

STAR 110

SEPTEMBER

COVER PHOTO: MAE MULLER
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SEPTEMBER 2020



IMAGE: MARTHA IRWIN



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DEAR READERS,

As all of us can agree that this summer break was quite different than the ones in the past. Rather than being able to use the time to go on holiday with our loved ones and travel the world, we were confined to our own homes. The COVID-19 pandemic has led us to adapt to a 'new normal' - the world learned to socially distance, wear masks and appreciate key workers. This academic year will certainly differ from the last as we respect these new rules to protect returning staff, students and incoming freshers. With most classes and societies operating online, it will be an unfamiliar transition for everyone. Strand Magazine looks forward to welcoming interested journalists, artists, video creators and creatives. We have a lot in store for the new year including more writing opportunities, virtual socials, interviews, careers events and more. We can't wait to speak to all of our new and incoming members and see what they create. The Strand Magazine is not only an arts and culture publication but a collective - a platform for King's students to unleash their talents whatever the field they are interested in.

This issue is a taster of what our amazing writers and designers can create. From interviews with rising star Mae Muller, artist Teshar to articles on the complexities of Indian cuisine, eating disorders and The Dangers of Performative Workaholism, there are no topical boundaries for a Strand writer.

We're looking forward to welcoming everyone very soon - welcome to King's and The Strand Magazine!

With love,
Halim Kim

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“DON’T CALL IT CURRY.”
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EXPLORING THE COMPLEXITIES OF INDIAN CUISINE

My father makes delicious mutton stew. He cooks it for hours on a low flame, coconut milk and potatoes with cinnamon, curry leaves and other spices - not measured but eyeballed. He'll occasionally stir it and can tell when it is ready just by smelling it. I make the steamed rice or dosas to have it with. It's a Sunday meal, not something you would cook on a busy Monday schedule. Born in Chennai and brought up in Calcutta, his food is a smattering of Bengali cuisine with influences from Kerala and Andhra Pradesh. I would get idlis in my lunchbox with sambar or cheese toasties - there was no in-between. I think cooking for loved ones is the love language for Indian parents. And if they can't cook, they'll cut you fruit.

CURRY IS COLONIAL TERMINOLOGY. A WORD THAT COLONISERS USED TO LABEL THE EXTENSIVE CUISINE OF THE SUBCONTINENT UNDER ONE LIMITED WORD.

This is what goes through my head when someone mentions they want to get some “curry”. India is a massive country with a not so homogenous cuisine of chicken or veg in a sauce. I don’t think many people remember that when they order takeout. We are all in some way victim of the mainstream - I have stuck to the dishes I know or saw on T.V. many times when I attempted to explore a new cuisine. But that’s your in, to experience a new cuisine, witness the bastardized to find the authentic.

In reality, the cuisine doesn’t only consist of just Chicken Tikka Masala - in fact, you won’t find that in India. Even though the food has travelled internationally it adapted as well, and this dish proves it. A plate of tandoori chicken - cooked in a clay oven on skewers, added to a yoghurt-based sauce took the UK by storm. What intrigues me is how this dish is called by its name more than it’s called curry.

Binging Ugly Delicious Season 2 on Netflix took me on a journey of my own. David Chang, host and founder of Momofuku, explores nuances in the world of food - working through racism and appropriation through what’s put on our plate. For something that is such a vital part of our lives, we don’t seem to talk about food that much. In “Don’t Call That Curry”, Padma Lakshmi, Priya Krishna, Madhur Jaffrey, Sonia Chopra and many more South Asian chefs and writers break down the black and white description of Indian food attempting to surmise the insurmountable variety found in the subcontinent.


“When someone goes to a Korean Restaurant, they’re like, ‘I want bibimbap, I want galbi, and I don’t like kimchi’. It’s like the top things that in their world, comprises a Korean menu because they don’t know what the f*** they’re doing. I’m that a**hole when I go to an Indian restaurant”, David Chang’s words ring true with many of us and our journey in exploring new restaurants. His travels to Mumbai present him with Thalís - a huge plate with small portions of different vegetables (sabzis), dals, rotis and non-vegetarian dishes, roomali rotis and kebabs. There’s also the revelation that not everyone in India practices yoga. What made it so effective was watching the process of unlearning. Chang’s acknowledgement of his own lack of knowledge and attempt to study the culture gives me hope that acceptance will move beyond “curry lane”.

No one in India will call Rogan Josh or Rasam a curry. They are called by their name as they should. The East India Company travelled to India to trade in the 17th century. Here, all they ate was local food which they termed as “curry”. Loosely, the term is now used to refer to sauces and gravy. “Curry” itself does not feature in any Indian languages. The words Karil and Kari pop up in a few South Indian languages which may have been used to describe spices for seasoning or the final dish. Curry travelled across the globe, it reached Japan and the Caribbeans. Many Indians travelled to the Caribbean as indentured labourers forced to work on plantations. It was here that Caribbean cuisine interacted with parts of India making curry powder more or less a staple in their cooking.

Indian culture is not one that writes things down or measures out the exact amount of jeera (cumin) powder or garam masala. It’s one filled with family recipes for heirlooms, ones that don’t leave the close net of blood relatives. There’s always that one closely guarded recipe, which makes it tough to bring dishes rich with years of history to our tables. And people’s affinity to North Indian food, the food you’re most likely served at your favourite Indian restaurant, makes it tougher to make the regional mainstream.

IT TAKES EFFORT TO BREAK AWAY FROM YOUR BIASES AND TRUST ME IT’S WORTH IT. NEXT TIME YOU WANT TO ORDER-IN, THINK ABOUT WHAT YOU CALL “CURRY”.

SARENA MOSS: HOW STUDENT THEATRE SHAKES THINGS UP



Sarena Moss stumbles into the Virginia Woolf building with her usual messy bob and an all black ensemble. She is warm and bubbly and after the preliminary chit-chat about English modules, she gets straight into the project that has taken up most of her final university year— writing and directing her own play, ‘These Walls Between Us’, for the first time.

“It was totally different to directing someone else’s work” she tells me, her hands splayed enthusiastically. “When you read someone else’s play you grow an understanding of how you want to direct it as you read it. I’m a very visual person so I had all of these visions of how I wanted to do these specific things before I’d even written it.” The final production of ‘These Walls Between Us’ was indeed an optical treat, incorporating dramatic coloured lighting and a physical theatre that transformed the lecture hall into the intimate and personal space of a bedroom. “Learning to change my vision was very difficult” Sarena concedes when I ask her about the challenges of directing. “But I think over time I opened myself up a lot more than I had done in the past to suggestion from the actors. They really pushed my vision forward into something that I didn’t think it could be.”

As well as writing and directing her own play, Sarena was co-president of King’s Players - this means she is in charge of reading through plays and organising the schedule and budget for the year. Student theatre always struggles with the constraints of time and money. When I ask Sarena about this she tries to keep positive. “Apart from budget I don’t think it’s that different to professional theatre.” She pauses. “And lighting, we need new lighting.” She pauses again. “And the physical space.” She sinks further into the grey sofa of VWB. “I’d like to say you can do theatre anywhere but it is also quite limiting.” She pauses again. Raises her eyebrows. “And us not being paid, of course.”

Despite her laid back demeanour, she describes her own pitching process last summer as “nerve wracking.” I ask if she has any tips for people looking to follow in her footsteps and submit their own work to a student theatre company. “Make sure you’ve spent a lot of time on your email pitch,” she says. She explains people spend time planning how they’re going to direct a play but don’t show that process clearly when they send in their ideas. “To be honest, it sounds stupid but it’s just confidence— if you can sell something well, you can sell anything.” She is encouraging about other students getting involved. Whilst the time constraints are challenging, the creative and social outlet seems more than a worthy pay off. “Just do it.” She says, her eyes lighting up. “Don’t think about it too much just get involved. I know sometimes it can seem quite cliquey but we have all new directors this term and we’d like to see that again. Some new faces.”

I ask Sarena what she plans to do in the future, this will be the first September she is not going back to university in three years, a prospect that is, to many of us, daunting. “In an ideal world I’d love to just be writing and directing and putting on shows. But also making theatre more accessible for more people.” She glances at the trees waving outside VWB where just a block away hit shows sell tickets for over fifty pounds a pop. “Theatre is so elitist, I think it changed for a bit, but now, it’s just the way it was. I want to encourage more people of colour and queer people and people from disadvantaged backgrounds to get involved in theatre. I think it could really shake things up. That’s what I want, to shake things up.”

WORDS: OLIVE FRANKLIN
EDITED: HALIM KIM

IMAGE: WILL NASH

THE HUSTLE FACTOR: THE DANGERS OF PERFORMATIVE WORKAHOLISM

You've probably stumbled across the work of Casey Neistat at some point. School leaver at 15, father by 17 - and from the trailer parks of small-town Connecticut - he has emerged as a film director/entrepreneur/social media personality extraordinaire. Being the co-creator of a successful HBO show and ex-CEO of social media startup Beme, which sold to CNN for a staggering \$25 million back in 2016, his merchandise bears the slogan 'WORK HARDER', which is also tattooed on his forearm. His Twitter bio simply reads 'family + work'. This is a man who has found success in two distinct generations of visual media and has built it all on an unrelenting work ethic.

Neistat's career demonstrates the omnipresence of hustle culture. Nowadays, workaholism is seen as a glamorous, marketable attribute, and increasingly, the answer to an uncertain and unstable job market. It is now something to flaunt on social media with a #inspiring quote and an emoji or two.

Technology has played a huge role in the pervasiveness of hustle culture. Not in the office? No worries, write that report on your phone, in bed; double check that spreadsheet in your lunch break, sneak in a few emails before a night out. It is difficult to establish an 'off the clock' state-of-mind when so much of your working life is right at your fingertips. And, with the continued rise of social media and influencer marketing, younger generations can make a career of their lifestyle as well as a lifestyle of their career - or a mixture of the two, in the case of Neistat. It's clear the line between work and life is becoming increasingly blurred.

Despite plenty of research proving that working more does not necessarily increase productivity, hustle culture has been put on a pedestal by its high-profile supporters with prominent places in both mainstream pop culture and the corporate world. Perhaps the most famous of these is Elon Musk, the multi-billionaire CEO of Tesla and SpaceX, who proclaimed on Twitter that 'changing the world' is only possible with an 80-100 hour work week. Marissa Mayer, formerly of Yahoo, took it one step further; proclaiming in 2016 to be working 130 hours a week. Working all 7 days, that leaves a precious 6 hours a day to eat, sleep, and generally - live.

These insane hours might not be for the benefit of only one company. 1 in 4 Brits take on a 'side hustle' to supplement their usual income, be it freelance work, a small business, or a few evenings of Uber or Deliveroo. In our current economic climate, this might be a necessity rather than a choice.

It is perhaps one of the most dangerous effects of hustle culture: by propagating the idea that those who work the hardest will reap the biggest rewards (a myth considered false for a variety of reasons), by normalising having to work a second, third, or even fourth job, society excuses big businesses for not providing an adequate salary or work-life balance. It is particularly disturbing when we consider that the most visible advocates of hustle culture are those at the very top of the corporate ladder.

So where does this all lead? Some might make it work, but for many, such a culture leads to burnout. It's difficult to accurately measure its prevalence - particularly when it is considered an 'occupational phenomenon' rather than a medical condition by the WHO - but we can safely assume that it is a widespread issue, and will likely become more so with the added stresses of a global pandemic and national recession. Burnout manifests as a constant feeling of helplessness, exhaustion and withdrawal that may start out very subtly but increase overtime. It affects workers in all industries, at all levels - even Casey Neistat felt compelled to address the 'relentless pressure' he felt as a vlogger.

So let's get this straight: working hard is not the problem. There are greater faults than having big ambitions, but feeling obligated to overwork yourself as a result of a toxic work culture is dangerous. We know it's bad for us, so why are we doing it?

WORDS: EMMA CAMPBELL
EDITED: ELLIE MUIR
PHOTOGRAPHY: EMMA CAMPBELL



COME WHAT MAE

THE RISE OF NORTH LONDON STAR
MAE MULLER



WORDS: EMMA SHORT
EDITED: HALIM KIM

Ever since Mae Muller first started making music three years ago, her career has been a delightful whirlwind. Her infectious attitude and smooth vocals in singles such as “Jenny” led to a prestigious deal with Capitol Records (Katy Perry, Sam Smith). Fast forward 36 months and she’s reached almost five million streams on Spotify, supported Little Mix on tour and sold out numerous headline shows of her own.

So when she found herself in lockdown, worlds away from the buzz of live performances and the recording studio, it came as a shock. “I was on this trajectory and then suddenly it ground to a halt,” she told me when we met at the Abbey Tavern, the infamous Kentish Town pub where she used work. “It was the first time that I was really worried about how things were going.”

HER EXPRESSION SHOWED TRUE ANXIETY, AS SHE LOOKED DOWN AT THE TABLE WE SHARED ON THE ROOF TERRACE. BUT THEN HER JOYFUL GRIN RETURNED. “THESE LAST COUPLE OF WEEKS HAVE BEEN REALLY BUSY. NOW THINGS ARE HAPPENING AGAIN.”



THE WHIRLWIND IS BACK.

Following the success of “I Don’t Want Your Money”, released in the epicentre of lockdown with a video she filmed on her iPhone, she kicked off her upcoming EP with new single “So Annoying”. I met Mae on a cool Friday afternoon in August, the very day of its release. Our conversation ranged from virtual festivals and the brilliance of North London, to the pitfalls of the music industry and the importance of using your platform.

CONGRATULATIONS ABOUT “SO ANNOYING”! WHAT MADE YOU SHARE IT NOW?

Thank you! “So Annoying” ties in really nicely with the rest of the songs on the EP, so it’s a natural first single. This EP is my favourite body of work that I’ve ever put out. I’m so excited to have people hear it and finally perform it live.

YOU SEEM TO LOVE BEING ON STAGE. DID YOU MISS LIVE SHOWS DURING LOCKDOWN?

Definitely! It’s my favourite part of being a music artist. Having people sing my lyrics back to me will never get old. I love being in the room with everyone and seeing how they receive my new music.

HOW ABOUT VIRTUAL GIGS? YOU PERFORMED AT THE VIRTUAL V FESTIVAL A FEW DAYS AGO.

There were 25 people in the crowd, all socially distanced... so it was intimate. But it was so much fun too! Just to have them invite me was amazing. It’s great how they gave up-and-coming artists a chance we’ve missed out on. I was supposed to do Reading and Leads, which would have been... oh, it would have been today.

BUT YOU MADE THE BEST OF LOCKDOWN, RELEASING “I DON’T WANT YOUR MONEY” ON 8TH MAY.

Yeah, and I shot the video on my iPhone! When I first got the call asking me to film it, I had a bit of a meltdown. But now I’m really proud of it. I like how it’s so DIY and so of the moment. It’s a positive way to mark that time in my life.

“IDWYM” IS UPBEAT, BUT WITH SERIOUS UNDERTONES. WHAT’S THE MESSAGE?

It’s about independence. When you’re independent, you’re free, whether that’s financially or emotionally. I’ve made that for myself and it’s really important to me. So trying to impress me with materialistic things won’t work! I want you to respect me, I want us to have great conversation. But it’s definitely a journey... I used to rely really heavily on other people for my happiness.

YOU GREW UP JUST AROUND THE CORNER FROM HERE. HOW HAS LONDON SHAPED YOU AS AN ARTIST?

Yeah, North London born and bred. I can’t imagine living anywhere else, I love it so much. I love the people, the culture, the music. I love that it’s such a melting pot. There are so many cool music venues here, like Kentish Town Forum just across the road. Growing up, I saw so many great artists emerge around me. Adele in Tottenham, Amy Winehouse in Camden, Lily Allen... Dua Lipa went to the school next to mine, so we have loads of mutual friends.

IT ISN’T JUST CORONAVIRUS SENDING SHOCKWAVES THROUGH LONDON. YOU ACTIVELY SUPPORT THE BLACK LIVES MATTER MOVEMENT AND SHARE GREAT RESOURCES.

I think everyone should use their voice. Especially as a musician – the music industry is so heavily influenced by black culture. Pop, jazz, RnB... nearly every genre has its roots there. As someone who benefits from that, the least I can do is spread awareness. I’m not saying I know everything, or that I’m the most resourced person. But if everyone was scared to get it wrong, nothing would change. It’s all about education and incorporating anti-racism into your daily life.

YOU’VE USED YOUR PLATFORM TO RAISE AWARENESS ABOUT THE PRESSURES OF SOCIAL MEDIA AND EVEN SHARED YOUR FACETUNE EDITING ROUTINE. WHAT MADE YOU FILM THAT VIDEO?

I used to compare myself so much to what I saw on Instagram. Because I Facetune myself, I know it isn’t real. But I started getting comments under my pictures like, “I’d die to look like you” or “this makes me feel so ugly”. That’s not how I want people to feel! I’m not going to stop using the app – that’s unrealistic, I’m not at that stage yet. But the least I can do is be honest. As my following grows as an artist, I want to inspire the young people that look up to me.

LISTEN TO “SO ANNOYING” ON STREAMING PLATFORMS NOW AND LOOK OUT FOR MAE’S UPCOMING EP.



Half a decade ago, most of us would associate the word algorithm with nothing more than mathematics, as they have gone largely unnoticed within our daily lives. Today, from our social media interactions, online shopping, or voting behaviour – it is almost guaranteed that an opaque algorithm is grading and influencing many aspects of our lives. From Cambridge Analytica's data operations influencing the outcome of Trump's election in 2016, to the Ofqual A-Level Fiasco; algorithms, no matter their form, can be nefarious and damaging.

Algorithms can be used varyingly by different bodies, such as brands using “personal recommendation” algorithms for marketing on Facebook or Instagram; banks using them for financial risk models; governments using them to determine the ‘fate’ of a students’ results in a time of a pandemic. These programmed sets of computational steps are slowly dissipating into many aspects of our lives, determining a lot about the functioning of society, much of which seems out of our control.

Despite the differences between the plethora of algorithms which exist, the most common way they impact us as citizens is the way our personal data and information is collected and reflected back at us, usually in a distorted and questionable way. The underlying functionality is the same; the collection of historical data about people, profiling their behaviour online, collecting their location, or even their answers to questionnaires, then using that expansive dataset to predict their future purchases, voting behaviour, or university prospects.

But what are the human costs of algorithms going wrong? When we are rushing out extremely complicated technology to generate profits or to make faster decisions – we can only look towards the damage already caused by algorithms to possibly foresee how they will impact us in the future.

ARE ALGORITHMS TAKING OVER OUR LIVES?

Whilst many social media users are mobilizing to demand justice and express solidarity, calling others to support Black-owned businesses and elevate Black voices - why are the biggest social networking sites working against the promotion of these demands for basic human rights?

In a filter bubble on social media - when we are always presented with the same content - our voices on social media can be projected into an echo chamber provoking a confirmation bias. Whilst optimists may claim that social media can expose others to new ideas, the upsurge of Black Lives Matter related content on Instagram has shown that it takes millions of people to significantly shake up the algorithm.

It becomes easy to assume that algorithms are beyond our control, but when algorithm training sets are programmed by humans - it brings into question the demographic makeup of those who have the authority to be making these far-reaching computational decisions.

The US based 'Algorithmic Justice League' argue that unchecked and unregulated AI systems "can amplify racism, sexism, ableism, and other forms of discrimination". This stems from the lack of diversity within the AI industries, where predominantly white, middle-class men dominate the industry. From its makeup of programmers, it is no wonder that algorithms can reflect the inequalities in society right back at us.

It is evident that algorithms are here to stay, and it is possible that as more social media platforms are invented and expanded, algorithms will become increasingly addicted to absorbing our personal information, thus further blurring the boundaries of data misuse. This means algorithms will only have a deeper human cost if its programmers' biases' - whether subconscious or conscious - aren't challenged or checked effectively.

Government Algorithms

The recent A-Level results fiasco revealed that important types of decision-making need far more than a set of biased programming of computational steps. In the case of the A-Level results before Boris' U-Turn, it was the lack of data that was shocking; using only the students ranking in subject availability and the school's grade history. This is an example of information which was rapidly gathered and standardised narrowly, with little recognition of its detriment until the A-Level student's faced the consequences of delayed offers from the universities they deserved.

Social Media Algorithms

Away from government algorithms; user-targeted, news feed algorithms on social media pose a serious threat to our mental health - from the marketing of 'weight loss' beverages enforcing the continuous pressure to self improve, or unrealistic #bodyinspo photos. When "a fifth of 16-24 year olds spend more than seven hours a day online every day of the week" (The Telegraph), it's somewhat apocalyptic to comprehend the amount of control algorithms have during our screen interaction time.

More recently, "user-targeted" algorithms have exemplified the ways algorithms can perpetuate racial inequality. Instagram users have noticed the site filtering content related to the Black Lives Matter movement, with this content being pushed to the back of feeds and remaining invisible on the 'Explore' page, despite the immense surge in the amount of content. Instagram has admitted this is called 'shadowbanning', describing it as "filtering people without transparency, and limiting their reach as a result". Whilst Instagram have acknowledged their need to address their algorithm 'bias', it seems Instagram's programmers are constantly working against activists' content, rather than promoting the agenda for racial justice and equality.

TikTok has also recently apologised for algorithmically hiding posts that included the Black Lives Matter or George Floyd hashtags from view, with the company saying it had to "regain and repair [the] trust" between itself and the Black community.



CINEMA IN LOCKDOWN DIARIES

The Age of Stay-at-Home-Cinema

As I am sure you're all so tired of hearing: we're in strange times, hard times, unprecedented times, and in the middle of all this we are trying so desperately to cling onto a sense of normality and freedom. In August, I asked some of our writers how their relationship with cinema had changed during the pandemic, or rather if it had changed, was it better, or worse? The responses I received were overwhelming, and extraordinarily special. To read about how cinema has, and continues to touch so many people's lives, especially right now, gave me so much hope to continue to see a future for an art form we all love so dearly. Whether it be escaping with a comfort TV show, mouthing the words that we know oh-too-well, or watching a film for the first time, giving us an inspiring new perspective on life, cinema replenishes whilst also giving us a home to come to when everything feels so alien. Right now, that feels particularly special.

I'm therefore very excited to launch the 'Cinema in Lockdown Diaries: The Age of Stay-at-Home-Cinema' and eventually write about my own experiences, once all our wonderful writers have shared theirs.

For now, I'll let the articles speak for themselves. Please have a read of the excerpts that our wonderful writers have composed as a little time capsule of how cinema has framed our lockdown experiences. You can find the full articles here

To all our freshers and new students, and hopefully, writers joining us, I know right now times are stressful and things feel particularly odd, but Strand Magazine is always here to offer a home for your strange and exciting thoughts. Drop us an email if you want to chat cinema, in whatever capacity that may be, we are always ready to hear new ideas, no matter (rather, especially) how wacky they may be. For our experienced and new readers, I hope the excerpts from our writers below will offer some comfort to your qualms and offer cinema as an artform that will always make us feel a little less lonely.

A few excerpts from of our 'Cinema In Lockdown Diaries':

But more importantly besides all of these novelties, the cinema offers a space of reflection unlike any other, allowing you to fully disconnect from the outside world and engage with nothing other than the images being presented to you. It also provides a much-needed haven of solitude for contemplation and a severance from the outside world, and I miss that more than you could know.

Cinema in Lockdown: An Abundance of Time - Alfie Woodhead



Written and Excerpts
Collated by Andriani
Scordellis

Edited: Ketki
Mahabaleshwarkar

Covid-19 has ultimately introduced a sense of Darwinism in film; filmmakers must evolve or face uncertainty in their future. Using streaming platforms alongside, rather than as an enemy of cinema releases is the key to safeguarding a healthy industry in the future – combined, the platforms reach audiences that would have previously been unable to get to a cinema.

It's Not All Bad: Lockdown Cinema and The Evolution of Film - Olivia Hall

While I felt like reality has turned into a dystopia, movies have brought me joy and fed my soul during the loneliness of the quarantine. The greatest power of film is that it can make you travel in space and time, so I used the seventh art as a media to revisit Paris through the lens of the great masters of the Nouvelle Vague such as François Truffaut, Jean-Luc Godard and Agnès Varda

A Cinematic Journey in Paris (under lockdown) - Carla Suarez

Last thoughts...

We look forward to welcoming you all into the wonderful world of film journalism, and despite the times, cinema stays a constant for us. Why not head to your favourite independent cinema and catch a film with a quirky mask and bag full of hand sanitizer? They would really appreciate the support!

If you are at home shielding, how about a Netflix Party with your favourite friends, or if you want to help an independent streaming service, grab a Mubi subscription coupled with a Zoom call to make sure everyone can see you gasp or choke on your homemade sourdough over a stereotypical indie boy in a pretentious indie movie (I'm guilty too). I've gone from trying to act cool on a red carpet when Timmy walked past - to crying over Call Me by Your Name in my room, for the hundredth time.

I personally really miss The Prince Charles Cinema, BFI Southbank, and ArtHouse Crouch End, and all the wonderful film talks at BAFTA, but we all know the moment we step foot in our favourite cinemas again it will be truly magical. So whatever your style of cinema in Lockdown, stay safe and connected! Whilst I ironically find myself missing packed red carpet premieres, and mourning the loss of a physical BFI London Film Festival this year, where I stumbled on my words talking to David Heyman (Producer of Harry Potter, Paddington, Marriage Story) he is also the loveliest man ever, and the film industry is the loveliest place ever.

However, it cannot be denied that everyone is trying extra hard to offer us a taste of cinema, and the efforts do not go unnoticed. The consistent need to provide an audience for these beautiful films proves how persistent this industry is, and how far away it is from dying out. Cinema is not going anywhere.

The transient nature of film means that we can have such strong, special moments in the space of an hour, and a lasting emotion that lingers with us through time. Whilst a film must come to an end, our connection to it is everlasting, so pop on a comfort show when you need some familiarity, but don't forget to expand your mind and sensations with films that will offer a fresh lens for life.

Grab a cuppa, and some sort of electronic device to read how our writers navigated the strong pull of comfort shows and the unease of new films, and maybe even acquire a few suggestions for your ever-growing film list! I hope you love or fall in love with film all over again, if you're struggling a bit right now, these articles are a great place to start.



AS WE WATCHED GALLERIES, theatres, and museums close at the end of March, we said a silent goodbye to the arts as we knew them. Almost half a year later, we are still in the midst of a pandemic, and the arts scene across the UK has been woefully obliterated. The British government was slow to respond, announcing only in July a promise to inject £1.57 billion into the cultural sector with the Arts Council expected to distribute £500 million of this fund. On the surface, this seemed like a form of relief, but the several months of the arts being largely unaccounted for have done irreversible damage.

A one-time injection of funding is sadly inadequate, it does very little to solve the long-term crisis the arts will face. There is no way of knowing how the cultural sector will be affected by the pandemic in the long term, what institutions will survive, and how we will be able to engage with the arts in the ways we used to. In an already underfunded and often overlooked field, it is difficult to see any hopeful light. Jobs and opportunities are scarce and competitive, and the institutions we love are struggling to stay afloat. Moreover, the few with any power or funding in the arts, are now more likely than ever to have these increasingly concentrated in their hands.

This is exemplified in the contention which has occurred right across the river from us. Three institutions along the Southbank: the Tate Modern, the National Theatre, and the Southbank Centre, are expected to have over 1000 redundancies. Protests have ensued as individuals in an already vulnerable field have become unemployed, and frequently without adequate payouts. These redundancies also disproportionately affect those from minority backgrounds, thus perpetuating so many of the power imbalances already at play throughout the arts. If you'd like to read more about this from individuals with more authority to address these inequalities then the white pube's 'FUCK THE POLICE, FUCK THE STATE, FUCK THE TATE: RIOTS AND REFORM' is an invaluable resource. The state of the arts and the circumstances for individuals trying to keep hold of their livelihoods as well as their passions confront us with a difficult conundrum: how can we, as individuals, productively show up for the arts? What responsibility do we have to return to physical arts spaces?



These questions defined a lot of my thinking throughout lockdown. In April, I read Jerry Saltz' article published in *Vulture*, "The Last Days of the Art World ... and Perhaps the First Days of a New One". His statement that art has always been "something done against the rules of advanced capitalism" and that it "isn't about professionalism, efficiency, insurance, and safety; it's about eccentricity, risk, resistance, and adaptation" has stuck with me. It largely led my approach to these questions. I spent hours wondering about how we would be able to engage with galleries and museums in a meaningful capacity again. However, when ruminating on the possibilities of art still being accessible, I found myself coming back to two areas in particular: *street art* and *online art*.

I've always been especially interested in (and a strong believer in) something about protest art's functional, and impermanent line of being perceived as vandalism; it embodies resistance. Floyd and Breonna Taylor, and the consequent protests, found myself reflecting on were the accompanying artworks to discuss this topic with the full reflection it deserves. "Minneapolis Street Art During and After the BLM" - Prof. Danez Smith. Throughout this piece, Smith describes the of Minneapolis as an 'art gallery' you experience by walking through the city; they reflect on the emotional experience of witnessing different artworks and the impact of the content have been made in. Protest art, however, has always largely been categorised as fleeting, but in the modern age this impermanence comes into question. The University of St. Thomas has a database entitled the Urban Art Mapping Project. George Anti-Racist Street Art which I also recommend spending time looking through. They similarly hold a database for Contemporary Street Art. These databases allow an insight into the messages and images that have resonated with individuals as they seek social justice while experiencing an unprecedented public crisis.

This leads me on to the topic of other online methods of engaging with art and criticism. Over the last six months we have seen a massive shift towards virtual engagement, and while this has some appeal in terms of accessibility, it also has major drawbacks. Yes, I cannot help but wonder why there was not a larger culture of institutions making their exhibitions available online for a reduced price. Understandably, online exhibitions are not a sustainable way to generate revenue but *our online traffic* has grown in power and it should not be underestimated.

At the risk of sounding incredibly pessimistic: it is likely to be a grim few years for the arts. Chaos has reigned, but not all hope is lost. I am confident that an eruption is on its way. Institutions stand on shaky grounds but will find their way into the hands of the individual. Public spaces will be reclaimed, and creatives will find ways to persist. As we settle into this new world, I eagerly await to see what art becomes the defining force. The past six months have been especially full of grief, but a sense of community and empathy that is fostered during these times is especially valuable.

So, we must see familiar works in completely unfamiliar contexts. We must see unfamiliar works in familiar conditions. We must wear masks and disinfect our hands intermittently. We must demand movements in diversity and equality in the cultural sphere. In this new world we have to meaningfully support the forces that have enriched our lives in any way we can.

Written: Godelieve de Bree
Edited: Ketki Mahabaleshwarkar
Image Credits: Markus Spiske via Unsplash

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WHAT THE ARTS LOOK LIKE NOW

I THOUGHT PEOPLE WHO SUFFERED FROM EATING DISORDERS WERE JUST NAIVE GIRLS WHO WANTED TO BECOME MODELS.



I THOUGHT THAT I, PERSONALLY, WAS DOING IT FOR MYSELF.

I THOUGHT WRONG...

I thought I was immune to societal standards. I thought people who suffered from eating disorders were just naive girls who wanted to become models. I thought that I, personally, was doing it for myself.

I thought wrong.

When I was at my lowest point and went to the hospital, the question everyone asked me was: 'When did it go wrong?' I wish I could provide them with a straightforward answer, simply responding that when I was twelve I bought a teen magazine, and it just hit me that: that was how I wanted to look. But the truth is a lot more gravely and uncomfortably complex. There was no starting point and there isn't going to be an endpoint. Society has implanted beauty norms into my brain. I didn't choose to believe them but now I can't choose to forget them. I can only teach myself to ignore or question them and not to act on their behalf, as doing so nearly killed myself before.

Around 1.25 to 3.4 million Britons have an eating disorder, the dark figure is known to be much higher since many do not seek support. In Germany, more than 50 per cent of girls under 15 have already tried a diet. Approximately 5 percent of people affected by anorexia die - the highest mortality rate of all mental illnesses.

I was diagnosed with anorexia at the age of 15, but I had started being obsessed with food - or more precisely how to avoid it - at least two years before. Slowly, I started working out more, switching from "normal" food to "healthy" alternatives. I stopped eating out with my friends and lied about what I had eaten. For too long, the changes stayed unnoticed from others and even myself. In return for my unhealthy diet, people began complimenting me on my model-like figure and on how fit I was. Suddenly, I was seen as pretty. For a very long time, I was able to hide how thin I had actually gotten.

The hardest part of my eating disorder was admitting it myself. Acknowledging a mental illness can take years since there are so many prejudices and negative stigmatizations attached to it. My problem with anorexia was that many people wouldn't even acknowledge it as an illness, instead declaring that it was just a phase most girls went through. Yes, many girls and women have at least some symptoms resembling an eating disorder, but that doesn't make it less of an illness. It should be even more alarming that eating disorders have a clear gender divide, with 75 percent of the people suffering from one being. We need to stop downplaying that nearly every woman in our life has had trouble with their weight and relationship with food, and instead we must start the conversation of how to help and change this reality.

Currently, in my hometown, everyone is scared or embarrassed to talk about my eating disorder. Usually, my family and friends simply pretend it never happened, the two worst years nearly being erased from our collective memory. But if they have to mention it, they usually talk about my "little eating problem" or quickly mumble the words "anorexia" under their breath. And I don't blame them - there is so much shame connected to the term "eating disorder".

One year after I first accepted my anorexia diagnosis and shared this with my parents and closest friends, my best friend told me that she was bulimic. Four years later, another close friend developed an eating disorder. Both times were heart-breaking as I was able to a certain extent related to what they were going through, but I was also unbelievably happy that they were sharing their thoughts with me; that they felt safe and unashamed to do what I couldn't for a long time. These conversations are necessary and must occur more often and openly, including between people who haven't experienced an eating disorder, to ensure that the understanding behind it and what might be triggering it is known.

The words ANOREXIA, BULIMIA, EATING DISORDER should be said out loud. Not because you like or promote them, but because we should not be ashamed. Because by saying them, we acknowledge that they are a reality and we can start a conversation. Don't stay silent if you need to talk - or even scream.

IMAGE: BRAIN VIA PIKIST, BARBIE VIA PIXABAY

WORDS: MALINA ANIOL

EDITED: ANNABEL FROST, HALIM KIM

THE COVID-19 FASHION EFFECT

analysing the lockdown's
impact on the fashion habits of
King's College students

Words: Liza Mikhaleva

As the life around has been adapting to the new “normal” with face masks barely covering people’s chins, our memories of the lockdown are slowly vanishing. But there is no doubt that the three-and-a-half months spent at home have changed our routine. So I decided to ask King’s College students about the changes in their fashion habits when the only runway they could walk was from their bed to the kitchen. They told me about their feelings, purchases, realisations and what Zoom parties they dressed up for. Based on the answers, if I were to define the three main ideas for this article’s thesis, they would definitely include long-awaited comfort, coming to terms with yourself and the need for sustainability in the industry.



Lockdown fashion moment: online "The Home Improvement Ball" organised category in a look designed by myself in my living room

Favourite face mask: P3 and N95

Lockdown location: Flo

@birtles.pdf

ANNUSHEH

third-year Comparative Literature with Film Studies student from Lahore

Lockdown location: Cambridge (with family)

Interests: filmmaking, photography, music, fashion

Lockdown purchases: summer clothes of bright colours and fancy patterns

Lockdown fashion moment: MacBook Photo Booth shoots

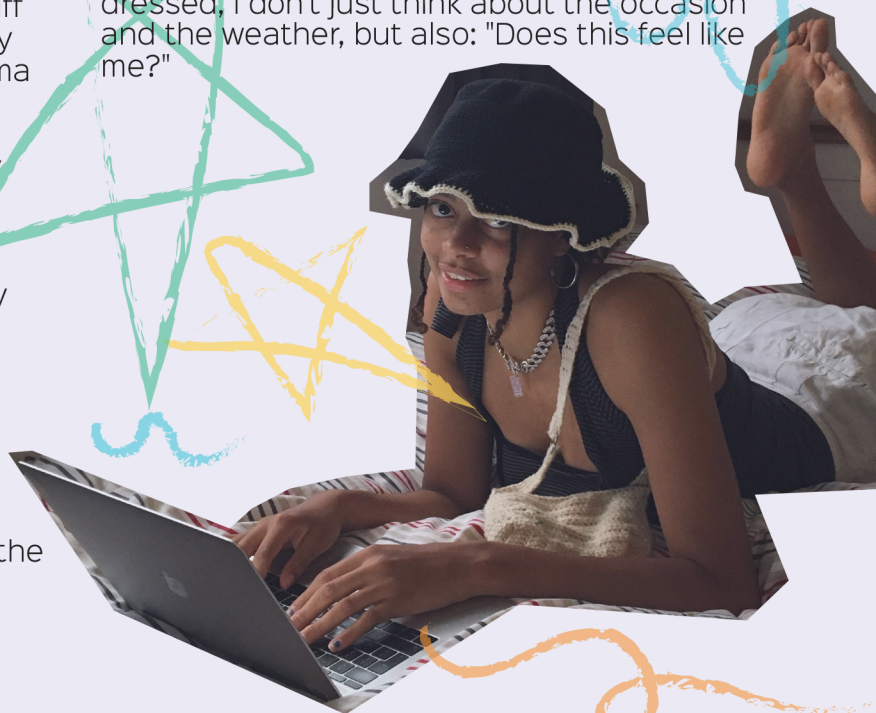
Favourite face mask: black Chicago Bulls mask

I saw the lockdown as an insane global phenomenon, so, I pretended to live in the Black Plague and documented it for my grandchildren. That's why I began experimenting with my looks more, especially as I found the never worn stuff that I had for years. My home outfits were very "throw-on-whatever-is-clean-and-nearby-but-make-it-fashion". My relationship with makeup changed a lot. Pre-lockdown, I'd do it pretty much every day, except for the days when my skin was breaking out. I'd even wear it when I wasn't seeing anyone because it gave me a self-esteem boost. So, when I took a break for three months, it made a huge difference in my relationship with my natural face. My skin cleared up, and I began to dig my dark circles and eyelids. Now, I see my bare face as an extension of my authenticity and not as something to cover up. I dressed up for Zoom calls—not so much for university, but for calls with friends and work. While my momma and I wore convenient clothes in the beginning, as the

restaurants began to open, we dressed up to look cute together.

In May, I was done with my clothes, so I e-shopped at Boohoo, H&M and Shein. I regret using the last one (Shein has recently been exposed for selling swastika necklaces and prayer mats as decor and unethical labour practices—ed. note). While the shopping cheered me up, the idea that in the global pandemic delivery workers were still expected to risk their lives didn't sit right with me. Especially since big retailers mostly produce in Asia, often underpaying their workers and utilising child labour. So, I realised that I really didn't need as many clothes and began donating it. I also reworked my old outfits.

This lockdown allowed me to focus on developing a personal style that reflects me—creative and colourful. Now, as I get dressed, I don't just think about the occasion and the weather, but also: "Does this feel like me?"



NAOMI SNOW

fourth-year Maths and Philosophy student from Nairobi and London

Lockdown location: London (with sister)

Interests: Music, DJ-ing

Lockdown purchases: Skincare, Hair Products

Lockdown fashion moment: outfits for Zoom parties by Club Quarantine with chains, hair charms and wine glasses as accessories

Favourite face mask: a blue camo mask and African-print masks from Kenya bought by dad

It was nice not thinking too much about what to wear every day. My fashion routine became very comfort-focused—hoodies, sweats, baggy tees. At first, it wasn't too different from my usual style, but deeper into quarantine my outfits became less coherent as I went through a nostalgic rabbit hole, finding clothes that I hadn't worn since my teenage years. My favourite item that has made a comeback is my netball skort from high school. Lockdown

made me feel a lot freer to wear clashing colours and patterns, which was really fun. But for online classes, I didn't put much effort into choosing clothes.

I didn't really do any fashion shopping, but I've been discovering a lot of Black-owned brands that I hope to buy from in the future (e.g. Mowalola, Daily Paper and Orange Culture). I reworked some of my old items and started crocheting—made some hats and bags. This hobby has made me appreciate the work that goes into making clothes. Thinking about the time it takes to create one piece puts into perspective the value of labour, which is often forgotten in the price-tag-battles of fast fashion. I also started paying more attention to my skin- and hair care, probably spending most of my money on it.

Now that lockdown is easing, I've been incorporating more stuff from my pre-rona wardrobe—dressing up a little more, but still keeping it cosy.

FINN

Psychology student from Tiptree

Lockdown location: Essex (with family)

Lockdown purchases: None

Lockdown fashion moment: working on a drag video project with her brother and their partner

Favourite face mask: there isn't one yet, but I'm planning to start wearing a balaclava when it gets colder

Interests: a visual and performance artist using drag, fashion, movement and illustration

Most days during the lockdown I'd wear whatever was most comfortable—jeans and a t-shirt usually. I had mixed feelings about my change of style, as I'm generally very acclimatised to making an effort in my appearance daily. It motivates me, so sometimes I felt bad for being lazy with my looks. But I also appreciated the breathing space of not having to dress to impress. When I'd finally dress up, I was doing it purely for myself, not for the public eye. This gave me a new sense of freedom to try new things. Not wearing makeup for so long changed how I look at myself in the mirror—I've become more confident in being barefaced.

I did drag a few times and a couple of Zoom shoots, which was exciting! It felt great to do drag again after a long break, but the different context was strange: there was no going out and being surrounded by queer club kids. I felt a bit under-celebrated and self-conscious doing it around my family, even though they don't mind it.

I didn't buy any clothes during the lockdown, as I'm trying to only buy second hand. I spent some time making new ones with old fabrics and crochet, and I love them more than anything I've ever bought. As lockdown started to lift, I decided to sell and donate some of my stuff, so it could be loved again by someone else.

I'm so happy to be able to go out again and have a reason to dress up, even if it's just to see one friend. I can finally bring a smile to people's faces with my extravagant outfits!

Read the full piece on our website with interviews from Alex (English Literature, third year), Anna (Business Management graduate), Daragh (Film Studies, third year) and Edit (War Studies graduate).

I CAN FINALLY BRING
A SMILE TO
PEOPLE'S FACES
WITH MY
EXTRAVAGANT
OUTFITS

I'VE BECOME MORE CONFIDENT IN BEING BAREFACED

@_daddy_longlegs_



THE DUNHAM-KATHERINE EFFECT: A RENEWAL OF COLLECTIVE CONSCIOUSNESS IN BLACK BRITISH DANCE

One key way the global dance community responded to the Black Lives Matter movement was by disseminating dance histories and pioneers that have been excluded from dominant narratives, curriculums and textbooks. Digital content spotlighting Black dance technicians, choreographers, and pioneers has shaken up conversation surrounding dance education. Leading student testimonials on social media also increasingly criticise a curriculum lacking in cultural inclusivity.

Dance pioneer Katherine Dunham is particularly pertinent to these leading themes of inequality; mention of her interdisciplinary work in the fields of dance performance, choreography, and anthropology is largely absent in dance programmes based in the UK, and her native country, the United States. Dance conservatoires have remained partial to the technical and artistic practices of the so-called 'gatekeepers' of contemporary and American modern dance, namely Martha Graham and Merce Cunningham. It is only now that calls for recognition of Dunham's outstanding contributions to the twentieth-century dance landscape have grown stronger than ever.

Dunham was born in Chicago in 1909 to a French-Canadian mother and father of Madagascan descent. In high school, she began modern dance classes that were rooted in the teachings of European practitioners such as Rudolf Laban. She also joined the Terpsichorean Club, as named after the Greek goddess of dance. She later studied anthropology to postgraduate level at the University of Chicago, for which she conducted various research trips in the Caribbean (predominantly in Haiti and Martinique). Having studied the rites, socio-cultural, and dance practices of the region's African diaspora, she merged this and her passion for dance upon returning to the stage. She presented Afro-Caribbean culture's vibrant and multi-layered features to unacquainted white American audiences. One of her earliest achievements was forming Ballets Nègre in 1931, which was then one of the few Black ballet companies in the United States. 1945 was another pivotal year during which she opened the Dunham School of Dance in New York; later, in 1967, a school and research centre for liberal arts in East St. Louis.

It was within these institutions that she refined the physicality and virtuosity that would come to characterise the Dunham technique. In translating a close application to her anthropological studies to the jazz, modern, and ballet training of her earlier years, she developed a practice that fused Afro-Caribbean dance rituals with Eurocentric ballet, i

innovatively framed within the context of American dance theatre. The Dunham technique is codified by the foundations of ballet: class starts at the barre, and the legs work mostly in turnout. The torso movements, however, are inspired by Afro-Caribbean dance practices as they require articulation, strength, and the ability to perform dynamic undulations. Rhythmically, Dunham technique also diverges from European modern dance in its embrace of polyrhythms. In a classroom setting, this means that more than one drummer is usually present, allowing for the dancers to move to multi-layered rhythms. The technique demands the movement of different body parts to different time sequences; a single exercise, for example, could feature counts of 5/7 against 4/8.



**WORDS: STEPHANIE BURRELL
EDITED: NADYA OPPENHEIM, KETKI MAHABALESHWARKAR**



Dunham's impact was most profound in her demands for Black modern dance (both within and outside America) to receive a justified calibre of artistic recognition and depth of treatment. Her efforts worked in tandem; her 1940 piece *Le Jazz Hot*: From Haiti is often cited as a turning point for Black dance in the United States. Dunham's work during this period arose from an inspired merger of African-American philosopher Alain Locke and her own 1930s Chicago Renaissance context of staging productions in small theatres and art houses at a time of great economic depression.

THIS CHICAGO-BASED CREATIVE MOVEMENT ENCOURAGED BLACK AMERICAN ARTISTS TO RECLAIM AFRICANIST ART AND SUBJECT MATTER FROM THE EUROCENTRIC GAZE, INCREASINGLY FOSTERING A SENSE OF BLACK ARTISTIC-SCHOLARLY PRIDE.

Owing to the highly interdisciplinary nature of both Dunham's influences and work, critics were impelled to discard the longstanding view of Black dance as "primitive" and therefore unworthy of aesthetic review, let alone the various artistic accolades that were freely awarded to ballet. A reshaping of America's collective understanding of the Black dancer and choreographer has since followed. The Alvin Ailey American Dance Theatre (founded in 1958) and Arthur Mitchell's company Harlem Dance Theatre (founded in 1969) serve as testament to the Dunham legacy.



A collective consciousness and Black pride expressed through art is of continual relevance in Black British culture today, one such example being IRIE! dance theatre. Founded in 1985 by Beverley Glean and based in New Cross, South East London, the company has remained novel in its approach of integrating African diasporic dance into the teaching and practice of the broader British dance agenda, as well as its own repertoire. Music remains an essential part of their practice in order to ensure that Afro-Caribbean culture is understood on its own terms, with traditional drums and percussion, reggae, ragga, calypso, and Soca being genres that regularly feature in their work and pedagogy. More recently, the company has developed a BA (Hons) degree in Diverse Dance Styles. It is the first course in the UK that places equal emphasis on African and Caribbean styles as it does contemporary, marking a pivotal moment in the history of Black British dance.

Similar to their pioneering American counterparts of the twentieth-century, developments within the British contemporary scene today are demonstrative of the continuing efforts of Black artists in honing a fluid and ever-shifting definition of dance; one that refuses to subordinate African or diasporic styles in favour of dominant techniques. In an atmosphere increasingly marked by a desire for change and greater diversity within the UK's dance institutions, IRIE! dance theatre seems to be a guiding light.

My lockdown experience (probably similar to yours) was hours of inevitable scrolling through Instagram and Tik Tok. We witnessed a whirlwind of coffee-whipping, brush-passing, and dance challenges. Triggered by protests against police brutality and the prejudice that affects BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Colour), these platforms are finally recognising the importance of representative creators. Achieving diversity and inclusion within the arts and culture industry, has become a priority, not just a pipedream. There is an optimistic movement towards a more inclusive algorithm – one that celebrates all content creators for their unique skillset and talents.

This summer was when I encountered Canadian Indian artist Teshar; who pleasantly surprised my continuous scrolling with the opening melody of Bole Chudiyan. Kareena Kapoor's introductory lyrics were suddenly disrupted by a strong catchy beat exclusive to the Teshar™ remixes. I got five hundred dollars in cash; in case they don't take Amex; the opening declaration is melodic yet punchy. This is Young Shahrukh, Teshar's musical homage to the iconic Bollywood actor that has championed the big screen for more than thirty years. Hearing this recognisable tune may not inherently seem like a big deal, but for Desi kids everywhere, it's celebration of the Bollywood Silver screen and pop-culture scene from our childhoods.



Celebration is exactly what Teshar advocates through his music, which fuses Latin and classic Bhangra beats, with catchy rap verses. Teshar breaks the mould by repurposing songs like Drake's Tootsie Slide or Billie Eilish's Bad Guy, combining witty lyricism with a voice that goes viral. In his 'LIVE at PopShift Housefull' feature, one viewer declared, "THIS is finally something new in Indian music!" Although Bollywood-Latin-Urban remixes have been wildly popular since the early 2010's, Teshar has effortlessly surfed the waves of virality with songs like Yummy Jalebi Remix and Old Town Road vs. Ramta Jogi, proving that culturally specific music can be truly transgenerational, versatile, and inclusive.

With Young Shahrukh amassing over 5 million views on YouTube and reaching #1 on the BBC Official Asian Music Chart, it is a formidable 'beginning' for the growing artist. I (digitally) sat down with Teshar to talk about musical success, recognition beyond the South-Asian community, and the nuances of social-media virality.

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Q: Your music has a great deal of Latin, Bollywood, and Middle Eastern influence – how does the combination of different cultures inspire you?

Teshar: The first remixes that I was making were mostly fusing Bollywood and Western music, just because that was a reflection of my own life. Being Indian and living in Canada, (and I'm sure it's the same for you guys living in Europe) there was a balance between two worlds. Essentially, your life is the mashup. Then, as time went on, I expanded my music taste and thought, 'you know, I could mix Bollywood and rap music, then I can put Bhangra music in there; RnB, Pop, Reggaeton, House, Salsa music. It was easy to just keep building!

Q: You mentioned in another interview that you have grown up singing and dancing with Bollywood / Bhangra music. Do you feel as though you are introducing a younger generation to that through your music?

T: I never thought of it like that, actually! The Bollywood songs I remix, and sample are songs I grew up with. For example, the Yummy Jalebi track has the song Jalebi Bai, and that song has probably been out for 10 years much like Bole Chudiyan. The most interesting thing was that there were a lot of people who didn't know what the Bollywood song was (Indian people too!) This made me think, that movie (Kabhi Khushi Kabhi Gham) came out in 2000; it is now 2020. I think of the younger generation who might not even know Bole Chudiyan or the hype about Shahrukh Khan.

Q: Artists often get typecast into a certain genre or style – can you label yourself as a remix artist, Bollywood artist, or a rapper?

T: Obviously, people are going to judge you based on what music you've made most, or what content you've been the most successful with. Sometimes I get the odd person saying, "Hey DJ Teshar!", and it makes me laugh because I've never labelled myself as a DJ. I think you just have to keep going in the direction you want to go with, and the world will follow. For example, from 2012 to 2014, I was mostly known as a guy who makes country remixes, and most people now don't even know that! It taught me that people might think of you in one way, but you have to continue doing what creatively stimulates you. If people think enjoy it, they stay on for the ride.

Q: Identity is a huge theme in the discussion of the South Asian diaspora. Your music tends to reflect how two musical cultures can blend together really well. Why do you think an English / Hindi / Bollywood remixes are so significant?

T: It's literally just because it is the blending of our lives. It is the most accurate representation of the lives that we are living. Only now, in recent times, has Bollywood been able to musically adapt to this as you can hear hip-hop style hi hats and EDM influences. I know Bollywood has its own distinct style and it's cool, but the reason fusion works so well is because everyone loves to see different things come together.

Q: And it's not just Bollywood, you use Latin sounds as well to create such a diverse blend. Why is this sort of representation important?

T: The reason I involve Latin music in my remixes is because I think it's super dope. To be honest, these days I've only been listening to hip hop and Latin music. In particular, Brazilian music – I just love it. I really like looking at the Latin scene because their music is so close to Indian music sometimes. That's the whole reason I created the Yummy Jalebi track off of a Latin vibe is because I thought there was a definite way to make it work! Also, I think the Latin scene is deservedly gaining more recognition and success in the mainstream American and U.K. charts. I think 'if they can do it in Spanish, we can do it in Hindi, Punjabi, Tamil, and all the other Indian languages'! I truly believe that you don't always need to understand the lyrics (the language) to appreciate the music. I listen to everything. If you look at my playlist, I literally go from 50 Cent, to BTS, to Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan!

Q: It feels like musical achievement in 2020 is validated by virality on platforms such as Tik Tok and Instagram. Songs like Young Shah Rukh and Old Town Road vs. Ramta Jogi have accompanied the milk drinking challenge and have even inspired original choreography – how significant has social media recognition been for you?

T: It's been a very interesting and evolving relationship. For the first, maybe ten years that I made remixes, I didn't release anything on the internet. Finally, I thought, 'let's try to put this out' and one of my very first remixes was retweeted by Punjabi MC! I thought it was so amazing. At the end of the day, you don't want to make music with the sole aim of gaining social media recognition. At least, I don't. I have just found that when you try to specifically make something for social media, it doesn't always work. Virality is an organic thing, you're just better off making authentic music.

My music being popular in the U.K. is so surreal as well. The existence of platforms like Lyca Radio or BBC Asian Network allow South Asian artists to receive mainstream exposure. I know Canada will get to that level eventually, because there are so many amazing artists making great work.

Q: Speaking of recognition, in Miss India 2017, actress Alia Bhatt performed to your remix! What was that type of acknowledgement on a Bollywood stage like?

T: It was so cool! The weirdest thing about getting the recognition over social media is that I found there's such a huge disconnect between my life and the life of my music. I think I wasn't even at home and my mom and sister were watching TV. Suddenly, the Miss India pageant was on and Alia Bhatt came out to perform, and she performed to my remix. And the funny thing about that remix is that it has a snippet of my sister's voice, so she was like holy sh*t! It was definitely cool but interesting; I was an average guy living in Canada, making music on the side, but on the other side of the world, a superstar Bollywood actress is dancing to my music. It's honestly two worlds – it's so surreal!

Q: Quickfire Round 'For the Culture' - In the Yummy Jalebi remix you list these classic sweets: mithai, kulfi, rasmalai, pista barfi – what's your favourite Indian sweet?

T: It's a different choice every day. I've always been a fan of the mithai that's diamond shape with silver on it! We consequently googled to find the name: Kaju Katli. Honestly, jalebi is too sweet for me so probably not that.

Q: Finally, what advice can you give to aspiring musicians at university and young creatives everywhere, who want to create unique content and break into industries?

T: Just do it! Don't wait for anyone. People think they need to make music only up to a certain point: when they get discovered. It happens and you might get lucky. However, a majority of people that actually make it, made it because they hustled hard throughout the highs and lows of their careers. It's all about consistency. Another piece of advice would be to drop your music yourself – produce, record, and market yourself. The world's eyes are on the same apps: Tik Tok, Triller, Spotify. Know how and where to advertise your work, because it deserves to be heard!

**TO LISTEN TO TRACKS AND
FOLLOW TESHERRR'S MUSICAL
JOURNEY, SEE:
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