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Traumatic Honesty

How Kendrick Brought Back Honesty in Hip



In 2024, Kendrick Lamar dominated not only the hip-hop sphere, but music in general. His song "Not Like Us" charted on the Billboard Global 200 chart for four non-consecutive weeks. On Spotify, it earned the biggest single-day streams for a hip hop song (12.8 million) and the most song streams in a week by a rapper (81.2 million). It also won 5 Grammys. This was all before his album GNX dropped, which in the US debuted atop the Billboard 200 with 319 000 album-equivalent units. It also simultaneously occupied the top two slots on the American Spotify charts, with "Squabble Up" being at number one with 3.272 million streams. He even managed to perform the Super Bowl Halftime Show performance. Throughout his rivalry against Drake, Kendrick's strongest weapon was honesty. While Kendrick kept on tearing down Drake's facade, Drake had nothing much to tear down. What could Drake really say that Kendrick hasn't admitted? But why couldn't Drake tear down Kendrick's facade? It's because Kendrick has already torn down his own facade and "The Big Steppers". After an approximate five year hiatus, Kendrick came back with his fifth studio album that delved into his life experiences that he's brought up through therapy. Kendrick speaks about his childhood, generational trauma, infidelity and celebrity worship. The album at first had mixed reception, it wasn't as well praised as Kendrick's previous work but in recent years, its impact on hip-hop has been more visible. In the era of ghostwriters, social media clout and industry plants, Kendrick has encouraged and brought back honesty in Hip-Hop.



Mr. Morale and The Big Steppers

On 9 May of 2022, after a long silence, Kendrick returned to the spotlight with the Heart part 5. A continuation of his Heart series, the Heart songs were the precursor to Kendrick's albums. In this case, the Heart pt 5 was the precursor to Mr. Morale and the Big Steppers, which was released on May 13 2022. The concept of the album is Kendrick going through therapy. Each song is one session. This is confirmed on the tenth track "Count Me Out" where Whitney, Kendrick's wife, says "Session 10, breakthrough". The therapist that Kendrick is conversing with is Eckhart Tolle, a German author known for his spiritual teachings. This is said by Kodak Black in "Worldwide Steppers", "Kodak Black, Oklama, Eckhart Tolle, And this here is the big stepper". The album is split into two parts, The first part being dedicated to the Big Steppers and the second part being dedicated to Mr. Morale. Kendrick then himself. Throughout the first 9 songs, Kendrick speaks of his fame and accolades. In "United in Grief", ways he and others deal with grief. They deal with spending and sexual pleasure. In N95, facade put up in modern day of the track being dedicated album with the same facade starts to break. In "Die Hard", he speaks about his fear of afraid a little, you relate or not?; Have faith a little, I might this, Kendrick still opens up. In "Father Time", he speaks tough love, how this tough love leads to the fear of vulnerability of a toxic dynamic between a couple, a microcosm of the with Kendrick ready to tackle his intrusive problems which Me Out", Whitney announces the session being a breakthrough his problems bare. The song is Kendrick in conflict, he should stay with his partner or if he should be counted ways and admits that he can't please the entire crowd. After "Savior", a message to the audience that he doesn't have all like them and they also make mistakes. "Auntie Diaries" is of two of his transgender family members and critiques I Sober", he touches upon the generational trauma passed on which years later through conversation with his mother, he of his mother's trauma. He ends the song by freeing his family with him. In the last track of the album, he announces to the general society, "Sorry I didn't save the world, my friend; I was like him, instead of waiting for him to solve the problem they Throughout the album, from song to song, Kendrick becomes to pointing out his own and destroying it. By the end of the The savior turned into the human dealing with the same problems



It's Butterfly Effect

The honesty in "Mr Morale and The Big Steppers" resonated with a lot of the audience. It also deterred some audience members since it brought out heavy topics that people weren't comfortable to hear, too hard of a pill to swallow. The album resonance extended to not only the audience but to Kendrick's peers. After 2022, more hip-hop artists started to put out more honest records dealing with traumatic subjects as well.

To me, the most notable project that is covered in Mr Morale's influence is Tyler The Creator's "Chromakopia". Unlike his other projects and like Kendrick, Tyler delves deep in his current problems that stem from his traumatic past. In contrast



to the fine living of "Call Me if You Get Lost", "Noid" shows the price of paranoia and stress that has to be paid for the positives of fame. Tracks like "Hey Jane" and "Judge Judy" depict the sorrow and heartache of his love life. In "Take Your Mask Off", calls out societies' facades in a similar vein to Kendrick's "N95" but he ends the track with taking off his own and giving a self-deprecating verse similar to the opening verse to "Count Me Out". In "Like Him", Tyler presents a more heart-breaking reality of his life without a father and how it has affected his relationship with his mother. Tyler has mentioned how much Kendrick's album resonated in interviews, "I love that album, but I feel like he touches on shit that's so, like, open and honest that some people can't listen to it because they probably feel like he's looking at them in their eyes and they're like, 'Oh, I can't panic. Uhhh, I can't listen to this. Put on something else so I can hit my dougie'.

Another artist that might I've taken inspiration from Mr. Morale is Vince Staples with his album "Dark Times". In "Black & Blue" and "Government Cheese", Vince gives a raw depiction of his upbringing riddle with gang violence. On "Children's Song", Vince directly confronts a friend about how his longing for crime is affecting his children. On the track "Shame on the Devil", he turns to god to talk about his guilt and he seeks redemption. "Etoufee" and "Radio" is a melancholic look at a past that Vince yearns to be in. In "Justin", Vince gets mad at himself for his accidental involvement in a person cheating on their partner.

Like Kendrick, Vince directly confronts his trauma and how it intertwines with his current life.

Two singles that are coded in Mr. Morale's influences are YG's "2004" and Ye's "Cousins". In both songs, the famed rappers reveal their traumatic past. In YG's case, he reveals that at a young age he was sexually assaulted. For Ye, it was him being sexually assaulted by his own cousin after their first encounter with pornography.

Obviously, this changes the perspective of the rappers and it makes the audience question if their behavior is a product of their traumatic past. Kendrick mentions this in "Mother I Sober", "I know the secrets, every other rapper sexually abused; I see 'em daily buryn' their pain in chains and tattoos". Before these rappers unveiled their truth, did Kendrick know? Did he know about their trauma through seeing their behavior or by them telling him? Or did he know since he knew his similar behavior was a result of his trauma?

The growth in more projects involving rappers being open about trauma can be attributed to Kendrick's own openness. Tyler directly cites him as an inspiration for his openness in "Chromakopia". Vince's delving into the past and connecting it to his current life is a similar thought process to Kendrick's album which shows the probability of it being an influence. YG and Ye's honesty about their sexual abuse might be a response to Kendrick's call out. After a period of Hip-Hop being focused on materialistic values or fame status, Kendrick has shifted its focus back to honesty.

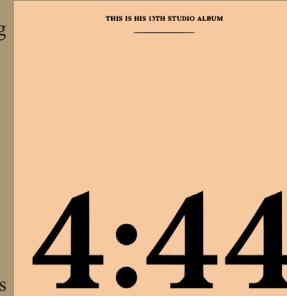


Those three albums show a much vulnerable side of the artist just like Kendrick on

Did Kendrick bring it back, or was it always present?

A criticism that can be made about "Mr Morale and The Big Steppers" brings back honesty is that it was always there. Honesty is a core element of hip-hop. Several albums that precede Kendrick's album have been honest and also have the artist breaking their facade.

The first album that I can think of that shows a similar vulnerability to Kendrick's "Mr Morale and The Big Steppers" is Jay-Z's "4:44". From the first track "Kill Jay-Z", Jay-Z puts down his facade and tells the listeners that this is a Shawn Carter album.

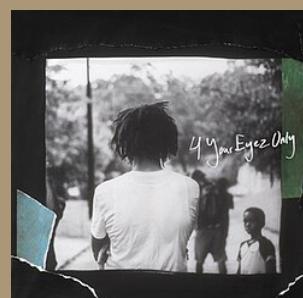


In "Smile", Jay-Z recounts the story of his mother hiding her sexuality and after several years coming out to him. The title track, "4:44", Jay-Z apologizes to his partner for his infidelity and how it was a product of his emotional immaturity. In "Marcy Me", he accepts that he can't vastly change since he can't forget his habits that he developed from his upbringing in the Marcy Projects. In the final track, "Legacy", Jay-Z discusses his wishes for his future generation, he wishes for generational wealth and prosperity. In "4:44", we do get a more vulnerable Jay-Z than we have in his other projects but this vulnerability isn't as sharp as Kendrick's. Jay-Z doesn't fully delve into his traumatic events in a similar way to Kendrick. Unlike Kendrick, Jay-Z still pulls back and falls into his persona.

Another album with a similar vulnerability is Kanye West's "Ye". Kanye is more calm and open in this album than the rest of his discography. He starts the album with a spoken word discussing about his suicidal thoughts extends to thoughts about killing his loved ones. In "Yikes", Kanye goes into his struggle with his (at the time) bi-polar disorder and he critiques the pharmaceutical mistreatment of his struggle. "Wouldn't Leave" gives us the listener a closer look to Kanye's (at the time) marriage showing that despite his crazy antics, his wife is stuck with him even though it caused her emotional turmoil. In "Ghost town", Kanye speaks on his wishes for better days and admits to his faults but he comes to the realization of his freedom. The final track, "Violent Crimes", Kanye talks about his fear as a father which is based on his reflection of how he treated women.

Like Jay-Z, we get a new found vulnerability in Kanye that we haven't seen in his project but he still holds back and doesn't talk about his traumatic past like he did in "Cousins". Kanye still retains his persona in the album.

The final album similar to "Mr Morale and The Big Steppers" is J. Cole's "4 Your Eyez Only". Like the others, J. Cole strips down the facade and presents vulnerability. In "Ville Mentality", J. Cole shows the cost of putting on a tough act, intercutting each



disrespecting his mother and wishing his dead father was here, a parallel to J. Cole's train of thought of when he was a child. The two parter "She's Mine" has J. Cole fully devotes himself to his partner and child. In "Change", J. Cole tells people to change for the better and how the true key to peace is through changing ways and stray away from the nonsensical violence, the price for not following change is depicted with the skit at the end which is a group of people mourning a loss of a member of the community dying from gang violence. "Neighbors" has J. Cole recounts the story of his neighbors calling the police on him. He comes to the conclusion that despite his success and his fame, he can still be the victim of injustices based on racism. The final track, "4 Your Eyez Only", is a message from James to his daughter. We learn that the whole album is not coming from J. Cole's experience but James' life who sadly passed away. He wasn't able to tell his own daughter his life story so he gave the responsibility to J. Cole. Like Kendrick, J. Cole tells a heart-breaking story with utmost vulnerability but unlike "Mr Morale and The Big Steppers", this vulnerability isn't his own but his late friend so J. Cole is still hiding behind a character.

Those three albums show a much vulnerable side of the artist just like Kendrick on



In "Mr Morale and The Big Steppers", Kendrick transforms from the tough luxurious rapper to a man with flaws and trauma that he's trying to recover from. From song to song, therapy session to therapy session, Kendrick admits more and more about the problems that haunt him. This honesty that he presents in this album deeply touched the listeners, among them being artists. Artists that took that sentiment of honesty and emulated it on their own project. After Kendrick opened up about his trauma, more and more started to open up about theirs. That's what sets "Mr Morale and The Big Steppers" from its predecessor that try to reach vulnerability. Kendrick isn't scared about opening up about his trauma, the terrible memories that make him the man he is today. The trauma that he has to face to make him a better father and husband. The true message of "Mr Morale and The Big Steppers" was that everyone embarked on their own journey of self-discovery and confrontation of their traumatic past. With more projects involving traumatic honesty, Kendrick succeeded in his goal with "Mr Morale and The Big Steppers".

Genre Exploration: Anime Dystopian



Recommendations

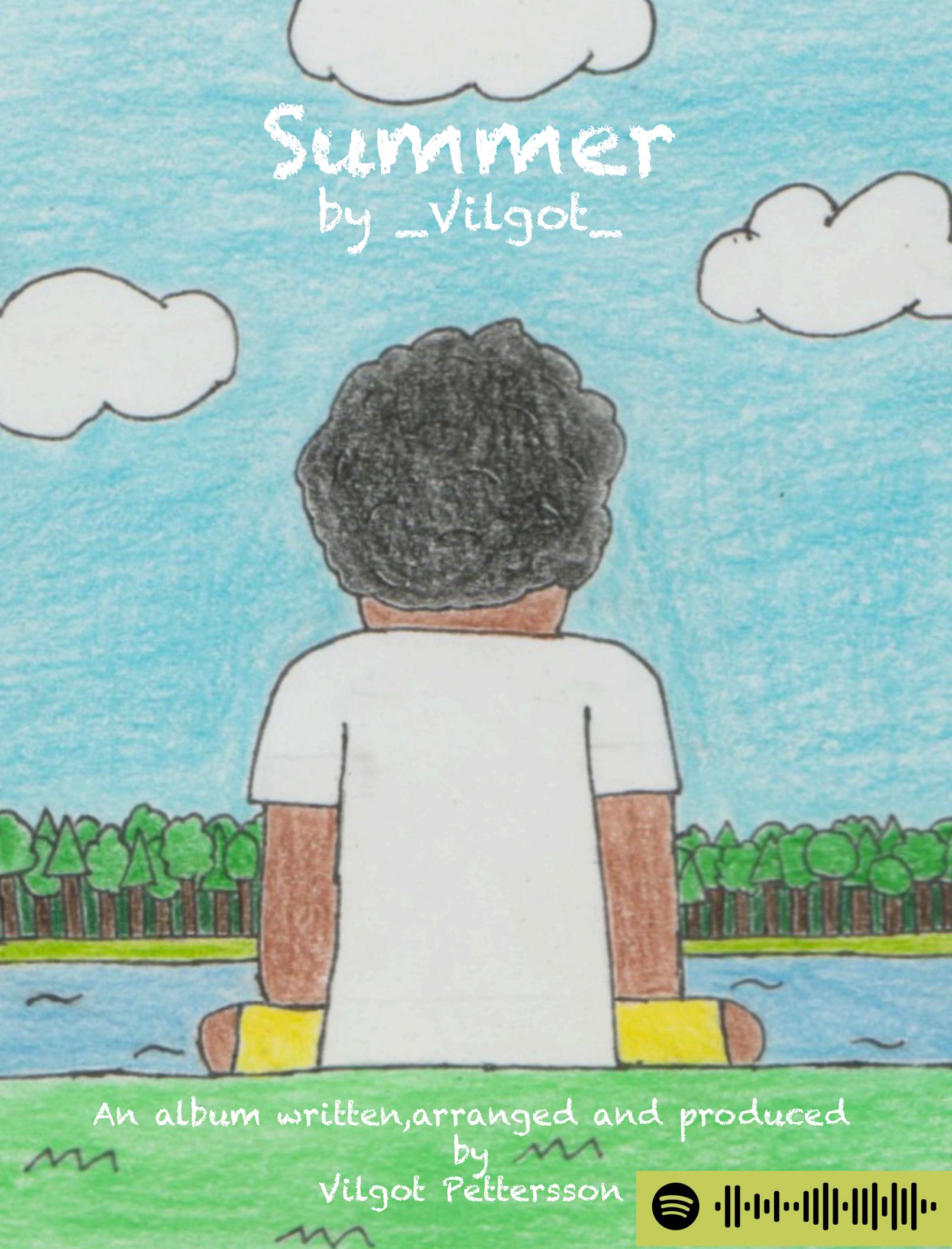
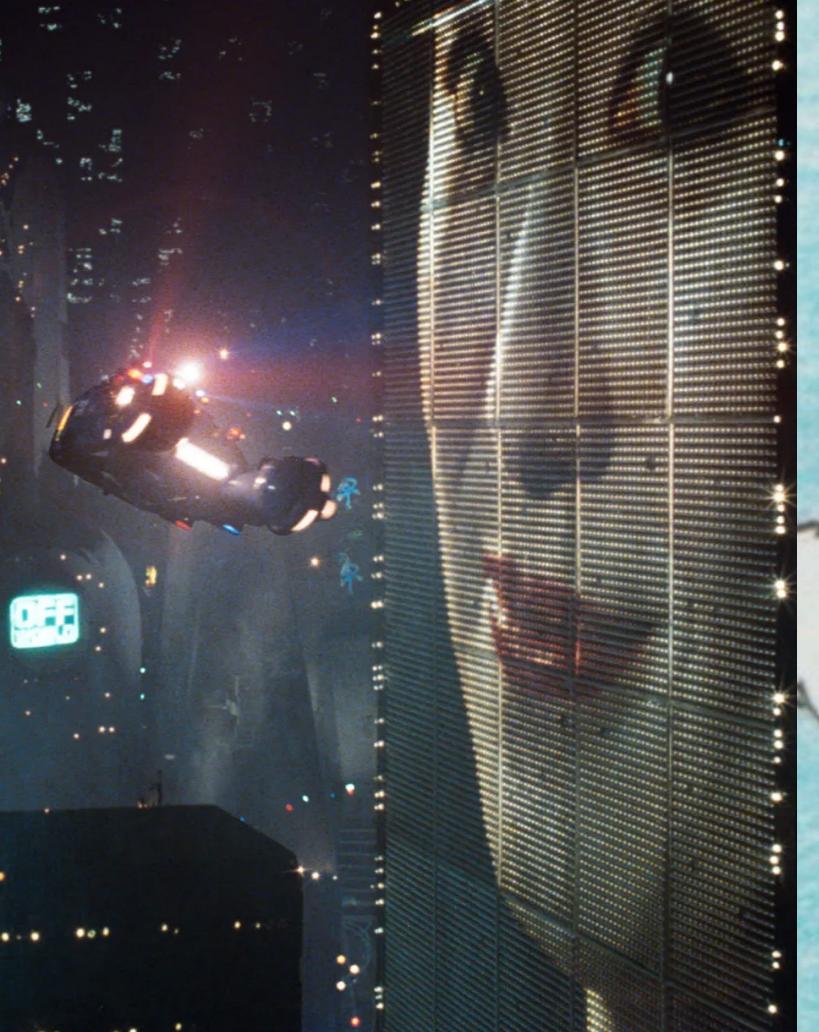
The first dystopian we'll be exploring is "Fire Force". "Fire Force" is a shonen series originally created by the mangaka Atsushi Ohkubo, who's also the creator of "Soul Eater". The story picks up in a new version of Tokyo called the Tokyo Empire. "The Great Cataclysm", which happened 250 years ago, was the event that changed the course of humanity. During it, the world was set at complete ablaze, making several nations fall and leaving a few areas left, one of them being Tokyo. In the aftermath, the Tokyo Emperor Raffles I established the new religion of the Holy Sol Temple and a new company, Hajima Industries, developed the perpetual thermal energy plant Amaterasu to power the country. The story picks up in the Solar Year 198, a special fire brigade called the Fire Force has been created to fight off humans that are the victims of spontaneous combustion. The brigade is composed of pyrokinetics and rarely none pyrokinetics. The show focuses on a particular section of the brigade, one that doesn't follow the standards and does share the common goal of the brigade. The main character, Shinra Kusakabe, a third generation pyrokinetic, joins the unique company. Throughout his adventures with them, he learns not only the possible sinister past of the Holy Sol Temple but also more and more about his own traumatic past. The thing that I really like about this show is how it's a representation of a possible future of how global warming could change society. The idea of spontaneous combustion is well developed. Not only it shows the terrors of it but how it affects society and the members of the brigade themselves. The tragedy of it is well explored. The pyrokinetic powers are very unique. The series depicts how pyrokinesis can be diverse in its ability. The mangaka gets creative with the characters' powers and their usage. Not only do they get creative with the regular people. The characters that don't have that ability don't get left out; rather they get as much of or more of the spotlight than the pyrokinetics. Of course, the usual intriguing mystery of the past is well done, especially when the characters are finding out more about the past at the same time as the audience. If you want a good depiction of a dystopia based on the fear of global warming, then "Fire Force" is a good contender.

The second dystopia is "Darling in The Franxx". "Darling in The Franxx" is a mecha/romance anime animated by Trigger and CloverWorks. The story is set in a distant future, where humans have abandoned the surface to live underground in a dome structure called Plantations. While the adults are living under the domes, the youth are up in the dome given the responsibility to defend the Plantation against giant creatures known as Klaxosaurus. The organization leading humanity is called APE and its chairman, Papa is worshiped to the same degree as god. We follow a squad of ten pilots but what sets this squad apart is the protagonist, Hiro, suddenly forms a partnership with a hybrid human called Zero Two. Through more missions and digging around their home, the group found out the current lifeless operation and how life was before APE. Similar to "Fire Force", the audience discovers the truth of their society at the same time as the character. It's also a nice dystopia that centers around over-exploitation of resources and the sacrifice of humanity for scientific advancement. The importance of common human things is very well shown through the eyes of the youth discovering for the first time these simplicity. Things like names are giving importance since in this new world, names have been lost. The youths' angst and emotional sensitivity contrast well with the emotionally restrictive world, it highlights both sides really well and the conflict between them is done nicely and subtly.

The third dystopia is "Promised Neverland". "Promised Neverland" is a shonen/dark fantasy anime originally written by Kaiu Shirai and illustrated by Posuka Demizu. In 2045, Emma lived in Grace Field House among 37 other orphans. Their lives seem perfect, they get tons of food, plush beds, clean clothes and are well taken care of by their "Mom". The orphans' education is seen as a key factor for their development. Emma and her two friends, Norman and Ray, excel academically. After an unfortunate night, Emma and Ray see something that makes them realize that their utopic home is actually a dystopia that will lead to their death. With the help of Norman, the trio plan an escape for not only them three but the rest of the orphans as well. Unlike the other two, "Promised Neverland" starts on a smaller scale focusing more on the truths of Grace Field House and then eventually opening it up to the rest of the world. It's similar to the usual escaping the cult plotline that are seen in movies but its fantasy elements and complete mystery of the world outside of Grace Field House makes it more intriguing. Although the show doesn't succeed with the same quality in the second season, the first season will for sure get you hooked. The dynamics between the characters are well done and the balance of their intelligence and their childlike naivety is perfectly handled since you truly believe that they're just smart children and not adults in children's bodies which is the struggle when you imply that the children are high-intellect.

Finally, the most famous anime dystopia, "Akira". After a sudden explosion wiping Tokyo, a world war follows. After this war, Tokyo gets rebuilt into Neo-Tokyo, a dazzling bright shining city with an underbelly of corruption, anti-government protest, terrorism and gang violence. In 2019, we follow the story of Shotaro Kaneda, a biker gang leader trying to save his childhood friend Tetsuo Shima who gains telekinetic powers that might put Neo-Tokyo in danger. The movie is famous for a reason, it is perfectly rated for its quality. The city of Neo-Tokyo is as intriguing and fascinating as other sci-fi cities like the one of Blade Runner or Coruscant from Star Wars. The heavy detailing in every single element makes you really focus on every part of the frame to make sure you don't miss out on anything. The colors punch you in the gut and make you at awe for how harrowing they are. You'll recognize all the famous scenes that others took inspiration from which will give another depth of appreciation for those tropes, such as the iconic Akira slide. The story is quite straightforward but this doesn't mean that it won't impress you. The scale of the action keeps on growing which makes the straightforward story impressive, you can't guess how big the consequences will be. The main character's charm and playful nature contrasts well with the seriousness of the city and the events, he gives the movie a nice lighter tone. "Akira" is highly regarded for the right reasons, if you won't watch the other three recommendations then that's alright but "Akira" is a must watch.





What sets it apart from Western Dystopia?

Anime dystopia and Western dystopia don't emulate the exact same energy, they're two different shades of the same color. You might say that it's obvious since ones animated so the world building can be taken to farther lengths than it can with live action. It is true but even with literature where the world building is what you tailor to be from descriptions which can be more imaginative than animations, Anime's storytelling has its uniqueness more than Westerns.

One key difference between both is the protagonist's perspective. In most western dystopia, we follow a middle aged character that has seen how society has changed; they know (not exactly) what led to the dystopian state of their world. For example, in "Handmaid's Tale", we get snippets of the main character reminiscing about her previous life which is a nice pinpoint of how much was taken away from her. In most Anime dystopias, the main cast are composed of the youth who grew up in the newly formed society. This perspective makes exposition more exciting since the past is as much of a mystery to the characters to us. Seeing the youth discovering the existence of common things and being a complete stranger about it shows the importance or gives you more appreciation for those things. For example, in "Fire Force", the existence of animals is spoken like a myth or in "Darling in the Franxx", traditional acts between lovers are completely new territory to the kids. You get the same perspective in Western dystopias like "Hunger Games", but what sets anime apart is that the youth that are built to focus on protecting or serving their government are discovering basic humanity for the first time. Anime highlights that humanity can't be sacrificed. Its messaging is more effective than western dystopia.

While most Western dystopia is caused by radical political change, in anime the change is less focused on politics but more on survival or technological advancement. For example, in "Darling in the Franxx", society has been shaped into what it is because of its overexploitation of resources which led to high technology advancement. The society literally shapes its youth to protect its exploitation of this valuable resource. In terms of survival, "Akira" and "Fire Force", both fictional versions of Tokyo, are Tokyo being hastily rebuilt after a catastrophe. You might attribute this concept to Japan's history of getting a city completely disappear from a huge explosion. Also, it focuses more on the environmental changes. Going back to "Fire Force", the show depicts a fascinating world of how humans have to adapt to the radical effects of global warming. Even in "Darling at the Franxx", when the characters see a small town of the past, the place is filled with overgrown plants and trees. The past society is always heavily depicted with nature, more than they do in Western media.

Conclusion

When it comes to dystopias, Anime takes it to a different level than Western media hasn't. The prominent messaging of the genre is to distance yourself from your societal role and appreciate nature and your humanity. A message that is well executed and depicted more than Western dystopias. Despite Anime dystopias being good, this doesn't mean that Western dystopias aren't amazing as well. If you want something new and exciting from the dystopia genre, then go watch anime dystopias.

An album written, arranged and produced
by
Vilgot Pettersson





The Bell

Bath's Hub for Music

Bath is quite a small city, it's easy to miss it on your way to Bristol. The city is mostly known for its tourist attractions, the Roman Baths and the Abbey Church, and for its universities, University of Bath and Bath Spa University. If you ask a local or people that visit Bath one good thing about the small city, it's the great selection of pubs. The pubs in Bath come in all shapes and forms, you can definitely find one that suits your style. There are several that also do live gigs but none of them compare to the one that holds the crown, The Bell.

The Bell is a pub in Walcot Street, an eccentric street on the edge of Bath's city centre. On July 2nd 2013, the pub was bought by 536 of its customers making it not only the first co-operatively owned pub in Bath but also the largest pub buyout project in Britain at the time. The project was even backed by the Genesis lead singer, Peter Gabriel and the lead singer of Led Zeppelin, Robert Plant. Before the buyout, the Bell was still prospering since the seventies but the previous owner wanted to venture into something new thus leaving the pub to new owners.

Robert Plant put it the best on the Bell strength, "To me, the Bell is a crucial and integral venue and a great window into the world of music and entertainment in the West Country", that also extends to the arts and artisans. The Bell hosts live gigs three times a week and the band always vary not only in genre but also in origin. One week it will be a rock group from the West Country and the week after it will be a jazz group from Egypt. Some bands also come with a comedy act that gives some surrealism to your life. Nonetheless, the crowd is always packed with people that wanna dance and shout like crazy. If there aren't any live gigs, the Bell hosts several events such as art galleries or DJ sets done by locals.

Other than the music and various events, at its core is about community like any good pub. Every Wednesday, I see a lot of recurring people. Some are university students, some are locals and then you have seniors that can be nice but also weirdly nice. I even have gone so much that people recognize me. Going to the Bell frequently will get you a similar result to going to a club or a society frequently.



The Bell is one of the best pubs since it does the two things a pub should do, creating a community and providing entertainment. The music has never disappointed and always entices a crowd to go wild. Some of my best memories at the pub were at the Bell because one of the best moments in the world is hearing live music and dancing crazy with your friends. Bath isn't as special as it is without the Bell's charming musical presence keeping the local scene alive.



Oh My Ladybug

The other day, I was waiting in a park nearby campus. I was waiting for the campus to open. Then it opened and on my way there, I found three ladybugs on my backpack. Two of them were the traditional red with black spots while one was black with red spots. During my entire stay at campus, the ladybugs were crawling around my backpack keeping me in good company. This sparked my curiosity about the species. How do they live? What do they eat? Does their spotted pattern have an actual function? Why does one of them black and have red spots? Where do they actually reside when they're not on my backpack or on a random piece of concrete? I thought why not do some research and learn a few things about the red dotted bug that I keep on encountering on the most random occasions.



General Knowledge

Coccinellidae, or known as the ladybug in North America or ladybird in the United Kingdom is a species of beetle. The lady part stems from Mother Mary since she was often depicted wearing a red cloak with 7 seven spots which represented her seven joys and seven sorrows. Most Coccinellidae are carnivorous predators that commonly eat aphids (small sap-sucking insects) and scale insects. Some species do consume other things like plants and fungi. They are promiscuous breeders meaning they breed with anyone. They reproduce during spring and summer in mild temperatures and in tropical regions, they do it during the wet season. They develop from larva to pupa to adult, the predatory Coccinellidae lay their eggs next to prey colonies so that they have a food source. Temperate (mild temperature) species hibernate and diapause (delay in development) during the winter and tropical species are dormant during the dry season. Coccinellidae migrate between dormancy sites and breeding sites (hopefully my backpack isn't a breeding site).

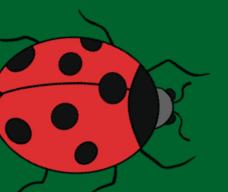
Color defense

Their bright coloration does serve a function, it's used for defense. Many coccinella discourage predators with their bright coloration since it's a warning of their toxicity. A 2015 study showed that five ladybug species color warning is a genuine warning for the species toxic nature. When disturbed, the ladybug defends itself with reflex bleeding, it exude drops of its toxic and bitter body fluid from its tibio-femoral (knee) joint to its predator to give a sample which obviously deters them.



Culture significance

Ladybugs are usually associated with luck, love, fertility and prophecy. The term "ladybug" is an affectionate term for a loved one. In European folklore, the ladybug is known as a matchmaker crawling on a woman and then flying to their true love. The Cherokee have revered them as the "Great Beloved Woman" which was used as a title for the highest-ranking women in the government, who would be painted in the colors and patterns of the insect during ceremonies. It's also said that they can predict the future, specifically weather conditions or crop conditions. They're also key figures in religions. In Christianity, ladybugs are seen as the literal gatekeepers of Heaven. The Swedish name for ladybug, *Himmelskungla* means "Keys of Heaven". In Judaism, they're referred to as the "Cow of Moses our Teacher".



Different Species

Here are some different species of ladybug that I found interesting:

The most common ladybug is the *Coccinella septempunctata*, which is a carnivorous beetle native to Europe, Africa and Eastern Asia. It was introduced in North America to have a biological control on aphids.

The black and red spotted ladybug is a *Exochomus quadripustulatus*, or commonly known as a pine ladybird. The pine ladybird is present in most European countries and it was introduced to San Francisco between 1915-1930 to control the hemlock wooly adelgid. They can be found from April to October on conifers (type of trees) and deciduous trees (trees that shed).

The *Cheilomenes sexmaculata*, known as the six-spotted zig-zag ladybird which is a misleading name since it creates confusion with other ladybird species. This species is seen in Asia. From India to Japan and even certain regions of Australia. They were introduced in the Caribbean islands as a biocontrol agent but it has spread throughout South America.

The Mexican bean beetle (*Epilachna varivestis*) is a ladybug that can be an agricultural pest. Unlike other ladybugs, the mexican bean beetle is a herbivore. This species is found throughout Mexico and eastern United States. They're abundant in wet areas in the west of the Rocky Mountains, it doesn't tolerate dry areas.

Finally, the *Nephus quadrimaculatus* is a ladybug that feeds on aphids and mealybugs. This species was first described by Johann Friedrich Wilhelm Herbst in 1783 and is present in Europe. It inhabited warm lowland and the lower slopes of mountains. It also inhabits parks and forests on deciduous trees and ivy.

Genre Exploration: Shibuya-kei

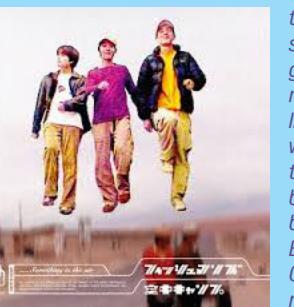
When it comes to Tokyo landmarks, Shibuya stands out as one of the city's most known areas. Its expansive crossing and its unique frantic night life that can't be seen in other areas brings Shibuya to the forefront today. This isn't only in the case of today but also in the 1990s. In the 1990s, Japan was in the aftermath of an economic crash from their bubble economy that was growing throughout the 70s and 80s. This put the city at some low state and all the flashiness of the 80s withered away. Despite that loss, Japan's voice of culture was still heard, especially Shibuya's. The city pop

that was playing in every club in the 80s was now gone which left room for a new genre to take its place, Shibuya-kei. Shibuya-kei, or in English Shibuya style, was a genre rising during the 90s from Shibuya's underground scene. Shibuya was a hub for music especially because of its various record shops, even housing Tower Records and an HMV. In a quick summary, you can say that Shibuya-kei is Japan's alternative pop. The genre is quite expansive and has multiple facades to it, it is so hard to pin-point since Shibuya-kei is more of a lifestyle than a strict music genre. The genre is known for its blending of Brian Wilson music, psychedelic rock, lounge pop and exotica. They even sampled music from the 1960s and modernized it in similar ways that hip-hop would do. The two key bands that pioneered the genre were Flipper's Guitar and Pizzicato Five. It would evolve and other bands would keep it alive during the 2000s. Here are some of the Shibuya-kei records that I think are amazing.

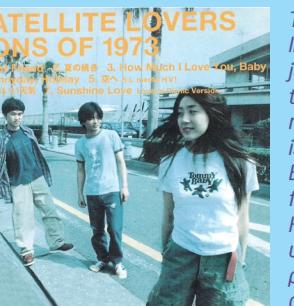
Recommendation



The first record is Lamp's "Lamp Genso". This album has had a small resurgence like a lot of Shibuya-kei records recently. In terms of its style, this album falls into the more jazzier and bossa nova side of Shibuya-kei. It's a good record to set a calming mood in the room. The vocals are soft and whispery which makes it feel like the artist is telling you a bedtime story, the harmonies give the songs a dreamy effect to them. The transitions between some songs are done so seamlessly that it feels like one long ride. The record reminds me of "Charm" by Clairo or Margo Guryan in which the songs feel like a soothing walk to the park. The soft acoustic guitar, the simple textured drums, the slow strings, the various small contributions of small instruments, the flutes breezing and the piano notes sticking out emulates that slow comforting feeling. These songs make you nostalgic for just the simple moments of quietness. For example, "Ame Furu Yoru No Mukou" reminds me of Japanese children's songs that I would hear on TV or while outside passing by. "Yume Utsutsu", the band's best known song, takes me back to looking at the window on the trains that would go outside of Tokyo. The song "Nihon Syonen No Natsu", makes me think of the artist sitting at bed by a warm light lamp and singing to it. "Hatachi No Koi" reminds me of an early morning walk at the park in Tokyo. The final track, "A Summer Vacation", is a great closer that excels with its choir-like harmony surrounding the main vocals, piano and the guitar. If you wanna a nice jazz record that makes you long for simplicity then Lamp's "Lamp Genso" does a good job in providing you that feeling.



The second record is Fishmans' "Kūchū Camp". I got recommended this album by my friend Jack and from his own words this record is "very chill" and "nice to just have on you feel me". In terms of the records I'm going to talk about, this one stands out the most compared to the others. This album leans more to psychedelic dream pop with hints of reggae. The groovy bass and drums paired with the up beat guitar puts your mind in a humid setting. It's a nice comfy sound to lay rest too. With some of the tracks being 6 minutes long, you're just feeling the vibe without ever expecting it to end. It's like those live gig bands that keep on playing the same thing till they get tired and if they do get bored, they spice it up with bringing different instruments like the flute or strings. The drums are different in the sense it doesn't go for the jazz texture but more of drums that I relate to rock or 80s pop. In "BABY BLUE", you get submerged into an excellent drum and bass combo with a nice guitar and remarkable flute appearances. In the track after "SLOW DAYS", the energy gets a little bit higher with a harder guitar riff and the singer's percussive wailing that contrasts well with his "oh yeah yeah". "SUNNY BLUE", the hip-hop drums take the forefront while the wave of vocals become the background of the song. In "Night Cruising", the eerie guitar, the repeating piano notes and the crunchy drums set you in the setting of driving at night in the rural roads of Japan. If you want an album to set your mind free and wander around then "Kūchū Camp" gives you the nice soundtrack for your pondering.



The third record is Satellite Lovers' "SONS OF 1973". Similarly to the other records, this record has come back in the spotlight because of the album's huge growth in YouTube. One big characteristic of this album is groove. With its melting pot of jazz, soul and funk, this record gives you a nice breeze and takes you back to a warm beach day. The use of the organ and tambourines gives the tropical soul to the album while the piano, guitar and drums keeps some groundedness. It gives me nostalgia for those weekend trips to Kamakura and going straight into the glistening ocean. The first track, "Best Friend" is a sweet love song that has the same calming groove and subtle vocals as Sade's "Kiss of Life". In "How Much I Love You, Baby", the singer not only changes between Japanese and English on verse and chorus but also with the verse she goes for a more rhythmic cadence similar to rap while in the chorus, she's much more melodic. The track after, "Sunnyday, Holiday", is a lofi track where the singer is much quieter and electric piano gives a wave of calmness. In "It's Nice Outside", using ordinary sounds like people talking, beer pouring and the phone buzzing it immerse you into a world, the simple piano and drums highlights those sounds even more. The album feels like the band members recounting their good times over holidays and with the singer's charisma and immersive instrumentals, the band draws you into their world of fun.



The final record is not only my favorite Shibuya-kei records but one of my favorite records of all-time, Serani Poji "one room survival". A little bit of history about this record, the band is composed of video game composer Sasaki Tomoko, music producer Fukutomi Yukihiko, and vocalist Yukichi. Originally the record was made for the game "ROOMMANIA#203". In recent years, the record has resurfaced through short-form content especially because of the songs "where is smiley?" and "pipo pipo". The album is an amazing wholesome pack of songs. A lot of the songs have a happy jingle or hook to it which makes you glee. One part of the record is composed of nice jazz with sweet vocals by the lead singers and the other parts is energetic electronica that would make you jump around. This album perfectly emulates the feeling of summer in Japan. Everytime I play this record, I get nostalgic of me sweating in the empty tatami room at my childhood house holding a 2 liter Suntory water bottle. The previously mentioned "where is smiley?" is a sweet jazz song that makes you glee over the childish hook, the trumpets, the acoustic guitar and percussions puts my mind at a party setting or at least somewhere near the coast. That song was the last song I listened to before leaving Tokyo to go back to the UK. The other famous song "pipo pipo" works for the same reason as "where is smiley?", a playful song with amazing drum breaks. "Pipo pipo" excels in catchiness and will make you sing "pipo" out of nowhere. My favorite song, "LOVELABOR", is a pleasant soothing song where the singer sings about the work they would do for their lover in English. The unclean English and whisper singing gives a nice warmth and wholesomeness to the song. The instrumental of this song takes me back to early summer mornings of Tokyo. "A fisherman's story" is an energetic song that is similar to "where is smiley?", the song puts my mind to a coastal setting. In the track after, "mune-aki" finds a way to perfectly balance the lo-fi side and the dance side of the record. Throughout the record, the vocals don't pull back and are used in the most creative way. In every song, the song would change and be very dynamic which gives you a thrilling ride. This record is a bundle of fun, it gives you nostalgia of simple times with its childlike mannerism. If you want to get the closest thing to knowing the experience of summer in Tokyo, listen to this album on a warm sunny day.



It's Impact and Why has it resurfaced

Several bands gathered a huge amount of success during their era not only in Japan but also abroad. The world subscribed to Japan's new identity post 80s city pop. Even non-Japanese bands started to make Shibuya-kei music, bands such as Momus, La Casa Azul, Dimitri from Paris. South Korea went even to the lengths of having "a Korean neo-Shibuya-kei movement" because of its number of up and coming Shibuya-kei bands.

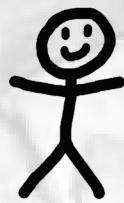
Shibuya-kei's initial demise was a result of the pioneers' bands disbanding or moving to other music endeavors. Like its predecessor, 80s city pop, it soon dwindled away because of its change of the setting. Similarly though, the genre would get its second life in the modern day. Three of the records I recommended are records that grew mysteriously in popularity on various social media. People have started to dig through to get more records. This doesn't only apply to Shibuya-kei, why have old Japanese records been gaining recognition? Why did Satellite Lovers' "Sons of 1973", an album that flew under the radar on its release, suddenly catch people's attention? I think it's a combination of two elements, Japan's rise in cultural globalization and the nostalgia for the past decades. With anime and games making everyone have their eyes turned to Japan more than ever, its music would eventually get its spotlight. Unlike before, the recent generations have been looking at past decades with glamor, this combined with the focus on Japan, the result is the second chance of shibuya-kei and city pop.

Conclusion

Shibuya-kei for me has this unique flavor that I can't find with any genre. I don't know what it exactly is but there's something in this genre that I can't find anywhere else. Another thing it has that I can only find in Shibuya-kei is nostalgia. Nostalgia of my home city or even country. It's not the same kind of nostalgia you get when a childhood song gets played and takes you back to when you were a kid. From the get-go, these records put my mind back to Japan. The genre's careless nature and playful charm makes it more welcoming to people who don't understand the language. With music, the language barrier doesn't stop people from enjoying music. That theory stands true with Shibuya-kei.



BEN'S RANT: ANIME



Over the years, we otakus, or weebz if you will, have been cast aside, ridiculed, and socially exiled for our undying devotion to 2D characters and emotionally devastating story arcs. We were the outcasts, the ones quoting anime in gym class and drawing Naruto headbands in our notebooks while the world laughed.

But oh, how the tides turned. Celebrities started flaunting their love for anime. From Samuel L. Jackson to Michael B. Jordan, the mainstream began to embrace what we always knew was peak fiction. We stood proud. We were no longer just basement dwellers; we were culture. Yet now... now we've gone too far.

Somewhere between the cringe TikTok cosplays, the overuse of "baka" in casual conversation, and calling every remotely cool character "daddy," we've crossed a line. The sacred texts are being disrespected. Studio Ghibli is being desecrated by AI generated art and people are watching anime purely for aesthetics without reading any subs.

It might be time. Time for a little humbling. Not exile, but just enough collective bullying to bring back balance to the anime force.

It all started with the growing popularity of anime in the Western world. On the surface, this seemed like a positive change, giving anime studios and mangakas a chance to reach a wider audience. But beneath the excitement lies a darker truth, shitty anime takes, blatantly wrong opinions, and the most generic top ten lists you've ever seen.

Aight enough of this bullshit dramatization of the situation, let's get real. FUCK yall opinions man. How the fuck do you got Solo Leveling S1, hold up let me reiterate, Solo Leveling SEASON 1 rated higher than Frieren? Nah I swear to god some of yall are straight up lobotomites. ON a real note though, are we really letting particle effects and edgy stares carry a whole ass show to the top while Frieren redefines what post adventure melancholy even means whilst still holding to top rank on MAL. Frieren's got themes, character growth, soul. That anime doesn't need to shout. It whispers, and that whisper hits harder than any CGI sword slash Solo Leveling could hope to animate.

But nah, yall see a dude in a black trench coat kill 200 monsters in a blue-lit dungeon and start acting like it's peak fiction. Bro is out here getting power ups like it's a mobile gacha game tutorial and you're all losing your minds like it's the second coming of Attack on Titan. Like man be for real.

And let's not even start on the new generation of anime "fans" who treat openings like TikTok audios, never finishing an episode unless there's a vibe check aesthetic filter. These are the same people who'll say they're anime "fans" but haven't sat through the psychological warfare of Evangelion or the emotional devastation of March Comes Like a Lion. Can't even spell "Monogatari" let alone watch it. You hand 'em Owarimonogatari and their brains flatline before Hitagi even shows up. They out here skipping dialogue-heavy episodes like they're side quests in a game they too lazy to finish. Meanwhile, we're out here getting philosophical enlightenment from a toothbrush scene and sobbing over internal monologues about the weight of self-worth.

And you know these are the same people who'll call "slice of life" boring while blasting the most mid shounen power fantasy with the depth of a kiddie pool. "Nothing happens in this show," they say bro, everything happens. You just missed it because your attention span's been cooked by reels and your idea of storytelling peaked with overused flashbacks and trauma bait. Don't get me wrong, trauma arcs can slap, but y'all treat them like seasoning. Sprinkle a tragic backstory on a flat character and suddenly it's "the most relatable protagonist ever." Get outta here with that.

You ever sit with Monster and actually listen? No swords, no mechs, no isekai cheats just dialogue, nuance, human pain. And it hits harder than a final form transformation because it respects your brain. It asks for your attention. And that's too much for some of y'all.

And nah, this ain't some elitist rant from someone who thinks you gotta have watched 1000 shows to be a fan. It's just have some damn respect. Respect for the creators who pour their souls into this. Respect for the medium that gave us everything from the soft stillness of Natsume Yuujinchou to the mind-bending chaos of Perfect Blue. Respect for stories that dared to be slow, or weird, or painful, or all of the above. Don't get me wrong none of these do I find too be the best but they still more humanity in them than solo leveling.

You can hype your sakuga-heavy, explosion-filled, edgecore series all you want, but don't pretend it's the peak just because it's loud and shiny. Sometimes the most powerful scene is just two characters talking. Sometimes it's the quiet moment after the climax, where nothing happens but everything's changed.

And for the love of all that is good, stop calling every villain with decent animation and a sad flashback "the GOAT." Bro manipulates a side character one time and y'all ready to write essays about moral complexity. Get a grip.

You wanna talk GOATs? Try watching Legend of the Galactic Heroes. That's 100 episodes of political chess, character depth, and ideological warfare with no training arcs and barely a single sword. Ain't no blue dungeon lighting to keep your attention there, just peak writing.

Look, love what you love. Wear your Akatsuki hoodie. Quote your favorite lines. Hell, make your AMVs. But if you're gonna step into this space, learn to recognize the roots. The stories that walked so your flashy favorites could run. The ones that didn't just entertain you they changed you.

And if you can't do that

If you're just here for the clout, the clippings, the clips with lo-fi beats and vaporwave edits Then yeah. Maybe it's time we bring back the collective clown check It's not even gatekeeping anymore, it's cultural conservation.

If you think of remembering anything from this rant just watch the anime I listed except for Natsume Yuujinchou. If you'd like any more recommendations you can contact me at bentakaki7@gmail.com



Photographer Focus: Pelle Cass



Instagram is a good platform to find amazing photographers. Since the app is built around photos it's the perfect platform for them to show their work but to stand out more you have to build a unique style. Photos with elaborate and glorious edits usually get a lot of attention, it certainly gets mine. One photographer that certainly got my attention with his truly large scale photos is Pelle Cass.



Pelle Cass' Background

Pelle Cass is a photographer based in Boston, Massachusetts. His work has been collected by various different establishments, from museums like the Fogg Art Museum to collections like the Polaroid Collection. He's also received fellowships from Yaddo, Artist's Resource Trust and the Polaroid Collection. He got introduced to the medium in high school, he went to an alternative school named Lewis-Wadham where the director of the school was a former Life Magazine photographer named Herb Snitzer. He took Snitzer's photography classes and that's where he got the interest for it.

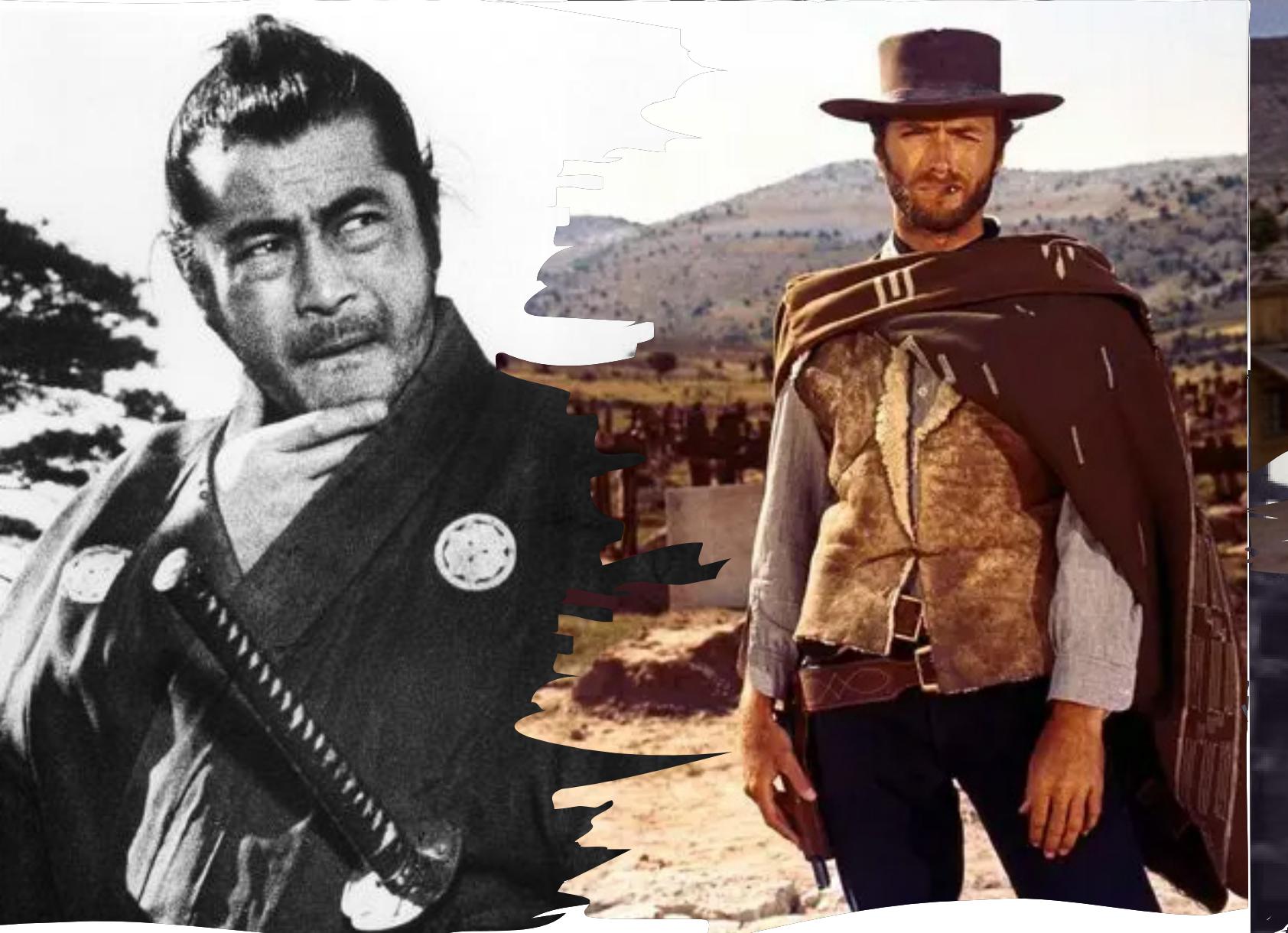


His style

I think Cass' can be described by what he looks for in photography: "Energy. Feeling. Strangeness. Every part of the picture should have something interesting, a person, a bird, or just dynamic negative space". His work is packed with so much detail it's a big tableau of the location or activity he's capturing. The process is quite simple, he puts a camera on a tripod, takes a thousand photos, takes the highlights and composes all those highlighted figures into one picture. Cass says the real excitement comes in the photoshop part of the process while the actual photo taking is boring. None of his photos are staged and thrives on randomness. For example in his work "Crowded Fields", the photos at a sports location dissolves the linear time of the game and instead shows the entirety at once. In the street location photos, the randomness is more apparent since there's not much guarantee of interest but Cass finds something because his "theory is that if I point a camera at some public spot for a long enough period, something interesting will occur. And it's true. A lot happens in an hour if you look closely". The best thing about his photography is its density of elements, like he said, there's not a single space in his photo that you should miss.

Pelle Cass' work reminds me of a Where's Waldo photo, a multiplicity of people or objects each with their own peculiar interest. To me, that's what makes Pelle Cass' work interesting and maybe that's why he has garnered a big following and an interest from high end establishments.





SAMURAI or COWBOYS Same Story, Different Paint

In 1961, Akira Kurosawa released "Yojimbo", a samurai tale about a ronin entering a gang riddled town. Through wit, trickery and a bit of luck, the ronin manages to not only disarm one of the gangs but both of them. Thus setting the town free from the violence and shady business. The film was a massive success, it's regarded as one of Kurosawa's best and one of the best samurai movies. In 1964, Sergio Leone released "A Fistful of Dollars", a western story about a stranger entering a gang riddled town. Through wit, trickery and a bit of luck, the stranger manages to not only disarm one of the gangs but both of them. Thus setting the town free from the violence and shady business. The film was a massive success, it's regarded as one of the best western movies. You can see by my descriptions of both movies that the plot is the same, Kurosawa also noticed this and wrote to Leone saying "Signor Leone, I have just had the chance to see your film. It is a very fine film, but it is my film. Since Japan is a signatory of the Berne Convention on the international copyright, you must pay me.". He did receive 15% of the film's revenue, He earned more money from this settlement than from "Yojimbo". It's the same story but with a different coat of paint, if this can be done then how similar are both genres? If all it takes is to change the setting and the design then can all samurai movies become westerns? To what degree are samurai movies and cowboy movies homogenous? Even though Leone directly copied Kurosawa, I believe that both genres still have core similarities. Although both sequels ("Sanjuro" & "For a Few Dollars More") diverge in stories, there's still some similarities in both in terms of other aspects. Samurai movies and Cowboys movies at their core are twins. This can be seen in their setting, protagonist and their themes.

Setting

The setting is a key thing for both genres. They both represent a specific time of their respective countries. In the case of the Samurai genre, the genre's films usually are set during the Tokugawa Era (also known as the Edo period), this is why a lot of the samurai movies touch on the end of the lifestyle of the samurai. For example, "Harakiri" by director Masaki Kobayashi is a story about a former samurai requesting to commit seppuku in the quarters of a local feudal lord, when asked what led him to commit the act he tells his story of how much he lost because of his samurai pride. The samurai movies are set in a time of change for Japan, where the traditions are losing their merit and a new age of governors are starting form usually with the help of technological advancements or foreign power. In the case of "Yojimbo", the small town is essentially lawless and in a rough patch because of the new age gangs. One key character of "Yojimbo" is Unosuke who stands out because he's the only person with a gun. He symbolizes the new generation, the generation that's moving away from the samurai ways and heading into the more radical territory. In the case of Westerns, the films are depicted during the American frontier, in a similar sense of the Tokugawa Era, this period was filled with disorder because of the country being in a state of change. The Wild West like indicated in its name is wild because law wasn't as present but various groups of gunslingers were. For example, in "For a Few Dollars More", not only do we see prison escape but a bank robbery and several cases of shootings between the groups. Similar to the Samurai genre, the loss of justice is a big theme. The point where it differs between the genres is that the Tokugawa Era was the era of change out of a system of order while the American frontier was the era of change into a system of order. Also in both genres, the setting is usually quite small, stories happening in a small town or in confined spaces that forces the adversaries to clash. The setting of both genres is key to their story, it's what makes or breaks the genre. Depicting the time of change of both countries and the roughness that change had on small towns that couldn't protect themselves from that change.

Protagonist

The protagonists in both genres are what keeps the audience engaged. Seeing how the main character navigates the chaotic setting in their unique way is what gives these movies their thrill. For the samurai, it's seeing the unknown ronin enter a new place and leaving it completely changed from what it was before shows the brilliance of the character. The protagonist also excels in their mystery, the lack of information of their past, morals and values. If decided to, exploring that mysterious past gives the audience validation for their patience in watching the characters story. If not, the mysteriousness helps you focus more on the problems and messaging of the movie, the character is the representation of good needed in the world. Related to their mysteriousness is their combat skill. Usually the protagonist is a fierce warrior that excels in combat but those skills are shown not throughout the movie but in sparse moments. The first iconic protagonist that comes to mind that represents these characteristics is the protagonist in "Yojimbo". The movie's excellence relies on Toshiro Mifune's performance of the nameless ronin that embodies the voice of reason needed for the corruptive town. Of course, these same characteristics in Clint Eastwood's unnamed cowboy that sent the same trends of protagonists in its own genre. The stranger is minimalistic with his words but speaks loud with his actions in a similar way as Mifune's ronin. Like the ronin, his gunsmanship is shown sparsely but the true epitome of the skill is saved for the end. The mysterious character gives a nice blank canvas for the viewer but the ones that we get to explore the past has its own rewards. Usually their past is quite traumatic, their huge hurdles that make them the tough character they are. In the western, a great movie that displays this is Tarantino's "Django". Although it's not exactly the character's past, we get to see all the loss and gritty times that lead him to be the tough cowboy at the end. The journey is similar to "Harakiri"'s ronin, the tough episodes that lead to the characters outburst of violence but in "Django" it doesn't end in a somber way. In both genres, the protagonist can go two ways. The mysterious witty character that is super skilled without much explanation or the tough explosive character who was a sum of traumatic experience.

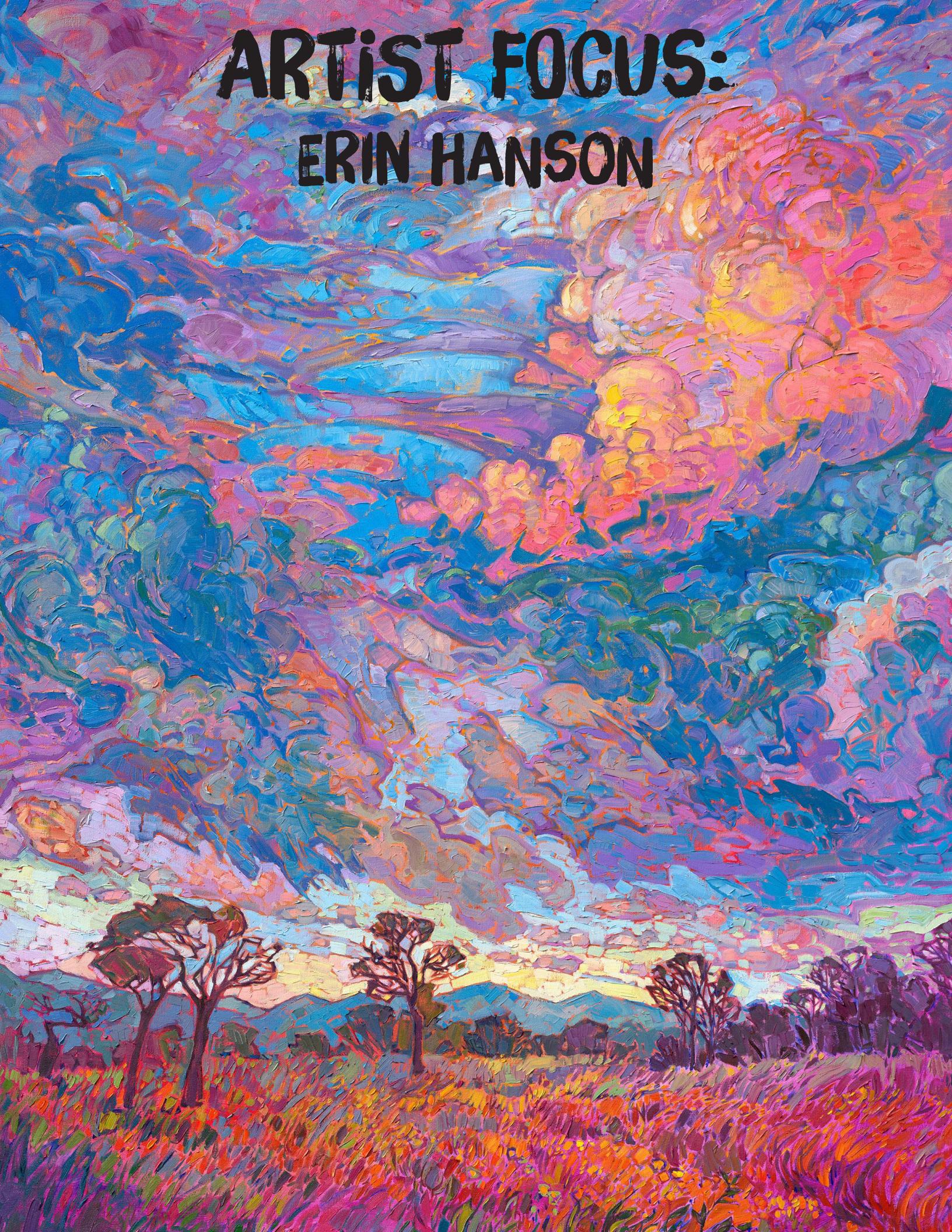
Themes

The genre's similarity in setting and protagonist is present since they both serve to project the same themes. The themes being change and justice. In the samurai genre, the representation of the orderly past and the possibly chaotic future is represented usually by the difference in generation. The elderly are usually grumpy and outraged by the lavish and wild youth. The effects of the country's change is shown in the worn-out town and characters. Going back to "Yojimbo", the first scene is a son getting kicked out of his home by his parents because of his misbehaviour, this shows the divide that the changing times has brought between those generations. In these changing times, law doesn't adapt as fast. So when law doesn't reach some areas, the justice system becomes blurry and more divisive than ever. "Harakiri" challenges this, the protagonist shines a light on the flaws of the samurai's supposed honor code and how it's outdated. The new generation is living in a brand new landscape that hasn't fully defined its good and bad completely which is why they're so rowdy while the old are struggling because their old justice system is not up to the times. The main messages of those movies are the blueprints of what the order of justice should be. You find that same messaging in the wilderness of the west. The rural and open area of the west full of possibility definitely lacked order. While you do still have generational divide because of its own form of change, you also have a diverse range of communities. The native americans, the south american immigrants, bounty hunters, sheriffs and cowboys. The melting pot of groups with each their own culture and goals makes it a chaotic landscape where communities can't find a common ground. While in the samurai movies, the divisive groups are the different clans, westerns' divisiveness is more effective because of the much more diverse upbringings. You see the effectiveness in this melting pot in "A Fistful of Dollars" and "For a Few Dollars More". In "A Fistful of Dollars", you have the Rojo brothers being the new chaotic generation against the family of the town sheriff, John Baxter representing the old in "For a Few Dollars More", you have El Indio and his group representing the youth while you have Mortimer representing the old. The challenge of the previous justice system and the lack of order of the west leads to the same question that the samurai movies do too, what's good and bad. Both genres show the rough evolution and process that justice has to grow through during changing times. How the undiscovered territory leads to divisiveness because people fully embracing the new or outright rejecting. The protagonist stands out because it takes elements from



Both genres capture a specific time, the time of both individual countries change. This change brought forth chaos that sparked by the divisiveness of groups and the questioning of the justice system. In the chaotic and quite rural settings the protagonist stands out because he's an outsider to the setting. With their intelligence or their skill in fighting they show the weakness of the groups that either outright reject the new era or fully embrace it, to truly persevere is to embrace the new but not forget the old which the protagonist does. Both genres project the same image of a transitional era but in different colors. The similarity in these genres show also the similarity in Japan and American history, that despite both being at opposite ends in the map both countries have had rough transitional eras that are painted in their cinema.

ARTIST FOCUS: ERIN HANSON



THE WORLD OF PAINTING HAS BEEN QUITE EXPANSIVE SINCE ITS AGE. PAINTING IS ONE OF THE FIRST ART FORMS DATING TO THE BEGINNING OF HUMAN CIVILIZATION. THE MEDIUM IS STILL AS RELEVANT AS EVER WITH NOW TAKING SEVERAL NEW FORMS. IN THIS DAY IN AGE, IT'S HARD TO FIND A NEW MOVEMENT THAT IS FORMING SINCE A LOT OF INNOVATION HAS BEEN ALREADY DONE BUT FOR ME, ERIN HANSON'S WORK IS LIKE NOTHING I'VE SEEN BEFORE AND IS TRULY UNIQUE.



ERIN HANSON'S BACKGROUND

ERIN HANSON HAS STARTED OIL PAINTING SINCE SHE WAS 8 YEARS OLD AND AS A TEENAGER SHE APPRENTICED AT A MURAL STUDIO WHERE SHE WORKED ON MURALS AND STARTED SELLING ART ON THE SIDE. INSTEAD OF PURSUING THIS PATH BECAUSE OF DISCOURAGEMENTS, SHE DECIDED INSTEAD TO PURSUE A BIOENGINEERING DEGREE AT UC BERKELEY. WHAT GOT HER TO GO BACK INTO OIL PAINTING WAS HER HOBBY FOR ROCK CLIMBING, THE LANDSCAPES THAT SHE SAW DURING HER CLIMBING AND SHE COMMITTED HERSELF TO MAKE ONE PAINTING A WEEK FOR THE REST OF HER LIFE. SINCE THEN, SHE'S CREATED A NEW PAINTING STYLE CALLED "OPEN IMPRESSIONISM" AND HAS GROWN A HUGE FOLLOWING.

HER STYLE

SO WHAT IS EXACTLY "OPEN IMPRESSIONISM"? TO PUT IT SIMPLY, IT'S A COMBINATION OF CLASSICAL IMPRESSIONISM AND MODERN EXPRESSIONISM. ACCORDING TO HER WEBSITE, "OPEN IMPRESSIONISM USES COLOR TO CREATE EMOTION, THICK OIL PAINT STROKES TO CREATE MOVEMENT, AND SEPARATED BRUSHWORK TO CREATE A STAINED GLASS EFFECT". IN TERMS OF TECHNIQUE, HANSON DOESN'T GO LAYER BY LAYER BUT SHE PAINTS SIDE BY SIDE TRYING NOT TO OVERLAP HER STROKES. HER PAINTINGS DEPICT SEVERAL DIFFERENT AMERICAN LANDSCAPES. WITH THE DIVERSITY OF COLORS AND STROKE PATTERNS, HER PAINTINGS LOOK LIKE LANDSCAPES SEEN THROUGH AN ACID TRIP LENSE. THE COLORS REALLY BRING OUT TRUE BEAUTY AND DO EXACTLY WHAT SHE WANTS TO DO, "CAPTURE THE EMOTIONAL FEELING OF BEING OUT OF DOORS". IT'S AN AMAZING REINTERPRETATION OF THE OUTDOORS DURING A BEAUTIFUL SUNSET. THE DIVERSE COLOR PALETTE MAKES YOU EXPLORE THE ENTIRETY OF THE PAINTING AND NOT FOCUS ON ONLY ONE FOCAL POINT.



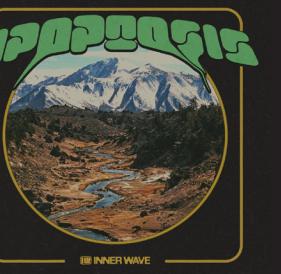
HANSON'S WORKS ARE A BEAUTIFUL WARPED VERSION OF LANDSCAPES WHICH IS THE TRUE SUCCESS OF ART. WITH HER INNOVATING WITH HER NEW PAINTING STYLE THAT HAS A UNIQUE COLOR WORK AND BRUSHWORK, HER WORK REMINDS ME OF VAN GOGH AND CLAUDE MONET. IN THE THREE, THEY BRING OUT THE MOST OUT OF THE OUTDOORS WHICH MAKES YOU WANT TO GO EXPLORE TO TRY TO MATCH THEIR OUTLOOK.

ARTIST FOCUS: INNER WAVE



During Covid, I stumbled on a song called "American Spirits". Immediately from the first guitar riff I was hooked to the song. Ever since then my love for the works of Inner Wave has grown and grown through each album and project. Inner Wave is an alternative indie band based in Los Angeles. Originally the band consisted of Pablo Sotelo, the lead singer and guitarist, Jean Pierre Narvaez, the bassist and Elijah Trujillo on the guitar. Eventually the trio would be joined by drummer Luis Portillo and sound engineer and keyboardist Jose Cruz. The band have been making and releasing music since the beginning of the 2010s. If you had to categorize the bands overall sound, it would be a blend of psychedelic rock and synthwave sounds. To get deeper on their sound, we have to go through their discography.

Discography



Their first album the "III" is an excellent start to the band's sound. With the synths and mellow guitar you can understand the definition that I gave. You immediately get immersed in that world with the opening track "Change Your Mind" which feels like a song coming out of a sci-fi soundtrack which is intentional. The band have been vocal about their love of the sci-fi genre and you can see their visuals and feel it with their music. The second track is the band's most known song of their discography, "American Spirits" which is understandable because not only is the guitar riff gets you hooked but the chorus is catchy. In its short run time, "American Spirits" is packed with so much flavor that will keep you playing the song over and over again. No other song follows "American Spirits" in its length. Instead the others excel in how long they are because they take you along a journey. "Happy 21" goes through so much but the bass line that is the first thing introduced keeps you grounded. "King's Cup" chorus gets beauty from how it elevates the production and the bridge stands out because of what it strips out of it. "R.O.krd" shows the bands skill in balancing simplicity and complexity and how they build up the production. The final track, "Pseudo" takes along a beautiful evolving journey with its amazing solos, bridge and synth ear candy. The best description of "Pseudo" that I found on the Youtube comments, "this song makes me feel like im in space and im slow dancing with an alien at a school dance". The album's subject matter deals with the narrator's messy relationship with his crush. Through each song, the singer goes through different stages of how he sees the relationship and dealing with the rejection. The singer's vulnerability is enhanced with its distortion, reverb and how his vocals are buried in the production, in a similar sense as Julian Casablancas voice in The Strokes debut album. Like shown in the album cover, this album will take you on a journey to a foreign land filled with so much things. Personally, this is my favorite album of the band and it's even in my top ten albums of all time.

The year after "III", the band released their follow up, "Sun Transmission". In this album, the band lean less on the psychedelic rock and more on the synthwave with using different synths than their previous albums. The leaning along on the synthwave goes in tandem with increasing presence of the sci-fi theme of the genre, the album cover alone tells you that this will be more of a space ride than the previous album. In the track "BB", you can see that the synths are more of a firm presence and Pablo's reverb heavy vocals take more of the flowy state. The drums also take a more concrete form on this record which can be shown in the track "Rosary". In "Diamond Eyes", the adventurousness of the band's production returns with changes of synth backing and the amazing guitar solo that comes with it, the lengthy bridge is similar to the bridge of "Pseudo" where the band are throwing every element they can without making it overstimulating. In "Interstellar Me", Pablo's vocals get completely lost behind the powerful synths but also the groovy drums and bass. The track after "Ccbu", the highlight of the track is the dynamic between Pablo's falsetto and his deep back vocals, the production being more of a laid back gives it room to shine but like "Diamond Eyes" it also comes with an expansive bridge that builds but manages to still keep it simple. The final track which is the most popular "I 4 2", here Pablo's voice and the synth are at their most ethereal make them a perfect match. In "I 4 2", Pablo speaks about his dilemma about being in love with two people and how he wants both of them at the same time rather than choosing one. The track evolves with different synths coming and guitar making its presence until the instrumental change that keeps the track fresh and ends on a good note. After "III", simplifying their sound and making them more grounded was the right course of action for the band and "Sun Transmission" is proof that it was the right choice.

The band would take their time with the next album, to be exact they would take 3 years. After that wait the band returned with "Underwater Pipe Dreams". "Underwater Pipe Dreams" stands out in their discography because of its bare bones nature. "Sun Transmission" was a simplified version of the sound they established in "III" but it still had quite a heavy foundation. While in this album it feels they're using the least amount of instruments and sounds as possible. This is perfectly showcased in "Eclipse", only having what seems like two guitars, bass and drums. Another thing that stands out in this track is Pablo's vocals, they're clearer than ever. Distortion and reverb is used only for certain moments but in "Eclipse" we hear a raw version of his falsetto. They're even bringing in new instruments that they haven't used before like in "I'm Aware" where a drum machine is used instead of live drums which they've used before but never on its own. The track after "Jerry" shows the band's intentions of the album, which is leaning more into the garage rock sound. While "Sun Transmission" was more about going farther into their synthwave elements, "Underwater Pipe Dreams" is them going the other path and going farther into their rock elements. In "Discipline", the Strokes influence is blatant with not only production but also Pablo's delivery can be synonymous with Julian's. Also the tracks on this album are short, the adventurous tracks following in the footsteps of "Pseudo" aren't present here but instead their following in the footsteps of "American Spirits". In "Buffalo", Pablo's raw and dirty vocals are laid bare at the beginning but then he changes to his clean falsetto that has a hint of reverb for the chorus, once again showing the band's excellence in dynamics. The track after "Forest", we get an acoustic guitar which renders the track to a more lo-fi or calming sound. Like "Jerry", the track "Bowler" is the band at their most rock. With the laid back guitar backing, Pablo singing along with the guitar lead and the textured drums, the song is a good soundtrack for a casual hangout and it ends with a sweet guitar solo. The ending "Song 3" shows that the band still have the capabilities to go back to their psychedelic rock style. The last track "Balto" conveys the album's title perfectly, a heartfelt ballad sung by a distorted and reverb heavy Pablo that sounds like he's drowning when he's singing along to the guitar lead. In this album, the band figured out their core strengths and to do that they stripped everything and went to the simple rock sound that could let them experiment a little bit but also focus on their true skills. The absence of the waves of synth is seen as a weakness but it makes you focus more on the bands true skills in their production.

Between "Underwater Pipe Dreams" and the next album release, the band released two EPs. "wya" and "wyd" are both solid projects but in 2021, the band released "Apoptosis". "Apoptosis" is the band taking what they've learned from the other albums and applying it all to this album, it's the band at their best skill wise. It's their return of their fusion of rock and synthwave. You see this in the first track, "One in a Million" which has the simple rock production but also has a synth lead and Pablo's vocals being distorted and echoed. In "Rey", the melting pot of "Sun Transmission" and "Underwater Pipe Dreams" is fully present. "Fever" has one of the catchiest and uplifting choruses of the band's discography. The tracks after, "Memory(Trees)" and "June" start with an acoustic guitar but then they build it up with waves of synths, especially "June" in its chorus that feels like you're looking at a shooting star. In "June", Pablo's use of his vocals and harmonies calls back to how vocals were used in the 70s. This album is a sum of the band's learning experience but also them leaning more into the 70s rock aesthetic that had snippets of synths. In "Nature", that style is apparent but another thing that's new in this album is the use of strings which is featured throughout the album but takes center stage in "Nature". On the next track, "Take 3", the band's adventurous nature comes back but not in the same form. In "Take 3", the verse and chorus are quite minimal but in a way that feels like the band is holding back fitting with the lyrics where at the point the singer hasn't picked himself up from a heartbreak up until he does on the bridge which is where the floodgates of the band's excellence come in, the wave of synths, Pablo's background vocals and even strings. The band's talent for build up is outright shown in "Take 3". On "Air", the track feels like it was recorded live in the studio even when all the different ear candies come in, it's the most psychedelic rock track on the album. It also has a small piano solo and horns which are other new instruments featured in the album. "Mystery" feels like a groovy 70s rock song and Pablo's echo voice is highlighted in it. The band took the live instrumentation of "Underwater Pipe Dreams" and mixed it with the firm use of synths of "Sun Transmission" which shows a more directness to their production. While "III" felt like the band throwing paint on the canvas, "Apoptosis" feels like they properly painted on it which you can tell by the song's sound and structure, which is why it's my second favorite record of their discography.

What happening in the world of....



Inner Wave are a heavily underrated band and in my opinion all their albums are worth a listen. Going through one by one shows the band's journey in how they became a well versed band. From "III", where Pablo speaks about his unrequited love to "Apoptosis" where he hopes for the other person's best. Inner Wave is the blueprint on how a band should grow, through experimentation albums like "Sun Transmission" and "Underwater Pipe Dreams" and taking what you learn from those albums to raise the general production. So join the spacial journey that Inner Wave has in store for you.

INN INNER WAVE

Akira

Setting: Physique-Chimie class, the whole classroom was doing an experiment concerning on titration (I think)

Akira and Vilgot doing their own experiment one table
On the other side, Felix and Bougue struggling to do their experiment (may-be trouble in filling the burette with liquid, or problem opening and closing the burette valve)

One of their elbow knocked the becher of titration. The liquid spills out

Felix: ???

Bougue: ???

Felix: Huhn? Mais qu'est ce que t'as foutu?

Bougue: Mais non c'est toi qui as cogné le bêcher

Felix: Moi je lisais la volume de liquide de la burette

Bougue: Moi j'ai juste ouvert et ferme la valve, je n'ai pas touché le bêcher du tout. C'est toi qui l'as touché, tu l'as oublié? T'es con ou t'es con?

Felix: Comment est-ce que je suis supposé cogner le bêcher si je n'ai même pas les mains sur la table? T'as cru que je l'avais cogné avec ma tête? C'est toi le con.

Snoussi overhears Felix and Bougue "quarrel" and jumps into the battlefield

Snoussi: Mais c'est quoi ce bordel??? Qui a renversé le titrant? Bon c'est VOUS DEUX! C'est votre faute! Allez refaire la titration les gars, oh mais je suis là pour faire la police et fouetter les fesses des deux bébés.

(in cursive) Felix, do you understand what I was saying, or should I explain it in English?

Mais ce n'est pas possible, on se croit vraiment en Grande Section, est ce qu'il faut que je te nourrisse Alexandre? Ouvre la bouche et vient l'avion

Ben

Had my turtle for 7 years assumed it was a guy nah turns out she was a girl she fucking layed eggs yesterday the end.

Neo

Prob gonna give you the yogurt incident then. So I go groceries every monday and that day as usual I bought a pack of 6 YOP. I usually drink them for gouter in the afternoon of sometimes for breakfast. That monday im pretty sure i had 1 left from a pack i bought before so i prob dranked that leaving a total of 6 bottles in the fridge. Tuesday when i go for lunch i realise theres only 5 left. Im genuinely thinking wow did i manage to buy a pack that was missing one im so fucking stupid.Quote i said on tuesday to thetim and quentin: "i swear someone stole a yop from my fridge, it's not possible that without noticing i bought a paquet of 6 yop where one is missing. If so then I'm brain-dead". But anyways for some reason didn't feel like drinking any so theres 5 left still as of tuesday evening. Wednesday i wake up i decide to take some yop for breakfast and would you look at that, 3 left. This confirms theres a fucking stealer. I take one for me and send a mail to the coloc manager to report. Then wednesday the same day afternoon, i look [picture of the empty fridge and the yop in the garbage]. Not even trying to hide it, bro also took out the cardboard for some reason. Then i dont remember the chronology really but i sent another mail to the managers. They finally send out a warning. I see on the fridge someone else wrote on a post-it to stop stealing food, meaning i wasnt the only target. Some of my shit got stolen again, ham this time. I go lunchless for 2 days cause i plan that shit in advance and im too lazy to go shopping if i didnt plan it beforehand. I put a post-it myself in my fridge section, wasnt effective im pretty sure my yogurt (another brand this time lmao) got stolen again. I had to deal with it cause it was like second to last week before leaving to london. Found this random quote if u want: "If god existed, my yops would be intact". And i found that the section on top of me in the fridge, after i stopped buying food, mysteriously was full of ham and yop. Like bro saw i wasnt buying no more he had to do it himself. Thats why i was sus of that guy considering he was also new 1 month prior. Lastly i guess, went back to london, life is chill, vacations are here, JULY 2ND, message from the landlord: im bankrupt lol leave now.

Kaito

In high school my friends kept calling me extroverted while I firmly believed I was introverted. Comes uni and I started trying to become more social, and while I still need some time myself, I learned that maybe I do like hanging around people a lot. Moral of the story, listen to your dickhead friends and be a mix of intro-extro-vert.

Myla

yo so here's an anecdote for ur magasin. One time i went to the bar with a few friends and i saw this girl i thought was cute. So i came with a reason to go talk to her and her friend, and then i got up. And stayed up. For an entire HOUR. I was too scared to approach them so i acted like i was talking to my friends. Finally, I went for it. I approached their table and if me and my friends could join them. The girls then very nicely explained to me that they were on a date.

Fred

I was checking online to see how much some golf le fleur would cost and bro it was extortionate, 575 dollars for a fucking pink cardigan, y'know that shit better be the best cardigan I've ever felt and seen. So I thought it was nuts that they were charging prices like that so I decided I'd make my own le fleur. I bought a shirt from primark wrote in sharpie on the front of it La Flout and I went into the Golf shop in London and did a little photo shoot in there. The customers seemed to like it. But the staff kept on trading me funny looks. What was made even worse was I brought in my mad mate from the middle of nowhere (boris) and my pessimistic mate Jack O'connor and the pair of them would pick up clothes, check the price tag, look disgusted at each other, then chuck the clothes at each other. We then had to leave rather quickly after that

Leon

When I was a kid, I used to live in Amiens, France. I was around three years old, and my dumbass decided to put a long ass stick made of Lego studs up my nostrils. I went to the hospital after that cuz I couldn't get it out. The end.

Felix

Yesterday a forest fire was starting near my grandparents house. We called the firefighter at like midnight and it was fine but if we didn't call might have been fucked.

Logan

So a few years back, I was lifeguarding at this camp for the summer. like most days, it gets really boring after watching the water for hours on end. So my co worker Jack and I usually just did random stuff to pass the time. Usually just watching ice being made and making casual banter . But one day we were trying to see who could throw our lifeguard packs the farthest and Jack ended up landing his pack on a shack with a hornets nest. Since we only had one pack for each person we had to get that asap since our shift was starting soon. So we ended up finding an old wooden ladder from our break room and we played rock paper scissors to see who went up. After round 9, Jack was the one who decided to go up while I held the ladder for him. He managed to get up there but he said that the pack was literally on the hornets nest and if he got it, he'd probably get stung a ton. So we thought that if he just took the strap and threw it into the pool, we'd be fine. He did just that, but the hornets didn't go after him, they went after me! I was wearing cologne that day and in my hindsight, hornets are attracted to those kinda scents. So they ended up chasing me and I ran all around the camp trying to shake them off and I just managed to get inside of the gym to avoid them. We ended up calling an exterminator to get rid of the hornets because I thought that they would remember a face and come back for me one day. But it's still one of my most memorable moments of any job I've had



WHAT SETS SUPER SMASH BROS APART FROM THE OTHERS?

FIGHTING GAMES HAVE BEEN THERE SINCE THE BEGINNING OF VIDEO GAMES. THEY WERE PRESENT WHEN GAMES WERE ONLY RESERVED TO ARCADE MACHINES EVER SINCE THE GENRE HAS GROWN, TO THE POINT OF HAVING A SUB-GENRE PIONEERED BY NONE OTHER THAN SUPER SMASH BROS. SUPER SMASH BROS FORMED THE SUB-GENRE OF PLATFORM FIGHTING GAMES WHERE THE FIGHTING IS RESTRICTED TO ONE V ONE BUT YOU CAN HAVE SEVERAL PLAYERS FIGHTING EACH OTHER IN A MUCH MORE OPEN BATTLE FIELD. FOR MANY YEARS, SUPER SMASH BROS HAD A MONOPOLY ON THIS GENRE, IT SEEMED LIKE IT WAS THE ONLY PLATFORM FIGHTING GAME OUT THERE UP UNTIL RECENTLY. IN THESE PAST FEW YEARS, NEWCOMERS HAVE APPEARED TRYING TO BE A COMPETITOR AGAINST SUPER SMASH BROS. DESPITE THEIR FRESHNESS AND NEW LOOK, NONE HAVE MANAGED TO SURPASS THE LEGACY OF SUPER SMASH BROS. WHY HAVEN'T THEY BEEN ABLE TO CHALLENGE SUPER SMASH BROS? SOME OF THE GAMES HAVE SOME IMPRESSIVE THINGS ABOUT THEM THAT WOULD DRAW IN A HUGE PLAYER BASE BUT WHY DON'T THOSE PLAYER BASES MANAGE TO STAY? WHAT DO THE OTHERS LACK THAT SUPER SMASH BROS HAVE? OR MORE LIKE, WHAT DOES SUPER SMASH BROS HAVE THAT THE OTHERS DON'T? TO FIND THE ANSWER, WE HAVE TO LOOK AT THE COMPETITION AND HOW SUPER SMASH BROS DIFFERS FROM THEM.

THE OTHERS



THE FIRST GAME IS BRAWLHALLA, A FREE PLATFORM FIGHTING GAME RELEASED IN 2017. THE BASE GAME FEATURES 65 CHARACTERS DUBBED AS "LEGENDS" EACH WITH THEIR OWN SET OF STATS, VARIED LOADOUTS, AND COSMETIC SKINS. THE GAME HAS HAD MASSIVE AMOUNTS OF SUCCESS, A STEAM LEAK SHOWED THAT BRAWLHALLA WAS RANKED THE 24TH IN PLAYER COUNT WITH A TOTAL OF 8,646,824 PLAYERS. IN ITS OTHER PLATFORMS IT ALSO HAS GAINED MASSIVE SUCCESS THUS INCREASING THE GENERAL PLAYER COUNT SINCE THE GAME HAS CROSS-PLAY SUPPORT. BECAUSE OF THIS SUCCESS, UBISOFT ACQUIRED BRAWLHALLA'S DEVELOPER COMPANY AND THUS LETTING THE GATE OPEN FOR COLLABORATIONS. STARTING WITH RAYMAN WHICH WAS ADDED ON NOVEMBER 6 2018 AND ON JULY 27 2022, EZIO FROM ASSASSIN'S CREED BECAME THE SECOND CROSS-OVER CHARACTER. SINCE THEN BRAWLHALLA HAS HAD MANY COLLABORATION AND CROSSOVER CHARACTERS. COLLABORATIONS FROM FRANCHISES LIKE ADVENTURE TIME, AVATAR: THE LAST AIRBENDER, BEN 10, HALO, KUNG FU PANDA, MEGA MAN, SPONGEBOB SQUAREPANTS, STAR WARS, STEVEN UNIVERSE, STREET FIGHTER, TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES, WWE AND MORE. THE CROSSOVER, FREE PRICE TAG AND CROSS PLATFORM ELEMENT IS BRAWLHALLA'S STRONG POINTS BUT IT'S NOT ENOUGH TO GRAB THE SPOTLIGHT THAT SSB HAS DESPITE ITS HUGE PLAYER BASE. BRAWLHALLA IS A STRONG CONTENDER BUT IT IS STILL MISSING SOMETHING THAT DOESN'T PUT IT IN THE SAME LEAGUE AS SSB.



THE SECOND GAME IS MULTIVERSUS, ANOTHER FREE PLATFORM FIGHTING GAME RELEASED IN 2024 WHICH WAS DEVELOPED BY PLAYER FIRST GAMES AND PUBLISHED BY WARNER BROS GAMES. THE GAME WORKS THE SAME WAY AS SUPER SMASH BROS AND BRAWLHALLA, THE CHARACTERS AND THE STAGES THIS TIME COME FROM LOONEY TUNES, GAME OF THRONES, THE DC UNIVERSE, SCOOBY-DOO, AND CARTOON NETWORK FRANCHISES. THE GAME INITIALLY WAS ANNOUNCED IN NOVEMBER 2021 AND OPENED FOR BETA FOR A SHORT PERIOD BEFORE RELEASING TO SEVERAL PLATFORMS, LIKE BRAWLHALLA. MULTIVERSUS' STRONG POINTS IS THE FAITHFULNESS TO THE RESPECTIVE FRANCHISES, ITS PRESENTATION AND THEIR TEAM ORIENTED GAMES BUT ITS WEAKNESS IS ITS MICROTRANSACTION AND ESPECIALLY ITS TECHNICAL ISSUES. ITS REPETITIVE ISSUES AND THE GAME TRYING TO SHOVE THE MICROTRANSACTION ON THE AUDIENCE MADE THE GAME STRUGGLE TO MAINTAIN ITS PLAYER BASE AND SINCE ITS RELEASE, THE PLAYERS KEPT ON DROPPING. ON MAY 30 2025, THE GAME OFFICIALLY SHUT DOWN ITS SERVERS AND DELISTED. MULTIVERSUS COULD BE A CASE STUDY ON HOW GAMEPLAY TRUMPS ALL OTHER FACTORS, IF THE GAMEPLAY IS NOT EFFICIENT THEN YOU'LL EASILY LOSE YOUR PLAYERS DESPITE THE GLAMOUR OF YOUR GAME. MULTIVERSUS' STRONGEST POINT WAS ITS ROSTER, UNLIKE BRAWLHALLA, THE FRANCHISED CHARACTER CAME WITH THE INITIAL GAME AND NOT THROUGH MICROTRANSACTIONS. THE BIG NAMES WERE THE BIGGEST SELLING POINT BUT THAT DOESN'T HAVE MUCH MERIT WHEN THE FOUNDATION IS FAULTY. IF ITS GAMEPLAY WAS NOT BUGGY AND THE MICROTRANSACTIONS WERE CUT OUT, THE GAME COULD'VE BEEN SSB'S FIRST RIVAL.



THE LAST GAME IS RIVALS OF AETHER, ANOTHER FREE PLATFORM FIGHTING GAME INITIALLY RELEASED IN MARCH 2017 ONLY ON MICROSOFT BY DAN FORNACE. THE GAME IS A SPIRITUAL SEQUEL OF FORNACE'S FAN-MADE REMAKE OF SSB CALLED SUPER SMASH LAND. THE FOCUS OF THE GAMEPLAY WAS TO MAKE IT FASTER AND MORE COMBO-ORIENTED THAN SSB. THE CHARACTERS ARE ANTHROPOMORPHIC ANIMALS DIVIDED BY FOUR CIVILIZATIONS THAT ARE DIVIDED BY FOUR ELEMENTS: FIRE, WATER, EARTH AND AIR. LIKE THE OTHERS, IT ALSO HAS CROSSOVER CHARACTERS FROM FRANCHISES LIKE ORI AND THE BLIND FOREST AND SHOVEL KNIGHT. THE ELEMENT THAT MAKES THIS GAME STAND OUT IS THE FAN-MADE CUSTOM CHARACTERS THAT YOU CAN ADD IN THE GAME THROUGH STEAM MODS. FROM RONALD McDONALD TO SANS, WHATEVER YOU CAN FIND OUT THERE YOU CAN ADD IT TO THE GAME TO MAKE IT THE FUNNEST EXPERIENCE AND THE ULTIMATE CROSSOVER. THIS IS THE GAME'S STRONGEST POINT AND GIVES THE GAME SOME ATTENTION, THIS GIVES THE GAME A MODDING COMMUNITY THAT MAKES ANY CHARACTER THEY CAN THINK OF. WITHOUT IT, THE GAME IS SOLID IN GAMEPLAY BUT IN TERMS OF CONCEPT AND PRESENTATION, IT LACKS IN THOSE DEPARTMENTS.

SUPER SMASH BROS' STRENGTHS

SO THE COMPETITION HAS BEEN PRESENTED AND THEIR STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES WERE SHOWN BUT WHAT MAKES SUPER SMASH BROS SUCH A FIERCE COMPETITOR. THEY'RE CERTAIN KEY FACTORS THAT SUPER SMASH BROS POSSESS THAT SETS IT APART FROM THE OTHERS, THINGS THAT MAKE EVERYONE RETURN TO SUPER SMASH BROS DESPITE THE OTHERS.

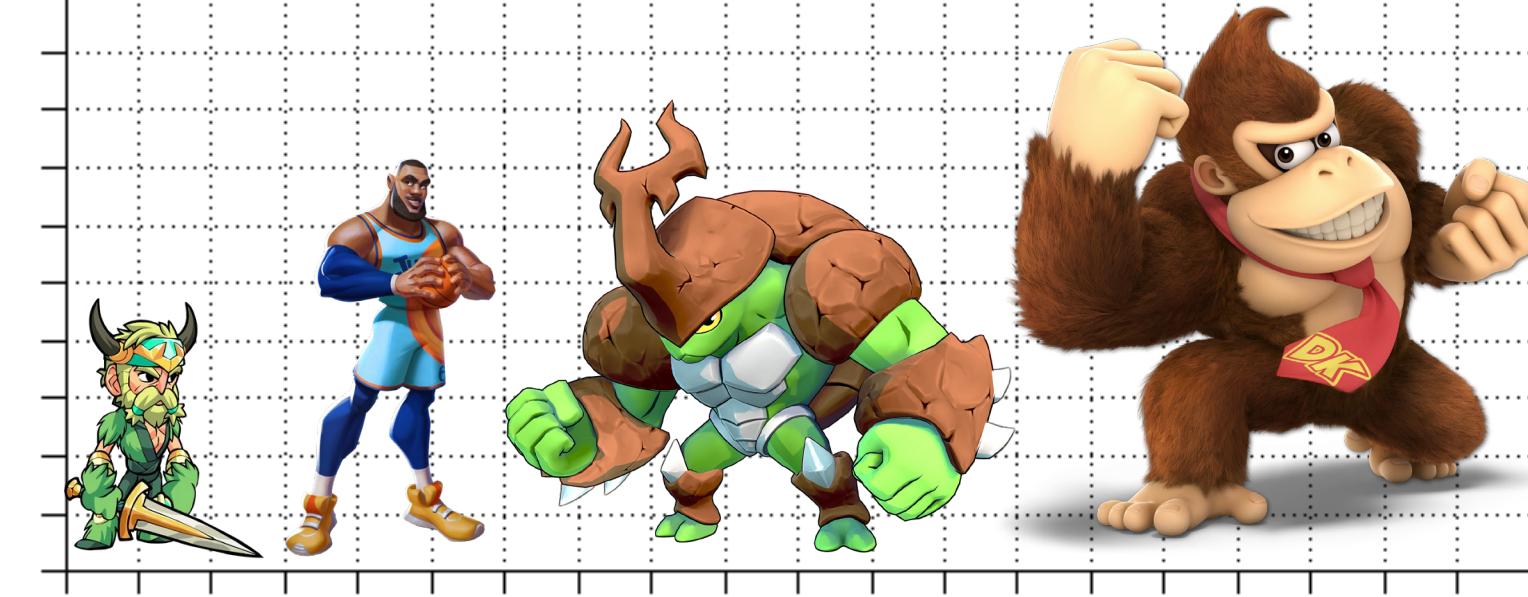
THE FIRST ELEMENT IS SUPER SMASH BROS ULTIMATE BIGGEST SELLING POINT, BIG SCALE. SSB FEATURES A HUGE ROSTER OF CHARACTERS FROM SEVERAL GAME FRANCHISES. UNLIKE THE ROSTERS OF MULTIVERSUS OR BRAWL HALLA, THE CHARACTERS ARE FROM GAME FRANCHISES AND NOT FROM MOVIES OR SERIES FRANCHISES WHICH DRAWS IN THE RIGHT KIND OF AUDIENCE, GAMERS. NOT ONLY DOES THE BIG SCALE CROSSOVER OF FRANCHISES COME IN THE CHARACTERS BUT ALSO THE MAPS, GIVING YOU A POSSIBILITY TO SEE YOUR FAVORITE CHARACTER IN A DIFFERENT SETTING THAN THEIR USUAL. FOR EXAMPLE, YOU CAN SEE PIKACHU FIGHTING CLOUD IN MINECRAFT'S OVERWORLD. ANOTHER BIG SCALE ELEMENT OF SPECIFICALLY SUPER SMASH BROS ULTIMATE IS SPIRITS WHICH EXTENDS THE SPOTLIGHT TO THE SMALLER AND LESSER KNOWN CHARACTERS FROM THE FRANCHISES. ALSO, SUPER SMASH BROS WII U OPENED THE POSSIBILITY OF 8 PLAYER MATCHES WHICH GIVES ROOM FOR MORE PEOPLE TO JOIN IN ON THE FUN AND RESULT IN QUITE EXPLOSIVE MATCHES THAT YOU CAN'T REALLY GET IN THE OTHER GAMES. THE REASON SUPER SMASH BROS ULTIMATE BIGGEST MARKETING POINT WAS THE BIG SCALE IS BECAUSE THAT'S ONE OF THE FRANCHISES BIGGEST STRENGTHS THAT IS HARD TO RECREATE.

THE REASON FOR SSB'S POSSIBILITY OF HAVING A BIG SCALE GAME IS BECAUSE OF ITS LEGACY. THE FIRST GAME WAS RELEASED IN 1999 AND SINCE THEN THE FRANCHISE GOT THE CHANCE TO REFINE AND GROW TO WHAT IT'S NOW. THROUGHOUT IT, FROM NEW INSTALLMENT TO NEW INSTALLMENT, THEY'VE GARNERED MORE AND MORE FANS. ALSO, HAVING SEVERAL INSTALLMENTS GIVES SEVERAL OPTIONS TO THE PLAYER, FOR EXAMPLE SUPER SMASH BROS MELEE HAS A BIG COMPETITIVE COMMUNITY BECAUSE THAT INSTALLMENTS GAMEPLAY IS DIFFERENT FROM THE OTHERS. YOU MIGHT SAY THAT STRENGTH IS UNFAIR TO THE OTHER GAMES BUT THE OTHERS HAD SUPER SMASH BROS TO BUILD OFF OF. THE LEGACY ALSO STRETCHES TO THE INTERNET. WITH THE SEVERAL MEMES COMING OUT OF THE GAMES BUT ALSO THE ICONIC IMAGERY THAT IMMEDIATELY MAKES YOU THINK OF THE GAME. THE NEW CHALLENGER BANNERS, THE SUPER SMASH BROS BRAWL SCORE AND THE LOGO. THE SMALL DETAILS DIDN'T GET OVERLOOKED AND BECAUSE THROUGH EACH ITERATION THEY HAVE BEEN REFINED, THEY'VE BEEN BROUGHT TO FOCUS. AS MUCH AS THIS ISN'T FAIR AGAINST THE OTHERS, SSB'S LEGACY IS A HUGE STRENGTH BUT IT DOESN'T RELY ON IT TOO MUCH.

WITH THE SCALE AND LEGACY ALSO COMES WITH INNOVATION OR DIFFERENT FORMATS. SUPER SMASH BROS DIDN'T ONLY RELY ON THE BASE GAME BUT STRETCHED THE MEDIUM SO THAT IT GAVE DIFFERENT OPTIONS THAT WORKED FOR THE PLATFORM FIGHTING GAME. THE FIRST THING THAT COMES TO MIND IS THE MORTAL KOMBAT STYLE TOURNAMENT WHERE YOU GO ROUND BY ROUND FIGHTING A DEDICATED TOURNAMENT UNTIL YOU REACH THE FINAL BOSS. THE OTHER MEDIUM WAS INTRODUCED IN SUPER SMASH BRAWL, THE STORY MODE WHICH GIVES A NICE NARRATIVE ELEMENT TO THE GAME BUT ALSO IN ULTIMATE GIVES AN ELEMENT OF EXPLORATION. ALSO, IN SUPER SMASH BROS ULTIMATE GAVE SPIRITS AND THE SPIRIT BOARD WHICH GIVES A COMPLETIONIST ANGLE TO THE GAME IN SIMILAR WAYS TO TRYING TO CAPTURE EVERY POKEMON BUT ALSO LIKE AN MMORPG, YOU WANT TO COLLECT THE BEST SPIRIT WITH THE BEST STATS TO BE THE STRONGEST. THERE ARE ALSO VARIOUS SMALL MINIGAMES LIKE THE BAT GAME WHICH GIVES A PLAYFUL FUN. ANOTHER SUPER SMASH BROS ULTIMATE INVENTION, THE CUSTOM MAPS WHICH SOME CUSTOM MAPS GIVE A FUN TWIST THAT THE REGULAR MAPS CAN'T ACHIEVE. SUPER SMASH BROS GAMES DOESN'T ONLY COME WITH A REGULAR PLATFORM FIGHTING GAME AND AN ONLINE VERSION OF IT BUT IT STRETCHES THE FORMAT BY MIXING IT WITH ELEMENTS FROM DIFFERENT GENRES OR GAMES. DESPITE ALL THESE DIFFERENT FORMATS, YOU CAN'T PLAY THESE ONLINE BUT THAT WASN'T A BAD THING FOR THE FRANCHISE.

DESPITE AT FIRST LOOKING LIKE A DOWNSIDE, SUPER SMASH BROS' FOCUS ON GAMEPLAY EXPERIENCE IN THE LIVING ROOM IS ANOTHER MONUMENTAL STRENGTH OF THE FRANCHISE. THE OTHER GAMES FOCUSED MORE ON IT BEING ON THE MOST CONSOLES BUT STARTING THE RELEASES ON THE PC AND THE ONLINE SIDE OF THINGS BUT DESPITE IT BEING MORE INNOVATIVE THAN SSB BUT IT'S THE INNOVATION THAT IS ESSENTIALLY NECESSARY. IF YOU THINK ABOUT THE BEST MEMORIES THAT YOU'VE HAD IN SSB IT'S ALWAYS BEEN IN SOME ROOM WITH ALL YOUR FRIENDS PRESENT ALL SCREAMING OR LAUGHING AT THE GAME. THAT EXPERIENCE STRETCHES TO TOURNAMENTS WHERE YOU HAVE THE SAME KIND OF JOY AND COMMUNAL EXCITEMENT. SSB WORKED IN THE SAME WAY AS BOARD GAMES DO, WHEN YOU HAVE A GROUP OF FRIENDS AND YOU WANT EVERYONE TO PLAY A GAME, SSB WAS A GREAT OPTION IN THE SAME WAY THAT MARIO KART. THE SWITCH EXTENDED THIS EXPERIENCE TO BEYOND THE HOME, YOU COULD PLAY THE GAME ANYWHERE AND SHARE THAT FUN SIMILAR TO HAVING A DECK OF CARDS IN YOUR POCKET. THIS STRENGTH IS ONE OF THE BIGGEST THAT THE OTHERS ARE MISSING BECAUSE THIS IS ALSO A GREAT SOURCE OF SSB GROWING ITS FAN-BASE AND GETTING ITS NAME OUT. THE OTHERS ARE STUCK IN THE STEAM OR THE CORE GAMER BUBBLE BUT THIS MAKES SSB BREAK IT. MY WAY OF ENTRY TO THE FRANCHISE WAS PLAYING THE GAME IN MY FRIENDS LIVING ROOM FOR THE FIRST TIME. IN MY OPINION, THIS IS THE CORE STRENGTH TO SUPER SMASH BROS AND WHAT THE OTHER GAMES NEED TO FOCUS ON.

IS IT POSSIBLE TO MATCH SUPER SMASH BROS?



SO, IS IT POSSIBLE TO MATCH SUPER SMASH BROS OR EVEN PROCEED WITH IT? YES BUT AFTER SEEING ITS STRENGTHS, IT REQUIRES A LOT OF WORK AND PASSION TO THE PROJECT. IT WILL NEVER BE EASY TO HAVE A GAME RIVALING SUPER SMASH BROS SINCE IT HAS THE UPPER-HAND BUT IF YOU STUDY IT AND SEE WHAT MAKES THE FRANCHISE STILL RELEVANT AFTER ALL THESE YEARS, YOU CAN RIVAL IT. FOR EXAMPLE, PALWORLD SHOWED THAT POKEMON DOESN'T HAVE THAT MUCH OF A CHOKEHOLD ON ITS GENRE OF GAME, THERE'S ALWAYS SPACE FOR SOMETHING NEW IN ANY GENRE. EVENTUALLY SUPER SMASH BROS' MONOPOLY WILL CRUMBLE BUT FOR NOW THE ATTEMPTS TO MAKE THAT HAPPEN HAVEN'T BEEN THE MOST SUCCESSFUL, FOR NOW SUPER SMASH BROS STILL IS THE STANDOUT PLATFORM FIGHTING GAME.

Film Focus: Edge of Seventeen

IN 2015, THE MOVIE THAT STANDS OUT THE MOST RECENTLY IS RYAN COOGLER'S SINNERS. THE MOVIE IS RYAN COOGLER'S BEST WORK AND STANDS OUT FOR ITS UNIQUE STORY, AMAZING CINEMATOGRAPHY AND BEAUTIFUL SOUND DESIGN AND SCORE. ANOTHER THING THAT STANDS OUT IS HAILEE STEINFELD'S PERFORMANCE WHICH REMINDED ME OF ANOTHER I WATCHED THE SAME WEEK AS SINNERS WHERE SHE ALSO GIVES AN AMAZING PERFORMANCE, THE EDGE OF SEVENTEEN. THE COMING AGE GENRE IS ONE OF MY FAVORITE GENRES AND THE EDGE OF SEVENTEEN HAS ENTERED MY PERSONAL TOP TEN MOVIES IN THAT FIELD. THE EDGE OF SEVENTEEN IS AMAZING AND HAS SEVERAL THINGS THAT WILL MAKE YOU WANT TO WATCH THE MOVIES.

STRONG POINTS

THE STRIKING THING IN THIS FILM IS THE WRITING. AFTER SO MANY LAZY WRITTEN NETFLIX COMING OF AGE MOVIES, THIS MOVIE'S WRITING IS REFRESHING. THE CHARACTERS ARE REALLY WELL WRITTEN AND ACTUALLY FEEL LIKE PEOPLE AND NOT CARICATURES. FOR A MOVIE RELYING ON DIALOGUE, IT DOESN'T MISS A BEAT, ESPECIALLY THE DIALOGUE BETWEEN STEINFELD'S CHARACTER AND HARRELSON'S CHARACTER. NOTHING TOO DRAMATIC HAPPENS THAT KEEPS YOU OUT OF THE HIGH SCHOOL SETTING BUT THERE'S STILL THEATRICALS THAT IS BELIEVABLE FOR TEENAGERS TO DO. THE MAIN CHARACTERS STRUGGLE TO CONNECT BECAUSE THEIR FEAR OF ACCEPTANCE IS WELL FRAMED AND IS HIGHLIGHTED WHEN SHOWN IN CONTRAST WITH HER EXTROVERTED BROTHER. NOT ONLY DO YOU SYMPATHIZE WITH HER STRUGGLE BUT YOU ALSO DISAPPROVE OF HER SELFISH ACTIONS, THE CHARACTERS ARE NEVER ONE SIDED. FOR EXAMPLE, THE BROTHER AT FIRST IS PAINTED AS THE VILLAIN BUT BY THE THIRD ACT YOU SEE HOW THAT'S NOT TRUE AND THAT IT'S A PRODUCT OF ONLY SEEING HIM THROUGH THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE MAIN CHARACTER. THERE'S ACTUAL DEPTH TO THE STORY AND NO SURFACE LEVEL WRITING WHICH OBVIOUSLY HOOKS YOU IN.

AS MUCH AS THE WRITING CAN BE SPECTACULAR, ITS BRILLIANCE CAN BE ONLY SHOWN THROUGH A GREAT PERFORMANCE. OF COURSE, HAILEE STEINFELD IS THE STAND OUT ROLE. SHE REALLY DOES A GOOD JOB ON DELIVERING THE WIT OF THE CHARACTER AS WELL AS THE TEENAGE ANGST OF HER CHARACTER. NOTHING FEELS UNNATURAL AND SHE PORTRAYS THE IDIOTY OF A TEENAGER AMAZINGLY. IN CONTRAST TO THAT, WOODY HARRELSON GIVES A SUBTLE ACT THAT ALSO COMES WITH WIT. HAILEE STEINFELD'S ENERGETIC PERFORMANCE WORKS WELL WITH HARRELSON'S CALMING ONE THAT COMES WITH FIVE TIMES LESS OF THE WORD THAT STEINFELD BLABS ON. ANOTHER HIGHLIGHT IS KYRA SEDGWICK PLAYING THE STRUGGLING SINGLE MOTHER WHOSE HYSTERIA IS SEEN FROM THE FIRST SCENE. UNLIKE HARRELSON, SHE NOT ONLY MATCHES STEINFELD'S HIGH ENERGY BUT TAKES IT UP TO ANOTHER LEVEL WHICH YOU ESPECIALLY SEE AROUND THE CLIMAX OF THE MOVIE. WHEN NOT IN HER HIGH ENERGY, YOU SEE THE TRUE SYMPATHY BEHIND IT AND HER FEAR WHICH COMES WITH WORRY. THE DYNAMIC BETWEEN THE ACTORS FEELS NATURAL AND NOT OUT OF CHARACTER OR WEIRD. THERE'S NOT MANY A-LISTERS BUT THE PERFORMANCES WERE SOLID, ESPECIALLY HAILEE STEINFELD WHO WAS NOMINATED FOR A GOLDEN GLOBE.

STEPPING BACK FROM THE STORY AND THE ACTORS, THE PRODUCTION IS REALLY GOOD FOR THE SMALL BUDGET IT HAD. THE BUDGET OF THE MOVIE WAS 9 MILLION DOLLARS WHICH IT'S NOT SURPRISING SINCE THE LOCATIONS AREN'T SPECTACULAR BUT THEY DO THEIR JOB. SAME THING WITH COSTUMES, EVERYONE DIDN'T HAVE AN OUTSTANDING STYLE EXCEPT STEINFELD'S CHARACTER THAT HAS AN AMAZING JACKET THAT I WANT SO BADLY. THE BEST THING ABOUT THE PRODUCTION DESIGN IS ITS USE IN DEVELOPING THE LOVE INTEREST. THE LOVE INTEREST IS INTERESTED IN ANIMATION WHICH YOU CAN SEE THAT INTEREST WITH ALL THE HAND DRAWN DRAWINGS POSTED ALL OVER IN HIS ROOM BUT ESPECIALLY WITH THE ANIMATION SHOWN AT THE END OF THE MOVIE. EVEN HIS CONFLICT WITH HIS PARENTS IS DEMONSTRATED WITH THE BIG EMPTY HOUSE WHICH HE'S THE ONLY ONE LIVING IN. IN TERMS OF CINEMATOGRAPHY, THERE'S NO OUTSTANDING SHOTS BUT THE MOVIE IS FILMED VERY WELL, IT'S YOUR STANDARD COMEDY CINEMATOGRAPHY. WITH THE SMALL BUDGET, THE TEAM MADE A GREAT FILM WHICH YOU CAN ALSO SEE IN THEIR EARNINGS WHICH WAS 19.4 MILLION DOLLARS, PROVING THE POINT THAT IT'S NOT REALLY ABOUT THE BUDGET BUT THE IDEAS.

CONCLUSION

THE EDGE OF SEVENTEEN IS A GREAT MOVIE AND WHEN WATCHING IT, IT REMINDED ME OF WHAT WAS MISSING IN TODAY'S CINEMA. TODAY THE SMALL BUDGET COMEDY, ROM-COM AND COMING OF AGE MOVIES AREN'T SPOTLIGHTED OR NOT MADE, IF THEY ARE THEN THEY DEBUT IN A STREAMING SERVICE WHICH MAKES THEM EASILY DISMISSED. THOSE KINDS OF MOVIES NEED TO GET ATTENTION AND I'M NOT ONLY SAYING TO DO A CINEMA RELEASE TO ALL OF THEM BUT ALSO TO REALLY MAKE THE WRITING AND EVERYTHING THAT COMES WITH IT FLOURISH. THE RESULT OF IT DOESN'T NEED TO BE THE NEW BOX OFFICE BREAKING MOVIE BUT THE AUDIENCE WILL HAVE A NEW COMFORT MOVIE THAT THEY'LL WATCH FROM TIME TO TIME. FOR ME THIS MOVIE WILL JOIN SUPERBAD, 500 DAYS OF SUMMER, RUSHMORE AND THE OTHERS AS MY COMFORT MOVIE.





Sunshine City

Tokyo's Mall for Everyone

Malls are key spaces for quality time with friends and family. It has everything for you to spend a nice day with your loved ones. You have all kinds of shops to go look around to find what you want. If you are hungry, you have a range of restaurants to choose from that will satisfy your appetite. Malls are an amazing spot to hang out with because of its range and huge number of options. Most people had that one mall that they would frequent growing up. For me, that mall was Ikebukuro's Sunshine City Mall.

The first good thing about Sunshine City is its location, Ikebukuro. Ikebukuro was a hub for all kinds of shops catered to gaming, film, music, anime and cosplay lovers. You had so many shops that fit your interest even outside of Sunshine City. Sunshine City had also shops that catered to those demographics. The Pokemon Center in it had all kinds of things for Pokemon fans. From TGC lovers to the fans of the games or the plushie collectors, they had every Pokemon related thing for you. If you wanted to get games or toys, the only Toys R' Us that I know that existed in Tokyo was there. They had a good section for Lego that had a statue of Yoda and R2-D2 at one point. I remember coming across it at the end of our shopping every time as a kid and if I was lucky, I got to get a lego set or a game for my Wii U. While those trips ending with Toys R' Us were a delight for me, it must have been a struggle for my parents to try to escape from a visit there. In terms of fashion, most of the shops in Sunshine were clothing related. You had various options of what clothing you wanted to get. For my family, we usually frequented the GAP that was there at that time. Sunshine also had an ABC mart, a shoe shop chain that would be found in every corner at Ikebukuro. There was also a small stage in the middle of the mall where there would be performances from up incoming singers or performances for kids. It also had a nice fountain display and a huge screen behind the stage. If you wanted to buy stationary, Sunshine City had several shops catered for it. They had 100 or 300 yen shops and before they had Tokyu Hands, the best stationary/arts and crafts chain but sadly it got replaced by a Nitori, a furniture chain. My younger sister would always go there to get whatever stationary she needed, or as a family we would go there to get the things for the new school year. Another store that had a lot of traction was the Disney store. It was always packed with the most die-hard Disney fans trying to get all kinds of Disney merch, I remember seeing a group of girls fangirling over a spoon that had Donald Duck on it. I never liked that shop since I wasn't that huge of a fan of Disney but my sister would always try to go in there, I had Toy R' Us and she had the Disney shop. The shop that my dad would always end up at was Seijo Ishii. A supermarket which had a foreign products, he would always go there I think to buy his coffee grains and other specific groceries for the house. There's other specific shops that I haven't even touched upon, one for all Marvel related things and another one for all One Piece things.

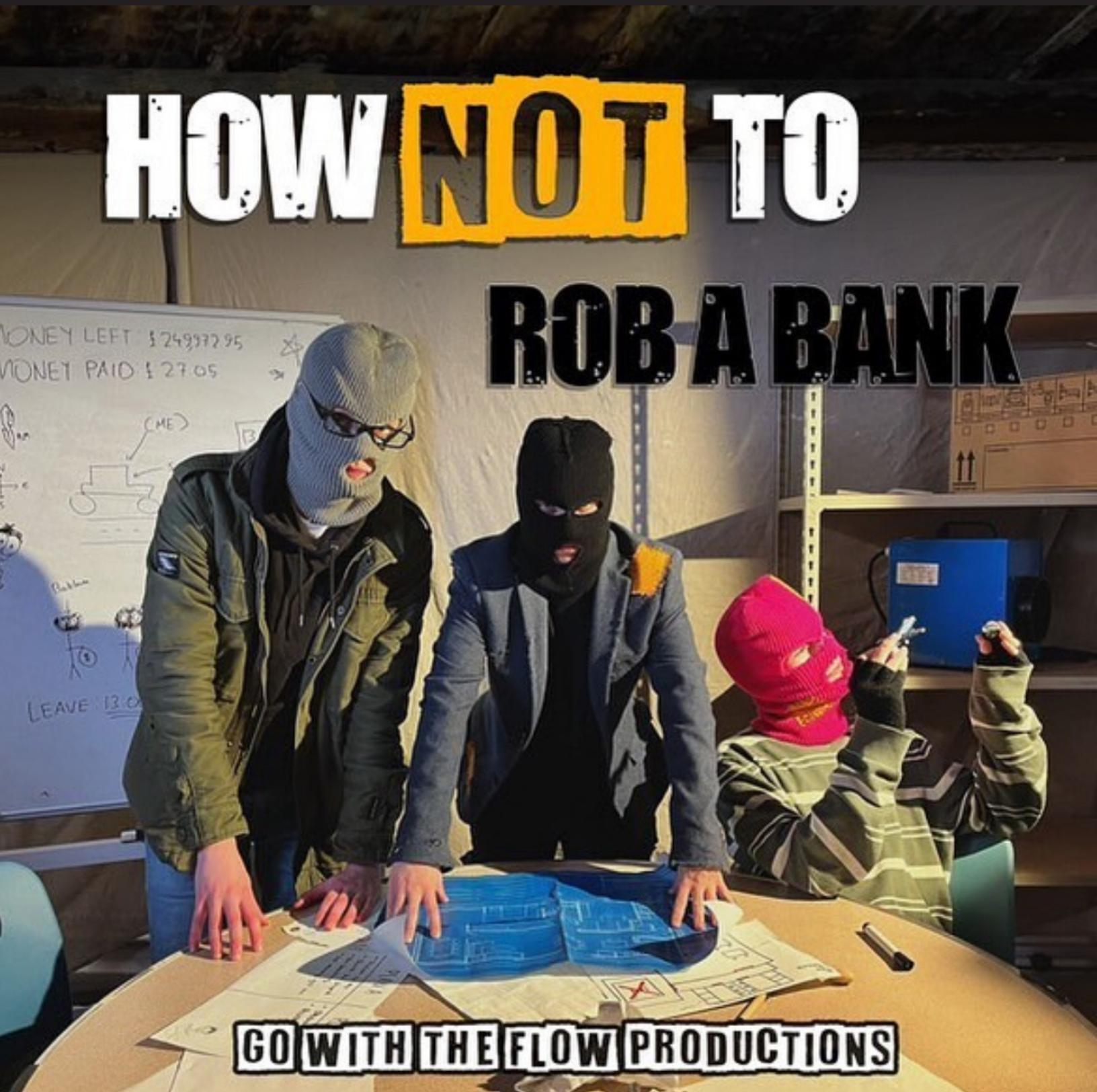
The dining options at Sunshine City were also as diverse as its shops. From traditional Japanese cuisine to Thai or Chinese. You had a nice Italian restaurant that used robots to serve you and grab your finished plates, it was weirdly futuristic. You had one of the best burger places, Kua 'Aina which was a Hawaiian burger place that had delicious burgers and amazing crispy fries. You also had several bakeries there if you wanted a nice pastry and coffee places if you wanted to take a break from the shopping. If you wanted to grab some ice cream, Sunshine had a lot of ice cream places, from memory they had one place that served ice cream from Okinawa. They used to have a Cold Stone but it turned into a Basket Robbins. My family would mostly go eat at Sunshine before going to watch a movie at the nearby movie theaters. Every time, the restaurants' food never disappointed me.

If shopping wasn't your favorite activity then Sunshine City has other options. They had indoor parks which I've never gone to but a lot of people would go, but most notably they had an impressive aquarium. The tanks are nicely decorated and unique. In the outdoor area, you see a circular tank where the seals swim around in circles. The jellyfish are in light up tubes in a dark room. They have all sorts of fish and sea creatures and they regularly do events. Although I haven't gone to the indoor theme park or the aquarium that often, it's a fun option if you don't feel like doing some shopping.



Sunshine City to me is the mall that I went most weekends to spend some quality time with my family and friends. It's the place that had so much which is why everyone liked it. It had something for everyone and had everything for what you wanted to do. This sounds like a big advertisement for the mall but I'm writing about it because there's so many good memories I've made there. Sunshine City kept its promise, it always brought more sunshine to the city of Tokyo.

なんか面白いこと、ある。
Sunshine City



WRAP OF THE DAY

BY JAMES MANT

- 1) TWO FISH ARE IN A TANK. ONE FISH TURNS TO THE OTHER FISH AND SAYS "I HAVE NO IDEA HOW TO DRIVE THIS THING!"
- 2) TWO NUNS ARE SAT ON A PARK BENCH. A FLASHER COMES OVER TO THEM AND FLASHES THEM. ONE NUN IS SO TAKEN ABACK AND SHOCKED THAT SHE HAS A STROKE. THE OTHER NUN COULDNT REACH.
- 3) WHY DID THE BARBER WIN THE RACE? HE KNEW A SHORT CUT
- 4) WHY DID THE DETECTIVE STRUGGLE TO SOLVE THE CASE ABOUT THE EGG? IT WAS A HARD ONE TO CRACK
- 5) WHY DID THE PIRATE STRUGGLE TO LEARN THE ALPHABET. HE GOT LOST AT "C"
- 6) WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU WEAR A WATCH ON A PLANE? TIME FLIES
- 7) DID YOU HEAR ABOUT THE ROBBERS THAT STOLE A CALENDAR. THE JUDGE GAVE THEM BOTH 6 MONTHS
- 8) WHY DID THE MUSHROOM GET AN INVITE TO THE PARTY. BECAUSE HE'S SUCH A FUNGI
- 9) WHY ARE FOOTBALL GAMES SO COLD. THE STADIUMS HAVE TOO MANY FANS
- 10) WHY CAN'T YOU TRUST ATOMS? THEY MAKE EVERYTHING UP

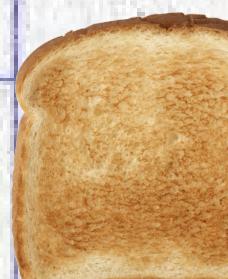
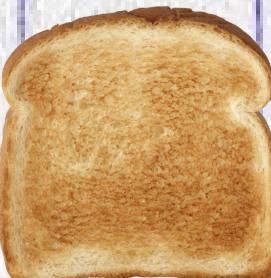


Garcon's Cooking: Recipes for and made by idiots

Curry Monsieur

Rough steps

1. Toast two pieces of bread.
2. Make curry.
3. Add ham and curry sauce in the middle of the two pieces of bread.
4. Add curry sauce on top of the completed sandwich.
5. Eat the curry monsieur.





Got My Eyes Open

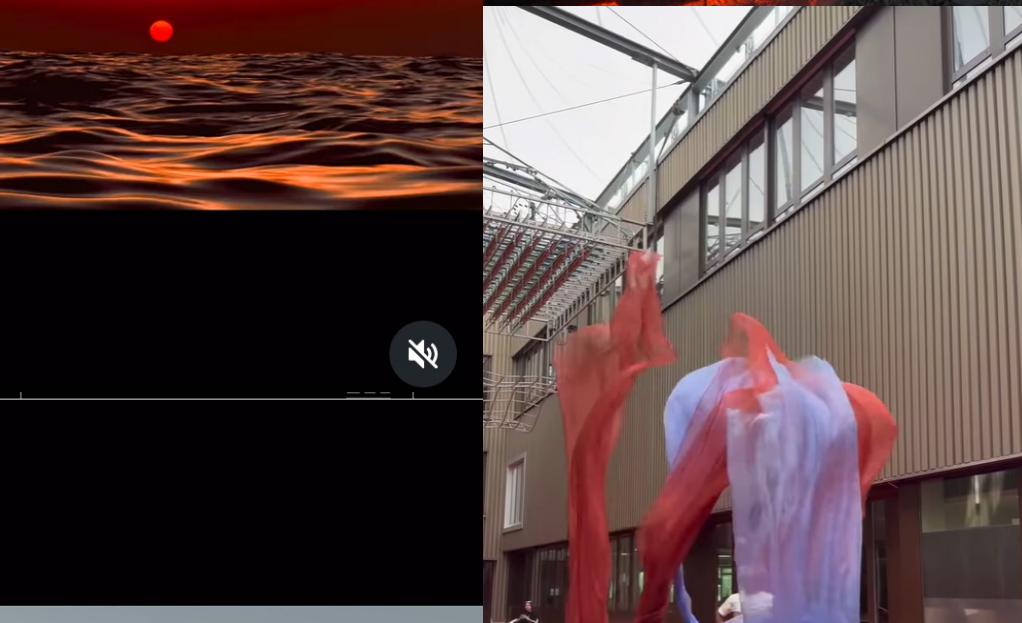
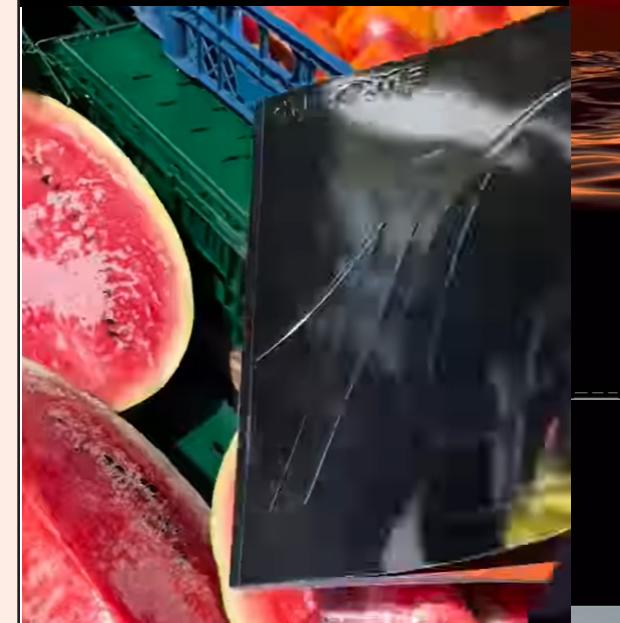
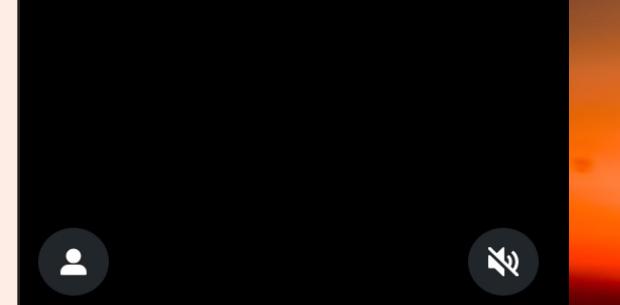
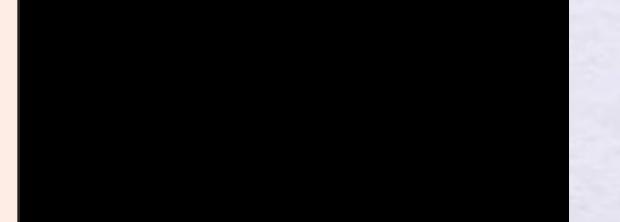
Instagram's Music Montages: Video Collage

The world of Instagram reels is quite expansive. You go from car crashes to cute cat videos to gross eating videos to a nice animation. Like any other short form platform, your feed is unique to you and the genre of short form videos you're into is not the same as the genre your friends are exploring. In reels, there are several trends that go at once and once you catch it till it quickly fades away. It's just how trends work in these social media times, but the trends that stick are the ones that aren't exactly tied down to the now. During the Italian brainrot, during the John Pork shenanigans and during the curing AI video generating phase, one kind of video keeps on reappearing in my feed. I call it the video collage genre, a short video starting with a statement said by a person that cuts into a montage containing several clips from different sources edited to a song. Unlike core videos or fan edits, these videos don't really have an exact theme that link the various clips together other than the song playing throughout them all. Why is it edited in that way? Why do a lot of accounts make those kinds of videos? Where did this genre's sudden rise come from? What do they want us to take away from these videos? This genre of videos is one that I really like and because of that fondness I want to dig deep on the various aspects of this genre of video collages.

The sudden rise of this phenomenon

In the fashion of any trends, once there is one person doing it a lot of people follow along. Especially in the short form landscape where the algorithm tries to find the most similar thing to what you like and feeds it to you. I don't have any clue on the true origin of this phenomenon but the accounts that I see these recurrent edits are from *helmuthcool*, *committee-of-affairs* and *oldfriends-bookends*. So why are there so many accounts that make these kinds of videos? Well, like any trends, simplicity helps it grow easily. All you need to make these videos are basic editing skills and an observant eye and ear. Anybody can make these kinds of videos which is maybe one thing that gives its appeal. These videos can be made by everyone which is why a lot of Instagram accounts make them. Another thing I think contributes to the rise is that it's a good format to show your favorite things. You not only showcase your favorite song of the time but also clips that you liked from your favorite movies or video on the internet. In the era where sharing your niche interest is rewarded, this is a good platform to show off your interest. It also is a part of the overall growth of music edits which is the new craze, people are more invested in music videos in general to the top scale production to the after effects lyrics video to the video collage. Music and video have been symbiotic as ever because of social media, the music industry knows it which is why artists are making music visualizers. When there isn't a visual for your favorite song, why not make your own using what you have.

In today's world, music videos are as prevalent as ever but not because the music industry is producing so many but because social media has given a platform for people to make their own using their own vices. The video collage genre is a part of the general trend of homemade music videos which its benefit is sharing your favorite art and seeing others favorites but also each other's skills.



Trowbridge: A diamond in the rough

Near Bath, there's several small towns but one stands out (not because one of my friends is from there), that town is none other than Trowbridge. Trowbridge or also called Trowvegas is a lovely town filled with more than you can think. After hearing so much about its brilliance, I managed to go there and spent the day there and it didn't disappoint. If this is your first time hearing about Trowvegas then my mission in this article is to convince you to go to this small wonderful town of Trowbridge.



The first thing I'm going to talk about Trowbridge is their Frankie & Benny's. Both times I've been, I've dined in that establishment and both times it has been an amazing dining experience. The restaurant's New York Italian-American style gives a nice cosiness for you and your friends to talk about various topics. The food is top quality and always been properly served, you'll leave the restaurant with your stomach completely satisfied. In the context of restaurant chains, Trowbridge's Spoons is also quite a fine place, when it doesn't have 100 men fighting each other. The most notable thing about the Spoons is its outdoors which is quite a nice and calm place to have a pint, something I wish Bath's Spoons had.

The second brilliant thing about Trowvegas is its malls. The first mall, Castle Place is a perfect location to film a liminal space short film. The abandonedness and emptiness of Castle Place gives it an eerie feeling but not in a way that creeps you. Instead in a way that sparks your curiosity on what this place was in its heyday. The shops that are still present are second hand shops that had nice deals on rare and specific items. If you wanna see what a mall is without the lively people then Castle Place will show you since it was gravely affected by the pandemic. The other mall that is still lively is The Shires. The Shires reminded me of how much I miss malls and the adventure that these places take you. It's your typical mall built during the 90s but what stands out in this mall is the coffee place that's built with sandstone which reminds you of the standard buildings of Bath. Also we tried the massage chairs there and if you like getting your legs being trapped and your butthole getting poked by a metal pole then you'll enjoy the experience.

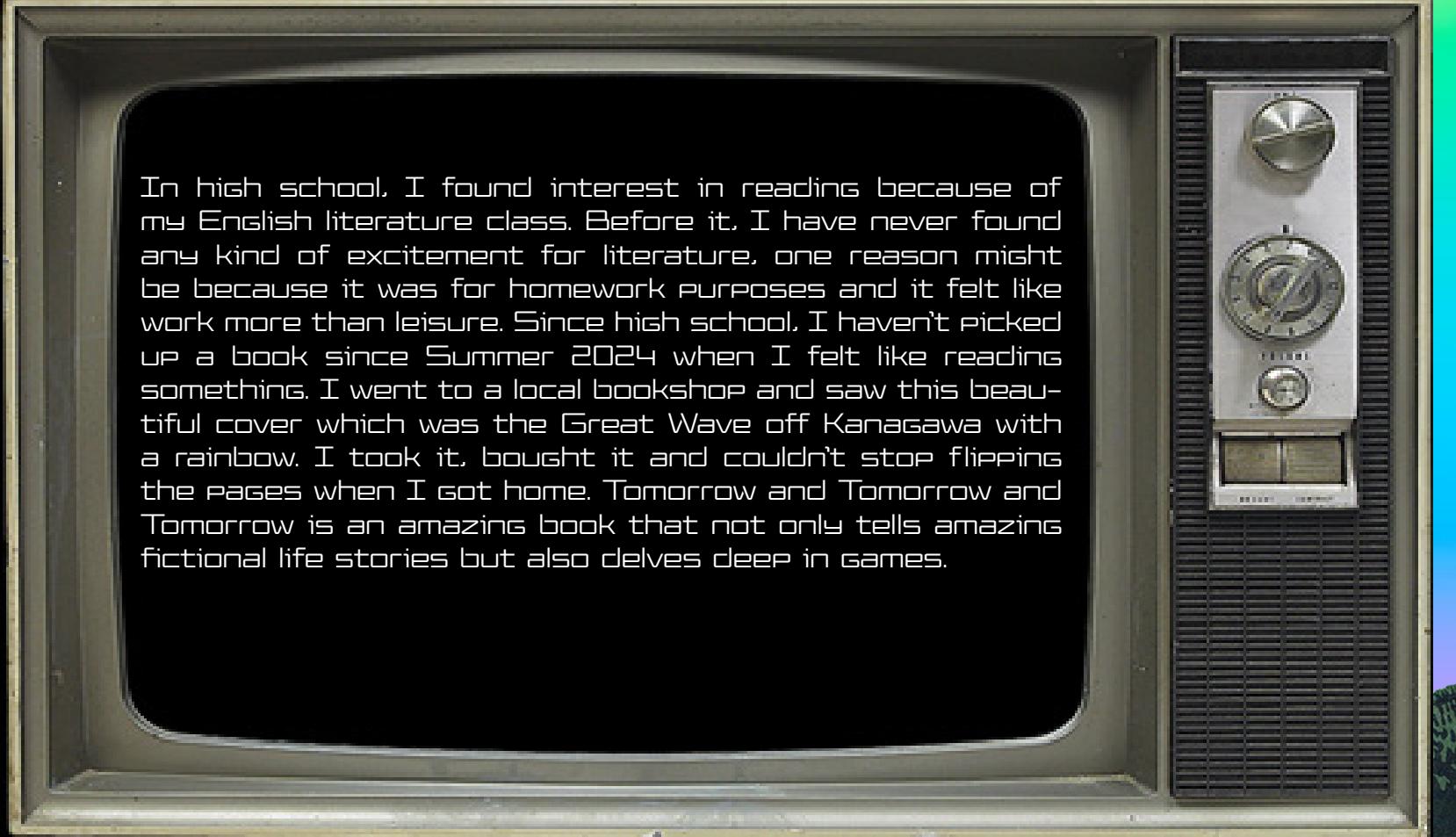
The third and best thing about Trowbridge is its own proper museum. The museum is a part of The Shires and despite its size, the museum will impress you. The museum centers around the history of Trowbridge's woolen milling industry between the 14th and the 19th century. The museum is built in the last operating facility, Salter's Home Mill which was closed in 1982, which I guessed right, impressing the museum's curator. The museum shows how Trowbridge wasn't only a pioneer of the woolen milling industry but of the industrial revolution in general. You get to see a lot of the machines used back in the day but also relics of the people of that time. Things such as clothing, diaries and tools. The last floor features more of those things but also a short film display that shows the town's history and an old piano that I had fun playing with. The museum was my highlight of the town.

One thing the museum showed me is that if you look close enough through the rough you can find a diamond which is Trowbridge. At first glance, you would think Trowbridge is just another small town that isn't that interesting and you just drive through but if you decide to stay then you'll be intrigued by not only its history but its unique sites. You'll leave the town intrigued on exploring more small towns like it that might have had a huge impact on the world. There's no place like Trowvegas.



Tomorrow and Tomorrow and Tomorrow: Life + Games = Adventure

In high school, I found interest in reading because of my English literature class. Before it, I have never found any kind of excitement for literature, one reason might be because it was for homework purposes and it felt like work more than leisure. Since high school, I haven't picked up a book since Summer 2024 when I felt like reading something. I went to a local bookshop and saw this beautiful cover which was the Great Wave off Kanagawa with a rainbow. I took it, bought it and couldn't stop flipping the pages when I got home. Tomorrow and Tomorrow and Tomorrow is an amazing book that not only tells amazing fictional life stories but also delves deep in games.



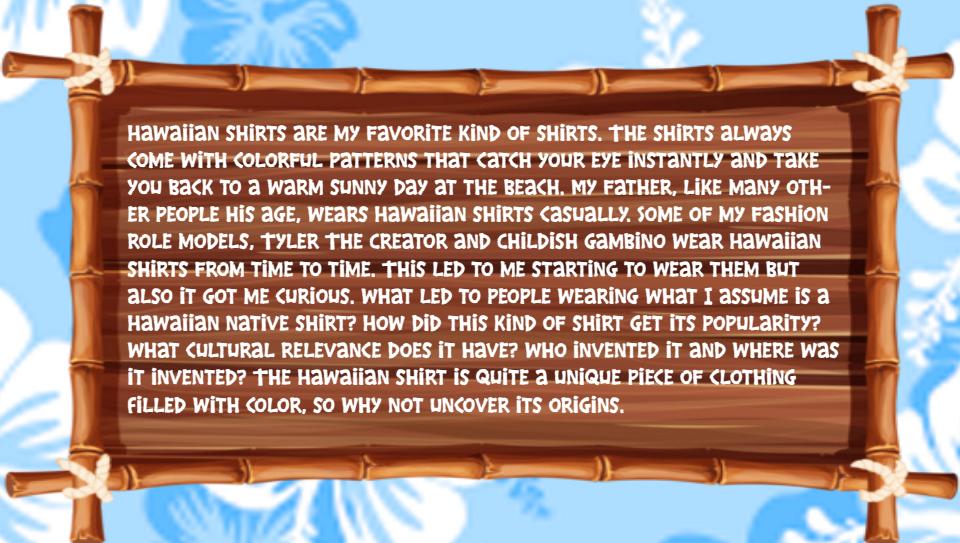
The story takes place in several different settings. From their childhoods to late in their adult lives, the story is broken up mainly in three parts. The first part takes place during their college years, the second part takes place past their prime and the third part takes place in the middle of their success, then the last part takes place in their old age. The story is quite dense and has an amazing pacing which flows so well that it's hard to take a break from the exposition. The characters' development is well knitted to the story, not feeling like filler. The different places keeps the story exciting since it always gives you room for more exploration in the same way as the time to explore. The twists and turns are mostly unexpected, taking a more dramatic route than the more logical route that feels rewarding in its own way. Even when the outcome is predictable, the lead up before it takes a great time to explore. There are some sections that are written in a unique way that really makes those sections stand out.

The story is great but it wouldn't be as good if the characters weren't amazing. The main two characters are Sadie and Sam but another integral character is Marx. The two protagonists are very complex not only themselves but also their relationship with each other. The extensive backstories give not only a deep background but also a multitude of character arcs, so you see their integral flaws get improved bit by bit as they submerge in their growth. Their integral flaws set improved bit by bit but there's also times where you don't notice them, from the family members that really showcase the protagonists' origins to the partners that impacted them. You feel for the smallest of characters which appear just for one section but they have such a charm which makes them memorable. The side characters are memorable since you see how they sculpted the characters to who they are or how they change, in a similar way as you have your list of important people that impacted your life. From parents to the random person who you didn't know the name of but said something that stuck with you. By the end of the book, you truly feel like you've witnessed a life story and the flourishing growth of the characters.

The core theme of this book is passion for games. The passion for not only playing games but also the process of making them. The journey of not only conceptualizing but also the journey of making them is detailed and not skimmed through. From the pre-production to the coding process to the debugging. In terms of passion for playing games, they depict the importance of the sense of escapism. You see this appear not only through the characters' childhood but also throughout their adulthood. This book perfectly represents people that have an absolute love of games even though that love can be detrimental but also how it's needed. Another thing it shows is how games create strong bonds, the foundation of the two main characters' friendship is their shared love for video games.

Tomorrow and Tomorrow and Tomorrow is my favorite book of all time since it has so much good going for it. As someone who really loves video games, it hit the nail in the coffin for what the medium is all about. The book feels like a beautiful biopic about game developers, so if that interests you then I highly recommend reading the book.

HISTORY OF THE HAWAIIAN SHIRTS



HISTORY

Hawaii was seen as paradise to mainland America, the place of ease. At the height of World War I, Hawaiian music was the rage and brought calm during the wartime. The return for the search of peace came back during the Great Depression but this time the new adoption was the Aloha shirts which is what is known as the Hawaiian shirts. The true precise origin of the shirt has been lost but they appeared during the 1920s and 30s. A possible origin is the local Japanese women incorporating kimono fabric into the men's shirt or the Honolulu-based dry goods store "Musa-Shiya-The Shirtmaker" under the proprietorship of Koichiro Miyamoto started making shirts out of colorful Japanese prints. The shirts grew in popularity because of tourists finding a liking to it during the mid-30s. The Aloha shirts took a break after the events of 1941 Pearl Harbor. The makers of the shirts turned into the war effort and patterns taken from Japanese culture fell out of fashion, opening for more Hawaii local features. After the war, the service members returning made the unique shirt more popular than ever. In the 1960s, the shirt was everywhere to the point that some workplaces had Aloha Fridays as a tradition. In recent years, the Hawaiian shirt has made a cultural comeback, for example Gucci are pushing the boundaries of the shirts by drawing inspiration from Japanese designs.



CULTURAL RELEVANCE

At the beginning, the shirts weren't outright embraced because the feminine garment was going against the hyper-masculine imagery of the time. What truly made the shirts accepted and thought after were the associations with wealth and fame. Hawaiian tourists were wealthy and eventually that led to celebrities like three-time Olympic swimming champion and surfing pioneer Duke Kahanamoku to singer Bing Crosby lending their names to particular brands. According to Dale Hope, a historian and the author of "The Aloha Shirt: Spirit of the Islands", those endorsements popularised the apparel. If the rich and wealthy were wearing a feminine fabric then the worries of looking masculine were washed away. Another major celebrity that brought attention to not only the shirt but the culture in general was Elvis Presley bringing more spotlight to the islands with music and his presence there. Eventually, the shirts lost in appeal might be because it eventually got attributed to the common suburban dad. What the Aloha shirts represent is the carefree nature, it shows the person is at their most comfortable in their life and isn't filled with worries in a way that a vacation in Hawaii would make you feel.

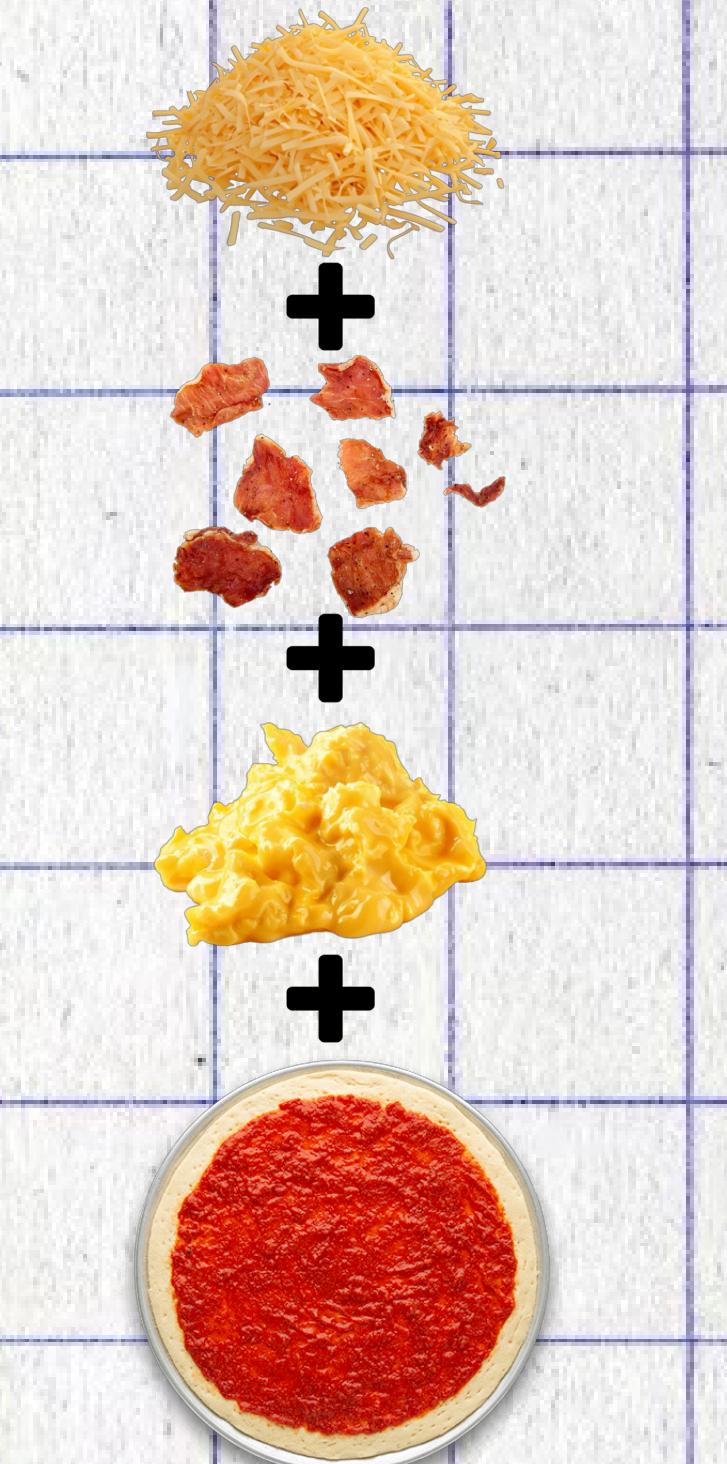
WHEN I WEAR a Hawaiian shirt, I feel at my most comfortable and confident. The shirts colors and carefree pushes me to be as colorful and carefree which is why it has gained such a mass appeal. It immerses you in paradise and takes you away from your multi-layered suits and restricting garments of the work setting. Aloha shirts are the fashion expressions of freedom.

Garcon's Cooking: Recipes for and made by idiots

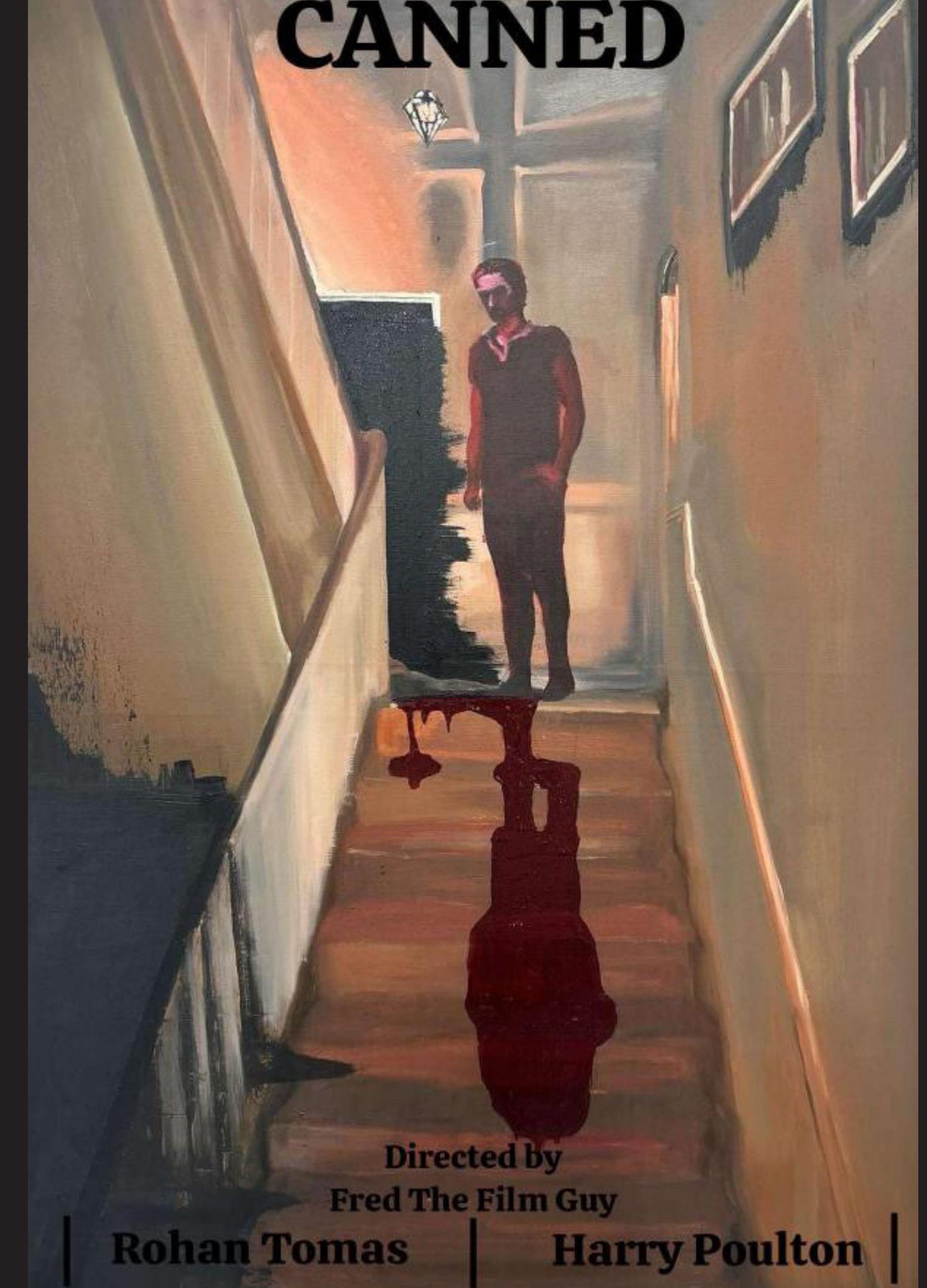
Breakfast Pizza

Rough steps

1. Make dough.
2. Flatten out the dough in pizza form.
3. Add tomato sauce on it.
4. Make bacon and scrambled eggs.
5. Add scrambled eggs and the chopped up bacon pieces on top of the sauce.
6. Cover the ingredients in cheese.
7. Put it in the oven.
8. Eat the breakfast pizza.



CANNED





Magazineky
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