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CALLING ALL YOUNG ARTISTS

Create travel-themed artwork and win air tickets to 12 destinations in Asia and Europe. p3

YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED

We tackle questions you were afraid to ask about other ethnic groups and cultures. p12

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THE STRAITS TIMES

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Developing film

Young photographers
delve into the world of
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The INside Track

You don't mess with the 'So-terns'



BY SERENE GOH
EDITOR

By January, this magazine will be nine years old. Since 2005, when we launched our first edition, the IN team has worked with many young people from all kinds of schools.

Each week, teens of the IN Crowd bring their ideas, talents and desire to learn more about the news media to this newspaper. There are also the older teens who come to us via attachment programmes and, cyclically, there are the returning scholars and interns from junior colleges, polytechnics and undergraduates from universities here and abroad.

In addition to all that, our interactions with schools have shown us what it is like for them to show care and concern for their immediate communities, especially through competitions such as Shop For Your School.

That's a lot of young people.

The group that has won a special place in my heart, however, are the recent winners of The Straits Times National Schools Newspaper Competition, our annual 24-hour media challenge. Part of the top prize is a three-week internship with The Straits Times newsroom, and I always look forward to having them on board.

I never quite know who to expect, though, because the championship trophy has gone to any number of teams, and often, one which was considered a dark horse.

As I recall, the team from Anglo-Chinese School was precocious and Victoria School was studious. The Raffles Institution guys were great writers and the girls and boy from NPS International School were professional.

Last year's winners are from first-time entrant School of the Arts (Sota), proving that the prize goes to anyone deserving of it. The four girls and a boy who made up the team, thinking they were the underdogs, shocked themselves by taking the win.

They were wrong. Their entry was a brilliant effort which showed off their use of language, visual communication skills and sense of humour. When they finally joined the IN team, they showed they had personality and a sense of adventure too.

By the end of their first day, the Sota interns (or So-terns, as they were affectionately dubbed) had already come up with their own system for reporting and, by the second day, had put together a concept for the IN Depth story that you can read this week.

As a unit, Rachel Chew, Lloyd Koh, Kong Yin Ying, Dione Lee and Ysanne Yeo relied on one another's strengths to get the work done.

They were responsible and covered for one another when they needed to. They were eternally curious about the processes of the newsroom and made time to listen to our sub-editors, artists and journalists to absorb as much as they could during their short stint here.

Not only did they do the legwork required for the main piece, they completed the illustrations to go with it and then shot their very own picture for the cover.

They didn't stop there. They also took over the INterests section, researching and writing about a subject that is close to their hearts. They even left a note for the team on their way out; one of the most entertaining we'd ever received.

I have never met a team more driven.

Did they bite off more than they could chew? Obviously.

Were any of us going to tell them that? Nope.

After all, they were doing a spectacular job and showing all of us they would not be defined by their age.

The result is a product that I am proud to present on the cover, a 100 per cent student effort that looks as good as any professional job.

To be sure, they did not just win the competition, they raised the bar.

From all of us at IN, here's to you, So-terns.

Positive about negatives



Young shutterbugs explore old film technology for edgier results. By RACHEL CHEW, LLOYD KOH, KONG YIN YING, DIONE LEE and YSANNE YEO



A variety of film cameras.



The final lunar eclipse of the millennium shot at 10 min intervals. The ISO 400 film was exposed on a single frame of negative at 1/4, 1/15 seconds each time.



DO YOU PREFER FILM OR DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHY?
Post your entries at www.facebook.com/innies.

While "uncles" are moving forward by ditching their film cameras for digital ones, some teens are going back in time. Returning to lengthier, less predictable photographic processes, they load old cameras with film, get them developed into negatives, then produce prints.

Although such methods seemed doomed as digital single-lens reflex (DSLR) cameras and home printers became affordable about 15 years ago, interest from a younger set has given them a new lease of life.

Foremost among film's appeal: scope for experimentation.

Young amateurs favour any number of SLR cameras and 35mm film, and form a growing pool of regulars at Ruby Photo Company at Peninsula Hotel Shopping Centre, a distributor and print expert which continues to specialise in photographic processes.

Mr Eugene Chan, director of the company who has been there for 13 years, has customers as young as 10 years old coming in with their parents, to those in their early 20s, as well as yuppies and expatriates.

Young photographers often start shooting on film after learning from their parents, before picking it up as their own hobby. Their numbers are growing, he said, while "the 'uncles' are the ones abandoning analogue".

Black and white photography continues to be the foundation for those keen to understand photography. Today, film is regarded as an artform.

"There are two types of youngsters," Mr Chan said. "The first group use a hybrid process – they shoot on film, scan in negatives digitally and make prints from there. The other group are purists. They do everything in analogue: they shoot, develop the negatives and make their own prints with enlargers."

But this pursuit of film is not cheap. The average cost for developing film ranges from \$20 to hundreds of dollars, while older working adults have invested up to \$30,000 for specialised machines that scan and print.

Mr Chan conceded: "Without these

young people coming in, business would be terrible. We might even have to close."

HAPPY ACCIDENTS

Analogue processes are inconvenient compared with digital ones. They are also time-consuming and rife with the possibility of errors. But diehards insist it is worth the trouble, not least for the unexpected results.

Ms Amelia Fong, an 18-year-old student at School Of The Arts (Singapore), started her photography hobby with film. She once loaded her camera with ISO 800 film, which is suited for low-light and action shoots and tested it out in poorly lit spaces.

After a downpour one day, she took pictures of an old HDB flat, as well as its surrounding trees.

The result? Surreal. "Rather than looking like rubble and trees, the shot was tinted blue. It made everything seem slightly darker and the colours of both the trees and construction debris more similar, more like a cohesive landscape," she said.

"It didn't feel like Singapore but somewhere with cooler weather. The shot seemed blur at first, but upon closer inspection, the remaining metal poles and other details could be seen."

Ultimately, the outcome was "not as flat, stylised" as a DSLR shot would have been. While digital tools such as Photoshop allow users to edit colours and boost clarity, she pointed out: "Nothing beats the way the colour of a photograph comes out because of the quality of lighting, and where and when the shot was taken."

Her schoolmates, Lai Yu Tong, Alina Sin and Marcus Yee, are similarly fascinated.

Yu Tong, 17, has a collection of six cameras – including an Edixa Matt Reflex, Diana Mini, and Vivitar Ultra Wide and Slim on which he has invested about \$350 over the past two years.

"I read online reviews on film cameras and sometimes my friends recommend them to me," he said. "I choose the cameras with interesting features that my other cameras do not already have and how practical they are for whatever trip or



These funky photos are the results of experimentation with a Lomo camera.

project I'm going to embark on next."

He explores the quirks that come with each one, treating the results as a photo journey. In fact, he loves the "hands-on" factor that film has to offer, down to the development process and the waiting time for his final prints.

These surprising results of working with analogue photography are described by 17-year-old Marcus as "romantic". As a medium that undergoes "virtually no post-processing", he added, it has an "honest and raw" nature.

While digital photography gives users the freedom to take as many shots as they like, film forces photographers to compose their pictures with care.

"With film, the process of photography really comes with every shot," he pointed out.

After capturing what hopefully is the perfect picture, there is the thrill of anticipation. Ms Sin, 18, who tries "different types of exposures, layering, and light", treasures this final sensation of "suspense".

"You have to wait to see the final product after doing calculations and fixing the lighting," she said.

As long as these enthusiasts continue to delve into past process, it seems unlikely that film photography will fade. Rather, it seems set to occupy a firm niche in the field.



P-SHARAN PINHOLE

The P-Sharan pinhole camera, designed and made in Japan (by Sharan Pinhole Cameras), offers a lightweight and easy mode of film photography with brilliant results.

Made entirely out of stiff card, this camera comes in a kit with instructions for you to assemble and start shooting. This is great for people who want to get started with DIY camera photography and yet want great results that they can rely on. It uses standard 35mm film and you can order the kit online at the Lomography Shop (shop.lomography.com/sg/), for about \$30 to \$50.

Find out more about the P-Sharan STD-35 and its sibling, the P-Sharan wide-35 at www.sharan-camera.com/home.html.



MATCHBOX PINHOLE

For a more challenging approach to DIY camera photography, try diving into making your own camera from a matchbox, film canisters, aluminium cans and spoons of black tape.

Using standard 35mm film, this pinhole camera is relatively easy to use while still allowing room for experimentation with the shutter and personalisation.

First developed in AD1000 by Ibn Al-Haytham, the pinhole camera is one of the most fundamental products of early photography, when it was still known by the name "camera obscura", which translates from Latin into "darkened chamber". The matchbox pinhole allows you to experience the authenticity of history and also the convenience of the contemporary film – the best mix of both worlds.

Make your own, with detailed step-by-step instructions, at www.matchboxpinhole.com.



MANUAL PINHOLE

You can make everything from scratch and venture into the origins of pinhole photography using photo-sensitive paper instead of film.

This unorthodox method of photography offers you ultimate freedom to shape your photographs from ground zero, often on low-budget terms. This camera may be slightly tricky to manoeuvre when it comes to developing the film – it returns to unstable film development stages: the dark room, a safe light and lots of chemicals.

To learn more about making your own pinhole camera, go to www.kodak.com/ek/US/en/Pinhole_Camera.htm.