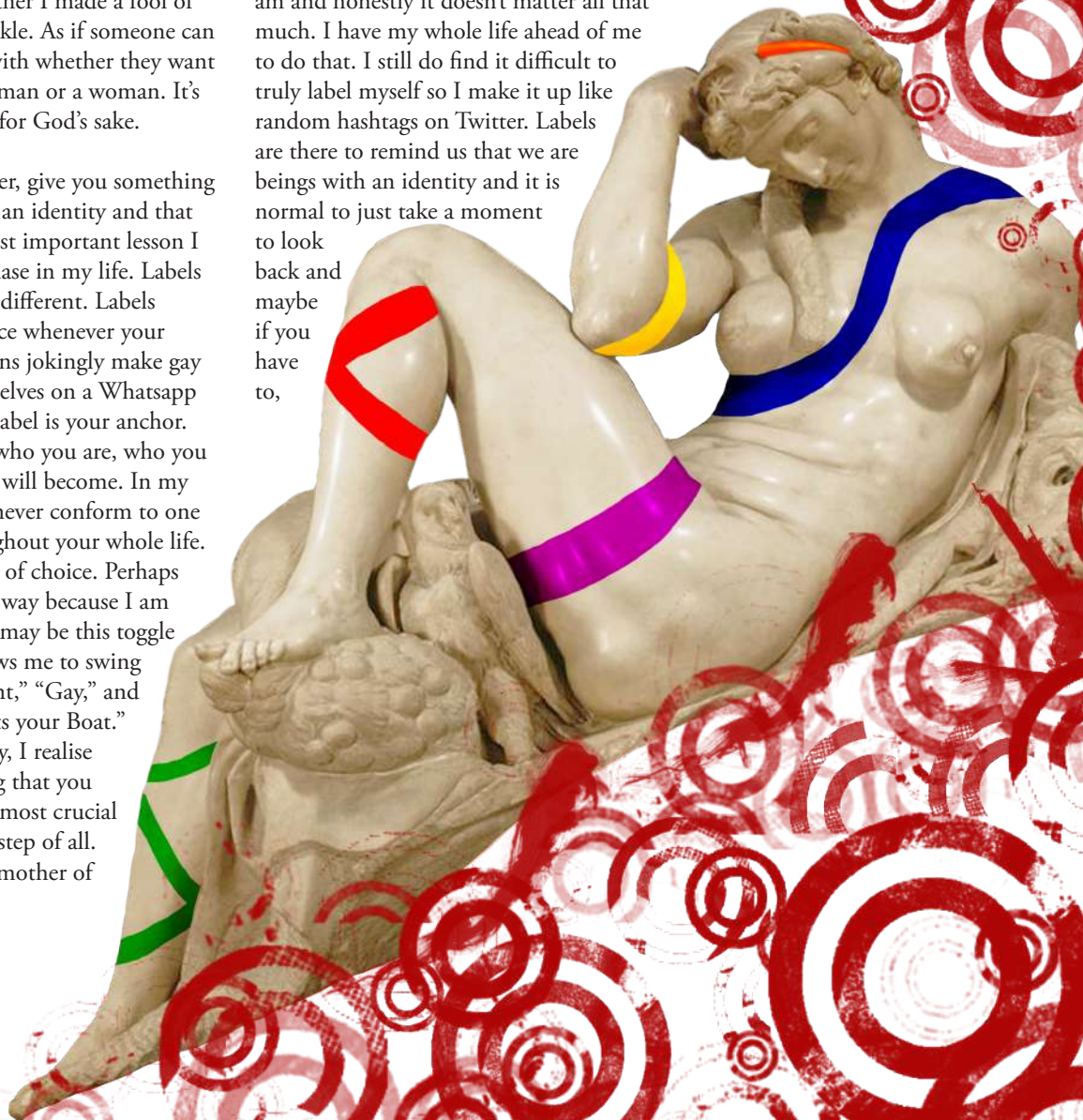
Coming out is not easy. You start to question whether you are the right sexuality or not and it becomes particularly tricky when you happen to sit on the fence. Fear kicks in not because you told the whole world about it but more like whether you told the right thing. Hence, the problem becomes not so much of a sexual orientation problem but more like whether I made a fool of myself by being fickle. As if someone can actually be fickle with whether they want to have sex with a man or a woman. It's not rocket science for God's sake.

Labels, however, give you something to hold on to. It is an identity and that is probably the most important lesson I learnt from this phase in my life. Labels will make you feel different. Labels will make you wince whenever your homophobic cousins jokingly make gay slurs among themselves on a Whatsapp group chat. But a label is your anchor. It reminds you of who you are, who you were and who you will become. In my opinion, you will never conform to one sort of label throughout your whole life. To me it's a matter of choice. Perhaps I might think that way because I am bisexual and there may be this toggle switch, which allows me to swing between "Straight," "Gay," and "Whatever Floats your Boat." Most importantly, I realise now that accepting that you are different is the most crucial and most difficult step of all. "Different" is the mother of

all labels and happens to be frenemies with "Normal." Once you are ready, it is then that you make a choice about how you want to see yourself because honestly whatever people might say, they are not going to give a damn. They have their own problems to deal with. Just stay away from them, problem solved. My past has shaped me to become who I want to be today and my present will definitely set the stepping stones of what I want to be in the future. Yes, I was referring to the sex.

So what is my sexuality? I guess it's safe to say that I am a bisexual male, at the moment. A very contented virgin bisexual man with the occasional outburst of sexual frustration. To some of my female buddies, I'm their half-gay best friend. Hence, I have come to the point where I think it is alright for me to be fickle. I have not had sex with either a man or a woman. I am twenty-two years old and I have yet to discover who I really am and honestly it doesn't matter all that much. I have my whole life ahead of me to do that. I still do find it difficult to truly label myself so I make it up like random hashtags on Twitter. Labels are there to remind us that we are beings with an identity and it is normal to just take a moment to look back and maybe if you have to,

reinvent yourself and find yourself a new label. Change is as fluid as sexuality. As of now, I will just concentrate on being me and indulge in more gay porn than straight porn because the sex in straight porn is atrocious. Gay people make more tasteful porn other than the BDSM stuff. Alternatively, I am simply going to be Jennifer Lawrence and win an Oscar. **manga**





Meiko "Menma" Honma from the anime *Anohana*

Plasticbag Cosplayer

Words by **Natalie Chin Shi Ryn**

To start off, I think it is only fair if I first lay out the obligatory disclaimer; that is, by the end of this article you may find yourself sick of my face. Now, as an active cosplayer who has had almost two years of experience in the community, I get asked a lot of questions in relation to the photos I upload on to the Internet. Sometimes regarding the costumes I wear of a particular character, the request for advice and tips for those who are planning to do something similar, and of course, people who are not cosplayers themselves but hope to gain more knowledge on the subject.

I believe since approximately five to six years ago, cosplay, an abbreviation for 'costume play', no longer seems 'foreign' even in conservative countries like Malaysia. Although the word may be familiar to many people these days, the activity still leaves some baffled and confused. I say this because my parents and a handful of my friends fall into this category. "Why cosplay?" To answer this question in-depth, I would have to take you back to my childhood, when I was just a twelve year old brat waiting to be accepted into my high school of choice. At that time, all I was preoccupied with was piano classes on the weekends and that was it. Due to all that leisure time spent away from school, I decided to, out of randomness, start watching an

anime called *Naruto*.

When I was only fifteen years old, one of my tuition mates saw me drawing on my textbook and asked, "Hey, do you by any chance cosplay?" That night, I scurried home and hopped on to Wikipedia to educate myself; and suddenly, all I wanted to do was cosplay.

When you cosplay, you have to know the character inside out, in terms of their attitude, looks, personality, history – you literally become the character you are dressing up as. This is not to forget the time splurged in costume-making, prop-making and all that work behind the scenes. A cosplayer may be able to effortlessly look good during cosplay conventions, but you must consider the amount of sleepless nights they have had to endure to meet that deadline.

The first prop I ever made left me a week without experiencing proper REM cycles. Many times during that process, I was on the verge of throwing in the towel. But at the end of the struggle there is always this wave of relief and feeling of pride. Because no matter how corny this may sound, it is the passion and love for what you are doing that makes you stay, regardless of the turmoil you have to go through. And this is exactly how I feel about cosplaying. I love it, so much; it is as simple as that.

To be honest, how well the overall outfit turns out depends on how much I adore the character. There are times I end up dressing as someone I do not have much interest in, in order to help peers fill up a space in a group. Other times, I purchase

outfits from cosplay stores and on online shops (especially the wigs) if I need it fast and if it fits into my budget.

Consequently, when given a choice, I always end up cosplaying male characters because of preference. But this does not mean I avoid the female characters completely. In fact, for the first official event I ever attended, I cosplayed the female protagonist Inori from *Guilty Crown*. After that, I found myself attending more and more cosplay events back-to-back, making countless new friends in the process, meeting people I would have never met if it was not for cosplay, and here I am today, still doing it and loving it more and more each day. My current best friend is a girl I met through cosplay!

I can understand why many people participate in cosplay competitively and professionally. There are some cosplayers whose popularity transcends countries and cultures, so much so that they are actually paid to cosplay. But using this as a ticket to be mean to folks who have just started out is not right. People who attend conventions may just be there looking for a good time, so do not rain on their parade; only give advice if you are asked. After all, cosplay is about sharing your affection for a character with others through the art of role-playing.

I apologize if this article became gloomy so fast, but collectively, cosplay is a misunderstood hobby. As you already know, it is not cheap and it is not easy either. Time, work, money, effort, knowledge and dedication complete the package. Hence, you need to know how to juggle your priorities and not get too caught up in this fictional world of cosplay. **manga**

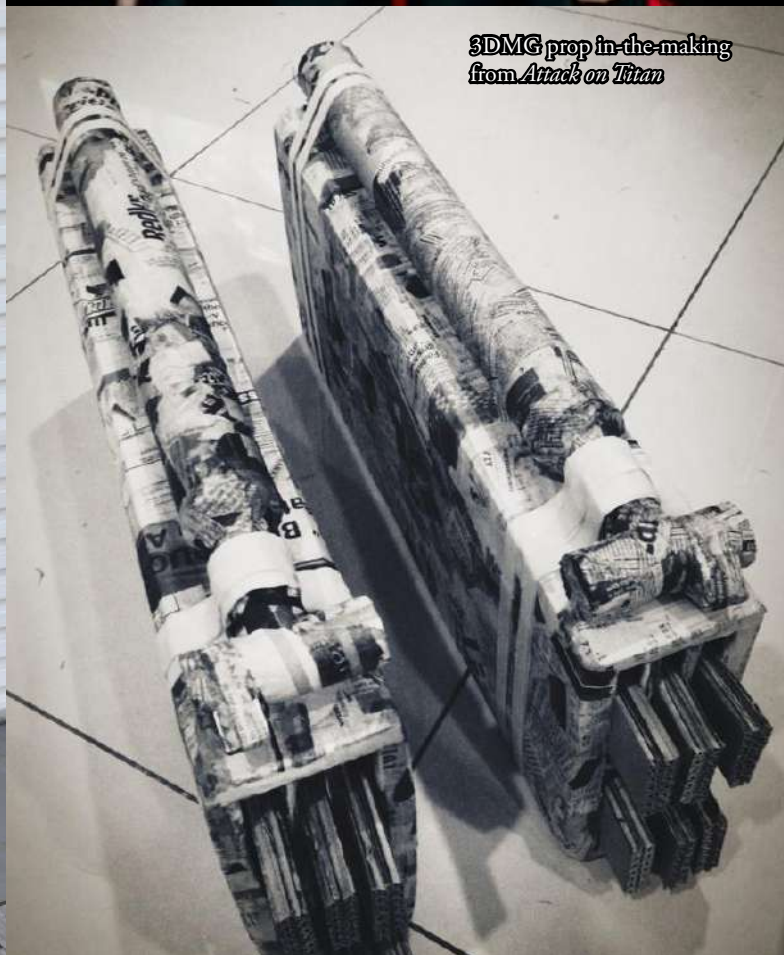
Inori Yuzuhira
from the anime
Guilty Crown



Lyfa from *Sword Art Online*



3DMG prop in-the-making
from *Attack on Titan*





Football: More than a game

Words By **Darren Adamally**

“Game after game after game, I realise now what is most important in my life, football. Show me something more thrilling than a perfect volley. Tell me you’ve never dreamed the immaculate strike; after that moment when an entire nation holds its breath. Tell me that football is not our one common language when the whole world stops for 90 minutes to be part of that one thing we understand.”

- FIFA 06™ Introduction

Football, soccer, it seems easy on paper. Twenty-one individuals, eleven per team: kicking a ball around a rectangular pitch for ninety minutes, hoping to put the ball into the back of the opposing team’s net. In fact, it seems boring on

paper, but when there’s two minutes left on the clock, with your team a goal down in the finals of the Champions League, boredom is a million miles away. The intensity that you feel as a player, manager or supporter is second to none.

What started out as a fun past time for Commonwealth Royalty, turned into what is the most followed sport in the world. Over a billion people watch the World Cup Finals, with the matches being telecast in over a 180 different countries. A fifth of the world live, breathe and eat football every day.

People play sports either for their entertainment, or for personal fitness, but football is more than just a sport. You can’t explain the feeling that takes over when you walk onto the pitch and thousands of fans scream your name, pushing you on to glory. You get the ball at the centre circle, dribble past three players, and place the ball into the top right corner of the net. The stadium

erupts and starts singing your name out loud; pure happiness. You feel on top of the world, nothing can bring you down. OK, so maybe most footballers may never have that kind of welcome, or play with such skill, but we sure do dream about it.

Over the past couple of years, there has been a ton of investment in the game, coming from steel and oil magnates, and powerful businessmen, such as Roman Abramovich, John. W. Henry, the Glazers and the owner of the Boston Red Sox, Stan Kroenke. As the money increases, so do the stakes. The difference between bankruptcy and thriving in the economic environment that now encompasses football could be a few mere points and the consequences, both on and off the pitch, could have a resounding effect on the respective club’s future. Other than the club, those most affected by such consequences are the fans, who spend thousands of pounds each year, cheering their team through the good times and the bad, through rain or snow, all because



of their love for the club that they call their own.

Be it a regional championship (like Euro 2014 or the African Cup of Nations) or even the international cups (the World Cup and the Confederations Cup), the outcome of your club's participation in such an event could make or break your day. Now, you could argue that this could be said for every sport, but no sport has quarter of the world's eyes glued to the television or ears to the radio, like football does. The world unites to observe the spectacle where bragging rights are fought for, and legends are made.

In some areas of the world, football is a religion. It's a day to day activity that plays a huge part in everyone's life. Football brings whole communities together. It's a norm in South American countries for whole towns to gather and watch football together on the weekends. Rarely do you see a sport bring people of all races and ethnicities together, where they put all their issues and prejudices aside and come together to enjoy a match of football. Then, there are the rivalries. The 'derbies' as they call it, where two

opposing teams, who are fierce rivals, fight it out on the pitch. Be it Arsenal, Real Madrid, Barcelona, Paris Saint German, Manchester United or Juventus, no matter which team you are a fan of, the passion, energy and ferocity of the support is incomparable with any other sport. Fans of Borussia Dortmund, for example, create what is known as the 'wall of death' with boards and placards at every home game, which is truly an amazing spectacle.

Football is an art. It takes years to hone your skill in just one department of the game. The beauty of a well-placed through ball or a rocket-like free kick is what inspires youngsters around the world to work hard and do their best to become the next 'Ronaldinho' or the next 'Messi'. Football gives hope. It gives the less fortunate a chance to achieve their dreams and inspire others to do so as well. What leaves the biggest impression on you is the pain; the agony you face when your team loses, or when your team gets relegated to the bottom of the ranks. Football hits you like no other sport does, and teaches you that patience and mental strength are two of the most important attributes in life. It teaches you that you

should never give up, and that the more effort you put in, the more it pays off.

The British call it football, the Germans '*fussball*', and the Portuguese, '*futebol*'. Different cultures have different names for it, but on the pitch, only one language exists, football. To take from Barcelona's famous saying, football is '*mes que un*' or more than, a game. **monGa**

“Soccer isn't the same as Bach or Buddhism. But it is often more deeply felt than religion, and just as much a part of the community's fabric, a repository of traditions.”

-- Franklin Foer

A small town Australian girl meets KL

Words and Photos by **Sarah Price**

“Once you get over the fear, then it’s a cinch,” she said. And then she leaped into the mountainous and unexplored region of her heart.”

– Monique Duval

The first thing I noticed about Malaysia was not the heat or the crazy traffic, it was how different the surroundings were. Dense rainforest surrounded the city and the roads, a heavy contrast to the gum trees back home. But once I made it to Sunway Monash Residence, I felt a sense of ease. To live with people from all over the world, as well as from my own country, helped ease the culture shock. We were all in this together, after all. Travelling around Malaysia and seeing beautiful islands was the highlight of my exchange experience I would never forget. That being said, not everything went according to plan. In fact, hardly anything went according to plan when it came to travelling.

From sleeping in a dirty ferry port for 8 hours, getting lost in a rainforest on Tioman Island and riding on motorbikes in Penang, everything we did was something we never planned. As



a person who is used to planning everything in my life, this came as a big shock to me. But, as they say, the best things happen when you don’t plan for it. Just letting it be and getting out of my comfort zone was the lesson I needed to understand. Suddenly, it felt as if the world was unlocking itself. My mind and eyes were opening in ways I had never before thought possible. I realized that I was not really ‘finding’ myself in Malaysia; rather, I was creating myself. It felt like this new phase of my life washed away the past and everything I thought about myself, and I was just a girl in this big world living every experience to its fullest.

In a small country town where I am from, there are not many people from different countries around. Most people are true blue Aussies; they say g’day, they eat kangaroo and drive utes. It’s not exactly a mixing of cultures where I’m from. So, when I came here I was taken aback by the Muslim culture. I had never met a Muslim before, and I knew very little about their beliefs. I always thought of Muslim people as the women who walk around wearing Burqas and who must obey everything that their husbands tell them to do. The image I always had in my head was of a reserved, beaten-down woman walking behind her husband and never allowed to look at another man. My somewhat fabricated image of Muslims in a hot and sandy desert only found in the Middle East was shattered when I came to Malaysia. Suddenly, I found myself becoming curious about the pretty South-East Asian Muslim girls with their colorful hijabs and clothes, which were a stark contrast to the heavy black gowns I had in mind.

Being a journalism student, I have always been an open-minded person. I’ve always lusted over adventure and the unknown. To me, Islam was a mysterious religion I knew hardly anything of. That’s when I decided to do one of my assignments about Muslim women’s rights. I never realised that Malaysia has one of the lowest quotas of women in parliament. There is still no



sexual harassment act, and the Domestic Violence Act took another two years to be implemented even after it finally passed in 1994. At first, this made me think that all Muslim men have no respect for their women. Suddenly, Malaysia seemed like such a backward country and I had a sickening urge to go back home.

But then, researching and digging a little deeper on the subject made me realise a whole new world that I had never entered. The more I investigated, the more I understood about Islam. Islam, I found, means 'peace' - which I'm sure many of you already know - but this was a new concept for me. Suddenly, I met many Muslim friends and a high sense of respect grew for each of them. I realized that many Muslims have a deep appreciation for their traditional values, and that my Christian faith is hardly different to the Islamic faith.

Interviewing Marina Mahathir definitely shaped my view on Islamic women's rights and the religion itself. This was my first major interview with someone quite famous. I still remember how sweaty my palms were. Am I good enough? Am I really cut out for journalism? But as soon as I met Marina, I knew that the interview was an important one. Her gentle but confident manner asserted an answer to a question I had been asking myself since coming to Malaysia. The Quran does not teach inequality. It does not permit men to beat their wives. Her knowledge was exuberating; and I felt as if I had a newfound understanding of something much bigger and deeper than I had ever thought possible. It dawned on me that I was starting to outgrow the sheltered life I was living in back home in my country town, and the various stereotypes placed on society from culture to culture. Malaysia was having an effect on me far more than just the boundaries of Monash, cool clubs and intriguing food; it was the culture in itself and the lessons I was learning. "We are all one people on this Earth," said Marina as she finished the interview. I smiled at her in appreciation, and looking back now I know that was the most important lesson I had learnt thus far.

"If I know the way home and am walking along it drunkenly, does it make it any less the right way if I am staggering from side to side?"

— Leo Tolstoy



Sometimes, I just smile. It comes at the simplest of moments. Never before have I been so appreciative of my life and everything in it. I realized that these little moments in Malaysia would be some of my best. Only the best of opportunities and the most colorful of moments have come my way. I am definitely not the same girl that left Melbourne airport for this unexpected journey; I have grown immensely. I was a girl who used to feel trapped and confined in the society I was brought up in, and perhaps a little insecure. While we can't be sure of much in this world, I know that deciding to come to Malaysia on a whim turned out to be the best decision I have ever made (not exaggerating). Malaysia didn't turn out as I imagined or planned, and that in itself made it so wonderful. I now believe in my own capabilities and myself more than ever, and that comes from taking a deep breath and stepping into the world on your own for the very first time.

To finish, I would like to end with a quote (I know I have inserted many throughout the article, I can get quite philosophical) by the fabulous Carrie Bradshaw from *Sex & the City*:

"Don't forget to fall in love with yourself first."

Remember this, and I believe we can achieve anything we want to in this world. **monga**





M1A1 Abrams tank in Djibouti

GET A TANK

Words by **Omais Soomro**

If you happened to be near the Phase 5 toll booth at around 10 am in Lahore, Pakistan, you would have seen that there was a massive traffic jam, a traffic jam that was caused, by rioting taking place nearby. Now, if you happen to live there and were going back to Phase 6, or going to LSE (Lahore School of Economics), you would have probably had to go all the way back to Defence and taken the long route from Bhatta Chowk.

Now, the obvious solution to this problem would be to solve the electricity crisis that was the impetus behind the rioting. Well, honestly, that isn't happening any time soon, so I think an urgent stopgap solution is needed, and needed fast. This is where this note comes in.

The most obvious reason why no one was allowed to go through was because their car would have been stopped, attacked and set on fire along with the occupants, which is (I am told) a very unpleasant thing to experience. Just imagine, what would have happened if you'd have been caught in a riot, in the above instead:

Observe this image and visualize such an event in real life. Done? Well, if you haven't, for your information that is an M1A1 Abrams's Main Battle Tank. If you haven't seen a war movie or played a first person shooter video game, let me fill you in. It weighs 60 tons, is armored fully from head to toe and has a 1500 horsepower gas turbine engine, along with a 125MM smoothbore cannon. But all that is irrelevant. Why? Because it's a tank, that's why. I mean, just think about it: There you are, being the best rioter you can be. You've burnt some tyres, hit a couple of policemen with your stick, you even broke a couple of windows. Now here you are, blocking Omais Soomro's way as he tries to get to class to give his presentation, generally being an ass----, when you see one of these bad boys rolling up. What do you do? Well, a number of things, most of them revolve around fleeing in abject terror. You could also, alternatively, bake a pie, if you happen to be a lunatic.

Regardless, what I'm trying to say is, buy a tank. And this isn't me being stupid, seriously, buy a tank. Or at least an Armored Personnel Carrier (APC). They aren't even very expensive (Seriously, you can buy ex-Soviet ones for little over 7000 pounds, which is, roughly, the price of a Suzuki Swift*).

Okay, so maybe I'm being a bit optimistic with the word 'tank', because you can't REALLY get a tank for THAT much money. But whatever you get, it will (roughly) produce around 300-500 horsepower, which is, in all honesty, supercar territory. And you can carry ALL your shopping, ALL of it. In fact, if you get an APC, it'll probably have a ramp that you can pull down (to facilitate putting in all your luggage, of course), and it'll have room for more than 4 people, who can travel (if not in absolute comfort), in absolute safety.

And then you reach the party piece: Imagine, you're low on money and diesel for your tank, and you need to pick up all the bachis [babes] (or bachas [boyzzes], I'm not discriminating here) you are down-ing (a standard by-product of tank ownership). Now, under normal circumstances, you'd have to wait at LEAST 10 minutes in a line to get fuel. But no, you have a TANK, you just pull up to the pump, point your cannon at the nice man and say "I'd like some fuel please."

Seriously, you DON'T even have to pay. Can't find any parking? Who cares, create room for yourself. Why? Because you have a TANK, that's why.

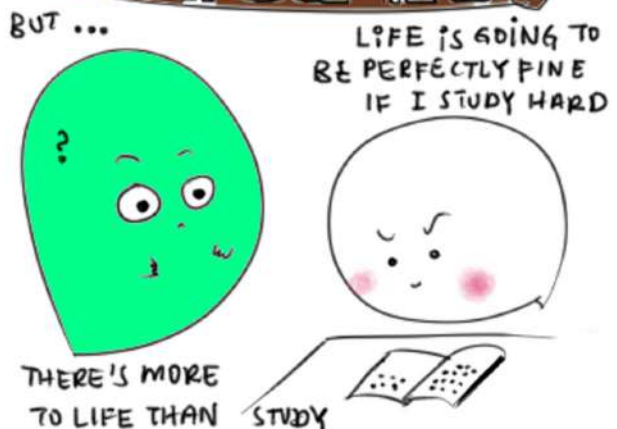
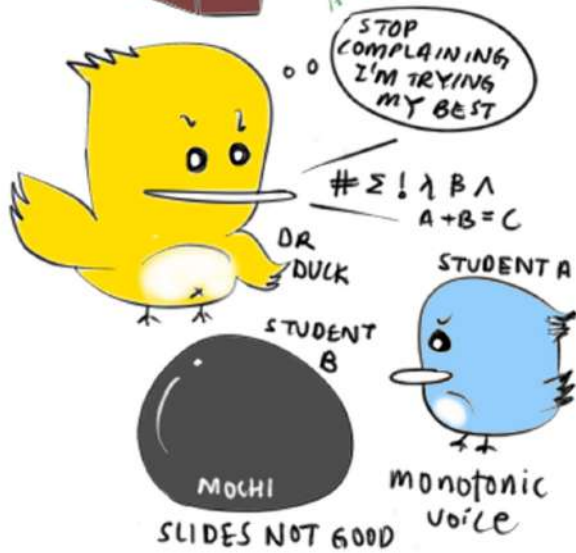
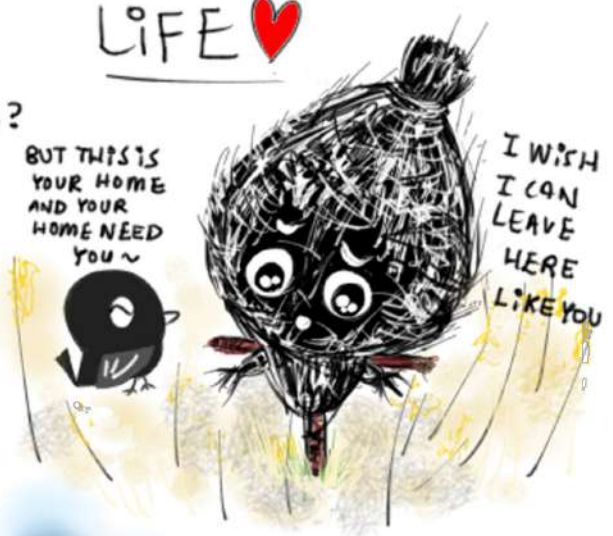
The future then, is clear. Be a winner. Get a tank.

*Only in Pakistan and only if you know the right people

OPINIONS



LIFE ♥



It's a Hard, Geeky Life

Bobbi Brown
Tortoise Shell Collection
Fall 2011

Words by **Tze Han Kee (Hanny)**

There are many labels that one might receive in life. For me, I would be the resident geek in any social circle. No exceptions. Sure, there are many, many people out there in the wide, wide world who enjoy playing video games, watching anime, devouring science fiction and fantasy novels or even collecting certain paraphernalia, but most of them do not do all of these things at once. You would think that in this world where every soul is connected by six degrees of friendship, my life would be filled with tons of like-minded people, and I would be filled with fun conversations with them regarding our shared loves. It's not really like that. It's a lonely world, although it looks glamorous now, because geek culture has been infused into popular culture. Yes, it is a part of it, but still, it feels like a completely different universe altogether. This feeling of belonging, yet the secondary feeling of isolation, both existing at the same time... You would feel happy at first contact, but the longer you remain, the further you will be thrust from the outside world.

I didn't really imagine myself as a geek growing up. I just loved things that most people did not have an interest in. Growing up with a bunch of older male cousins, I was exposed to classic games like *Duke Nuke'Em*, *Warcraft* (that's right boys, the RTS game that sparked the whole *DotA* craze in the first place), *Street Fighter* and *Mario*. I was exposed to all of these games even before I could comprehend ten-word sentences. When I was six years old, whilst watching the *Empire Strikes Back*, I cried "NOOOO, it can't be!" with Luke Skywalker. Getting older, *Lord of the Rings* and *Harry Potter* transported me into different worlds, and I rediscovered my love for Japanese anime. I accepted *Saiyuki*, *Rurouni Kenshin* and *Ayashi no Ceres* like a fish takes to water.

Those were the days. Those were the days when you watched the shows, read the books and manga, and played the games. But as the days pass, you start to realise your friends don't really enjoy doing the same things you do. They've moved on to things like *DotA*, *Twilight* (with many shudders and violent vomiting on my part when I tried to join the bandwagon), Nicholas Sparks' romances, *Naruto* and *Bleach*.

You, on the other hand, still dwell on the same things you do because you love them so much. You have immersed yourself into that same space, trying to understand each and every detail you see because with each revisit you discover something new. There are moments when you are filled with this overflowing feeling of... I don't quite know what to call it... It's a little between sheer love and exploding inspiration, and the sad thing is that you want to share this love, this inspiration, but you cannot find a willing audience. Come on, you would balk at your friends for talking about the





same K-Pop artists over and over again. It is the same as you trying to tell them how awesome Ezio Auditore from *Assassin's Creed* is. You will not lose friends from being a geek, you just won't have many people who are able to relate to the things you like to do. There's quite a difference between the two, I assure you.

With this in mind, you turn to the World Wide Web. You join the forums, write the fan-fiction, create the GIFs to be shared on Tumblr, and you even watch the fan-made videos on YouTube. You find people online, in some obscure parts of the world, who actually share your loves, your obsessions. You talk to one another, you discuss, and you gush over how sexy Tsuda Kenjirou's voice is. But that's it. Those people cannot do more than that for you. They cannot cry with you when you are down, and they cannot jump for joy with you when you've passed that hellish final paper. They are there for you in the form of a few lines of texts and HTML codes that strangely seem to replace real human interaction.

By now, you would most likely have found peace within yourself. Yes, you now realise that you prefer immersing yourself in other objects over social interactions, but you are not too far gone that you are a complete recluse. It's cool. Prepare for the next most toxic thing in your life: those fellow fans or geeks who are like you but think that they are much better than you. Those are the ones who would belittle you as a *Lord of the Rings* fan because you prefer the movies over Tolkien's books, those that bash you for not being able to comprehend the sheer magic of George Lucas' original *Star Wars* trilogy because you actually enjoyed the prequel trilogy (and you laughed at Jar Jar Binks because you thought he was funny and not an actual failure as a character). They take your claim to the pieces of magic that you've placed your heart and soul in, and take your stand as rubbish whilst asserting their own superiority. At this moment, you will be heartbroken. You feel unworthy, because they have been longer fans, "better" ones because they took in more of the fandom than you did. Just like every piece of human interaction, virtual or not, you'll find douchebags like these hanging around.

Things are much worse when your fellow geeks realise that you are a girl. The patriarchy amongst such a community is strange. Thanks to commercial movements that support the "geek chic" aesthetic, like the campaign by Bobbi Brown a few seasons ago, those who call themselves "true-hearted" geeks decry girls who identify with these notions. This is because they do that just to get male attention. Trust me, not every geek who is a girl looks like that, I can attest to that. Just because I have an extra X chromosome instead of a Y, it seems as if my credibility in being as socially inept as you are has plummeted just because these men/boys are *so helpless* around women. Please. If I could score a man just by being a geeky chick, submitting to the geek chic aesthetic, I'd be swimming in men right now, and not obsessing over the latest anime with the most amount of *bishounen* characters.

It's not easy, being a geek. But at the same time, it's not the end of the world, really. It's a lonely little world, but you don't necessarily have to subscribe yourselves to the same things over and over again. So what if you like *Star Wars*? You can also like reading crime novels too. If you're a *Dota* player, why not try watching a cult-status series like *Dr. Who*? That way, your net is cast wider, and you are far more likely to find like-minded people, virtual or in real life. Who knows? Perhaps you might make one or two real friends, friends who will laugh and cry with you no matter what. Now, wouldn't that be a sweet ending to all of the challenges of being a geek? **manga**

Tell All: Exchange Students Reveal Their Monash Malaysian Experience

Words by **Syahirah Rashid**

Photos by **Vladislav Fedorov**

Cultural diversity, financial benefits and academic excellence are some of the reasons why Thomas Freeman, Vladislav Fedorov, Natania Colloppen and Feriel Kramdi came to Monash University Malaysia for an exchange semester.

All of them came here to experience a different culture away from home. Natania, from South Africa, said “Melbourne’s culture is really similar to South Africa, which is why I chose to come here [to Malaysia] instead.”

Malaysia’s multiculturalism has attracted Vladislav or Vlad from the Monash Clayton Campus to come and study here. “I’ve always wanted to visit China, India and other Arab countries, but coming to Malaysia, you get to experience as



many Asian cultures as possible.”

Feriel, an exchange student from Science Po Paris in France added that she chose Monash because it is an Australian university that is ranked within the top 1% of the all the universities in the world. The whole new culture in Malaysia, an Asian country, became an added bonus.

Besides getting to experience a new culture and the academic excellence of Monash University, the financial benefits that exchange students get by coming here are also too attractive to miss. Unlike the Sunway campus students who go on an intercampus exchange to one of Australia’s Monash campuses, exchange students arriving here get free accommodation in Sunway Monash Residence, partial reimbursement of their flight tickets, a travel grant and free wireless Internet in their apartment.

Similar but not the same

Thomas, an Australian from the Clayton campus, wishes that there were more activities on campus such as a free barbecue day, which they have every week at his home campus.

Vlad, on the other hand, prefers the activities on the Sunway campus to his home campus. “It is quite developed. They do not focus on alcohol, unlike in Australia, and there is a greater focus on clubs and societies. University is where learning takes place and it is good that these clubs help students develop their passion.”

Natania, however, feels that the local students on the Sunway campus are shy. “We mix around with other exchange



students because we have gotten to know each other before the semester started. As for the local students, I only make friends with them during lectures or in tutorials.”

Feriel agreed and added, “Even in my home campus, I do not mix around with the exchange students, so I understand where the local students are coming from. They have already been here for years and have their own group of friends, so it is understandable.” However, both Natania and Feriel have had a great first impression of Malaysia and the Monash campus here. Natania says that the Sunway campus’ architecture is similar to the Monash campus in South Africa in terms of the set-ups and colours. “I like that this campus has more spaces to meet up and discuss, and that there are study lounges and quiet areas in the library. We do not have quiet areas in the library in South Africa.” Feriel agreed and added that she likes how the university is close to the residences.

Vlad also had a good first impression of the Sunway campus. He was very surprised when he first entered a lecture room, because he thought it was quite large!

The ‘argh’ moments

Vlad, however, finds it frustrating how this campus lacks basic facilities such as computers and how there are not enough laptops available for borrowing. “I think that this needs to be addressed and I have already brought this matter up. But I think it needs to be brought up again.”

Natania voices out her frustration about how the Malaysian immigration holds on to students’ passports for months at a time. “I like to have my passport around and I need to feel safe and secure by having my passport with me...we can’t travel because the immigration has been holding on to our passports.” However, she added that the university services are very efficient. “I got my



student ID the very next day and there are also a lot of helpful guides for exchange students.”

Another frustration pointed out by Tom was the never ending construction on the campus grounds. “The construction takes so long. And the Starbucks’ pathway... that thing seems to be taking forever to be completed.”

A Malaysian thing

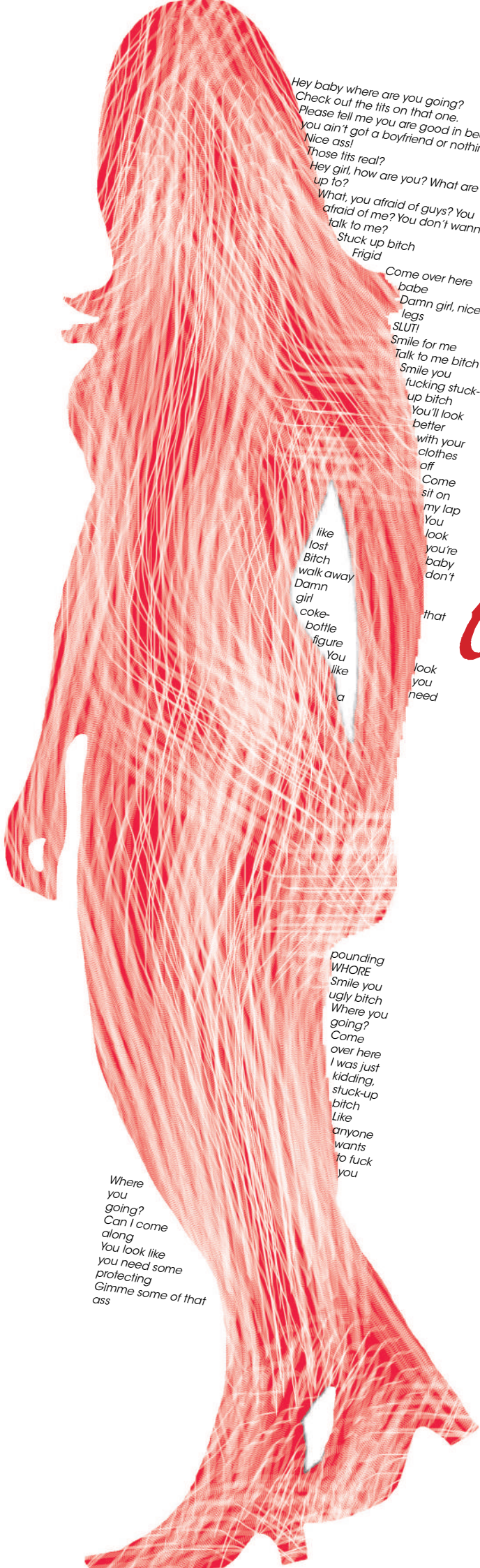
Besides the spicy and cheap food, the exchange students seem to be enthralled by two significant aspects of Malaysian culture; the ‘Malaysian Timing’ and the close and casual relationship between the students and the academic staff. “I thought I came into class late. But ten minutes later, the class still had not started,” Tom said, with an amused facial expression. The same point was brought up by Feriel as well. She, however, thinks that it is a good thing as back in her home campus deadlines stressed her out. She added, “But I am not sure if this is a good thing in the long run.” The French student, who is planning to stay for one whole year, also favours the close relationship between the students and the teaching staff. According to Feriel, in France, the relationship is more formal and students are less likely to approach their lecturers after class.

Be adventurous

Be it Malaysia, South Africa or one of the Australian campuses, or any of the partnering universities, it is a good opportunity for students to step out of their comfort zone and be adventurous. An exchange program helps one to develop courage, form new friendships and provides one with the opportunity to experience an entirely new culture. Cultural shock may be inevitable in the beginning, but the experience one can get out from an exchange program is too precious to miss. **monga**

The writer went for an intercampus exchange to Monash Australia before. She missed Malaysia when she was there and is missing Melbourne now that she is back.





Hey baby where are you going?
Check out the tits on that one.
Please tell me you are good in bed. Like,
you ain't got a boyfriend or nothin?
Nice ass!
Those tits real?
Hey girl, how are you? What are you
up to?
What, you afraid of guys? You
afraid of me? You don't wanna
talk to me?
Stuck up bitch
Frigid

Come over here
babe
Damn girl, nice
legs
SLUT!
Smile for me
Talk to me bitch
Smile you
tucking stuck-
up bitch
You'll look
better
with your
clothes
off
Come
sit on
my lap
You
look
you're
baby
don't

like
lost
Bitch
walk away
Damn
girl
coke-
bottle
figure
You
like
a
that
look
you
need

pounding
WHORE
Smile you
ugly bitch
Where you
going?
Come
over here
I was just
kidding,
stuck-up
bitch
Like
anyone
wants
to fuck
you

Where
you
going?
Can I come
along
You look like
you need some
protecting
Gimme some of that
ass

When Men Think It's Funny To Make Women Feel *Uncomfortable*

Words By Jasmine Rajah

My first initiation into womanhood was not a celebratory feast or a squeal of excitement or an outpouring of congratulations. In fact, I 'became' a woman even before I got my period. The initiation, sadly, started when I experienced my first cat-call and flirty remarks from unknown men on the street as I walked past them. I was puzzled by their sudden interest in me and little did I know, those cat-calls were just the beginning of many more (extremely unflattering and degrading) calls. I was eleven when that happened.

Street harassment (or public harassment) is a serious issue and is often neglected by society and ridiculed by the men who initiate them, saying that they were just innocent 'compliments' for women, nothing offensive. Although it is thought that street harassment is only faced by women, it is also a common issue amongst men, but this is often unnoticed and neglected by them.

Street harassment includes:

- Leering or excessive staring
- Honking and whistling
- Sexist comments
- Making vulgar gestures
- Saying sexually explicit comments
- Kissing noises
- Being followed
- Blocking paths
- Sexual touching or grabbing
- Public masturbation
- Assault

For the purpose of this article, I have asked some friends to tell me about their experience with street harassment, which they have willingly shared and permitted to include in this article. All names have been changed for the purpose of privacy.

"I took the bus to go back home one day. There were not many people on the bus, so I decided to sit at the back. When the bus stopped, a man went up and sat beside me. I didn't understand why he chose to sit beside me as there were plenty of empty seats around us. I felt like he was looking at me so I looked back at him only to get a huge shock! He had his private parts out and was stroking it while looking at me. I panicked and decided to move to another seat."

– Deborah, 26, Malaysia

"This incident was the most recent one. There was this guy in college who used Facebook to send me sexually explicit messages. When I confronted him about it (face to face), he proceeded to tell all my close friends that he had sex with me because I begged him to. Disgusting!"

– Dayana, 21, Singapore

"I think it happened a few years ago. The neighbour's teenage son (who was mostly away to live with his grandparents in the village) came to live with his parents for a few days. Mom told me to sweep the kitchen floor and I did so with the door open. While sweeping, I noticed that someone was looking at me. I looked outside the door to his house and saw that he took his 'thing' out and was touching it while looking at me. I screamed and closed the door. I think I was about eight."

- Nurul, 12, Malaysia (Yes, she is 12!)

"This happened in my home town in South Korea. While on my way home, a car stopped beside me and the man in the car asked me where the clinic was. As a young girl, I didn't know what he intended to do. He explained to me the part of his body that hurt and he told me to have a look at it. That was when he took out his privates. I got shocked and ran away. When I reached home, I cried. I think I was eleven when that happened."

- Ameline, 23, South Korea

"This happened at church. There were a lot of people making their way into church when suddenly, I felt a hand grab my buttocks. I knew it was not an accidental brush because he was clearly grabbing my buttocks. I was in shock and incredibly ashamed. I didn't have the courage to turn around to face the person who did it, because I couldn't face those other people who had just seen what had happened. I just ran into the church and tried to close my face out of shame."

- Rozy, 23, Malaysia

"An incident happened in the condominium that I currently live in, with my sister, in Mont Kiara. A group of foreign men constantly harass us. There was a time when my sister had accidentally dropped her coins on to the floor and as she bent down to pick up the coins, those men were throwing more coins at her so that they could look at my sister's behind. I was incredibly angry at that. Even today, they still continue to harass us. We would go to the swimming pool and they would corner us and block our path to the pool. We couldn't swim freely because they would be at the corner checking us out and they would wait for us to get out of the pool to continue harassing us."

- Tiara, 22, Tanzania

"I was leaning against the wall outside of the public library while waiting for my mother to pick me up. There was a construction site across the road. I didn't realize it at first, but something caught my attention. It was one of the construction workers who was sitting at the edge of the building and whipping out his privates while staring at me. Angry and disgusted, I screamed, "Why are you putting it out? It's not even that big and you are the ugliest thing I have ever seen! Put that back in!!!" I laughed loudly and went back into the library. I was shaking in fear but I felt empowered."

- Christine, 22, Malaysia





Ways to overcome street harassment

- **Ignore them and keep on walking.**
Sometimes ignoring is the only way to go about it, especially if you're in a deserted place.
- **Give them 'the stare'.**
- If there are many people around you, **make a scene** and point at the perpetrator. "This guy just touched my butt!! Arghhh!! Pervert!!"
- **Attack the behaviour, not the person.**
Instead of saying, "You are a jerk!" say "Stop standing so close to me!" or "Don't block my path or I will scream!"
- **If the harasser is in a car, write down the license plate of that car.** Even if you can't see it, pretending to write it down can scare the perpetrator into stopping. If the harassers are aggressive or threatening and you do write down the license plate number, you can report them to the police.
- **Name the behaviour and state that it is wrong.** "Do not whistle at me, that is harassment, NOT a compliment!"
- **Pretend to do a sexual harassment survey.**
When someone whistles or comments on your body turn around, and with a pen and paper in hand, question them. "How often do you harass women?" "How do you choose your victims?" "Are you aware that this is sexual harassment?"

Useful tips: Easy to find items to protect yourself from predators

- **Chilli Powder** - You can keep a small box of red chilli powder in your bag and in danger throw it in the eyes of the harasser.
- **Pepper spray** - A water-based pepper spray is always advised.
- **Spray deodorant** - You can keep a deodorant in your bag. If the harasser comes too close to you then you can spray the deodorant in his eyes.
- **A sharp object** - You can always carry a safety pin along with you. You can pin it onto your clothes or pin it onto your chain or bracelet.
- If someone is constantly bothering you, tell whoever it is that unless they want to deal with the police/boss/etc., they should stop bothering you. Make sure you do something about it so that the next time you are harassed, you can strongly tell them, "I have already reported you to the police/boss/etc., so you better leave me now, or else!" Always remember to have proof when reporting to the police/boss/etc., such as video/audio recordings, pictures etc...

Monster



A monster lives inside me.
I've had it all my life.
It speaks to me its sugared words, then cuts me like a knife.

You bind my wrists and lock my jaw.
You are my hideous, hidden flaw.

Your voice is velvet.
Your heart is dead.
You turn my muscles into lead.

You drown my sleep and crush my chest.
You steal my strength.
You freeze my breath.


These things you do –
They are not right.
You've taken all my will to fight.

A monster – it infects my mind.
At night it haunts my dreams.
I listen to its every lie, I play out all its schemes.

You break my voice and rob me blind.
You twist my reason and my mind.

It's not my fault,
I'm free from blame.
Why do I wake to all this shame?

I know what the monster wants.
Though in my head it'll stay,
I'll let it nowhere near my heart.
I fight it every day.





Choice, Freedom and Satisfaction

Words By Khashayar Mohammadi Photo By Brian Soong

I'm quite sure that every university student has experienced stress and anxiety while studying for exams or while struggling to finish assignments before the given deadline, but recently, stress (and the procrastination that comes along with it!) is spreading to more and more students every day. No matter how good of a student you are, I'm sure at some point in your studies you have felt that the pressure was too much for you to handle. I used to think that this amount of pressure was normal and that our parents had all gone through the same thing when they were our age; but recently I read an article by Barry Schwartz that made me think more about this matter. Maybe our generation is under a lot more pressure than the previous generations were, and maybe students from our generation shouldn't be blamed entirely for their shortcomings during their studies.

Let me start with some basic descriptions of freedom in the world that we are currently living in. As Schwartz puts it, Western societies have been trying really hard to improve the quality of life over the years, and they reckon that the way to achieve higher qualities of life is to give people more freedom. According to these major liberal powers, the way to achieve higher levels of individual freedom is to increase the number of choices. But is this really the best way to achieve freedom?

Just try to remember the good old days before the smart phones and social networks replaced actual social interactions. Back when doing something didn't necessarily mean you were

missing out on other activities. You could go for a long walk in the street, without constantly checking how much time you have wasted walking. Now that your smartphone constantly bombards you with notifications and reminders, your mind can barely relax and enjoy a long meaningless walk in the street! Everything you do, you are making an important choice; every task that you choose to do is shaping your future.

You're probably thinking: "Well, that has always been the case." But older generations didn't have as many choices as you have right now. If your parents chose to go to the cinema, they weren't missing out on much else. Have you noticed that right now people take a lot more pictures than they used to? Maybe that's because our minds are so occupied every single minute that we even choose to look at what happened around us later. When our minds are not heavily engaged.

Of course, the choices we make are not always as simple as choosing the best restaurant or choosing the best film that we can watch in the cinema; some of the simple choices that we make each day will stay with us for the rest of our lives. Again, this has always been the case, but then again, our predecessors didn't have as many choices as we do right now. Some of the restrictions in the freedom of choice were due to supervision from people with more expertise, but was that really a bad thing? Does every citizen have the knowledge to choose the most suitable path?

Fifty years ago, if you were experiencing pain or any other sort of medical abnormality, you would go to the doctor, or be admitted to the hospital, and all you had to do was to pay for your treatment after it was finished. But I'm quite sure most of you have encountered cases where the doctor has provided you with different treatments, informed you of the advantages and the disadvantages of those treatments, and then allowed YOU to decide which course of treatment to choose from. Of course, these choices let the patient decide more freely, but the problem here is that the doctor is assuming that the patient has enough knowledge to pick the best treatment for himself/herself. There's a shift of responsibility from someone with more expertise to the unhealthy patient, looking for a cure! Should the patient undergo more pressure during this challenging period? Is the patient in the right state to make such an important decision?

Don't get me wrong, I'm not saying that freedom of choice has been detrimental to modern societies; all I'm doing is using Schwartz's theories to point out why our generation might actually be mentally over-occupied.

Like I said, right now when you look around and all you see is the choices you have to make! Your mind is not getting enough rest because it is constantly engaged in a decision-making process. All this decision-making is taking away the energy you'll need for more important tasks in your life. We are surrounded by what Schwartz calls "The Explosion of Choice." And having all of these choices has only made us regret the choices we have made, more than we should! As Schwartz puts it "When everything is possible, you don't have freedom, you have paralysis!"

“But now if you graduate and you see that you're not happy with your degree you have no one but yourself to blame.”

Just ask your parents about their academic choices and chances are high that they're going to answer "What choices? When we were studying there weren't many choices available." Now, try to list down how many choices were available to you! Try and list down how many universities are in the city that you're living in. I bet before you're even finished reading of all of these universities out loud a voice inside your head will say "Am I currently wasting my time with the wrong course? Am I wasting my time with the wrong major?" All of these possibilities have only made us think more about what would have happened if we had made a different choice. Our mind is constantly repeating the phrase "What If?"

The choices have increased, and the sources of blame have changed. In the past if you couldn't study the course that you wanted you would get angry at the government and curse at how you don't have the option that you want. You would curse and then move on with life. The blame was borne by the entire world! The world was responsible and there was nothing you could do. But now if you graduate and you see that you're not happy with your degree you have no one but yourself to blame. You have to live with the choices you have made because the control has changed from an external to an internal locus.

Personally, I think another factor strongly contributing to the pressure put on people of our generation is social networks such as Facebook. Most of us now have a Facebook account, where our identities are observed and judged every day. Even our identity has become a matter of choice! Our identity is no longer just passively observed by our friends and family, right now our social networking profiles (or our official social representatives) have become the basis by which others will observe our behaviour. It's not just passive observations though! Certain social networking behaviour is actively encouraged by liking, sharing, etc., while others are condemned by dislikes and blocking and other actions of this sort. We have to conform to what our social networking peers agree with otherwise our social lives are endangered.

Freedom of choice has helped improve our modern society, but it should also be noted that the apparent increase in stress levels among our generation may be due to the immense pressure that this state of perpetual decision-making has had on us. So hopefully the next time your parents (or any of your peers) judge you for achieving less than they expected, you can let them read my article first! Maybe they would change their minds. **manga**

Psychopaths: a gift of nature

Words By
Parvin Kaur Sandhu Pirthipal Singh

“Psychopaths are not a mistake of nature,” a quote I strongly agree with. Opinions vary, but from my personal viewpoint, psychopaths are more like a gift of nature, so extraordinary, different and rare, that these characteristics are hidden so deep beneath the folds of the façade known as the ordinary person. I discern that the term psychopath is just a stereotypical label created by society to segregate people according to social strata that serve their best interest.

The question remains, who is Dexter? Dexter is a unique television character. He is a blood-spatter analyst in the forensic department of Miami Metro by day and a serial killer by night. Labelled as a psychopath in the series, he has a passion for blood and often refers to himself as “born in blood” and I have a fervour for his precisely meticulous, neat and methodical kills. Dexter’s obsession for blood began when he was a mere child, when he and his brother, Brian, were in a shipping yard massacre. Brian and Dexter witnessed their mother being dismembered with a chainsaw and the two boys spent two whole days surrounded in a pool of their mother’s blood.

Being the younger of the two brothers, Dexter was able to block out the incident of his mother’s death, but not without consequences. He spends the next 30 years of his life being emotionally divorced from his humanity. He often refers to himself as a “monster” and refers to “humans” in a manner in which he does not perceive himself to be one. The way I comprehend it, Dexter is not absolutely bereft of emotion. He is merely emotionally shut down, where an event scarred him so deeply that he blocked out most of his emotions in order to keep himself sheltered from the world around him. I emphasize the word most because he displayed violent tendencies as a child when he killed animals and violence is indeed a very powerful manifestation of emotion. This particular emotion is captured by Harry, Dexter’s adoptive father, who then realizes Dexter is not just anyone, and he is a child who aspires to be something altogether exceptional and idiosyncratic than what society envisioned him to be. Harry subsequently guides Dexter to channel his “dark passenger”, his murderous impulses, towards

being a vigilante according to the “Code of Harry”. The Code strictly specifies that Dexter must only engage in the kill if he is not going to get caught, his victims must be killers without a conscience and lastly he must be completely certain of their guilt. Moreover, Harry coaches Dexter on how to conceal his tracks, how to create a veneer of normal human emotion and social behaviour. Harry persuades Dexter never to reveal the truth behind his masquerade, because the world would never accept him for his true self as people are fearful of what they do not fathom.

*“...knowing that
you hold the fragile
and precious threads
of their existence
in your mighty
palms...”*

How do the terms precise, meticulous, neat, and methodical fit into the life of a serial killer anyway? Dexter begins his killing ritual by first selecting his victim, which usually are felons who have triumphed in slipping through the narrow loopholes of the law. Secondly, he researches his victim extensively by stalking them in order to discover the proof of their guilt, and he must be convinced that they are going to kill again without appropriate justification. Once Dexter is assured, he sets up a kill room, which is typically covered and lined with industrial plastic from the ceiling to the wall, and contains a kill

table where he straps his nude victim with rolls of shrink wrap, holding the victim securely to the table thereby preventing their escape. He usually includes pictures of his target's victims, hung like sanctuaries to communicate the rationale for his hunger to kill him or her. Dexter's kill room also symbolizes a shrine for the innocent lives his target has taken. Next, he abducts his target by sedating them with M99 or choking them with a wire. He is commonly seen throughout the series in a tight, dark green Henley, cargo pants, and tennis shoes during the ritual. Dexter will almost always end his victim with a single puncture wound to the heart using a knife. He then dismembers their body into beautifully grotesque multiple fragments with a saw similar to the fashion his mother was massacred.

The magnitude in his artistic method of killing portrays that he is sub-consciously and involuntarily reviving the memory of his mother in his mind each time he kills his victims. Moreover, the only substantial memory he has of his mother is her being butchered because he was only 3 years old when it happened. Therefore, he is able to form an important bond with his victims on a prominent level that he subsequently relates to his mother. Dexter undergoes a form of insecurity where he feels he was stripped of control, unable to help his mother, to stop her murder, all of those years ago, thus he re-writes and narrates a new story filled with control each time with his victims.

What is the other abstruse significance behind his kills? Dexter claims to undergo a deep-rooted emptiness and loneliness within him and his motive for killing is to feel alive since after all "Death is not the greatest loss in life. The greatest loss is what dies within us while we live." The remarkable idea of taking an individual's life in order to bring life to one's self creates the illusion and sensation of mastering control over another, gazing into your victim's eyes, watching their life force dim and drain from their eyes, knowing that you hold the fragile and precious threads of their existence in your mighty palms.

On some recherche extent, a serial killer kills to absorb the essence of their victims' core into themselves to fill their own void of emptiness. Having an utterly lack of interest in sexual relationships, the sole moment Dexter experiences any form

of emotional connection to another is with his victims, when he takes their life. For once, Dexter is the King, the "Great Trinity", a creator, preserver and destroyer within his very own world. He immortalizes his connection with his victims by slicing their cheek with a scalpel to collect a droplet of their blood and preserving it on a blood slide which he then stores in a wooden box, yet again his attachment with blood is conveyed. Throughout the series he is seen reminiscing his kills by constantly opening the wooden box and "speaking" to his victims. Summing it up in layman terms, Dexter has "mommy issues". **manga**



Express

to Impress

Do we really need to follow the latest trends to be fashionable?

Words By

Zuzana Zukarnain

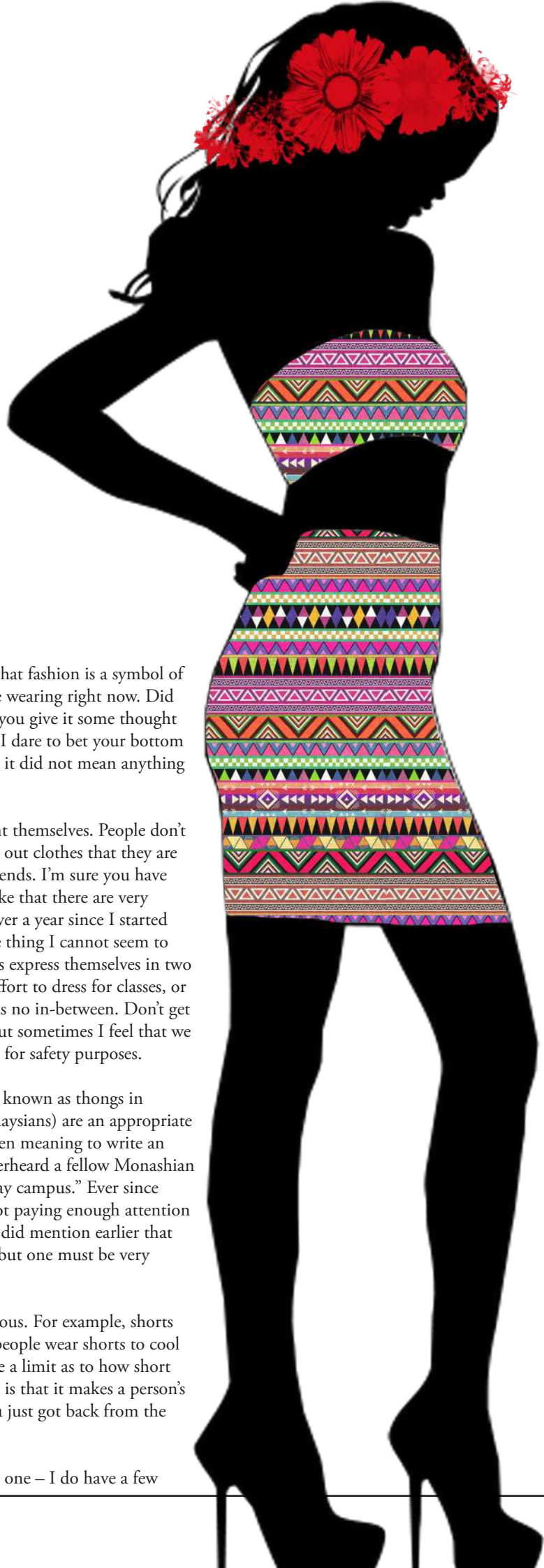
Whether you are male or female, there is no denying that fashion is a symbol of individual identity. Don't believe me? Look at what you're wearing right now. Did you simply pick it out mindlessly while shopping, or did you give it some thought and actually tried it on to see if it looked good on you? I dare to bet your bottom dollar that you did not simply pick out your clothing like it did not mean anything to you.

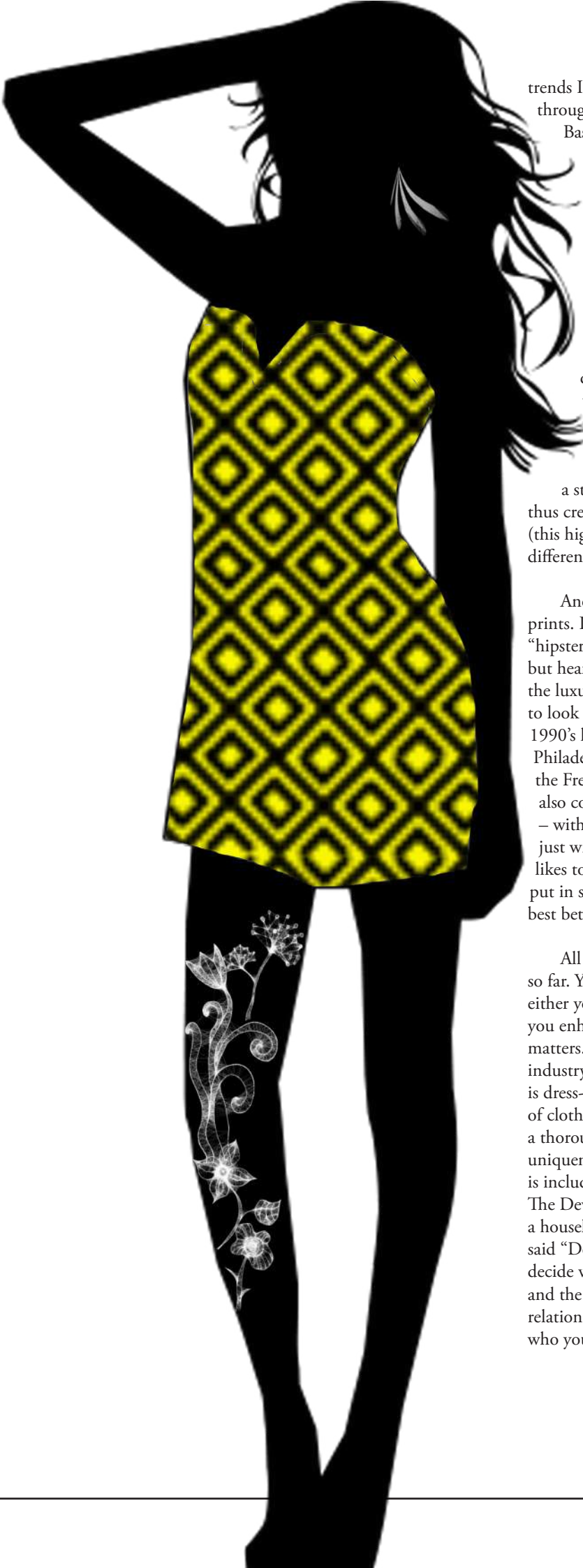
To me, fashion is a way in which individuals represent themselves. People don't blindly buy the first piece of clothing they see – they pick out clothes that they are attracted to, and some may even try to follow the latest trends. I'm sure you have heard of the famous quote “dress to impress”. But I feel like that there are very few of us who adopt it into their daily lives. It has been over a year since I started studying in Monash University Malaysia, and there is one thing I cannot seem to fathom. I noticed that Monashians in the Sunway campus express themselves in two different ends of the extreme – we either put in our full effort to dress for classes, or we just slip on the first thing we see in our closet – there is no in-between. Don't get me wrong, I'm all for freedom of individual expression, but sometimes I feel that we need to find a proper equilibrium when attending classes, for safety purposes.

With all due respect, I do not see how flip flops (also known as thongs in Australia, and infamously called selipar Jepun among Malaysians) are an appropriate footwear for daily activities around the campus. I have been meaning to write an article about this topic for quite sometime ever since I overheard a fellow Monashian blurt out, “flip flops are the official footwear of the Sunway campus.” Ever since then, I could not help but reluctantly agree that we are not paying enough attention to our footwear as much as we do to our outfit. I know, I did mention earlier that I'm all for individuality and making a fashion statement, but one must be very cautious of which trend one succumbs to.

I have a few trends that I think are downright ridiculous. For example, shorts too short that the pockets are sticking out. I understand people wear shorts to cool down and show off a little bit of skin – but there has to be a limit as to how short is too short. The thing about short shorts that bothers me is that it makes a person's entire appearance seem disheveled. Remember, unless you just got back from the beach, short shorts are better kept in the closet.

Let us not make this article into a negative “bashing” one – I do have a few





trends I adore. Fashion is not just about expressing yourself through what you wear, but also through how you accessorize.

Basically, how you present yourself physically reflects who you are on the inside. Fashion is like a window people use to see a fragment of who you are inside. In most situations, I consider hair and make-up to be a part of fashion because they complement each other. One of the hair trends I really enjoy currently is the ombre mermaid hair. The hairdo gives the impression that you probably spend hours on your hair every morning. But actually, it's just effortless beach-y waves. You can easily impress people with your ombre dye job because it looks complicated, but actually it's simply a change in gradient of hair colour with the darkest at the roots and lightest at the ends. Although I think this hairstyle will still be trendy in the years to come, there is already a New York-based colourist Aura Friedman who took the ombre hairstyle to another level and introduced splashlight streaks. Splashlight streaks are a streak of highlights that move horizontally across the hair, thus creating the appearance as if you're standing in a spotlight (this highlight streak is normally used in anime drawings to show different lightings).

Another top fashion trend in my opinion is the tribal/Aztec prints. I know, all of these fashion trends I love are all quite "hipster" and you are probably just about done with me right now, but hear me out first. Think very carefully, when have we ever had the luxury of wearing patterns of mixed shapes, and still managing to look good? The last time Will Smith tried to pull it off in the 1990's he was sent off to live with his aunt and uncle in West Philadelphia (although, we have to give him credit for becoming the Fresh Prince of Bel-Air). Tribal prints are not only stylish but also convenient because you can match it with almost anything – with another tribal print, or with stripes, or polka dots, or even just with a plain solid colour. If you're one of those people who likes to sleep for as long as they can, and want to look like they put in some effort on their outfit, tribal-printed clothing is your best bet.

All in all, these are only my views on the worst and best trends so far. You should not take it seriously because in all honesty, either you follow current fashion trends or you don't, it's how you enhance your personality with your appearance that really matters. I know, there are some of us who feel that the fashion industry is superficial, and some even go to the extent of saying it is dress-up for older girls. But let us be reminded that every piece of clothing we see in the shop and go on to buy goes through a thorough designing and production process. Diversity and uniqueness is celebrated in fashion because that means everyone is included in this "superficial" fashion world (Note: please watch *The Devil Wears Prada*). A fashion designer who has made himself a household name in the fashion industry, Gianni Versace, once said "Don't be into trends. Don't make fashion own you...you decide what you are, what you want to express by the way you dress and the way you live." Clearly, this quote applies to each of us in relation to this article. Trends come and go, but individuality is who you are. **manga**

Political Apathy

Words By **Jasvir Dang**

“Alas, thou art truly a politician!” These are the magical words that ring in my head every time elections are held in Monash, whether it is the MUSA or the MUISS elections. There are always those few brave souls who are willing to form a party, run for elections, and promise ‘change’.

But, have you ever wondered what the role of the Monash Student Council (or MSC) is? Do you earnestly believe that our very own student council has the power or even the jurisdiction to meet our so called great expectations?

Before we delve further into this pressing matter, we must first understand who comprises the MSC and what they are constitutionally permitted to do. The MSC constitutes of four main divisions; MUSA, MUISS, C&S (Clubs and Societies) and MUPA (Monash University Postgraduate Association).

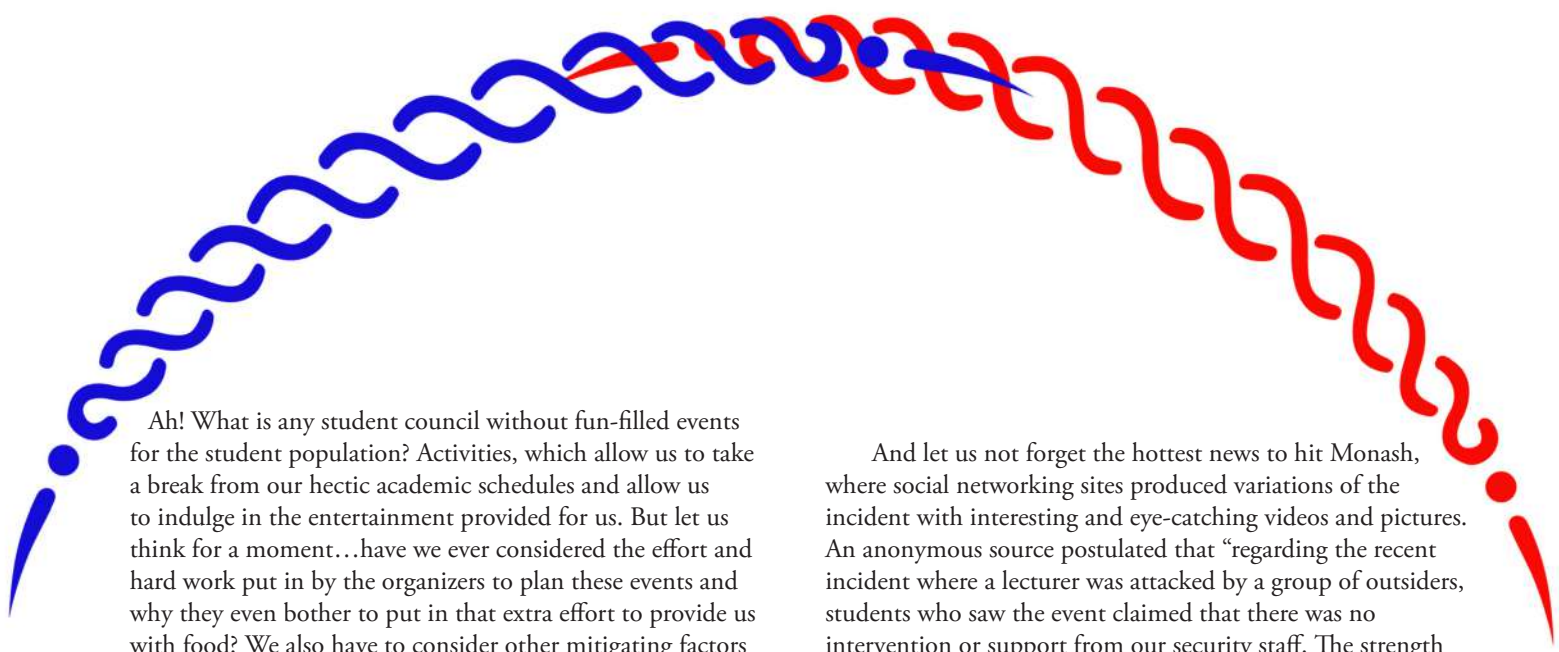
Just ask any international student and the common issue that they all face is getting their passports back on time! And, what’s made the situation even worse is that we have to pay RM 1, 000 just to get our visas extended. There are even those poor souls who have to pay this exorbitant amount to get their visas extended for only three to six months. But let us not start ranting and engaging in social protests to voice our opinions on this matter, but let us simply try our level best to understand the policies in place within our University. To the best of my knowledge, for those who get their passports extended for a relatively shorter period of time (less than a year) are put in that position either due to their academic performance or their poor attendance during the academic year.

And what about our comparisons with other world class

universities whose libraries are open 24/7 for the convenience of their students who are ever so studious! The latest our school library closes at is at 11pm and that is only for a couple of weeks before and during the examination period. So this begs the question, why can’t the MSC cater to our needs and give us the 24/7 library? The answer is neither simple nor thoroughly complicated but it is rather a question of feasibility and the capacity of a student council to achieve such a feat. But herein lies the problem, that our very own student council does not have any jurisdiction or any authority over the running of the school library. It makes one ponder why, as students, we cannot understand the rules and circumstances that our council is bound by. But then again, could it also be that we lack the relevant information to actually comprehend and sympathize with them? It would be best if certain information could be readily available to the students, whereby a platform could be created to publicize and disseminate the necessary and pertinent information to the student body. And this is where we take a step back and cast our judging eyes on our very own student council.

“...have we ever considered the effort and hard work put in by the [MUSA] organizers to plan these events...?”





Ah! What is any student council without fun-filled events for the student population? Activities, which allow us to take a break from our hectic academic schedules and allow us to indulge in the entertainment provided for us. But let us think for a moment...have we ever considered the effort and hard work put in by the organizers to plan these events and why they even bother to put in that extra effort to provide us with food? We also have to consider other mitigating factors such as the organizer's budget for the event as well as the circumstantial constraints that one may face.

Syahid Ismail from the Faculty of Business stated that "MUSA and MUISS are supposed to be like a union for students. An avenue where students can express their point of view. These views are to be taken seriously by the University. MUSA and MUISS are not just platforms for students to gain popularity by organising parties and such." I can almost certainly bet that this is a common opinion adopted by our fellow peers and sadly, it may not necessarily be a fabrication of the reality that we live in. I am sure that Charles Dickens would have a totally different story in mind if he were to re-write his classical novel "Great Expectations" in the Monashian context. I guess it is merely inherent and within our human nature to always expect more and to enhance our university experience. Maybe we need to tone down our hopes or do we actually have the right to voice out our opinions? Imagine a student body where we had no voice, no opinions and we were not even allowed to express them! I can just imagine us living in George Orwell's 1984 or even with Big Brother watching over us with the all-seeing eye. Perhaps, the Monash Student Council could organize forums for us to raise our concerns and find amicable solutions to certain issues.

And let us not forget the hottest news to hit Monash, where social networking sites produced variations of the incident with interesting and eye-catching videos and pictures. An anonymous source postulated that "regarding the recent incident where a lecturer was attacked by a group of outsiders, students who saw the event claimed that there was no intervention or support from our security staff. The strength and ability of the security staff, it goes without saying, is very questionable. Exactly how safe are we?" The incident raised numerous issues with regards to the University's efficiency and effectiveness in dealing with such threats where students felt that they were no longer safe within our University compounds. There are clear boundaries and jurisdictions to be set with regards to the management of the University's security and the safety of our students, as it does not primarily fall under the purview of the MSC but rather the University's OHSE department. But let us not sell our council short as they do have the authority to voice their opinions to the respective departments and ensure that the safety of students are well taken care of and that potential threats are dealt with in an effective manner.

What then is the role of our student council? Is it to simply allow us to voice our opinions or actually to enact upon them? Is it to entertain us with quality events, which would only give us one night of fun, or should a greater priority be placed on the welfare and safety of students? Ideally, the council could achieve all of these goals simultaneously but this would only be possible if the majority of students did not remain politically apathetic. **manga**





eSports, real sports?

Words By **Jimmy Liew**

Welcome to the emerging world of eSports, or electronic sports. eSports are technically video games played in a *competitive* environment. These games can be played 1-on-1 or sometimes two teams can square off against each other. The bottom line is that eSports are competitive events where two players or two teams battle each other in real time. The latest buzz among the gaming community is that eSports will someday be as popular as real sports. This assessment is not without its merits as eSports viewership has been on the rise in recent years. The writing has been on the wall for a while for eSports' progression, as prize money for the various disciplines of eSports has been steadily increasing, especially in China and Korea with companies like Taobao and Tencent providing the sponsorships. In China, eSports clubs have been formed to provide team houses for players to train full time. Player transfers between clubs may command a fee in excess of USD\$ 50,000 per player. Reminds you of off-season player

transfers between football clubs, doesn't it?

One might argue that since eSports doesn't resemble anything close to an athletic endeavor, they should not be considered a sport in the traditional sense. But, let me ask you this, where is the physicality in poker or the spelling bee? Both of these events are frequently broadcasted on ESPN, the world's leading sports network. This suggests that confining sports to a strict definition of anything which involves physicality is not pragmatic. To excel at eSports, the player has to possess the required mechanical skills as well as an analytical mind to exploit the weaknesses of his opponent. Teamwork is essential for team based games. While eSports might be played virtually on a machine, this virtuality sets it apart from anything else that traditional sports has to offer.

“Instead of hitting on pretty office ladies at a day job, you get to hang out with other sleep deprived dudes...”

This brings me back to my childhood years, as my dream during those early years was to make a living off winning Ragnarok Online competitions. My parents were quick to squash these ambitions and quickly brought me back to reality as being a professional gamer at that time just wasn't feasible due to the lack of sponsorships and competitions. Unless you were a Korean Starcraft player, gaming wasn't a sustainable career and even then you had to be the best of the best to ensure that you had a



Intel Extreme Masters 2013 in Katowice, Upper Silesia
Photo from Matthew Brzostek, PCLab.pl

stable cash flow. Dota 2 player, *iceiceice*, laments about the rising cost of living as the number one issue on why the once vibrant pro-gaming scene in Singapore has been dwindling in recent years, as parents prefer their children to pursue more stable routes.

However, broadcaster *LuminousInverse* was lucky as he had understanding parents. As some may know, Asian tradition always dictates that education comes first, with a desk job in an air conditioned room being the primary goal. With that being said, office jobs and gaming are polar opposites to each other. Instead of hitting on pretty office ladies at a day job, you get to hang out with other sleep deprived dudes as competitions can happen in various time zones. It will be hard for Asian parents to understand playing video games as they are the bane of any string-of-straight-A's existence.

With over 100,000 concurrent viewers tuning in to Twitch.tv and other similar sites to watch games like League of Legend, Dota 2, Heroes of Newerth and Call of Duty; it's quite obvious that eSports viewing has been gaining

momentum over the last couple of years. In the videos section, dozens of games of every qualifier, championship matches and even training videos that offer tips for amateurs are made freely available, streamable in HD, and are compatible with iOS and Android if you want to watch these videos on your phone. With the propagation of services like Twitch.tv, you'll be able to watch from the first person perspective of a professional player. This is akin to some of the most handsomely paid sports professionals taking you through their training session on a play by play basis, via video. This is years ahead of traditional sports broadcasting. In comparison, you will have to subscribe to sports channels to watch the EPL or the NBA. Even so, you'll still need to fork out RM 30 for the next WWE or UFC Pay Per View.

Closer to home, Malaysia's own Dota 2, HoN and LoL teams have been getting good results in various regional tournaments. Malaysia's Orange eSports managed to place third at a USD\$2.8 million Dota 2 competition in Seattle, Washington, prompting Youth and Sports Minister Khairy Jamuluddin to congratulate them on Twitter. The minister was willing to recognize what

was once deemed a casual pastime as a legitimate sport. He further stated that the Youth and Sports Ministry would be giving recognition and support to the local eSports industry. Orange's star player *Mushi* cried on stage after his team was eliminated from the competition, evoking memories of past badminton championships where national hero Lee Chong Wei cried after losing to Lin Dan. Please tell me that his passion does not resonate with you. While no one can be sure how far eSports might progress in the near future, based on the stellar performances shown time and time again by our compatriots, Malaysia will certainly have a part to play in the shaping of the imminent landscape of eSports. One thing is for sure though, besides Lee Chong Wei and Nicol David, we have Orange eSports to cheer for as well from now on. **monga**



Culture & You

Words By **Charminda Dayasiri**

Taking the Communications course in the first semester, I had to learn many definitions for the word 'culture'. I am not going to lay out the lectures that spanned across the several weeks. But for the record, modern day culture is just about everything we engage in, ranging from our dining habits to how we say 'hello' on the phone. Everybody is aware that culture is something of importance. But if you really think about it, culture has become one of those things that has changed massively but has not been noticed by enough people.

Needless to say, here at Monash, there is a whole ensemble of cultures. What defines a cultured undergraduate in one nation differs from another nation. Although that is pretty much the basic idea, it is not a 100% exact. Given that the generation encompassing the majority of us undergraduates are from the same 'era', what needs to be realized is that all of us have been influenced by the west, or what has evolved to be 'pop culture'- that is, the most popular practices. Why this is not a bad thing is because it is more or less the common string that holds us all together.

Personally I don't believe that 'cultured' is a title that should be thrown at a person who speaks like the Queen and finishes piles of Penguins Classics. What thick, picture-less books can instill, I find can be instilled by watching even *Courage the Cowardly Dog* on Cartoon Network (a dark yet intelligently directed cartoon). Times are as such that even the most fundamental elements of media exposure, such as 'toons', have complex details that are actually meant to teach essential lessons or in the least lay out a foundation for it. For example, everybody knows the story of *Little Red Riding Hood*, but what most people don't know is that the dark forest, with the tall, erect, bushy, dangerous trees, was meant to represent- (pick a guess!). I have to admit, I have willingly listened eagerly to quotes from numerous movies and TV shows instead of reading stacks of philosophy books and literature. It is actually quite offensive to only label certain pieces of performance art as being 'authentic'. Whatever happened to 'each is his own'? So yes, I think Azealia Banks and Lana Del Rey both make excellent music.

One significant way of how culture has changed is by how it has been replaced by realism. Certain customs have been knocked out by scientific proof but what that bowling ball also took down was the only thing that actually mattered in the symbolic practice- Positivity. For example, no math can prove that eighteen is a lucky number, which is why 18 ingredients are used to prepare the Chinese dish Buddhist's Delight. Likewise, no one has ever proven that a person died because he broke the long noodles used in this dish, which is usually used to represent longevity. It's only the healthy positivity and moral support in it that actually counts.

It is now 2013 and it is all about being futuristic. We could possibly be a few years away from avoiding the culture shock in most foreign places. Pop culture is the new black. The main disadvantage of losing traditional practices is that we're losing the originality we rightfully claim ownership of. For example, back home in Sri Lanka, there is always a huge difference between store bought New Year treats and the homemade ones. Moreover, technology itself has begun to show originality. All sorts of techniques have been and are being invented to promote positivity, with a vibe that matches the present. Gone are the days where you would be judged for using the wrong fork at most dinner parties. Oh wait, then again you don't really need a fork with pizza! **manga**

The Stalking Trash Can

Words By **Yong Jo Leen**

Stalking is not uncommon today. Quite often, we hear stories of people being stalked. Whether it is our friends, ourselves, or some strangers around the globe. Usually someone is stalked when a person we do not know gains access to our personal or private information, without notice. By right, nobody should have access to our private information, for instance, like the exact location of where one is staying. Undeniably, stalking is a serious issue, but what happens when a trash can stalks you? What if a trash can can observe your every move from a distance to make a profit?

I was scrolling through my Facebook news feed for ideas on this 'Opinion Issue' of MonGa. I mean, I knew I wanted to write something about privacy, but I needed something to capture the attention of everyone, if not me. Then, I stumbled upon this news story about stalking trash cans in London, which was something I found interesting yet scary. So, I knew I had to write a piece on it.

I thought it was interesting because I never knew that an "everyday" object could be so sophisticated to the extent that it could stalk people. Sources inform me that the trash cans were built and put in place in the city of London sometime around 2012 during the Summer Olympics.

The 200 bins sprawled across the city are equipped with Wi-fi and LCD screens, therefore these trash cans are capable of tracking your whereabouts as long as you have a smartphone and are connected via Wi-fi to the Internet. These bins, dubbed as "smartbins", then obtain your MAC address to access and measure the proximity, speed, duration as well as the manufacturer of your phone. As I delved deeper into the research on this topic, I found out that the company responsible for building these bins is a company called Renew. Based in London, this company created these bins in order to place ads of similar competitors so that both the company and the competitor can profit. Say, for instance, you are at KFC and you spend about half an hour there. These bins then use such information to create similar alternatives to KFC such as Burger King. Another way in which these bins can access your location is when it recognizes that you have been somewhere often or repeatedly. Take for example if you go to Starbucks, these bins can then show you ads on promotions happening at Starbucks.

There is no need to mention that these bins are not cheap – each unit costs a whopping 30 000 pounds! Yet, the company is confident that it can sell space to advertisers. While they usually advertise to competitors, local councils get to advertise too but they do not usually get much of screen time and are only entitled to one third of the time businesses get.

Needless to say, public uproar ensued and there are now orders to stop the bins. While some did not mind the

"smartbins", others expressed their concern. It is as if every move we make is being watched; we can no longer enjoy the privacy we used to have.

These bins have only been operating since March of last year. Nevertheless, the fact that this issue is being highlighted only now left many smartphone users furious. Then again, some likened these stalking trash cans to traditional online stalking. Renew's CEO said that he is applying the concept of cookies online. This means instead of tracking people's browsing habits in the comfort of their own homes, he is tracking people's movements on the streets in order to target them as consumers. Renew's CEO also said that this was merely an experiment. While Renew defends itself by anonymising the data they obtain from users, the fact that they access people's locations and then use the data defeats the purpose. Can you be very sure that they do not use your personal information when they can easily track your whereabouts?

One such company that has experienced similar backlash to Renew is Nordstrom. Nordstrom, a well-known fashion retail store was accused of tracking phones while customers were at their stores. They tracked customers' shopping habits which unsurprisingly made the shoppers angry.

While I wonder of the fate of Renew and the interactive trash cans, I feel that the problem is not with the bins themselves or what they are capable of doing (invading users' privacy). The real problem lies with the tackling of privacy issues. Rather than put the blame on these smartbins that seem to know wherever a user goes, perhaps the tackling of privacy issues should be enforced, given that this is the age of not only the Internet but also of Wifi-enabled devices.

I am not sure if these bins will be put in Malaysia. If this was the case in Malaysia, I wonder what would happen. Would we be so paranoid to step out of the house? Would we ban ourselves from accessing the Internet just because someone was watching over us? I wonder... **monga**





Christopher Nolan on the set of *The Dark Knight Rises*

Photo from Warner Bros.

In reverence of Christopher Nolan

Words By Ai Lin Soh

On July 20, 2012, the sickening sound of gunfire rang in a movie theatre in Aurora, Colorado during a midnight screening of the highly anticipated film, *The Dark Knight Rises*. The shooting injured 58 victims and took the lives of 12 people.

The cast of *The Dark Knight Rises* shared their condolences to the unfortunate families of the victims, including the scriptwriter and director, Christopher Nolan, who added, *"The movie theatre is my home, and the idea that someone would violate that innocent and hopeful place in such an unbearably savage way is devastating to me."*

Born on 30 July, 1970, Christopher Nolan's love and passion for the cinematic world and his talent is undoubtedly one of the best in the industry today. He shot his first ever short movie at the young age of seven using his father's Super 8 camera. Those very same eyes that looked through his father's camera, shot and directed its way to success and recognition years later with films like *Memento*, *The Prestige*, *Inception* and the *Dark Knight* trilogy.

SPOILER ALERT!

Nolan's movies are known for their intellectualism and depth. The product of his wild imaginations and sophistication is seen in *Inception*. Released in the year 2010, *Inception* is a science fiction thriller starring Leonardo DiCaprio as Dominic Cobb, a leader of a group of dream-travelling mercenaries on a mission to plant another person's idea into a target's subconscious. The idea of *Inception* began 8 years prior to the production, merely because Nolan was fascinated with the idea of dreams:

"...I have been interested in dreams, really since I was a kid. I have always been fascinated by the idea that your mind, when you are asleep, can create a world in a dream and you perceive it as though it really existed..."

Despite this 8 year process, the script changed every couple of years because it was written from his own experience of dreaming. I am pretty sure I was not the only one who had a question mark stamped across her forehead whilst watching *Inception*, especially when

the complex idea of dreams within a dream was introduced. Nevertheless, it was the depth and idea of the movie and the brilliant performance by the cast that earned *Inception* a total of 205 nominations for numerous awards, including 8 Academy Award nominations.

Aside from the intellectualism and depth, Nolan brings the idea of a movie as a leisure activity to a whole new level when he explores the style of unorthodox, non-chronological storytelling in *Memento* (2000). *Memento* is no ordinary film. It is so mind boggling that I felt like I was just 'watching' without understanding anything during the first 10 minutes of the screening. Nonetheless, by the end of the movie, *Memento* climbed its way to the top, becoming one of my favourite films of all time. The best aspect of this movie is how it was edited and presented in both black and white and colour. It is almost inexplicable – imagine a clock; a black and white series when the story is told chronologically and a coloured series when the story is unfolding backwards.

When both of the clock's hands meet at the end, it forms the whole picture of the story. Or maybe, you could just watch

it for yourself!

If you've watched enough of Nolan's films, you would probably realise most (or, probably all) of his work are focused on male protagonists who try to come to grips with their past of failing in love or losing their loved ones because of revenge. For instance, in *The Prestige* (2006), the rivalry between the two magicians Robert Angier and Alfred Borden, beautifully delivered by Hugh Jackman and Christian Bale respectively, arises because of the death of Angier's wife during a magic trick, which was caused by Borden's 'mistake'. In *Memento*, the entire film revolves around Leonard Shelby played by Guy Pearce, a man with anterograde amnesia (the inability to create new memories) seeking to get revenge for the rape and murder of his wife. Then, there is Harvey Dent, played by Aaron Eckhart, who wants to avenge the death of Rachel Dawes (Maggie Gyllenhaal) in the end of *The Dark Knight* (2008). Regardless, I still believe in Harvey Dent!

Additionally, it is also a well known fact that Nolan finds people he likes working with and sticks to them for his other films. Michael Caine, being Nolan's lucky charm, has been faithfully appearing in Nolan's many films; *Batman Begins*, *The Prestige*, *The Dark Knight*, *Inception*, and *The Dark Knight Rises*. On the other hand, Christian Bale isn't just Batman or Bruce Wayne; he is Alfred Borden as well. Likewise, Marion Cotillard is both Mallorie Cobb (*Inception*) and Miranda Tate (*The Dark Knight Rises*). Cillian

Murphy seems to be one of Nolan's favourites because of his extraordinary eyes as mentioned in an interview. Murphy played Robert Fischer in *Inception* and Dr. Jonathan Crane a.k.a. Scarecrow in *The Dark Knight* trilogy.

Also, Nolan's films often end with a philosophical monologue. In *Memento*, Leonard Shelby delivers the closing speech that still sends chills down my spine:

"I have to believe in a world outside my own mind. I have to believe that my actions still have meaning, even if I can't remember them. I have to believe that when my eyes are closed, the world's still there. Do I believe the world's still there? Is it still out there? Yeah. We all need mirrors to remind ourselves who we are. I am no different. Now, where was I?"

In *The Prestige*, Michael Caine, who played John Cutter, took the honour of closing the splendid film. However, Nolan managed to make *Inception* one of the most infuriating cliff-hangers ever by ending the movie with a direct jump cut to black. He left the characters' fates open to the audience's interpretation.

"Now, what says you? Dream or reality? Why so?"

Then again, does it even matter? Since Cobb doesn't even care to watch if the totem topples over in the end. He got to see his children, and that is all that matters.

With all his successful films, Nolan has showcased in his own idealistic style why he is important to the film industry, despite not attending film school, proving curiosity is the best teacher after all!

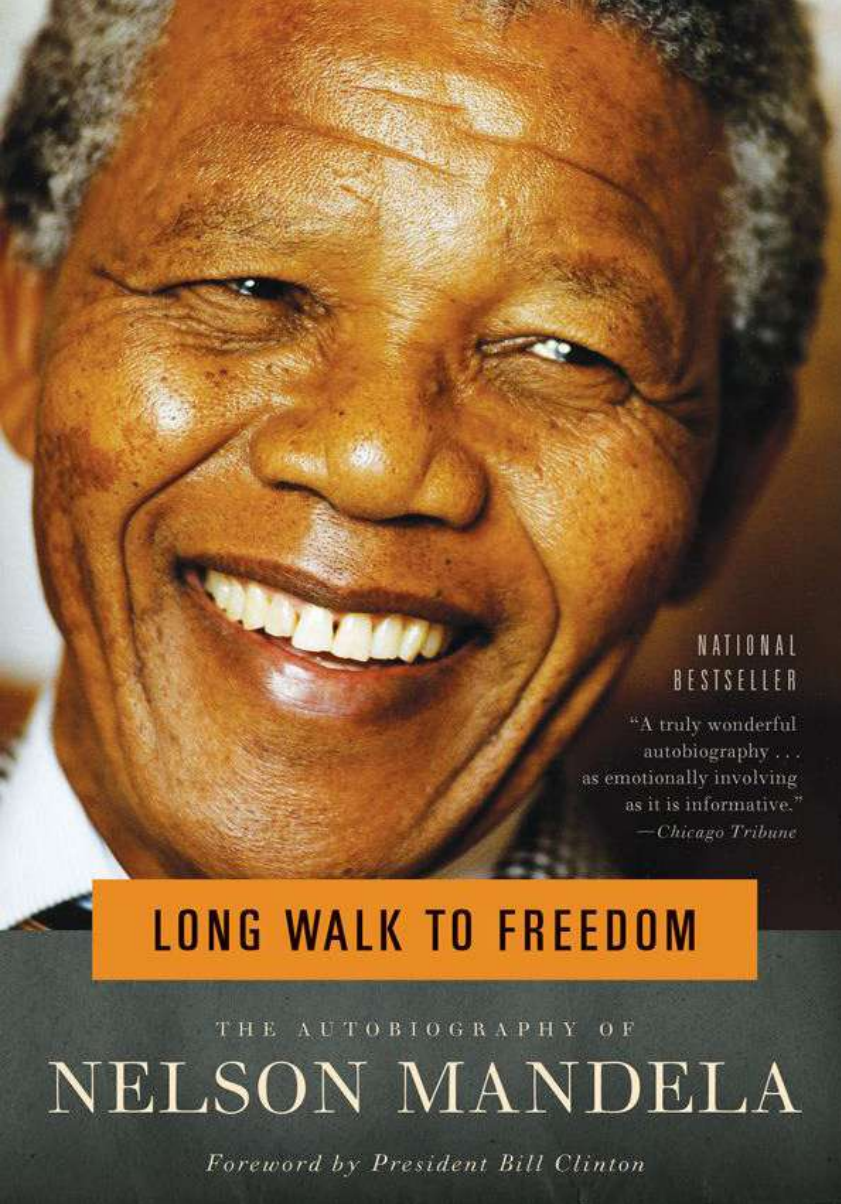
Look out for Nolan's upcoming film, *Interstellar*, out in November, 2014. In case you're wondering, Nolan has not broken out of his habit of getting familiar people to be part of his potentially-blockbuster projects, yet. Anne Hathaway, who previously worked with Nolan for *The Dark Knight Rises*, will be returning for a role in *Interstellar*. Michael Caine (surprise, surprise!) will also be contributing to the new film as a cast member. On another note, calling all Matthew McConaughey fans, you don't want to miss out on this film.

Anyways, I know Batman said *"A hero can be anyone. Even a man doing something as simple and reassuring as putting a coat over a little boy's shoulder to let him know the world hadn't ended."* But, Ben Affleck isn't anyone and, I have my doubts.

Oh, did you know that when you put together the first initials of each of the main characters in *Inception*, they spell out "DREAMS" (Dom, Robert, Eames, Arthur, Mall, Saito) and in *The Prestige*, they spell out "ABRA" (Alfred Borden, Robert Angier), as in from the famous word used by magicians, "Abracadabra." **manga**



Christopher Nolan on the set of *Inception*
Photo from Warner Bros.



Long Walk to Freedom comprises of eleven parts, which spans from Nelson Mandela's childhood to his Presidency. The issues of politics, freedom, justice, tolerance and leadership are explored through the mind of a great leader. However, Nelson Mandela gives a truly honest account of his personal life, which includes his role as a husband, a father and a son. The book acts as a mirror to the historical leader as well as to the real man whose hopes and dreams, trials and triumphs are not different to that of ours.

Nelson Mandela's growth to the man we perceive of him as today is a rather interesting one. He was named Rolihlahla, which means "troublemaker", the name he himself sees as a prophetic one. The name 'Nelson' was given to him by his teacher and 'Madiba' is his clan name that he is fondly known by as well. Nelson Mandela was raised by Regent Jongintaba after his father passed away when Nelson Mandela was young. Thus, began his path to destiny. However, Nelson Mandela lived many defeats and discouragements, financially, politically and personally, before he emerged as the President. I wonder if he even dreamt the heights that his life would ultimately lead him to. This fact is rather inspiring as often people become discouraged and let go of their ambitions and dreams based on short term problems. He states in his book "I could not imagine that the future I was walking toward could compare in any way to the past that I was leaving behind..." and yet he is a man who remembers his past and forgives the faults in them.

“Our differences can be a tool for war and division or an instrument for unity amidst diversity.”

Identity is a central theme in this book, and it was also the fuel that drove the anti-apartheid movement. South Africa was divided by tribal lines as well as racial ones. However, the tribal leaders blurred these lines to unite not only the blacks but also the Indians and the coloureds to fight against oppression. "We were not different people with separate languages; we were one people with different tongues." This statement is a precious realization for many of us who come from multi-ethnic and multi-religious nations. Our differences can be a tool for war and division or an instrument for unity amidst diversity.

Following Gandhi's '*Satyagraha*', the non-violent

LONG WALK TO FREEDOM

THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF
NELSON MANDELA

Foreword by President Bill Clinton

*Long Walk to Freedom:
An Experience*

Words By **Lydia Thiagarajah**

On an especially hot Friday afternoon I was sitting in the library and reading *Long Walk to Freedom*. After being engrossed in the book for an hour and a half I looked up and perceived the world and the people around me in a completely different, rather philosophical, light. The value of freedom of just being able to go where one wanted to and not be judged by the color of one's skin is overwhelming when one has read the struggles, atrocities and pressures that come with being confined physically, mentally and emotionally in one's own nation.

I began reading the *Long Walk to Freedom* after the overwhelming reaction of the South African people to Nelson Mandela's illness. It was a rare occurrence (for me at least) that people would show such great love and respect for a former President who was ailing. Thus, the thought provoking reading of this book commenced.



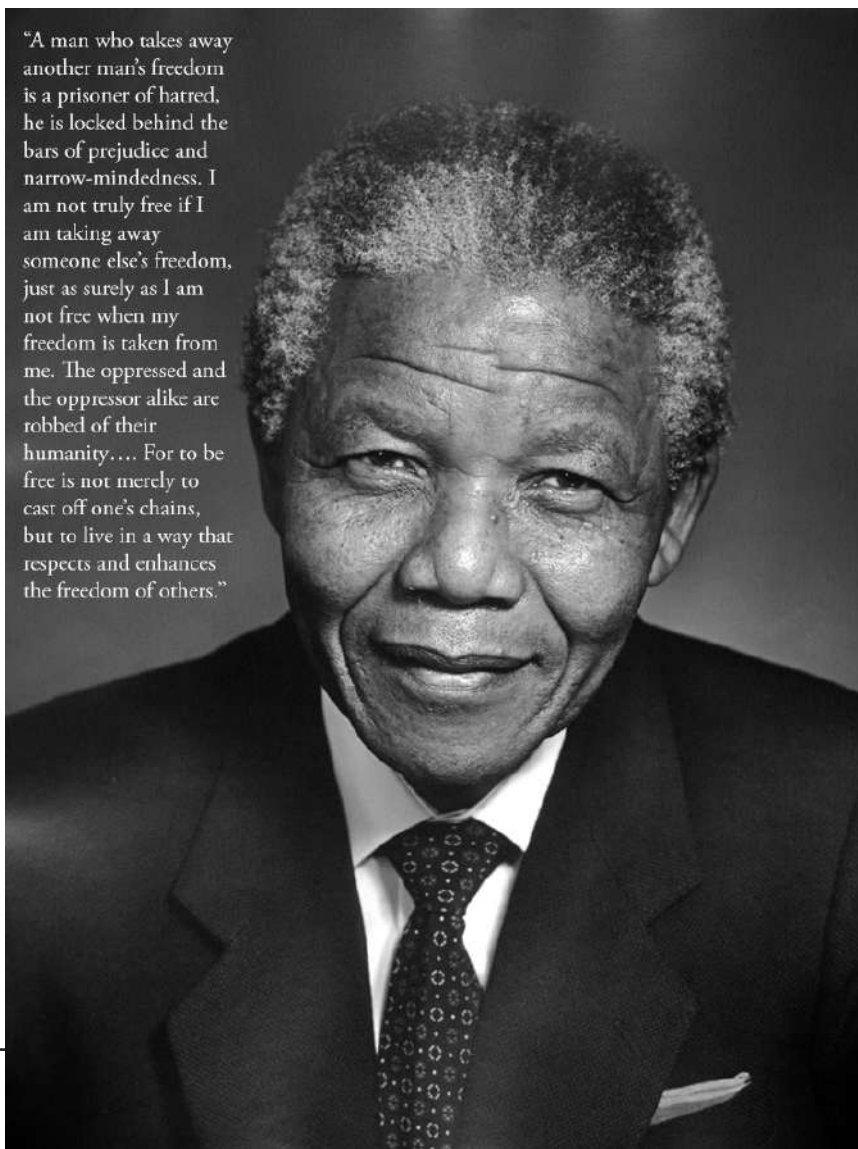
The greatest lesson I learnt from this book was the compassion and forgiveness in this great man's heart. As President he did not shun his oppressors but rather created a home for all the people who were South African; "I detest racialism because I regard it as a barbaric thing, whether it comes from a black man or a white man." I was amazed by the generosity and acceptance, which was possible by someone who was mistreated greatly and yet embraced those who inflicted it upon him. "I knew as well as I knew anything that the oppressor must be liberated just as surely as the oppressed. A man who takes away another man's freedom is a prisoner of hatred, he is locked behind the bars of prejudice and narrow-mindedness. I am not truly free if I am taking away someone else's freedom, just as surely as I am not free when my freedom is taken from me. The oppressed and the oppressor alike are robbed of their humanity." This is a lesson that all nations and leaders as well as the commoners must learn. Often the oppressors believe the lie that oppression is a branch of power and yet Nelson Mandela proves them completely wrong.

Long Walk to Freedom is thus a teacher of the great truths of life. I understood now the love that this great man has truly earned from the people he served as well as from people around the world to whom he continues to be a living example; an example of the success of non-violence, compassion and harmony. The account of a man who started out as simple as anyone else and attained greatness is truly inspiring. It is a book that must be read by every human being on earth. **manga**

quest for freedom was undertaken by Nelson Mandela. He refers to himself as well as his colleagues as 'freedom fighters'. "A freedom fighter learns the hard way that it is the oppressor who defines the nature of the struggle, and the oppressed is often left no recourse but to use methods that mirror those of the oppressor. At a certain point, one can only fight fire with fire." This quote holds great power as it was uttered in a place of frustration and despair. Though the anti-apartheid movement never used violence they should not be mistaken as being passive. Nelson Mandela further states "But if peaceful protest is met with violence, its efficacy is at end. For me, nonviolence was not a moral principle but a strategy; there is no moral goodness using an ineffective weapon." Though he was at a point in time divided between the forces of violence and nonviolence he stayed true to his moral code. Non-violence is a frustrating war to wage. History has been marked with movements which got too impatient with non-violence and subsequently resorted to violence. However, patience and perseverance is key in this kind of struggle.

Long Walk to Freedom also acted as a confessional to Nelson Mandela whose grievance was with the lack of time he spent with his family. His honesty about his own neglect as a failure is exemplary. The regret with which he addresses the lack of time spent with his mother and children is painful to the reader. The hardships which he faced in his time of imprisonment is certainly mind boggling and yet the courage with which he endured his tenure just blows my mind.

"A man who takes away another man's freedom is a prisoner of hatred, he is locked behind the bars of prejudice and narrow-mindedness. I am not truly free if I am taking away someone else's freedom, just as surely as I am not free when my freedom is taken from me. The oppressed and the oppressor alike are robbed of their humanity.... For to be free is not merely to cast off one's chains, but to live in a way that respects and enhances the freedom of others."



'All you need is love' ... Wait, do you?

Words By **Lynn Verghese**

Boy meets girl.

Boy falls in love with girl.

Girl falls in love with boy.

Boy loses girl.

Boy gets girl back.

They live happily ever after.

Add to it a no-nonsense father-with-a-gun, an over sentimental mother, half a dozen song and dance sequences (at least two shot in Switzerland during the winter), an over-exaggerated fight scene, lots of glycerine induced-tears and what you have is a fail-proof, highly entertaining mainstream Bollywood love story!

Now, we have all watched enough movies to be familiar with Bollywood's trademark of the "Love Conquers All" mentality. It has a notorious reputation for being unrealistic and stalkerish. And believe me, Hollywood is not too far behind! The standard Hollywood romcom formula has the couple nervously dancing around the idea of being in love and finally,

in an hour into the movie, when an epiphany hits them, they declare their love for each other and the "you complete me!" dialogues are exchanged. This glossy, sugar coated view of love - a big explosion of passion and doing whatever it takes to be with the other person- is the idea that we have grown up with.

Do these scenarios and expectations of love even remotely mirror reality? Maybe not.

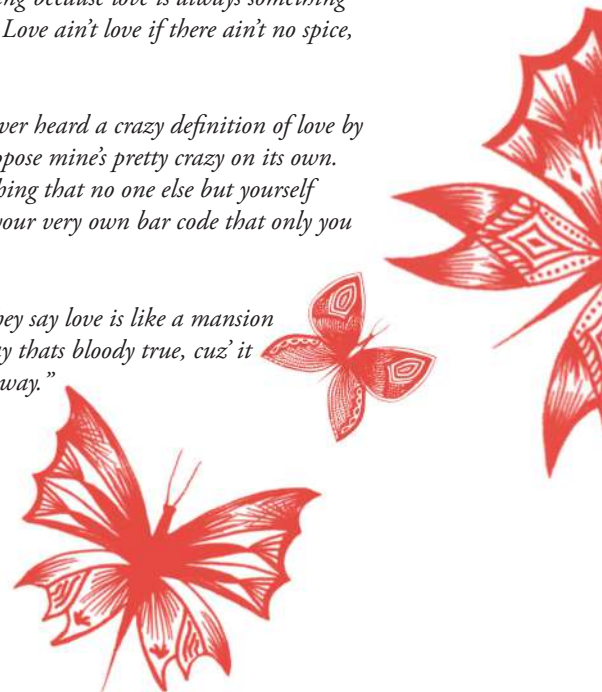
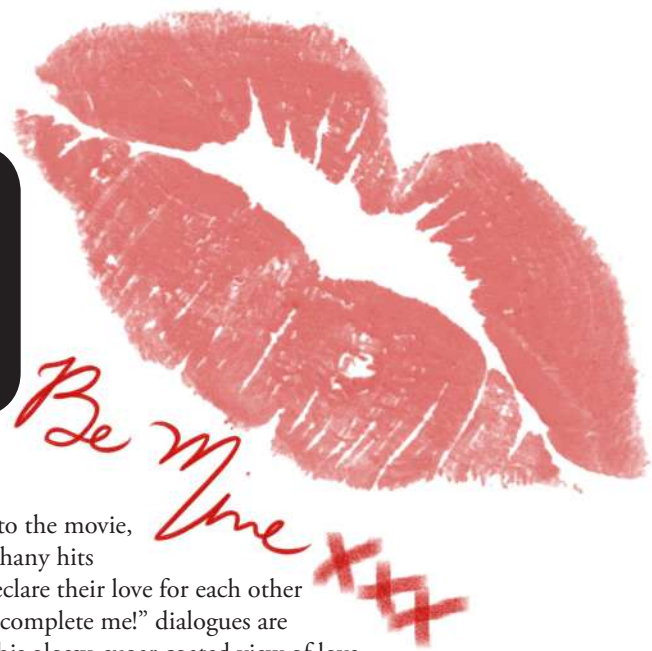
As students of the Sunway campus, we are all aware about the craze surrounding the Confessions Page. And you may have also noticed that a majority of those "confessions" have been written by lovesick Monashians and if nothing, these posts just make Facebook a lot more interesting! From creeps to romantics, stalkers to desperate souls, our campus seems to have it all!

So I went ahead and asked a few Monashians about love. What, according to them, was a proper definition of love? How would they describe being in love? The answers I got were a treat to read! Here are the few diverse (and probably very relatable) views on love:

Katrina Ann: *"Being in love is different yet exactly the same as in the movies- there is bucket-loads of drama, melodramatic scenes, lovey-dovey scenes, murderous scenes, raving lunatic scenes, sweet scenes, amazing moments... Except that at the end of the two hours there is no 'technical' happy ending because love is always something you need to work on..Love ain't love if there ain't no spice, sugar!"*

Alya Omar: *"I've never heard a crazy definition of love by other people but I suppose mine's pretty crazy on its own. For me, love is something that no one else but yourself can be sure of... like your very own bar code that only you recognize!"*

Chandira Silva: *"They say love is like a mansion built up on sand, I say that's bloody true, cuz' it can easily be blown away."*



Samantha Tan: *"Love isn't what Hollywood tells you. It's about two independent souls who are happy without each other, to be happier together. Crazy definition of love? "If he doesn't love me, I'd die!" Drama."*

Aric Ting: *"To me though, love is something that invokes you. It's what makes you run away like a chicken when you see your crush, it's what makes you hug and kiss your partner to death, it's what makes you buy that \$300 dress for your girlfriend even though you know you can find the same one on Ebay for just \$29.99...It's something, and yet nothing, because it's not a thing at all."*

Avisha Fernando: *"I think being in love is being with someone who makes you really, really happy, but at the same time, it also makes you feel like you want to kill that person! At the end of the day though, it's having someone you can depend on no matter what."*

Pritha Manivanan: *"Love is a terrible (yet much needed) disease that affects most people at least once in their lives!*

Symptoms include:

-Irrational thinking

-Romantic gestures

-Your love interest constantly filling your thoughts (this can be debilitating)

-An increased heart rate when you are around your love interest.

-The desire to put one's lips against the other's. Extremely unsanitary.

-A constant feeling of wanting to dance to the song "Kuch Kuch Hota Hai" with that special one, in a coconut tree estate setting, all dolled up in designer sarees, running around the trees.

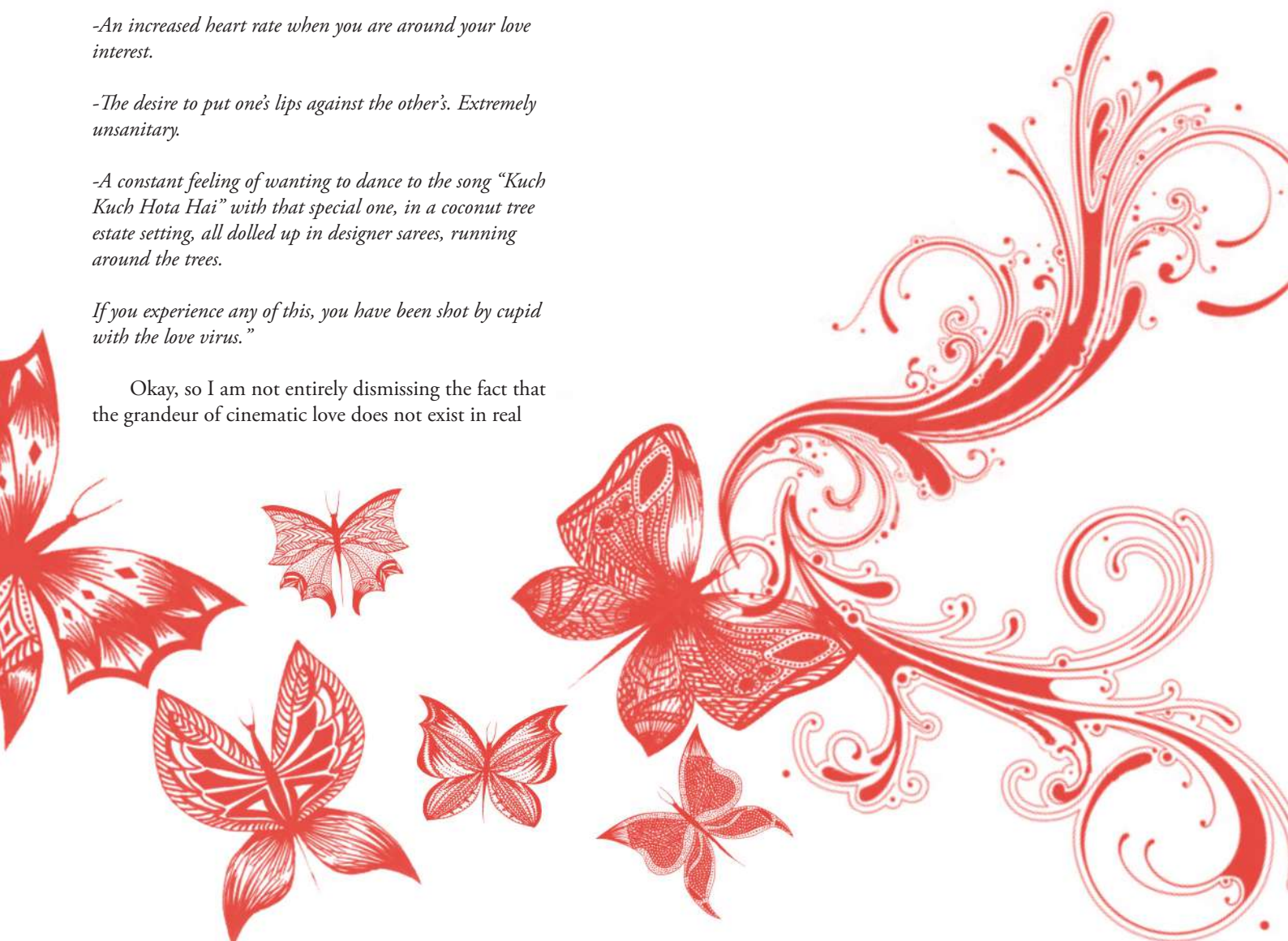
If you experience any of this, you have been shot by cupid with the love virus."

Okay, so I am not entirely dismissing the fact that the grandeur of cinematic love does not exist in real

life. Maybe it does and I am sure that there are people who believe it does. And frankly, there is nothing wrong with that. A part of me chooses to believe that one day, I will have an epic love story that will be passed on for generations! Who doesn't want someone to sweep you off your feet every now and then? Movies are great and maybe we could all take a little relationship advice from them, but maybe just a little to infuse some fun back into our lives, not to model it based on the cinematic notion of romance.

Unfortunately we live in a world where dating is tedious, relationships aren't a piece of cake and not all love stories that end in marriage necessarily have to have a happy ending. Therefore, most of us have no option but to avoid being naive and stay close to reality.

Does this mean that movies should not depict stories about "ultimate soul mates" and epic odes to Romeo and Juliet? OF COURSE NOT! Movies thrive on the portrayal of the fantastic notion of "love conquers all". Be it Hollywood or Bollywood, these innumerable tales of grand love, sacrifice and tragedy still keeps us believing in love. 'Reel love' gives us hope that we too will have our own versions of the 'happily ever after' - just not with Ranbir Kapoor or Ryan Gosling. **manga**



Declaration of a Third Culture Kid

Words by **Nimesha Ratnayaka**

Photos by **Ai Lin Soh**

and **Brian Soong**

“*Where* are you from?” is a question that boggles the minds of some of us, leaving us with an incoherent answer, struggling with identity. A Third Culture Kid (or TCK), according to definition is a person who grew up outside his or her parents’ culture, in other words their ‘passport culture’. If you look around campus, you’re bound to see some of us in our natural habitat. What characterises a TCK? I’m glad you asked.

As global nomads, home is an inconsistent haven, likely to change through the years, as we balance our lives between two or more worlds that define who we truly are. Friends and networks come in different shapes, colours and numbers, and social networks become a sustenance, feeding this sub-culture life. Airports become routine, and jet lag is the equivalent of a hangover. Whether leaving a place permanently or merely on vacation, it becomes a habitual experience, where some of us have mastered the art of flying before learning to walk.

This constant relocation comes with the nagging formality of packing up your entire life and bidding your friends goodbye, not lacking the wishy-washy pledges to arrange revisits and to keep in touch no matter what. Once you’re back in your home country, or as some would call it their ‘passport country’, one goes through immense withdrawal symptoms and an overwhelming pressure to fit in. Ironically, returning back home can be a greater cultural shock than the rapid interchange of



locations, as the latest trends, rituals and traditions can leave you feeling vulnerable, allowing the feeling of alienation to creep in. Not to mention the recurring nightmare of having to build new relationships as well as patch older, forgotten ones, while the ones you left behind get neglected. Soon enough, you find yourself acquainted with the new school, the hottest vernacular, a new set of friends, leading you to make long-standing plans, just in time for you to drop everything and move again.

“Once you’re back in your... ‘passport country’, [Third Culture Kids] go through immense withdrawal symptoms and feel an overwhelming pressure to fit in.”



In addition, those who have not experienced your perspective of life never seem to grasp the reason you cannot fully integrate yourself into your culture of origin and may sometimes interpret it as pure arrogance and capriciousness. Such a lifestyle is bound to lead some of us into exasperation as grownups, where one's aim would be to stay put where they are most comfortable or to return to their homeland and try to assimilate. However, some possess the innate instinct to wander, craving adventure and a change of scenario.

Having lived a Third Culture childhood has its perks, of course. TCKs are often equipped with the ability to embrace multilingualism instantly, from continuous exposure to varying cultures. Albeit it may not be of vast fluency, we concoct our own TCK language and are better suited to understanding those that are alien at first. Growing up as an 'expat brat', I recall the multiple tear-filled first days of school, the horror of learning to count in an unknown language and the initial anticipation to return to my previous 'real' home. Bizarrely, this experience converts itself into a sense of familiarity with change. You endow yourself with confidence, rather than anxiety, when undergoing



change and new hurdles, such as entering University life and living alone, or moving to yet another country for employment. The multicultural mesh that fosters a TCK allows tolerance towards all cultures and thus, they become the much needed cultural and social bridges in the world.

Friendship is a blessing in everyone's life, nevertheless friends are invaluable in a Third Culture adolescence. Personally, friends have made up for the innumerable birthdays, school events and graduations that my extended family, especially my grandparents, have missed due to distance. Each group of friends signifies a phase in an expat child's life and has momentarily shaped his or her identity.

If you grew up as a global nomad, like I did, you are bound to be blessed with friends of different faiths and cultures, who speak vibrant languages – bits of which I'm sure you've picked up along the way, are of assorted complexions, with distinct food preferences and are from various economic backgrounds. They've all had a substantial role, perhaps even stronger than that of a parent, in shaping who you are and how you live.

A frequently changing lifestyle makes you genuinely grateful for the fleeting moments of joy, the challenges faced and overcome, as well as the extraordinary memories, resulting in the formation of remarkable relationships.

On a personal note, I have truly been blessed with a life that has never failed to disappoint the adventurer in me and has enhanced my individualistic identity. So, for those of you Third Culture souls who feel that their life has been too eccentric and long for a more ordinary one, embrace your global nomadism and remember how lucky you are to be able to experience so much of this unfathomable world we live in. **manga**

Colors

by Whitney Thomas, MK (1991)

*I grew up in a Yellow country
But my parents are Blue.
I'm Blue.*

*Or at least, that is what they told me.
But I play with the Yellows.*

*I went to school with the Yellows.
I spoke the Yellow language.*

*I even dressed and appeared to be Yellow.
Then I moved to the Blue land.*

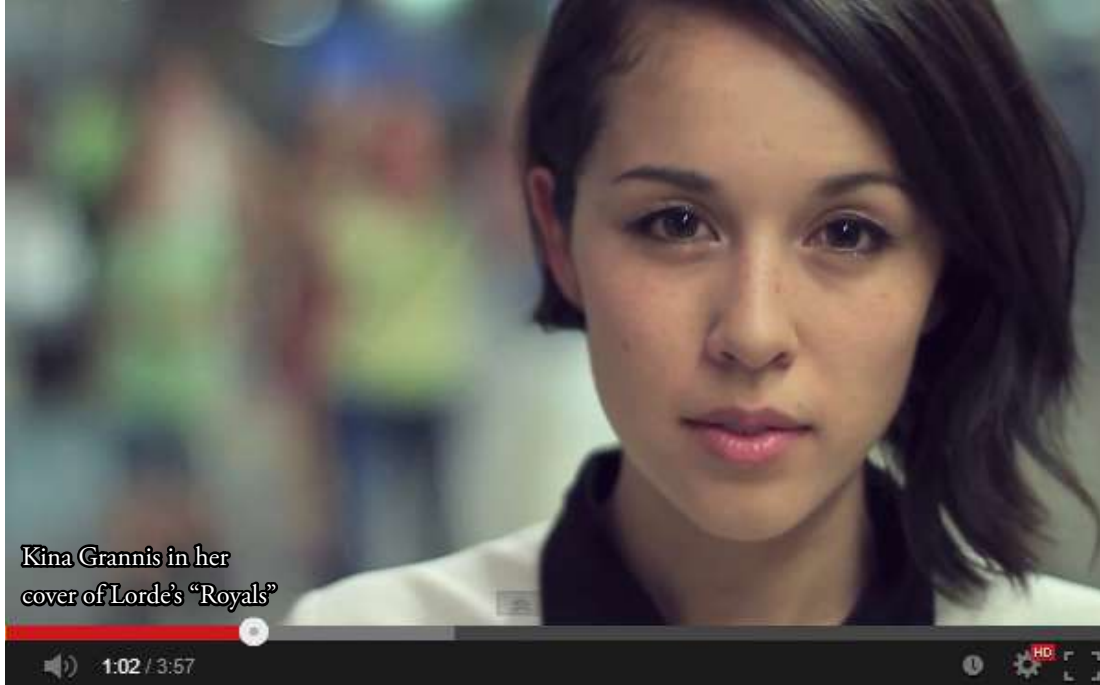
*Now I go to school with the Blues.
I speak the Blue language.
I even dress and look Blue.*

*But deep down, inside me, something's Yellow.
I love the Blue country.*

*But my ways are tinted with Yellow.
When I am in the Blue land,
I want to be Yellow.*

*When I am in the Yellow land, I want to be Blue.
Why can't I be both?*

*A place where I can be me.
A place where I can be green.
I just want to be green.*



Asian Americans on the Rise: How YouTube Changed the Game

Words By **Lee Jian Yun (Sarah)**

In 2010, M. Night Shyamalan's *The Last Airbender* made its debut on the silver screen. The film was based on *Avatar: The Last Airbender*, a popular Nickelodeon cartoon which featured Asian characters in an East Asian setting. You can therefore imagine the backlash Shyamalan received when it was announced that he would be casting Caucasians in most of the lead roles.

What occurred with *The Last Airbender* was just another case of "whitewashing" orchestrated by the powers of Hollywood. There seems to be a pervasive belief in Tinseltown that Asian actors are not bankable enough. The result is usually a re-casting process in East-West adaptations, where Asian roles are either downplayed or given to Caucasian actors. This would explain why there are very few American films and television shows with Asians as leads. Even if Asian actors are credited as part of the main cast, the characters they play are usually secondary compared to their Caucasian colleagues. Shows like *Hawaii Five-0* come to mind, where greater prominence is given to characters like Steve McGarrett and Danny Williams instead of the clearly Asian Chin Ho Kelly and Kono Kalakaua.

Added to this is the widespread stereotyping of Asians in Hollywood. We

are all too familiar with the generalisations put forth by the media about Asians: that they are nerds with non-existent social lives, that they are terrible in sports except for Kung Fu...the list goes on. Martial arts films, in particular, tend to do well in the North American box-office, with films like *Rush Hour* raking in as much as \$141,186,864 in the United States alone, more than half of the total box-office earnings.

Because so-called Asian differences are highlighted so much in the media, it almost seems like Hollywood is trying to subliminally tell young Asian Americans that they are different and will never fit into the collective American culture. With such stringent definitions imposed by Hollywood on what it means to be American, it is unsurprising that young Asian Americans often find it difficult to find accurate representations of themselves in the mainstream media. That is, up until 2005, when a then little-known video-sharing website called YouTube surfaced on the Internet for the very first time.

With its low barrier to entry, YouTube provided an excellent platform for many aspiring entertainers to showcase their work on a global scale without having to pass through the gatekeepers of Hollywood or the American music

industry. It is arguable that for the first time ever, Asian Americans finally had the opportunity to show the world that regardless of their skin colour, they were just like average Americans, with voices to be heard. Many of these Asian American YouTube personalities (more commonly known as YouTubers), rank in the top 100 most subscribed channels, whether overall or in their respective categories (comedy, music, etc.). Ryan Higa (*nigahiga*), widely considered to be one of the more recognisable Asian American faces on YouTube, famously held the coveted spot of most subscribed channel of all time for 689 days in total. He has since been dethroned and now ranks in eighth place. Best known for his humorous skits, his channel has amassed over 1.56 billion video views since its inception, with the total number of subscribers amounting to 9,977,252 (statistics accurate as of 25 August, 2013).

So what makes these YouTubers so appealing to viewers? Perhaps it is because people are finally able to see Asian Americans for who they really are – stripped down and outside the stereotypical conventions of Hollywood. These YouTubers speak fluent English and collectively demonstrate versatility over a range of fields – as writers, directors, actors, comedians, musicians,

etc. – proving that talent is not exclusive to the dominant force of Hollywood. What is interesting to note is how despite them falling into the general category of Asian American, their respective ethnic makeup is identifiable, recognised and acknowledged by viewers. These ethnicities include Filipino-Americans, Chinese-Americans, Japanese-Americans and Korean-Americans among others. Such a scenario is refreshing, as Hollywood does not often make this distinction, with the producers' only concern being if the person is Asian.

Adding to the appeal of these Asian American YouTubers are the fresh perspectives they bring to the table – perspectives which differ from the ones constantly perpetuated by Hollywood. For instance, some of them have taken the opportunity to address common stereotypes about Asians, oftentimes with a comical twist. Also addressed are issues faced by either Asian actors in Hollywood or Asian Americans in general. In a video titled *Saved by the Bell: The Movie*, filmmaking group Wong Fu Productions (*WongFuProductions*) critiques the whitewashing of roles in Hollywood by turning the tables on the industry itself. Delivered in the style of a mockumentary, the video features the “director” of the new movie *Saved by the Bell* defending his choice to cast mostly Asians in the leading roles. *Saved by the Bell* was a popular television sitcom in the 1990s which had, as expected, a predominantly White cast. Hilarity ensues

as the director tries to justify his decision with famous racebending examples from Hollywood (The faux slit-eyes in *Cloud Atlas*, anyone?).

The simultaneous rise in social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter has further consolidated Asian American YouTubers as successful stars with solid fan bases. Social media has allowed them to establish interaction with their fans, sometimes on a much deeper level compared to mainstream artists. This is because YouTubers usually manage the social media interaction themselves, unlike pop stars, where a third party may be running their accounts. By communicating with fans directly, YouTubers are able to receive feedback and suggestions and apply them accordingly. It also helps that a YouTuber's fan base is smaller and arguably more tight-knit, giving rise to more intimate and personal meet-and-greets during concerts and events.

YouTube has clearly paved the way for a more level-playing field in the media industry. It would be ignorant for powerful industries like Hollywood to deny the marketability of Asian Americans. This bankability is evident in their fan bases extending to as far as Europe and Asia. In fact, several YouTube musicians like David Choi (*DavidChoiMusic*) and Kina Grannis (*KinaGrannis*) have held successful concerts in these continents. Some companies have recognised the talent of these YouTubers and the power

they have in tapping into the wider online community. This happened to beauty guru Michelle Phan (*MichellePhan*), who was recruited by cosmetic company Lancôme to be their first ever video makeup artist. She has even recently launched her own makeup line called EM Michelle Phan in partnership with L'Oreal. The fact that both of these leading cosmetic brands were willing to invest in Phan is laudable and hopefully predicts a future trend of Asian Americans assuming more important and visible roles in the media industry.

YouTube has shown that the younger generation does not need racebending to be convinced of someone's talent. It has also shown that this generation is willing to invest time and money on talent, regardless of race. With YouTube being such a cost-effective public platform, the media industry need no longer fear that a film or record may bomb because it is being fronted by an Asian. By simply observing the plethora of talent online, companies can selectively pick out Asian Americans who have already established themselves with a solid fan following, such as in the case of Michelle Phan above. In doing so, they are assured of the marketability of these talents, saving a good deal of time and money. YouTube has undoubtedly changed the game. With time, hopefully Hollywood will change as well. **manga**



Still off Wong Fu Productions' "Saved by the Bell: The Movie"

Visuals vs. Content: A Meditation on the Cinema

Words By **Khashayar Mohammadi**

As far back as I can remember, I was always interested in cinema and film making. I would spend most of my free time watching films at home, sinking into the magical realm of motion pictures. I remember the first time a film really spoke to me. I was 7 or 8 years old and it was the first time my parents took me to the cinema to watch a serious film. It was a film about the Iran-Iraq war, but I can't recall the title. I remember being speechless after the film ended, and I remember begging my parents to go and watch it again but my parents couldn't understand why someone would want to watch a film more than once!

I think I was about 14 or 15 years old when I first started watching Hollywood films. This exposure to foreign language cinema was interesting and baffling at the same time. Hollywood films were so different in so many ways, but I knew that I needed to explore them further. The main difference that I noticed was the way that Hollywood films had a tendency to be more visually stimulating. Although in terms of content Hollywood films would usually fall short compared to Iranian films, the visual stimuli would compensate for it. American films looked good on the screen; they were making use of the visual aspect of cinema to make their films look cinematic; something that I had rarely seen in Iranian films.

I guess there's a very simple explanation for why Iranian films are very content-centered. Looking at the cultural and political context of Iranian cinema can easily explain why most films are story-based. The absence of nudity and kissing and the mandatory *hijab* on screen along with the political and social restrictions on stories meant that film makers couldn't attract people to their films just by adding meaningless sex scenes; they needed to provide the audience with meaningful, creative story lines that could pass through the censors. I had watched a few Iranian films that had great visuals, but it wasn't the same. Our films had a more 'put into frame' mentality; the film makers didn't necessarily put much thought into composing the shots, they would just try to capture beautiful scenery on camera. Although I loved Iranian cinema, I found that I was more interested in the visual side of cinema rather than the content. After all, cinema is a visual medium!

This made me look deeper into the history of cinema and film making. I realized that cinema was evolving, and in its evolution, the visual aspect was becoming more and more dominant. Films of the 40s and 50s were mostly content-centered, regardless of where they were made. But as we get closer to

the current decade, one can sense the dominance of visuals and cinematography techniques. The role of the cinematographer is becoming more important.

This complicated concept of 'Visuals vs. Content' stayed with me for a long time. I was no longer just waiting to see what would happen later on in the story, I was now looking at each frame to see what was put in there and why. Growing up, I always thought all you needed for a good film was a good script and the visuals didn't matter, but it was no longer the case for me. By this time, I believed that a better camera could mean a better film! But without a doubt, the content is still very important.

Two quotes that I had heard over the years were floating around in my head. The first one was by Roman Polanski. Polanski once said that the best film was a film that you could pause every second, and admire each frame as a piece of art. He was emphasizing the importance of visuals. The second quote was something John Cleese once said in an interview. He was being



questioned about his opinion on cinematic visuals to which he answered: “People keep telling me that film is a visual experience. Well, life is a visual experience too, but here we are talking!” These two quotes aren’t necessarily contradicting; one can say Polanski’s statement compliments what John Cleese said.

“...[Iranian] film makers couldn’t attract people to their films just by adding meaningless sex scenes; they needed to provide the audience with meaningful, creative story lines...”

Undoubtedly, an important factor responsible for this major shift from content to visuals is repetition of

content. After a few decades of film making, it’s hard to come up with a truly original story. People can now easily predict films based on their experience. People who have watched films for more than a decade can easily predict what will happen later on in the story. Now the audience needs something more interesting to watch. Let’s not forget that when cinema first came into existence, the audience was simply amazed by the existence of moving images on screen! But as time passed, the audience craved more and more stimulation.

Here I want to draw on examples from one of my favorite films and one of my favorite short films; first one being Terrence Malick’s *The Tree of Life* and the second one a short film by Mohsen Makhmalbaaf called *Testing Democracy*. *The Tree of Life* is pure visuals, and I can confidently say it’s one of the most beautiful films ever made. It’s one of those rare films that does not have a single redundant frame. If you have ever watched it, I encourage you to pause it at each second and see if you can find a single unpleasant frame. *The Tree of Life* is so visual-centered that while watching it, one can feel Malick is trying to tell us “Does the story really matter?” *Testing Democracy* on the other hand, can be considered the exact opposite. *Testing Democracy* is an experimental short film shot with a Sony Handycam. The film looks very flat and distasteful, but the content of the film will amaze any audience member. The plot line and the story is so creative that one can feel Makhmalbaaf trying to tell the audience the exact opposite; he is trying to say: “Do visuals matter at all?”

After coming to Malaysia I had the chance to be on the set of a few Malaysian films and short film productions. I found Malaysian cinema particularly interesting, especially the independent films. Overall, Malaysian films had a higher technical standard compared to Iranian films. They had strong visuals, and overall, the content was still comparatively strong. One interesting aspect of independent Malaysian films was the slow pace of the plot and the narrative, which immediately drew my attention. The slow pace of the film would allow the audience to sink into the world of the film and feel what is meant to be felt.

In a nut-shell, there is no right and wrong when it comes to the balance between visuals and narrative. After all, every person has a different preference, but currently, the cinematographers play a much more important role in the production of a film. I find Malaysian cinema particularly interesting because personally, I think that Malaysian film makers have succeeded in keeping the eastern soul alive while still using Western techniques effectively. I strongly recommend you to watch the works of independent Malaysian film makers such as James Lee, Azharr Rudin and Fikri Jermadi. Maybe you’ll change your mind about Malaysian cinema! **manga**



Musings of a TCK in Malaysia

Words by **Vikramjit Lahiri**

Photos by **Brian Soong**

The word that first comes to mind is; ‘diaspora’, being part of a globalized trend of diasporic culture, or being a Third Culture Kid, which has its benefits and drawbacks. Being an Indian, however, brings with it a 100 percent chance of meeting another or a lot of the same in any country around the world, being from the second-highest populated country in the world. If only someone had told me this when I was ten years old on a flight to Malaysia. I shouldn’t have been as shocked as I was, to see so many of my own here.

Literally a thriving, internalized and very much local culture of Malaysian Indians, at the same time very different from the Indians from the motherland, can be very confusing for a ten year old kid having just shifted his whole life to a place he had never been before.

Growing up away from home and adjusting to the local language, Bahasa Melayu, was surprisingly simple due to the few little inferences and similarities it tends to have with my mother-tongue, such as milk, which is called “*susu*” in Malay, the same word also coincidentally means urine in my mother-tongue. This made it increasingly difficult for me to speak about milk or order it anywhere in public.

On a serious note, Malaysia has given me everything



I could ask for from a second home; great friends, memories, facilities, independence but for some odd reason it will always be just that; a second home. After not having returned to India for the first four years after moving to Kuala Lumpur, going back to my hometown of Calcutta, in the north-east of India, brought back a sense of belonging that I had almost forgotten about.

I love Kuala Lumpur and Malaysia and almost everything I have experienced here so far, but there will still always be a simplistic charm I find whenever I go back home to India that I don’t seem to experience here. That is, being around my own, literally speaking, and still being in touch with close friends whom I have known since I was two years old and just finding a sense of similarity and common ground.

The reason I say India is still home, even after having spent close to the same amount of time I had there, here, in Malaysia, is the sentiment of knowing my roots, my origin, but at the same time never deluded to the fact that to a very significant level I might internally and behaviourally already be a Malaysian. Of course, the win-win scenario would be to be able to share dual citizenship from both nations but we all know that can’t happen. So the win-win in my opinion is the culture. I’ve learnt to keep in touch with my roots and be able to negotiate culture on my own terms. I am still doing this at the age of twenty-one and probably will be doing this forever.



“I must confess, I sometimes begin to forget as well, especially when...speaking to my cousins and a sudden “lah” spills out of nowhere in my passionate effort to enforce meaning into a casual conversation.”

Having two places I can call home is a luxury that most don't have. Being what is called a Third Culture Kid continues to increase in popularity with a further hybridization of all races and cultures worldwide. But this process eventually leaves an interesting question in the mind of individuals who are a part of it, one of identity and origin. It is always a funny sight when most of my Malaysian friends tend to forget that I actually am not Malaysian and that I don't have a local identity card and they get shocked all over again even though they have been in this same exact predicament, with me, just a few years ago. I must confess, I sometimes begin to forget as well, especially when I get off the plane in Calcutta and the airport officials there find my face to not suit my accent at all, or when speaking to my cousins and a sudden “lah” spills out of nowhere in my passionate effort to enforce meaning into a casual conversation.

It's a process I've come to love, a mixture of tastes, ideals, sentiments, principles, and the list just keeps on going, but now, being in university and my family having gone back to India, it does



cause a void sometimes that is difficult to fill. I have a personal opinion, I would like to share with any international student here, or anybody from another other country away from their home, or for anyone having lived away from home for a period of time; in the long-run it is always beneficial to be able to provide insights into different places, markets, cultures, races, lifestyle and emotions, it is undoubtedly the best way in which to acquire knowledge and vision beyond our innate horizons and capabilities, to understand things and behaviours through multiple perspectives.

An interesting observation I have made, and this is only in my opinion, is that international students having arrived in KL only after high school or just before university tend to end up in a group of people from the same country. Arguably, this is natural human behaviour, not partaking in the risk of rejection. But having been here since primary school and having made a huge portion of local friends it is clear that it really comes down to the choices made by us, as Third Cultured people and showing an interest to really submerge ourselves in the local culture and not only be physically present. I would definitely urge all the Third Culture people I know, or those who read this, to actively and consciously leave their comfort zones and make friends with the local people of whichever nation you are in, or else we never really experience the advantage of getting this opportunity when there are those who do not get this

benefit and are for some circumstance or another and for the lack of a better word, stuck where they were born, work where they were raised and die not having seen much of the world.

Just like any other kid, growing up anywhere away from home will have phases, including not caring where you're from, then caring where you may be from, trying to figure out where you belong, understanding that it just isn't that simple and finally concluding that home can be anywhere you choose to make it. It is explicitly simple while being tremendously confusing at the same time, just making the most out of the time away from home and not constantly wanting to go back but at the same time remembering where one belongs and what that connotes... simple. And then finally one arrives at this stage I am at now, just sheer realization that it is way too early to judge anything and that seeing more gives me so much more to know. **monga**



In defense of solitude

Words By **Vinanie Wijesoma** Photos By **Ai Lin Soh** and **Lestari Hairul**

"It's not that I want a sexual partner, a long-term partner, someone to share a bed and a snuggle on the sofa with – although perhaps I do and in the past I have had and it has been joyful. But the fact is I value my privacy too. It's a lose-lose matter. I don't want to be alone, but I want to be left alone. Perhaps this is just a form of narcissism, vanity, overdemanding entitlement – give it whatever derogatory term you think it deserves. I don't know the answer."

-- Stephen Fry (2013)

I read those words in the summer of 2013, and these words, still etched into mind, have left an unsettling bitter aftertaste. Had I read the words back home, or in Monash, they wouldn't have taunted me to such a degree, but see, I read it in Sri Lanka. I have spent most of summers in my passport country, my parent's motherland, my place of birth, but something about this summer felt sticky, for you see; my summer holidays have never felt sticky. We moved the previous winter, following a fifteen year stint abroad, to permanently settle down in our family's choice vacationing spot. I hadn't yet grown accustomed to the idea of calling Sri Lanka 'home', or that this was my new mailing address.

Following his "self-slaughter" attempt the previous year, Stephen Fry, the author of those words, wrote a piece on his blog titled "On Loneliness," chronicling his past suicidal inclinations. I am neither suicidal nor a middle-aged English man, but something about Fry's choice of words made me thoroughly uncomfortable and almost half-wishing I wasn't directed to his blog. I don't even read blogs; there's something mendacious and obnoxious about them. And the word

'blog' feels gross and incomplete on the tongue; though this resentment could just be masked envy. I copied-and-pasted those hundred odd words and saved it as a document titled 'untitled' on my laptop. Every two months or so since, I'll revisit those words in the hopes that I'll experience something novel, something that brushes away that bitterness. But this hasn't been the case...yet (that is, I'm hopeful).

"This is plagiarism," I scowled to myself. Except it wasn't, for I have never published those words and he, Fry, seems to have beaten me to it. Those words were plundered from my safe-keep mind, pillaged from the most hollow of my writings, and stolen from the depths of my soul (this last one...too much, I agree). I read the words out loud to my mum, who appeared to be consoling our turtle, Starry, in the garden; the little one recently lost his (or it could be a her) partner. 'Lost' in the literal sense of the word, not as a euphemism. "Patience!..You will find your man, and life won't feel as confusing." In retrospect, my mum could have spoken those words to our recently-partnerless turtle, but I was in no state of mind to take that in to consideration. "But mumm!" I growled, something about living under the same roof as my family never fails to revert my disposition to reflect that of a petulant, self-entitled teenager, "It's not at all about finding a man!" I decided then against starting a rant for something about the way Starry was eating said he (or she, I really should find out) needed mum's attention more. And so, I fell silent, sauntered into the living room, my laptop held open in my hands like a book, and settled into an unusually elevated settee. I re-read those words, only to discover that my initial anger had transformed into something far less volatile, a feeling that I had found solidarity with a fifty-five year-old man living in a mansion.

For you see, you don't have to be a close friend to pick up on my hermitic nature. Two or three casual run-ins and you will notice I find ways to slip away to be myself; whether it is to eat, read, watch a television show or simply to sit in silence... all by myself. But this reclusive undertow of my being is not to disparage the part of me that sporadically seeks and thoroughly appreciates the company of incredible people; that is, my friends and family. Inebriated hazy night out with my besties, moon-bathing in Naz's pool; booze-induced heated, and eventually slurred, discussions with my brothers; sleepovers with my girls, stuffing our faces, and accusing each other of deliberately moving the all-knowing *Ouija* board ("Move it one more time Neha and I swear the *Ouija* spirits will condemn you to a loveless senior year!") For all of these memorable days and most nights I have experienced (for some nights were a bit of a blur) have been shared with my dearest friends and family and none alone, by myself.

The paradoxical part of all of this is, is that if these people's presence were to be removed from my life, I would suffer greatly, and be entirely alone, something I hope to never experience. But like Fry, I value my privacy too. I need my moments of solitude,



my unobstructed moments of nothingness. But it must be said, these 'moments' do stretch for a far longer time than most people are comfortable with.

So, I hope these words have comforted any kindred spirit out there; and I hope you feel less alone in knowing that your need for solitude is not aberrant. And for all those readers baffled by my kind, the readers who think we have taken some sort of sad vow of solitude, I assure you we have not. We are not "anti-social," we *are* social-beings, just not as social as you, or in need of around-the-clock human interaction. **manga**

Of Pharmacy And Ivy Leagues

Words By **Amirah Aidura**

Photos by **Brian Soong**



Asians in general have always held education as the pinnacle of achievement. We live in a society where as a graduate, you are judged by the rankings of the university you studied in, and by how 'famous' these universities are. Saying that you graduated from Cambridge with a 'wishy-washy' degree (my best friend is one of them, so please don't take offense) will generate significantly more wows, oohs and aahs than saying that I'm studying Pharmacy in Monash, even though it is the best Pharmacy program in Australia and 7th in the world.

It's as if being in Oxford, Cambridge and the Ivy Leagues (of which Stanford is not one of them by the way, contrary to popular belief) is equivalent to being handed the VVIP pass and having full access to everything in this world, just because of 'name'. At times, I feel that this awe is heavily misplaced, as I feel that Monash deserves more 'wows' than what they're currently generating. I'm not sure if people actually realise that Oxford, Cambridge and Imperial do not offer a Pharmacy undergraduate programme, and are highly ranked for their *pharmacology* programme, *not* for a pharmacy degree! In case you are wondering, pharmacology does not train you for a health professional setting and instead focuses more on the research and industry side. To add salt to the wound, the Pharmacy programmes in North America are almost exclusively post-graduate programmes (yes, including everyone's beloved Harvard). This drastically reduces the number of Pharmacy schools available if you're looking for a 4-year undergraduate course that teaches in English (Karolinska Institute teaches in Swedish, whereas University of Tokyo is obviously in Japanese).

So what was I left with, when I decided to study Pharmacy? It wasn't a hard decision. I applied and accepted my offer, feeling

proud that I got into a school with over 100 years of history in Pharmacy. Nearly 2 years in, being in undoubtedly one of the *best* pharmacy undergraduate programs in the entire world..... *it does not feel like it*. One of my best friends is in Cambridge, the other is in Stanford, and I am also acquainted if not friends with enough people in really good universities (Johns Hopkins, Middlebury, Oxford, Imperial, you get the gist). Here I am, with the technicality that I am equal, if not better in standing than some of them, yet it doesn't feel that way.

*"...I feel that
Monash deserves
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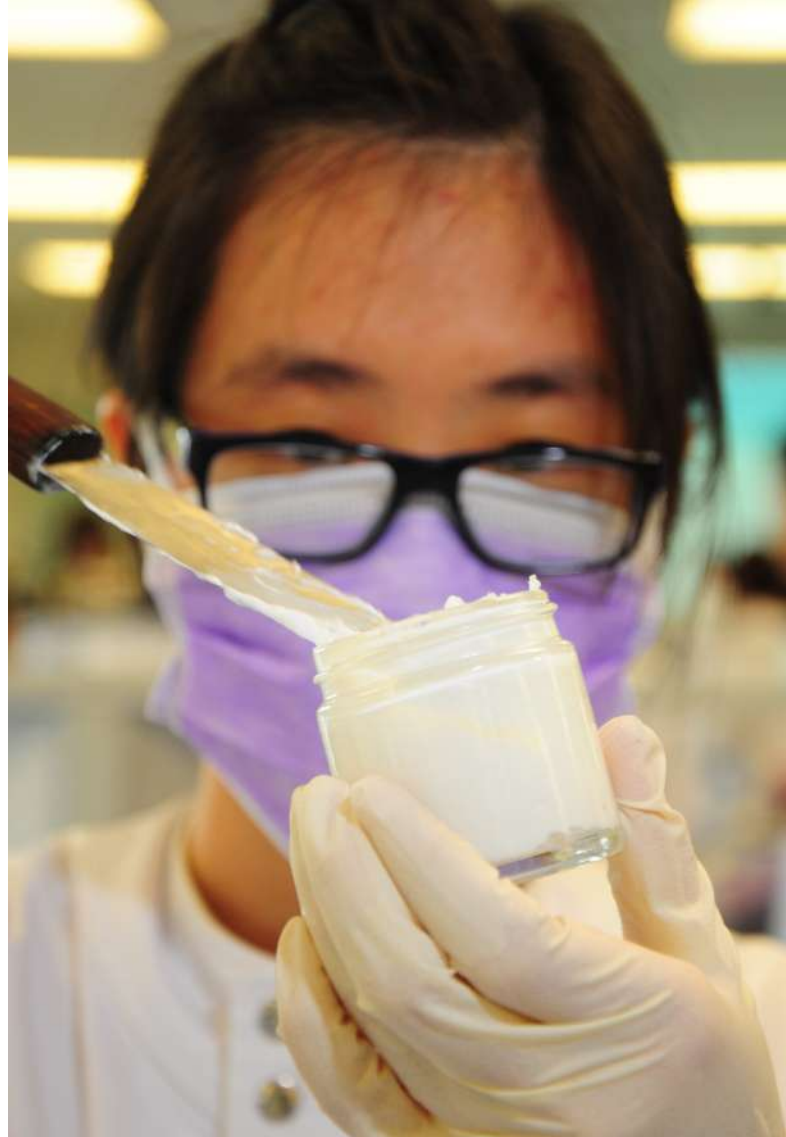
Among the reasons I don't feel like I'm in such a fantastic university is this: I feel like a nomad, and there is a lack of exclusivity. Pharmacy in this campus does not have a building of its own. I have my classes not in the medicine building like everyone thinks, but in the Business building instead (Building 6). My labs are conducted in the Medicine building (Building 3 level 6) and occasionally in the Histopath lab. My dispensing tutorials and workshops are conducted in the computer labs (Building 9), whereas Administration is in the Arts building (Building 2 level 6). My lecturers' rooms are very scattered, some in building 2, some in 3 and some in 6. I can't help but feel as if every school has a building except us, and we are technically the academic powerhouse of the campus in terms of rankings. For a while, we were under the impression that the extension of building 3 would be a school dedicated to Pharmacy. However, our hopes were dashed when we found out that only level 6 would be exclusively ours.

While there is a clear lack of belonging, it is not all that bad. As the intake is still small, our classes are conducted in tutorial rooms instead of lecture theatres. I really love this, as I get to learn in a class size that is almost exclusive to a liberal arts school. It also means that the lecturers recognise me by name and actively encourage questions during classes. Furthermore,

level 6 of the new building will accommodate a Professional Practice Suite, where we can practice our dispensing models and counselling for OSCE. This would hopefully increase the feeling of 'anchorage' in Pharmacy students as we no longer need to utilise the computer labs in the building 9 and can gravitate to a certain building.

Another factor that I feel quite strongly about is the general feeling of 'being second' to Parkville. I cannot speak in terms of administration, research, and student-teacher relationships, and will not do so. As a student, however, that feeling permeates almost every aspect of lectures. Lecture slides are occasionally not synchronized with the Australian lectures. It is perfectly fine when a lecturer edits the slides to suit his style of presentation. The issue is when there is a change in lecture content or worse, when content is missing. That being said, it is not entirely the Sunway lecturers' fault. The issue is brought up repeatedly in Staff-Student Liaison Committee meetings held twice yearly, and it is made clear *every time* that in most cases, Parkville (the Australian counterpart) sends the lecture slides to Sunway late. This can be even as late as a single hour before the lecture is scheduled to be delivered. I cannot blame the lecturers if they deliver lectures with less information, as they would have had less (if any) time to prepare for the lectures to be delivered. As it is a regular occurrence, I can't help but occasionally feel that the Sunway campus isn't held as an equal.

There should be more interactions between the Sunway and Parkville campuses to ensure that not only are the lecture



materials delivered similar, but that the quality of the lectures delivered are *also* similar. If this does not occur, Malaysian students have to put twice the number of hours in to studying a topic as we would have listened to MULO as well. Not only is this a great waste of time, it also feels partially unfair when certain information like exam tips or extra information is disseminated to the Australian students, but not to the Malaysian campus students.

“... being in undoubtedly one of the best pharmacy undergraduate programs in the entire world.....it does not feel like it.”

There are occasions when I feel that for Monash Malaysia campus to thrive, it has to either attempt to localise the syllabus or to work in a cooperative (i.e synergistic manner) where lectures and exam papers



are not set by only the Australian side. If neither can be implemented, there should at least be very close interactions not only between unit coordinators but also between the lecturers themselves to overcome the obvious disparity. That feeling that the lecturer does not know what he is doing unfortunately comes across more often than it should in the one and a half years I have been here, and attempts should be made to completely eliminate this.

I feel the final reason that no one goes 'woah' when I say I'm in Monash Pharmacy is a combination of several things: history, architecture and funding. The top universities my friends are attending have rich histories spanning hundreds of years. Most attempt to preserve their traditional architecture as much as possible and unmistakably exhibit an aura of grandness. While the course in Monash originated from the Victorian College of Pharmacy, and has a history of over a decade, the original college itself was small and there was little value in preserving the architecture. Instead, both Parkville and Sunway have opted for a more contemporary and modern look. While it is a beautiful look, I believe increases in the number of primary trees on campus, like raintrees, would only serve to benefit the overall look. Raintrees are a great indication of age, and would help increase the perception of age and establishment.

Coming back to the issue of history, Harvard and the like can boast an extensive alumni network that can easily donate back to the school, be it monetary-wise or via knowledge. Many companies funded by alumni are willing to share their experience with their school and

also provide opportunities for research and development via a joint partnership. While I am very sure this happens in Monash as well, it may be to a lesser extent. Pharmacy here after all, only recently took root in 2009 and our first batch has just graduated. These issues are largely unavoidable and while it is understood, does somewhat contribute to the lesser feeling of 'elitiness'.

To sum it all up, I believe that the feeling of not being in a top university boils down to several things; a lack of exclusivity and the feeling of being second to Parkville- both of which can be overcome in the short term. The third, history, architecture and funding is largely unchangeable but should be taken into account should Monash Malaysia like to exist in the coming 50 years. Monash Malaysia and its future School of Pharmacy has to strive to become a campus that can be seen and felt as an equal. Exchange students should feel proud to come to Malaysia, just as much as we do when we go there, and should certainly not be handicapped in terms of study materials when they do come. It should try to become an environment where lecture delivery is seamless and organized regardless of the campus. They can try to improve the way this system is conducted by getting specific feedback from exchange students, who are the best indication tester in terms of quality. These issues certainly cannot be resolved in the 4 years that I am here, but I do hope that steps are taken to improve it within the next decade. After all, I would like to stand proud and say that I have graduated from a top pharmacy school one day, and feel equal to my Ivy League friends. **manga**





the calm after the storm

Words By **Eugene Chia** Photo By **Brian Soong**

2012 was a very bad year to be an IT student. As a second year IT student, it felt like I was on a sinking ship with no means of escape. We were literally caught between a rock and a hard place. It all happened when we found out that most of our senior lecturers were leaving. Rumors said that there was a massive power struggle and that most of the senior lecturers were either being sacked or were leaving in protest because of what was going on. Other rumors stated that the school of IT was going to be disbanded. That felt most true when the School of IT was being reduced to a discipline. If that wasn't bad enough, we found out that the intake for the IT degrees were put to a complete stop. They were literally 'taking care of loose ends'. Even members of the staff were complaining about the turmoil within the School of IT.

On a student level, we were not informed about anything. All we knew was that our beloved IT lecturers were leaving us for other institutions, such as Taylors and Nottingham, and the discipline of IT was slowly going to be 'put to sleep'. Rumors of a merger were lingering in the air.

As IT students, we want to graduate with an IT degree, not a Business or an Engineering degree. If the School of IT were to merge with another school (such as Engineering or Business), we'd be left stuck in the middle.

As for some of us, we didn't even know whether we could graduate at all seeing that most of our senior lecturers had already left. Many units were taken off the list and second year students were left with hardly any units to take. It was truly a dire time. The worst part of it all was that we couldn't do anything about it. Or so we thought.

Out of the blue, three very brave students, who were daring enough to stand up and voice out their opinions in these desperate times, ruffled the feathers of the IT administration so ferociously that they even got to question the Pro-Vice Chancellor, as well as the acting head of the discipline of IT on what was going on. Without the bravery of these three students, the rest of us, in the School of IT, would have just remained in the dark because that's what we generally do; keep our heads low and keep our noses out of trouble.

As time passed, things slowly settled down. The official statement (from the discipline of IT) has been released. They claim that they are putting a halt to the intake as a means of quality control. Due to our results (which they did not mention was either good or bad), they intend to equalize the 'graph' as well as to increase the quality of education that the discipline of IT can provide. As a second year student heading into my

final year, it was certainly a relief to know that the discipline of IT wasn't going to be demolished. The year 2013 started off with good news. New lecturers were being brought in and new units were being offered. Not only that, as of semester 2 of 2013, we even got a new head of school, Dr. Jussi Parkkinen, from Finland. Dr. Jussi Parkkinen is a professor from the University of Finland, who is currently heading two departments in Monash Malaysia. He's now the head of the discipline of IT as well as the Engineering discipline of Electrical and Computer Systems. With that, he embraced the IT students with good news. Instead of abolishing the degrees currently available, he's planning to add a new degree to the discipline of IT: Software Engineering. When we, the IT students, first met Dr Parkkinen, we didn't really know how to react.

But as time passes, the clouds are starting to dissipate and we know now that we are in safe hands. Although we didn't get a clear answer as to why our senior lecturers left, we now know the direction of the discipline of IT and only time will tell where we are headed as a discipline, and maybe soon enough as a School. The discipline of IT managed to survive the storm and I know that the discipline of IT won't be leaving Monash Malaysia any time soon. **monGa**

8 Non-Paperwork Things You Should Know Before Heading to Monash Australia

Words By **Emily Choong**

Photos By

Emily Choong and **Syahirah Rashid**

1. Go forth and plan to travel like there's no tomorrow

You have, give or take, five months to spend in this land down under. As of Monash Abroad's policy today, you may only spend one semester in any Monash Australian campus. As it was my first time living away from my family for more than two weeks, I took the opportunity to go around as much as I could within the state; for instance, travelling to different suburbs each week. Plan to explore the area and the culture whenever you can. Be it the Great Ocean Road, a weekend trip to Sydney, taking a particular train line and see where that gets you or book tickets for festivals and concerts.

2. Learn to cook

Eating out all the time in Melbourne can burn a hole in your wallet. As much as people remind you not to do conversions, remember that it is essential for you to save up for other activities and events to enhance your Australian experience. It all depends on your learning style. I personally find recipes only partially helpful. I would often tune into cooking shows or watch YouTube chefs like *Laura in the Kitchen*.

3. Take advantage of the freebies

"Free food for all those who attend the event!" Oh, yes. The people here are masters at knowing how to catch your attention. The first few weeks will probably be



one of the best weeks of your life. Aside from the fact that assignments have not flooded in yet, you will find free food on campus nearly every day. You know how people usually skip Orientation? Trust me when I say you do not want to skip the ones in Monash Australia. One hour before my orientation commenced, rounds of pancakes with ice cream and maple syrup and of course coffee of whatever type you like was served. Throughout the rest of the weeks, Clubs and Societies held BBQs at the lawns where you can sit down and enjoy the environment accompanied by the aroma of lamb and beef sausages barbecuing by your side. Often enough you will also find club meetings ending with free dinners and this will save you lots of money on meals. If you do live on campus, you will find hall suppers and dine-ins all prepared for you throughout the semester. Aside from food, there are usually also free movie tickets and merchandise depending on the club.

4. Don't wear 'thongs' to a 'footie' match in the 'arvo'

The Australian slang may be hard for some to pick up and adapt to. Australians shorten everything: "*brollies*" for umbrellas, "*arvo*" for afternoon, "*Maccas*" for McDonald's, "*footie*" for football and many more. If they like you or if you are friends with them, you will get your nicknames in no time and they will either be shorter than your real name or way too long. You should also



know that some Australians get annoyed when people use the terms “flip flops”, “slippers” or “sandals”. In Australia, perhaps only in Australia, those are referred to as thongs.

5. You will walk a lot

The Clayton campus is as big as a neighbourhood in Subang Jaya. It takes at least 15 minutes to walk from the residence to campus or 25 minutes if you are a slow walker. People would think of renting bikes but I do think that walking is more practical for one to enjoy the environment. If you do not own a car in Australia, you will be walking a lot from bus stations to your destination or perhaps running to catch trains. The public transport is usually very punctual and the trains and trams wait for no one. Also, you will definitely get lost on campus during the exploration period after you arrive. Find your way around the campus before classes during the day and also towards the evening when it gets dark because from personal experience, the campus looks different during the night. Do not miss out on the campus tours too!

6. There's 4 seasons in an hour

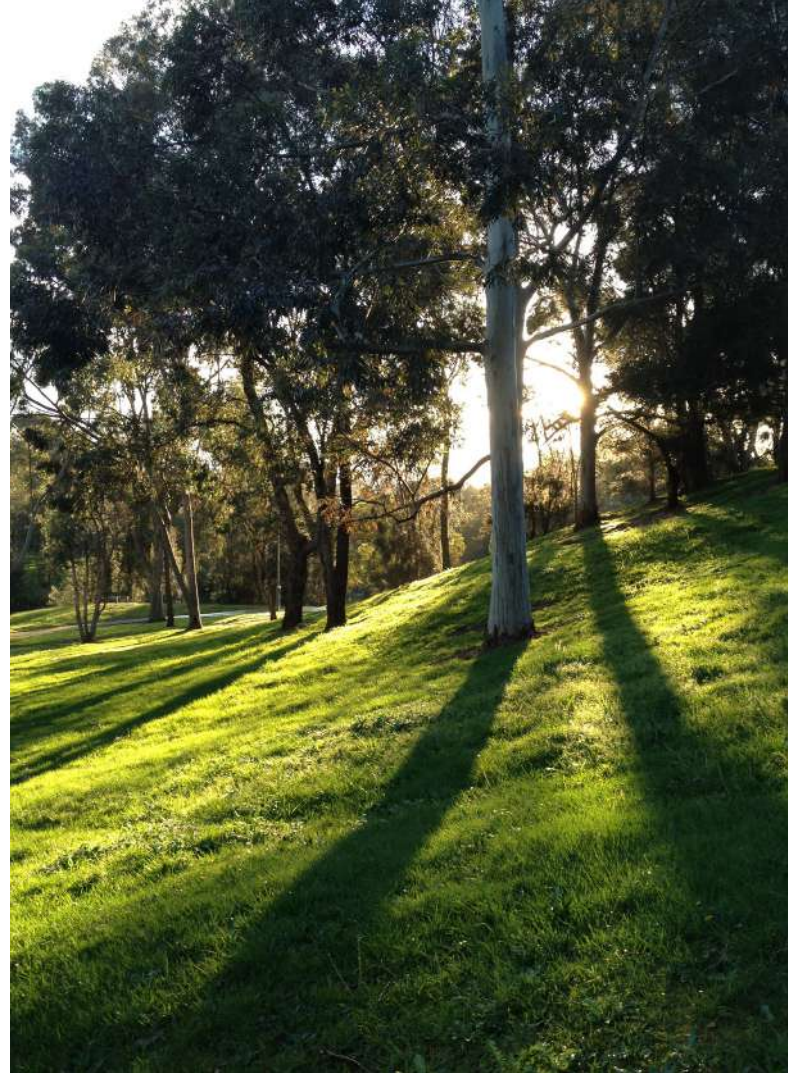
If you think Malaysia's weather is horrible, think again. The rain comes and goes as it wishes. Strong winds will make you feel colder than you already are. The sun can be scorching at some points of the day. The clouds play tricks on you. Be prepared with umbrellas, raincoats, sunscreen and waterproof shoes before going out because you do not want to be soaking wet from the rain or getting sunburnt after a long day's walk.

7. Shopping is bliss

\$2 shirts and shorts are easily available if you know where to find them. Direct Factory Outlets are available in the city and stuff goes really cheap at the end of the seasons. Most importantly, do your research before purchasing particular brands that are available worldwide, for not all of them may be cheaper in Australia. The only downside to this is that the shops usually close by 5.00 p.m. or 6.00 p.m. so reach early to avoid disappointment.

8. Protests on campus

With a history of political activism, you shouldn't be surprised to see student protests happening around the campus. Monash became a very political space in the 1960s due to the controversial Vietnam War. There was a ballot system whereby males, over the age of 18, were chosen to go overseas to fight, and maybe die, for a war that was not even entirely theirs, so to speak. This outraged many students and with that began many protests, demonstrations and student activism. The *Lot's Wife* student newspaper became the centre of debate for it was the only other form of communication amongst students. This newspaper, that gained its name from a biblical passage, still runs today publishing articles contributed by students on just about any topic. **manga**





A Malaysian in: Chennai, India

Words By **Rekha Shankar**

Photos By **Brian Soong**

Of the many privileges that I have been blessed with in my life, travelling has always been one of those activities (and luxuries) that has brought me immense joy and fulfilment. There's just something about having the opportunity to step away from this hectic city life that I am always exposed to and take a joyride somewhere, be it travelling within Malaysia or to other countries. While I have yet to travel or backpack by myself or with some friends, my parents, who share the same lustre and curiosity to experience the various cultures and abundant beauty that this world has to offer, are whom I attribute as being the fuel behind my desire to leave this place behind and travel the world someday. I know for a fact that I am not the only Monashian who possesses this wanderlust, and that we all have some mental bucket list of the roads and paths that we envision ourselves traversing through someday. Just like how I have this really romantic image of me, sailing on a yacht off the coast of Santorini...

But, before I get lost in that dream of mine, back to the

topic. The whole point of travelling, to me, means being able to step out of one's comfort zone and to take a look at the bigger picture instead. Exploring countries plagued with a cornucopia of social, political and economic problems different from the country we originate from, can make one realize how our day-to-day 'problems' (i.e., our intimate relationships, or even studying a chapter in our unit readers) can be deemed so trivial and insignificant in comparison to the problems of other people, whose biggest daily worries are whether or not there will be enough food to be put on the table. One such country that made me and still makes me question my set of troubles and worries until this very moment is India.

'India, the land of sweet smelling women', 'India, the land of festivals', 'India, the land of the diversity' or so they say. In the month of July 2012, my family and I flew to Chennai, India, for the first time in our lives (except for my father) to attend my cousin's wedding ceremony, an arranged wedding. Yes, as unbelievable as it may sound to many (modern) Malaysians, arranged marriages are still common in today's world; a tradition that is still practiced in India until today. But that is a whole different topic.

"...a relative from Malaysia had exclaimed, "This looks like Malaysia...40 years ago!" and it definitely felt that way too."

Firstly, I must highlight how India, to a certain extent, is an experience like no other, especially if one hails from a developed and well-formed nation. Especially if one is used to the access of clean water, non-dusty, quiet streets, three roads, ethical driving and the absence of homeless people sleeping on five-foot walkways and road sides at every corner. Because that is exactly how Chennai was. I suppose what is considered a norm for the Indians living in India was completely foreign to me; three lane roads that were treated as if they were six lanes, loud honks going off from every other vehicle at every other imaginable second (yes, even at 1 am in the morning, the honking never stopped!) extremely dusty roads, 5 foot walkways that were treated more like 7-foot walkways (it is THAT crowded in Chennai!) and finally, the sympathetic sight of the abundance of homeless people. People sleeping under flyovers; people sleeping on roadside pavements with cardboard boxes flattened out to be used as blankets; people sleeping next to eateries they worked at; people sleeping just about everywhere! What a shock it was! Not only did I feel like I had entered



a different dimension on this planet, but I also felt like I had stepped back into a time and era that only my parents would have been familiar with, as a relative from Malaysia had exclaimed, “*This looks like Malaysia...40 years ago!*” and it definitely felt that way too.

For the reader reading this, I am not trying to paint India in a bad light. Of course, there were the amazing parts of India too. Firstly, their food! Being someone who enjoys her curries and *rasam* (an Indian soup) very much, India was a food haven for me! To a point where, as expected, I did develop mild food poisoning, but I won't elaborate. Secondly, being someone who also adores her *saree's*, *lengas*, *kurti's* and Punjabi suits, India was also THE shopping haven to find the most beautiful Indian garments and accessories at unbelievably affordable prices. Thirdly, India is teeming with history, with hundreds of ancient temples and palaces dating back over 1000 years ago. Scattered all across the Indian terrain, these temples have the most extraordinary architecture; amazing detailed carvings of patterns and deities adorn these temples and ruins. One also has to commend on how intact and well preserved many of these temples are. I would say that India is *the* country to travel to if one is desperate to break free from their comfort zone and traverse through a land of differing cultures and experiences.

As mentioned previously, I do not wish to belittle India, as all countries do have their fair share of pros and cons. However, what I do want to point out in this article is that, being thankful is an extremely important value that all of us (who live a life of comfort – in comparison to homeless people) should harbour. Like I mentioned earlier, having had a first-hand glance at a life that I have never had to endure, was enough to put my worries at bay and ease my soul, as I contemplated on troubles that suddenly seemed so unimportant to begin with. Being someone who has been exposed to a

life of privilege for as long as I can remember, going to India was an eye opener for me. The first thought that came to my mind was “*Oh! No wonder the Indian migrants (particularly the labourers) love Malaysia!*” If anything, going to India made me love Malaysia more. It invoked in me a sense of appreciation for my motherland. Albeit the political scenery, I realized that home will forever be where the heart is! Also, I have to admit that we Malaysians kind of have it really lucky. **manga**





whose faces people will recognise most easily and thus vote in most easily. A few students would care about the actual policies and manifestos but as the turn-out to the debates tend to show, and particularly telling is the turn-out to the various forums and public meetings held by the council, the numbers do not translate much to anything. As it is, while the figures this year are really good, only 1724 students voted. That's 32% of the student population who bothered to turn up. Where is everybody else? I reckon everybody else is too busy running their own lives to care. And that is why the song-and-dance schtick is so duly employed each year. That's the only way to grab attention. It's a popularity contest, the one with the most votes wins. The friendliest, the prettiest but not the most competent unfortunately. Charisma counts more, empty promises count more. But then again, most of us are only here for 3 years so why bother right?

Why bother indeed. And then 2014 rolls in and in comes the usual impotent complaining and griping. We vote in the party we deserve. But with no one to step up to take the lead and even worse, with no one to keep a dedicated eye on checking and balancing, we deserve whatever parties choose to contest. Don't blame the contesting parties for putting forth the kind of candidates they have. Blame the fact that most of us don't care in the first place, much less to field worthy student council candidates.

We don't care that the cafeteria is dirty. We only care that it is dirty when we're sitting at a dirty table. We don't care that the general surroundings are messy. We only care when we are sitting amidst a mess. The cognitive dissonance is necessary, how else to balance academic life with social life and the need to experiment at this crucial stage in our lives? So we let things slide but only see some things when they are right in our faces and then we turn to the usual

Don't Shut Up

Words By **Lestari Hairul**

By the time you read this, the new MUSA Council would have been chosen, the campaign over and the winners decided. The losing team will pack their stuff up and go their separate ways, the winning team would have had their victory dinners while plans for the future are shelved for the time being as life goes back to normal, at least while the exams are looming up in the horizon.

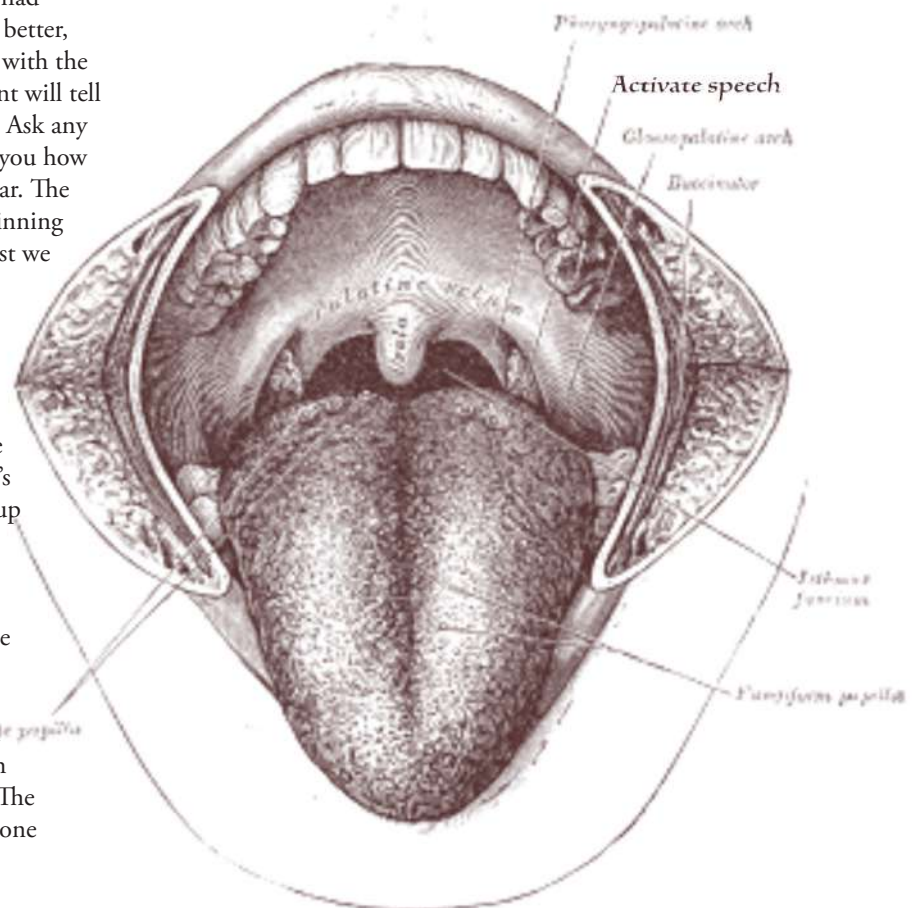
It is the same deal year in, year out.

Each year, in the middle of semester 2, groups of students will start to gather with the lofty aspirations of affecting 'change'. Each new party being sworn in had started out their campaigns with the idea of being better, more transparent, more engaging, and more open with the rest of the student body. But as each cynical student will tell you otherwise, it is the same old song all the time. Ask any long-staying student in Monash and they will tell you how similar each council becomes with each passing year. The bright-eyed bushy-tailed proclamations at the beginning will dwindle to the tired refrains of "we did the best we could."

I'd signed up to campaign last year because personally, I was sick of listening to the complaints. I thought that I should put my money where my mouth is and if I wanted change to happen I should get in the system and see what's wrong, what can't be done and what is so messed up in the first place.

As it turns out, getting in was easy but the affecting change part, not so much. But not for the reasons one would assume.

The usual parade of cheer and song, colourful shirts and publicity boards are employed with each campaigning season and therein lay the problem. The whole idea is to be the most prominent party, the one



avenues and complain. But in recent years, there's that reprehensible move of complaining behind a pseudonym.

Using a pseudonym to complain would mean that the students in question don't even trust that their own peers will respect their opinions. Sure, some are definitely inflammatory but for those that seek questions on practical needs, why the need for identity censure? Perhaps because as much as MUSA tries to push for more student voices, the students themselves would prefer to keep mum. How then can MUSA represent the voice of the student population when it can't even get meaningful feedback to convey to the Administration?

I have heard of people attributing this collective silence on the futility of any requests for change. But do people not realise that our strength is in our numbers? That lasting, positive change cannot occur overnight and would mean that it will require a significant investment in time and energy?

Lest you think I would prefer to put the blame on ourselves, let me backtrack a little bit from this raging on the student population and shine the light back on the Administration. The crippling, stultifying bureaucracy on campus is as much to blame, honestly.

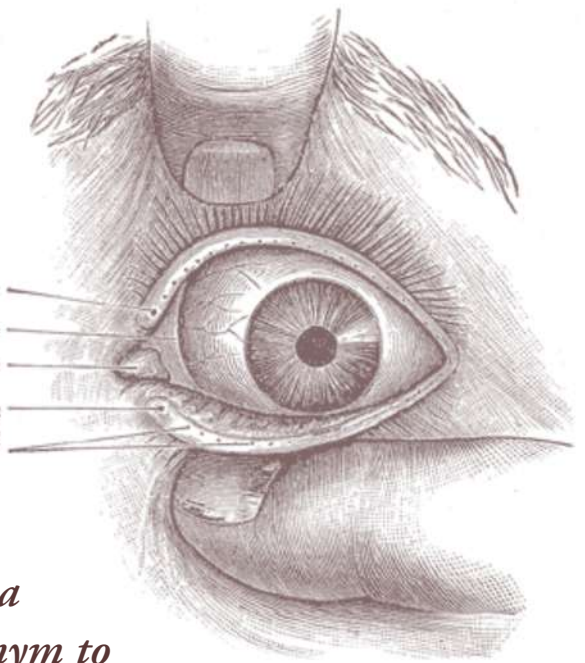
Punctum lacrimale

Who watches the watchers?

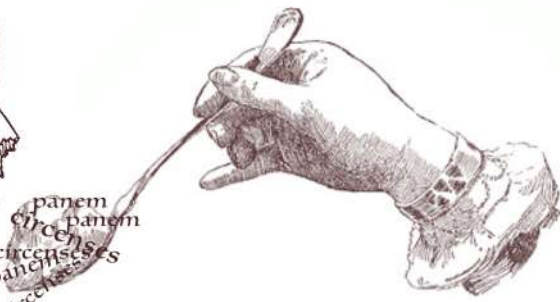
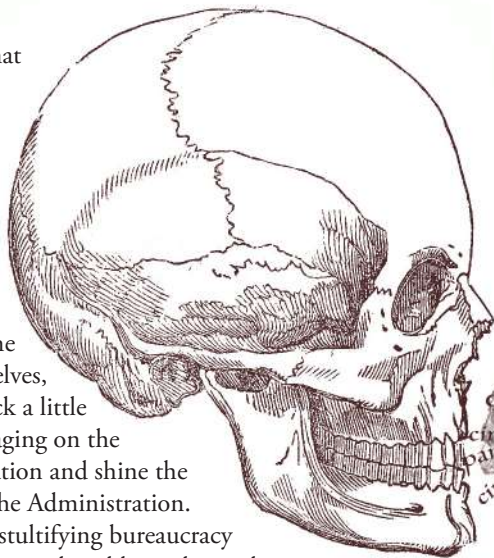
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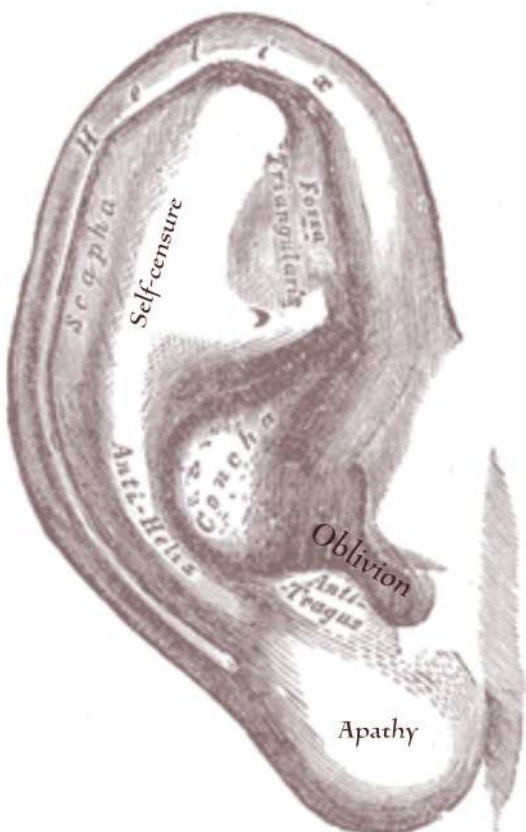


“Using a pseudonym to complain would mean that the students in question don't even trust that their own peers will respect their opinions.”



Sure, certain practices are in place to make sure that things go smoothly but really I think a bureaucracy can run as a well-oiled machine if only the cogs working in it would set their minds to do their work as they should. It's a two-prong deal though and this is where I once again blast ourselves. We need to keep making noise. We need to keep on badgering 'the adults' and make sure that change will happen and that things are maintained and improved on. We need to remember that it is our money (or our parents' money) that is keeping all of this afloat.

During one of the Council meetings held this year, I'd tweeted "I now understand why governments fail". At the tail-end of my patience over the way the meeting was being conducted and most importantly, impotently angry because the inability to vote meant I could not even express my disapproval over the proceedings however superficially, I saw then why things rarely change. As long as we feel helpless, as long as we don't bother to open our mouths to speak and speak through the right channels and with the right temerity, governments continue to fail. What you see here is a micro stage of the world. If we are the generation where future world leaders will derive from, we'll do best to set aside the impotency for when it really should hit us: when we are old and decrepit. **manga**





The Indonesian Lady That Never Spoke

Short Story By **Stanley Yang Yang Teng**

Perhaps she coughed or was it a trick of the ear? The resident at the hostel could not decipher what sound she has made. Maybe it was because the Indonesian lady never spoke and the first time he had heard anything come out of her mouth, he was surprised.

The Indonesian lady works in the launderette from 10am till 10pm from Monday till Friday. She was a serious woman who does her work strictly to what the management expects of her.

Wash, dry and fold. That was all she knew. No ironing since the management was imposing a budget cut.

No ironing at all. ...except if you pass it to the other workers in the launderette who happen to do favours for that group of students who were considered long-time friends of theirs. That was the problem in hostels, having students around for a long time gives them a chance to befriend a worker or two, then coax the workers to do something extra that eats into the management budget. Good for the students, bad for the hostel.

Therefore, most residents tried to avoid the quiet lady and passed their laundry to other workers for washing. But there was one resident who always preferred her. A Resident of 10-05, Block A.

On every Friday, the resident would bring his laundry downstairs and handed it specifically to her. The first time he did that, he had to instruct her to fold his underwear, shirts and pants in a specific way according to his liking. He never preferred

folding in any other way. That had frustrated him and the other launders before his current residence. Surprisingly, the Indonesian did exactly as told and needed only be told once. Each and every time she hands the laundry back to him, there were no mistakes.

The resident has a particular fondness for the Indonesian lady. She never speaks. The business-like conduct of her manner satisfies the introverted resident who prefers to filter his thoughts so as to economize the number of words spoken. It's simple that way for him.

But it needs to be simple for him for a reason. He takes great comfort in the quietness of the Indonesian launder because too much has been said when he had learned about his partner's infidelity. The tears, the scream, the noisy exchange had been all too much. Too much to the point that parting was inevitable. But the parting was not mutual, it was a one-sided decision when she had left the university without a sound, like how subtle the wayang-kulit play its climax scene.

Solitude is his only sanctuary from it all. After all, introverts do, in fact, recharge by being alone.

Perhaps as he ran through all these thoughts in his head, his face might have betrayed his emotions. For the Indonesian lady might have coughed or said something, because she was now staring at him. Her eyes hollow and penetrating, as if already knowing what he's thinking.

He felt afraid and quickly nodded and left

his laundry with her.

The next week was not so gloomy. For he felt renewed, refreshed and very far away from last week's problems. That Friday, he had come down to collect his laundry.

Again, he passed his laundry card to the Indonesian lady. The lady looked at his number and brought out his laundry bag, passed it to him and signaled him to sign his card as recognition for the returned bag.

It was late at night and when he was signing the card, she was closing down the launderette. As customary, he felt the need to check his clothes for missing ones. As he opened it and felt his clothes, it was warm and without crease this time... as if they were ironed.

When the Indonesian lady locked up the launderette, the resident looked intently at her.

'Thank you', said the resident.

When she was placing her key back into her bag, she stopped for a while, as if registering for the first time the very words of appreciation from someone. Then she started walking. On and on, away from the launderette, never looking left nor right, but ahead she went.

Just like life, she needed to move on as well.

Standing Up to The Comedian

Interviewed By **Tze Han Kee (Hanny)**

It seems that Monash Malaysia is not short of comedians. I'm here to introduce Aw Yuong Tuck (who answers to "Tuck-kor", or "Brother Tuck" in Cantonese), an up and coming stand-up comedian in his own right. Don't let his un-staturesque physique blind you; he is filled with enough humor to make even Yao Ming seem like a tiny midget. Wait...that might be a hyperbole, but you should get the picture.

I got to sit down with Tuck on a sleepy Friday afternoon, armed with a set of questions that he readily answered, with a particular interest toward expressing his time spent in Hong Kong as both an exchange student and a visiting Malaysian comedian.

When did you first discover that you had an interest in stand-up comedy?

I have always wanted to try it since I was fifteen. I started out being the go-to emcee for any events in my high-school, and people would always tell me that I should try stand-up. However, at the time, there weren't any platforms for newbies like me to enter the scene, like comedy open-mics, so I had to wait.

What is your experience of stand-up comedy?

I have been doing it for a year, since 15 August, 2012. I've met a lot of awesome people, like Kavin Jayaram [a RedFM DJ, and also an established comedian], Rizal Van Gayzel, Jason Leong, Harith Iskandar, Douglas Lim, Kuah Jen Han and many more. I got to know them from attending a weekly open-mic event known as "One Mic Stand". Since then, I've even met Russell Peters in Hong Kong!

What is the source of inspiration for your material?

Most of my material comes from experiences drawn from my daily life. I incorporate self-deprecating jokes into my style. I just know how to make a tragedy into a comedy, I guess. Oh, I don't do race-based humor, though. (Laughs)

Do you have a mentor in this area? Or rather, who do you look up to in this field?

To be honest, I think comedy is pretty personal, so I can't really name anyone in this respect. It's really hard to teach someone how to do comedy. The only way to do it is to just go on-stage and be funny. If the material doesn't work, then write and re-write it until it works. Although, I do sometimes ask more senior comedians like Kavin or Jason Leong for some ideas. They have taught me that writing is one of the most important things for a comedian. You have to keep writing, writing and writing until you get the perfect punchline.



Tell me more about your time in Hong Kong, what is the difference between the comedy scene there and here in Malaysia?

It's really different there. Hong Kong audiences are mostly expats, while Malaysian audiences are usually locals. It was hard for me to do local jokes because the audience members are usually from Western countries, and are more interested in "universal" topics like: marriage, relationships, work, race-based jokes, etc. Malaysians, on the other hand, prefer the funny side of everyday life. So, having said this, my time in Hong Kong taught me how to write more universal jokes, but having to cater to Malaysian audiences taught me to find my own brand of humor.

Last question, do you wish to pursue comedy as an occupation?

Of course I do! But my ultimate aspiration is to be a radio DJ. However, I don't think that it's achievable due to my thick Malaysian-Chinese accent and my background because it's not really desirable in local English radio stations. I've tried auditioning for Mandarin radio stations three times, but none of them have replied. So I think that I'm going to be forced to work as a banker in the future, or maybe I'll be a hawker at Rock Café if I really can't find employment. (Laughs) Well, actually the Malaysian comedy scene is pretty lucrative, but it has its risk. You might have five shows per month, or maybe none at all in a year. It is very risky, although it is seemingly easy money. I find it to be a dream job, really. **monga**

Tuck can be found at these events:

Weekly Open Mics:

- One Mic Stand, Petaling Jaya
- Rhythm and Laughters, Petaling Jaya

Monthly Open Mics:

- Comedy Kao Kao, Publika.
- TimeOut KL Thursday Comedy, Kuala Lumpur
- Penang ChinaHouse, Penang Island
- 42 East Open Mic, in Taman Tun Dr. Ismail

I Dream of The Sea

*I dream of coves and coasts and cresting waves,
Of saltwater and limestone caves,
And stones that dot the silver shore,
That make me miss you all the more.*

*There's biting, whistling wind and chilly skin
And freezing tide that rushes in.
The lonely night clings to the air,
And powder sand is everywhere.*

*I dream of music ringing from my bones,
Melusine kings on coral thrones.
I turn around and there you are.
You're silent; distant like a star.*

*And though these sounds of spray I think I hear,
This strong belief that you are near,
And spiral shells you find for me,
I'm only dreaming of the sea.*

- Tiara Chloe Lim



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