SUM

STUDENT UNION MAGAZINE

#115

RETRO

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Cover by Lene Berkenhagen

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EDITORS' FOREWORD

THIS ISSUE IS A TIME MACHINE – EXPLORING VARIOUS TIMES IN HISTORY.

Hello and welcome to the 115th issue of the Student Union Magazine!
We proudly present a printed issue of our magazine every semester, and this time around, the theme is "Retro" – a playful and broad concept that invites endless interpretation. From nostalgic reflections, vintage aesthetics to a sense of community, our contributors have explored the theme in their own creative ways – and, as always, they have delivered!

As winter is approaching, we wanted to enter a time machine and revisit the past – we wanted to capture the muted colours of old photographs, the pixelated charm of old-school games and the timeless energy of retro styles. In this issue, we look back in order to move forward.

Grab yourself a cup of something warm, get comfy, and join us in our time machine through these pages. We wish you a happy reading!

YOURS,
JULIE INKSMITH & HANNA WALLSTRÖM

SPOTIFY PLAYLIST

RETRO - SUM #115

Scan the QR code and listen to the Spotify playlist put together by our contributors for the full experience. Sit, relax and take your time exploring Retro.

CONTENT

ARTIST'S STATEMENT

Text: Lene Berkenhagen IG: lene.banene

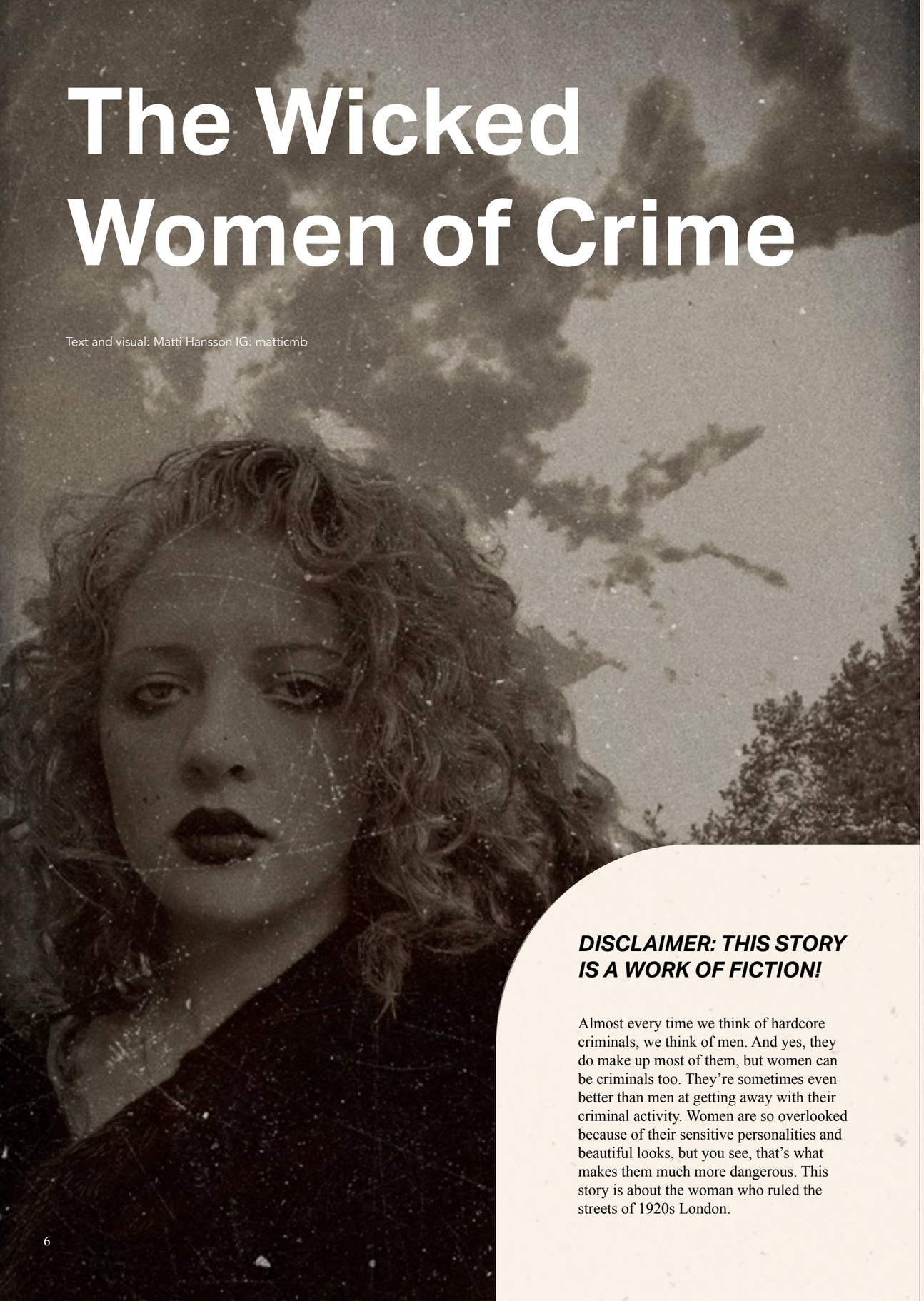
DANCING DISCO DEVICES

When I heard about the theme *retro*, my mind immediately went to disco balls, because what is better than having only one light source and getting a thousand lights back? Spinning, swirling sparkles, rushing over the heads of the dancers below. Retro is about finding the joy in the things of the past, and if one thing would bring me joy, it would be to see the chic of the 70s returning to clubs!

Visual: Nandini IG @bromeo_and_dudeliet

The Wicked Women of Crime

Text and visual: Matti Hansson IG: matticmb



DISCLAIMER: THIS STORY IS A WORK OF FICTION!

Almost every time we think of hardcore criminals, we think of men. And yes, they do make up most of them, but women can be criminals too. They're sometimes even better than men at getting away with their criminal activity. Women are so overlooked because of their sensitive personalities and beautiful looks, but you see, that's what makes them much more dangerous. This story is about the woman who ruled the streets of 1920s London.

A woman by the name of Lillian Jennie Wickham, or "The Wicked", became the most notorious trafficker and cartel leader in all of England. The gang, Jennie's Sisters, became the first women's gang with up to 250 members. She was smart not to name her gang after her first name, but no one knew her middle name, so she used that as a cover. Jennie's Sisters were big on drug and weapons trafficking, as well as torturing and killing men who had wronged the sisters. The known body count for this gang was at least two dozen men. She was incredibly slippery. She evaded capture her entire life – until her death, September 29th 1926, only a week after her 28th birthday.

Local law enforcement had begun an undercover operation to finally catch the famous Lillian. This operation began as a small investigation by a Detective named Alan Rover, but was then taken over by Agent Carl Morgan from the Criminal Investigation Department. He had been watching over Detective Rover's work and made the decision to step in as he thought Rover was way in over his head. He was right. Wickham had a plan to smuggle goods over from France, and the CID was not happy about that. Although they didn't know if it was drugs or guns, they had to stop her.

It was time to finally catch "The Wicked". Morgan used his confidential informant contacts and undercover detectives at the local police department to create a buyer for Lillian's goods. They made an elevator pitch she could not resist. They offered her £50,000. Today that's nearly £3 million. That was an incredible deal that she just could not look away from. Rover and Morgan then found out, with the help of their CIs, that it was narcotics and knives she was planning to transport.

Lillian was born to Margaret and Tom Wickham on September 22nd, 1898. She was raised in a happy and loving home where she was encouraged to become a strong and independent woman with dreams and plans for the future. Margaret and Tom were progressive compared to the rest of society, and their parenting style was deeply frowned upon since women should only be caring for their children, husbands and their homes. Her parents did take her to church on Sundays and that's where she learned to read and write, since they didn't have much money left over for education. Years passed, she grew and grew, got some churchgoer friends and even a boyfriend.

About three weeks before her 17th birthday, she and her friends had planned to meet and discuss the Bible at her house. That night, a police officer knocked on the door with the horrible news that her parents had been in an accident. This broke Lillian. She visited them every day in the hospital, for a whole week and a half, before they both eventually died from their injuries. From what we know, this was her downfall. She was orphaned and had nothing left to live for, or so she thought.

Two years went by, and her church friends had left her as well as her boyfriend. She was deep into an addiction, and she was evicted from the small cottage her parents had left her just two years prior. Money for food and drugs was hard to come by, but when she did, she definitely did everything to get her hands on it. Robbing small businesses and street shops for their cash is where it all started. She was only 19 by this time.

She found some friends out on the streets who helped her get money and a good high. However, it was never enough; she wanted more and more. They stopped being generous and started to ask her for favours in exchange for money, those favours being sexual acts. This went on for about three years, on and off, until a beautiful woman named Norah saved her from exploiting men in need of power. She had been clean for a while and saw Lillian getting kicked in an alley. Norah ran over and fought off the two huge men who had just almost killed her. That's where she discovered that she was actually a lesbian this whole time. She never really liked men, and women had always been there for her. Norah later became her lover and partner in crime for a while. This did lead to Norah's relapse and after four months of loving Lillian, she ended up passing away from an overdose. The effects of drugs had now been seen firsthand, and she decided to get clean.

Money was still being stolen by her, but instead of using it to buy drugs to use, she just bought them and later sold them for a higher price. She was profiting from other people's addictions. Later that year, she was getting more and more business, not only from street rats but from bigger clients. That is when Lillian Jennie Wickham officially became a cartel leader. By the end of the year, her gang had almost 130 members, and it was still growing with new recruits almost every week.

They all gathered on the top part of London Bridge late at night when the streets and roads were empty. That's when they planned the next robbery, the next big buy and even some murders. What was different about this gang was that men were turned down entry; only women could join. This made the male gangs nervous, yet they still loved to toy with the girls. Those men who touched the girls in any way that was not allowed by them ended up in a hole in the ground in a park or the closest forest. As long as you were a woman with charm and a motive to either sell drugs or avenge those who had wronged you, you were welcome to join this new gang. In 1924, there were around 250 members and the gang had also officially gotten their name, Jennie's Sisters.

Of course, they had to have a mark to indicate their affiliation to the gang; it was a hand-drawn four-point crown, often drawn or stitched onto clothing. This mark was a sign of power, that every woman in Jennie's Sisters was her own queen ,and not to let men tell her what to do. Now every member could spot each other on the streets and frighten the men who get too close.

September 29th 1926, was the day they got her, Lillian "The Wicked". She went to meet this potential buyer and

got a good look at the cash she was going to get. After a good handshake, she was cornered by police and the CID. She reached, with both hands, for her revolver and freshly sharpened Bowie knife, and just two seconds later, she was shot twice in the heart by Agent Morgan. She fell on the gravel and was pronounced dead at the scene. There, they found 700 litres of bottled medicinal “tonics” that contained cocaine and opium, as well as almost 50 boxes of different kinds of trench knives, the boxes containing up to 15 knives each. The legal force had stopped a future mass casualty.

They saved a lot of people that day. Lillian Wickham’s story showed that crime was not limited to men. She opened a whole new world for future female criminals. She unknowingly wrote history.

The following is a transcript from a recovered recording of the undercover operation, dated September 29th, 1926.

Audio recording, “The Buy” at 20:43

Lillian Wickham:
“Show me the money or no deal.”

Undercover detective:
“Alright, here.”

Lillian Wickham:
“Jesus, you weren’t joking. Now we’re in business.”

Undercover detective:
“Good, shake on it?”

Lillian Wickham:
“Absolutely.”

[Clap and handshake]

Agent Morgan:
“Show me your hands, now!”

Lillian Wickham:
“What the fuck? You bastards!”

[Clinking metal]
[Two gunshots fired]

End of audio recording

This is the last known record of Lillian Jennie Wickham – the woman who rewrote London’s criminal history.

THE TASTE OF TIMELESS FLAVOURS

Text: Selena Zuithoff
Visuals: Nandini, IG @bromeo_and_dudeliet

“Yeah, I just arrived… Yes, it is. Okay… yes, I will. Bye.”

I hung up the phone with my keys dangling in my hand and my two suitcases at my feet. I stared at the door in front of me – the door to my new apartment. I had not yet seen the inside of it, but my family didn’t have to know that. As long as they believed that I had somehow found myself a luxurious apartment in a safe neighbourhood, everything would be alright. In reality, I had no idea what the apartment would look like. I had found a listing online and, knowing how difficult it could be to find housing, I had simply applied.

The silence surrounded me as I stood in front of what was to become my new home for the coming years. Secretly, I had my doubts. An apartment for this price, in this area, fully furnished? It felt too good to be true. But the lady who had given me the keys carried a grandmotherly kindness that made me trust her instantly. She had told me that her family had lived in the apartment for decades, but at this point, it was mostly exchange students who stayed here. Surprisingly, the décor still reflected the tastes of its older inhabitants.

I leaned against the doorway while I took it all in. A jumble of 70s-style colours, patterned walls, mismatched chairs – it was a vibrant chaos. I appreciated that I didn’t have to carry a couch or a table up the stairs, but this was maybe a bit much. Perhaps it was possible to make some adjustments over the coming weeks. For now, after fifteen hours of travel, all I cared about was something to eat.

But the bright kitchen cupboards were all empty. There was no food and nothing to drink except the water from the tap. I took out my phone to look for a supermarket nearby, only to find out my battery had died. That left me with two choices: unpack while hungry, or try my luck and wander around a city I had never been to before…

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The next day, my growling stomach woke me up. The night before, it had taken me an hour to find a supermarket and another to find my way back home. By the time I had dragged myself and my shopping bag up the stairs and into the kitchen, I was too tired to make a proper dinner. Not that I had felt particularly inspired anyway. As I stumbled into the living room, I noticed that I hadn’t closed my curtains the night before. The sun spilt in through the large-paned window, leaving a golden hue all through the space. It gave the apartment a warm vibe, softening the bright colours and blending them together harmoniously. I took a deep breath and suddenly I managed to see the apartment with different eyes. Maybe I would be able to get used to the funky-looking interior.

As I made my way into the kitchen, I spotted a bookshelf mounted on the wall next to the stove. Overshadowed by all of yesterday’s impressions, I had overlooked it, but now it drew me in. The shelf was lined with cookbooks spanning decades, from French cuisine to bread making to budget cooking. It almost looked like a small library. My eyes fell on four notebooks, each with a slightly worn, black cover. Curious, I took one out and opened the first page. In neat handwriting, it read:

“For your first time away from home.
I wrote down the recipes of your favourite meals.
Now you can make them for yourself.
Will you add your own?
I hope you enjoy it.
Lots of love,
Mum”

The note was followed by a few pages with the same handwriting and clear, thorough recipes. I leafed through the rest of the book, impressed by how many recipes the owner was able to collect. Each recipe was dated, the first being on the 28th of August, 1976. I realised that was almost exactly fifty years ago. In just three days, it would be the 28th of August again. I wondered if they had been in the same position as me, on the brink of a seemingly exciting time in life, yet also feeling a little lost. The message of this person’s mother gave me a warm feeling. I looked at the first recipe, “Beef Stroganoff”.

“Beef Stroganoff

1 onion, sliced
150g mushrooms, sliced
1–2 tbsp flour
100ml sour cream
200ml stock (beef or vegetable)
Pasta (any kind will do!)
Optional: beef and 60ml of white wine

Fry the onions until soft, then add mushrooms and cook until golden.
(Optional: add the white wine and let it reduce a little)
Sprinkle over the flour and cook for 1–2 minutes, stirring constantly.
Slowly stir in the stock until incorporated.
Add the cream and stir gently until smooth.
Bring to a simmer, then reduce the heat to medium-low and let thicken slightly (3–5 minutes). Adjust salt and pepper to taste.
If you are using beef, add it now with any juices, and simmer for 1 minute. Remove from heat immediately.
Serve over cooked pasta.

Mum’s tips:
Start cooking the pasta when you are at step 5, it will finish at the same time!
The key to a rich flavour is in the fond—the browned bits left in the pan. Scrape them up and stir them into your sauce.”

The day before, I had been too tired and too uninspired to make anything at all. At that moment, this meal still felt a bit ambitious. But something about the way the recipe was written made me want to honour the person who wrote it. I looked through the half-unpacked grocery bag and opened the fridge. Relieved, I saw that I had bought most of the ingredients the day before.

I spent the next hour cutting and stirring, carefully following the recipe. As the sun lit up the apartment even more, my kitchen filled with smells that reminded me of home. Reading the mother's handwriting, alongside the owner's notes, it was almost as if they were cooking with me. I felt a bit emotional as I thought of my own family, miles and miles away. When I finally set down a plate on the dining table and sat down in front of it, I felt a sense of accomplishment. The melancholic emotions from before disappeared swiftly with my first bite. I paused as I savoured all the flavours. It felt like a hug from the past.

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Over the last few weeks, I had slowly found my way. The apartment had become my safe haven, a place to breathe between all the activities, studies, and socialising. I had grown to love its quirks: the funky colours and the bold old-fashioned furniture. I had made some friends, sure. Maybe it was too early to call them real friends, but there were definitely a handful of people who could become that.

The notebooks had become my guide. I had learned that the writer was a young student, also in his early twenties. He went through the same phases as I was going through now; I could tell in his writing. On November 15th, 1976, he tried out a shepherd's pie recipe for the first time. He fought with the oven settings and ended up burning it completely. He had crossed out the oven instructions and added "setting 'hot' actually means 'smoked and charcoaled, try medium next time'". The kitchen was now equipped with an oven with actual temperatures, but I still managed to undercook the pie on the first try. On the second try, I burned the top layer of cheese. The recipe itself was golden, though, and I had made it at least three times since. I even added the right temperatures next to his notes.

When Christmas came, he invited some friends over for his first potluck. He praised the tastiness of the brownies from a friend named Dana, and the page was still marked with some stains that could only be batter.

It was now a slow Sunday, somewhere towards the end of October. The city outside was quiet; it was a rainy day and no one was out on the street. The apartment felt empty and I missed the noises of my family's house. On days like these, there would always be someone around, especially in the kitchen. I pulled myself up from the couch and walked over to the record player. It had become one of my favourite items in the apartment. The vinyl records allowed me to transport back in time and they connected me with the décor. As the music reached the corners of the living room, my stomach gurgled.

At some point, I'd need to make some dinner, but today I felt especially uninspired. I flipped through one of the notebooks, the second one in the collection. It was the second year of the author's studies. He had clearly become more confident in his cooking, trying his hand at more and more advanced recipes like Chicken Kiev and Beef Wellington. That might be a bit ambitious for today. Amongst these fancy dishes, one of the recipes stood out: a simple potato salad. He had called it 'Potato Party' and made it for a gathering with his friends. It had the note "Always a success, make sure you make enough!". One of his friends had scribbled "The party was good, but your salad was better" in the margins.

A wave of nostalgia hit and I couldn't help but think about my own friends as I cut the potatoes. While they slowly boiled, I mixed some hard-boiled eggs, tuna, mayonnaise and lemon juice together. After a while, I added the potatoes and mixed them all in a bowl. Some chives and a few sun-dried tomatoes to top it off. I imagined all of his friends in the small kitchen, a lively setting with music and chatter, jumpsuits and metallic fabrics, flared pants and the smell of cigarettes. With the vinyl record playing in the background, it almost felt possible to be there, part of this friend group.

When I finished, I noticed that I had a smile on my face. Subtle, but my mood had changed significantly. I dipped my spoon into the salad, scooping up a bit of the past. It was the most comforting meal I'd had in a while. The tangy taste of the sauce, the creaminess and the soft potatoes. I took out my phone, but hesitated a little. As I looked at the empty living room, the image of my friend from the past and his friends filled the space. Then I took another bite of the salad, emptying my plate. I pondered a little while I chewed, then I texted my new friends, "Anyone free for dinner tomorrow? I have this amazing recipe I would like to try." Maybe sharing this food could bridge our worlds—the past and the present.

Text and Visual: Michaela Černá IG: misacernafanacc

FROM ALL THE LETTERS I SAVED

The bell rang, and Martina rushed out of the classroom. She had to run as her teacher kept them in class late, even on the last day of school. She was so eager that she arrived in three minutes flat, giving her just enough time to fix her hair before meeting him. They met at the office where she worked. Today, she would be called a junior project architect, but in 1990, in Czechoslovakia, no such fancy titles existed, so she told him she had been hired as a kreslířka to draw blueprints for sugar refineries. "That's much nicer than my janitor job," he said to her during their first interaction. It was a brief one as they both had their hands full with work, but they set up a time for their next date. Fifteen minutes passed before he finally showed up at her bus stop. There was just one in Chvojenec; it was the go-to meeting spot for everyone since there was nothing but houses and farms as far as one could see. The bus stop was the only connection with the more civilized world. The buses were always late – and so, often, were the boys.

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I wait too – but my waiting looks a bit different. I am sitting on the bus, headphones in to drown out all the noise, both from inside and outside, mindlessly staring at the screen and scrolling to escape my thoughts, hoping for a notification with a new message to appear – or not. Before I knew it, an hour had passed, and I had missed my stop. "Great, now I have to wait for another bus to take me back," I think to myself. Once again, I forgot time because I was too busy burning my serotonin receptors and destroying my attention span in the infinite world of social media filled with constant noise. Everything felt boundless these days: endless career options, possibilities, and perpetual waiting for something that might never come. Oftentimes, I find myself wishing to live in a different world. A simpler world. One that doesn't overwhelm and paralyze me. A world where all I have to worry about is getting on the right bus.

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Martina didn't mean to get in trouble. All she wanted was to reach out, to feel connected, to keep hope that she might live in a different world one day. But she didn't live in a free country – not yet. For now, she was in a country where men in uniforms, with guns at their sides, could come to your workplace to interrogate you for writing a letter to a girl in Sweden whose address you'd found in the newspaper. She had written many letters like that before. It was perfectly normal and legal, even encouraged, for young people to build friendships with comrades in foreign countries. She had been writing to her pen pals from Russia since she had known how to write, and it had never occurred to her that it might cause so many problems for her. She endured endless interrogations, and everyone around her judged, even insulted, her for allegedly conspiring with Swedish Hare Krishna followers. At least her family was on her side, for better or worse. She was glad her parents were reasonable and open-minded people who didn't fall for the propaganda, but it came at a cost. As a result, she was denied university education, job offers, and benefits. Now she was not only the child of a problematic family; she herself was considered suspicious in the eyes of the Party and was being investigated for conspiring against the regime. Everyone kept telling her to confess, but to what? For responding to an ad that was in the newspaper? For wanting friendship? For weeks, they called her in. They offered her strange deals — if she cooperated and became their bait, then maybe they could help her get what she wanted. But all she wanted was to be left alone. The world was fenced in, and the future didn't seem too bright, but the sky was still wide.

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I didn't want to go to university, not really. Everyone around me seemed to have a plan. Courses like law, business, and medicine. I had none. I thought maybe I'd figure it out later, but later came fast. I enrolled anyway and dropped out after the first semester. I told myself I'd find work, and then the world shut down. COVID-19 locked the doors, and I was stuck inside my head. I got into more stupid relationships, maybe just to feel something, and watched a friend's life collapse when she found out she was pregnant. I helped pay for her abortion because no one else would. The world was freer than ever, and yet we were trapped by every meaning of the word. Days blurred together. I didn't have a plan anymore, just the quiet hum of uncertainty, and a screen that never stopped glowing. My world shrank to the size of my six square meters childhood bedroom – the room I had been trying to escape my entire life. My life seemed to be going nowhere. Nevertheless, the only way out was through.

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When it was finally over, it didn't really end. Her mother made some calls, spoke to people who knew people. The visits from the police stopped, but the whispers didn't. Her boyfriend broke up with her, her friends turned quiet, and in the office, people avoided her eyes. She'd go home and cry into her pillow, wondering how something as innocent as writing a letter could change her whole life. How was she supposed to know the ad in the newspaper was bait? And that the person was a Hare Krishna sympathizer? How could she, of all people, be accused of being a religious cult sympathizer and treated like an enemy of the state? At least it was about to end. It was her final visit to the police

station, to hand over every single letter she'd ever written to anyone. Some of her most precious memories and possessions ended up in the hands of officers who would've thrown her in prison if it weren't for her mother's friend, who was the head of the department in her municipality. But then she met him. A tall boy with messy hair and tattoos that looked like drawings done in secret. Martina wasn't the type to fall for a criminal, so she tried to ignore him and walk away, but he noticed her too and they started chatting. His investigation was even more ridiculous than her own; the reason he'd been brought in was simply that he looked suspicious. They talked in the hallway while waiting for their names to be called. It wasn't a long conversation, but it was enough to make her smile again for the first time in months. Maybe there were still chances to make precious new memories.

Eventually, after two summers spent in isolation, the borders opened once again. I went back to school, lived abroad, and travelled. I smiled in photos, posted stories from airports, and told myself I was happy. But inside, I felt myself spinning. There were too many choices, too much noise, and too much pressure to do more, be more, and become something great. And when I couldn't, I felt like nothing at all. The noise came back, or maybe it'd never gone away; it just hadn't been so loud when the world turned slow and quiet. Everyone seemed to be building a life while I was still figuring out who I even was. The borders were open, but I still felt trapped. Every night, I went to bed hoping I would wake up and everything would be different. And one day, it finally was, but in a way I could never have imagined for myself. But I learned that even hospitals can become places of quiet rebirth.

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The summer of 1990 was golden and soft, the kind of summer that seemed to stretch endlessly, spilling over with sunlight and the scent of cut grass. The air buzzed faintly with change — something new, uncertain, but alive. Every morning, Martina woke to the sound of swallows nesting under the roof tiles and the distant hum of tractors in the fields. She'd slip into her white cotton dress, now tight around her growing belly, and set off down the road on her old bicycle, hair loose, feet bare against the pedals. The path to the lake was lined with wildflowers and dandelions gone to seed. She'd stop sometimes, catch her breath, and look out across the golden fields where haystacks stood like quiet monuments to simpler times. The borders had fallen. People dared to dream again, and the air was filled with newfound hope. At the lake, she'd wade into the cool water, her reflection rippling and bending around her. Sometimes the tattooed boy would join her, tossing pebbles and laughing when they sank too soon. They didn't talk much about the future; neither of them knew what it would bring. Still, they talked about everything else. About the smell of wet soil after rain, about what names they liked for a child, about how strange it felt to live in a world that was suddenly allowed to breathe. She knew things wouldn't be easy. Money was tight, jobs uncertain, old habits slow to die. But she also knew that, for the first time, she wasn't afraid. Something quieter had replaced it. Not joy exactly, but peace. The kind that comes when you finally stop waiting for the other shoe to drop. Being twenty didn't get easier, just different. There were still mistakes to make, loves to lose, fears to face. She didn't know what tomorrow would look like, or the next year, or the next decade. But as she lay in the grass that summer afternoon, hand resting on her stomach, feeling the faint flutter of a new heartbeat, she thought that maybe, just maybe, that was enough.

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Then came the hospital. It wasn't as dramatic as it sounds, more like a pause that I didn't know I needed. The world outside was still spinning fast, but I finally stopped moving. The days inside passed slowly, marked by the sound of footsteps on tile and the rustle of leaves outside the window. I met people who were trying to start over, too. One of them was her. Calm, funny, and patient. The kind of person who didn't need to fill silences to make them warm. We'd sit outside in the hospital garden, watching the sunlight change through the branches. The air smelled faintly of pine and disinfectant. I hadn't felt safe in a long time, but somehow, sitting there with her, I did. We didn't talk much. Sometimes healing begins in the quiet, when you stop trying to make sense of everything. While sitting outside in the garden, watching the light change through the trees. I felt safe, for once. So, I switched from economics to art, started painting, and started breathing again. When I left, I didn't return to my old life – I left economics behind and started painting again. I let my hands remember what my mind had forgotten — how to create something that didn't have to make sense to anyone else. For the first time in years, I was breathing again.

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That summer, we all went to the lake together: my girlfriend, my mom, her new husband, and I. It was the same lake she had biked to in her white dress, only now the trees were taller, and there were plastic bottles washed up on the shore. But the air still smelled the same — warm rain, cut grass, freedom. We rode our bikes through the forest, stopping to pick wild strawberries, our fingers stained red. My mom laughed when I complained about the hills and said she used to walk the same path barefoot. We swam until the sky turned pink, the water cool and soft around us. We spent weeks on the farm in Chvojenec. I got blisters on my hands, dirt under my nails, but I didn't care. We mended fences together, side by side, and somehow mended something between us, too. There was no grand conversation, no dramatic reconciliation, just quiet understanding. The silence between us wasn't heavy anymore. It was peaceful. I looked at her, the woman who saw the world end in front of her eyes when she faced prison. Maybe we weren't so different after all. The sky above us stretched wide and endless, the same one she'd looked up to thirty years before. The world turns, people change, borders open. Some things change, others stay. But love, hope, and the sky above us — those remain.

A FRAGMENT OF TIME

Text Wilma Nilsson IG: wilmaa.nilsson
Visual: Anna Tarien

I hold a yellowed fragment of time in my hands.
Looking down, I see a picture, faded like the memory of a once big dream.
It carries the traces of a life I never lived. And yet, it feels so familiar.

You stand there, happy and full of life, with a smile from a time when we didn't know each other. Dressed in baggy jeans, an oversized t-shirt and a pair of sneakers. In the background songs about dreams, friendship and love playing on a CD.

With a youth filled with risk-taking, curiosity and laughter, nothing ever stopped you from doing what you wanted to do. And I hope that you really did everything you ever wanted to do.

Holding your memory makes me realise that I finally understand what you mean by *the good old days*.

I hold a fragment of time in my hands. Looking down, I see a picture, this time neither yellowed nor faded but colorful, like the dreams I have and the life I hope to live.
I stand there, happy and full of life with the same smile that once decorated your picture. Songs about dreams, friendship and love are playing on the speaker in the background, and I see myself in my baggy jeans, oversized t-shirt and sneakers, just like you. My youth is filled with risk taking, curiosity and laughter, and I try to not let anyone stop me from doing all the things I want to do. And so I will, one day, have done everything I ever wanted to do.

And when the day my picture is no longer vibrant comes and my memories have faded, I hope to look back at my youth and think about *the good old days*.

I look down at your yellowed picture one last time and somewhere behind your smile, I see myself and I think about how beautiful it is that nothing ever really disappears–it might just fade a little bit.

BACK WHEN?

Text Wilma Nilsson IG: wilmaa.nilsson

Time quietly moves forward;
without us noticing the future becomes the past.
The wind blowing the echoes of the voices that say,
"it was better back then".

Back when?

Back when the songs played from vinyl records,
or back when they played from CDs?
Back when you had to use a landline,
or back when flip phones were the norm?

Back when you had to send a postcard to tell your friends about your adventures,
because you couldn't post your life on social media?

Was it really better back then, or was it simply different?

Today the songs plays from our phones,
you can listen to anything, everywhere, at any time.
Today, the phone isn't attached to the kitchen,
but instead attached to us.
Today you don't need to send a postcard,
you can just text them your pictures.

Was it simply a matter of perspective?

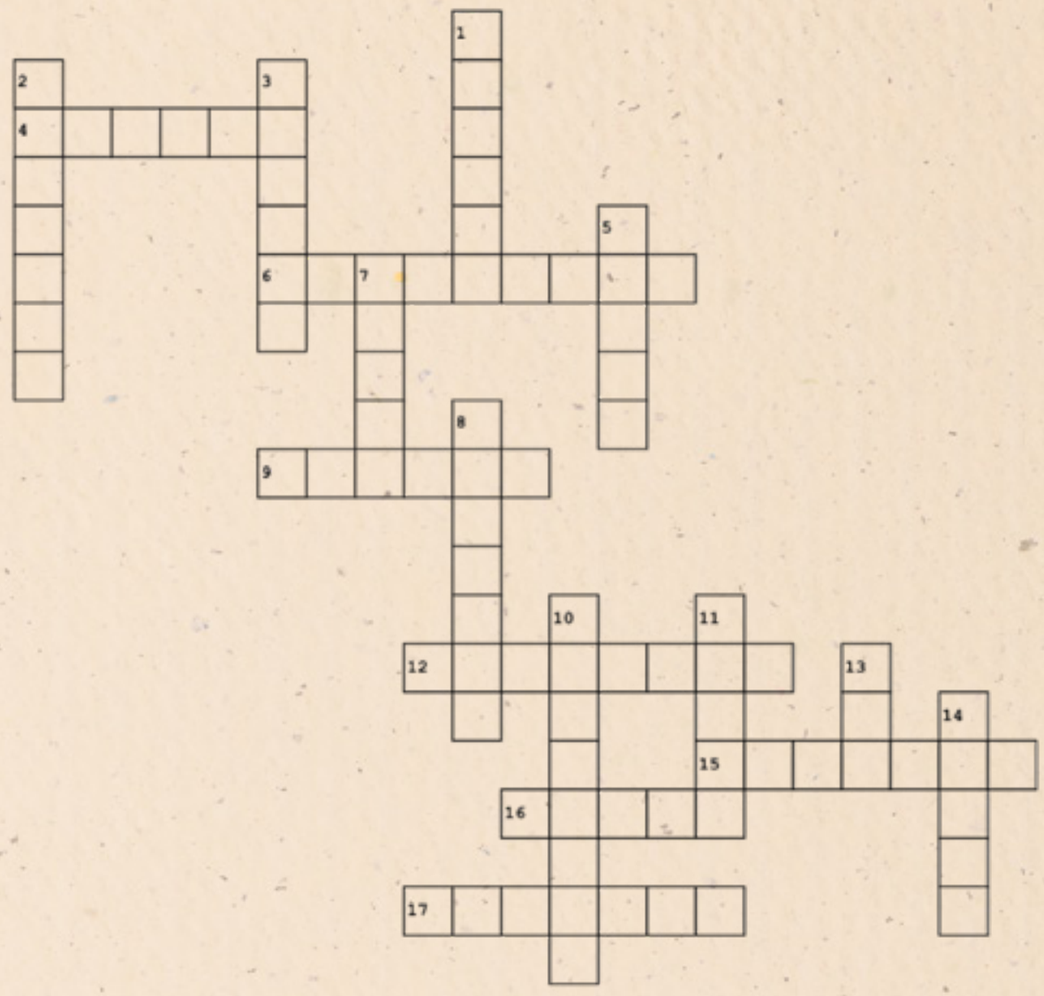
Time may have felt slower back then.
You called on the landline hoping that your friend was waiting by the phone.
You didn't know what your friends were up to if you hadn't seen them.

So time may feel like it´s moving faster today.
You can call your friend, knowing that they will have their phone on them.
You know what your friends are up to, no matter how long ago it was since you saw them.
You carry it all in your pocket, a phone filled with everything you can think of and the world has never been smaller.

The question remains;

Was it better or simply different?

RETRO CROSSWORD



Across

4. Where you'd go to play Pac-Man or Space Invaders.
6. Sentimental longing for the past.
9. Opposite of digital; warm, imperfect, and real.
12. Instant camera brand that printed photos on the spot.
15. Timeless and always in style, like good design.
16. Looking to the past for inspiration.
17. Stylishly old-fashioned, full of charm.

Down

1. Essential gadget for capturing retro Polaroid moments.
2. Iconic handheld console from Nintendo's glory days.
3. What you'd do to your favourite scene or song.
5. Music format that is making a comeback in the modern era.
7. Warm brown photo tint from the past.
8. Portable stereo, often seen on 80s city streets.
10. Compact music format you'd rewind with a pencil.

Good Old Pubs

Text and Visuals: Alice Falla

The Cock and Bull in St Peter Port, Guernsey, has always felt like my pub. The carpet is a deep reddish colour, stained over the years by cigarettes, pork scratchings and countless pints, dropped on the floor. There are flags from various British regions and abroad decorating the walls, sticky teak tables and a constant smell of smoke, despite the fact that smoking indoors has been illegal for 20 years. The interior has not been redecorated since at least the '90s, when my parents first started going, creating generational memories of the yellowing wallpaper. There's a pool table in the corner of the basement covered in sticky handprints and £1 notes ready for the next round. Pictures of that pool table are the only photographic proof that I've ever been to that pub, despite going at least once a month since I turned seventeen.

Nearly every Brit has their own version of the Cock and Bull. It is such a core staple of our culture, spanning four countries and three Crown Dependencies, where many of us navigate our social lives by pubs. They are such an important centre of community in Britain, even with the rise of social media and the decline in independently owned pubs. It's the place for teens to experience their first step in adulthood, for old men to complain about football, and for people to share the wins and losses of life. Every situation calls for a trip to the pub, whether celebrating marriage, birthdays or funerals. They are a place to put aside quarrels and lament together over a Manchester City loss or a £6 pint.

Pubs are also a way for us to celebrate British culture wile distancing ourselves from our troubled past. Many Brits struggle to feel patriotic about our nation – and rightly so – as Great Britain was one of the most notorious colonising powers and wreaked havoc on the rest of the world in the name of the Royal Family and country. Public houses are the one institution that holds no physical memory of these atrocities in comparison to our museums, statues, schools and landmarks. It is our way of celebrating who we are without partaking in a piece of the past or reinforcing the ways that led to colonisation. They are the one thing that makes me proud to be British.

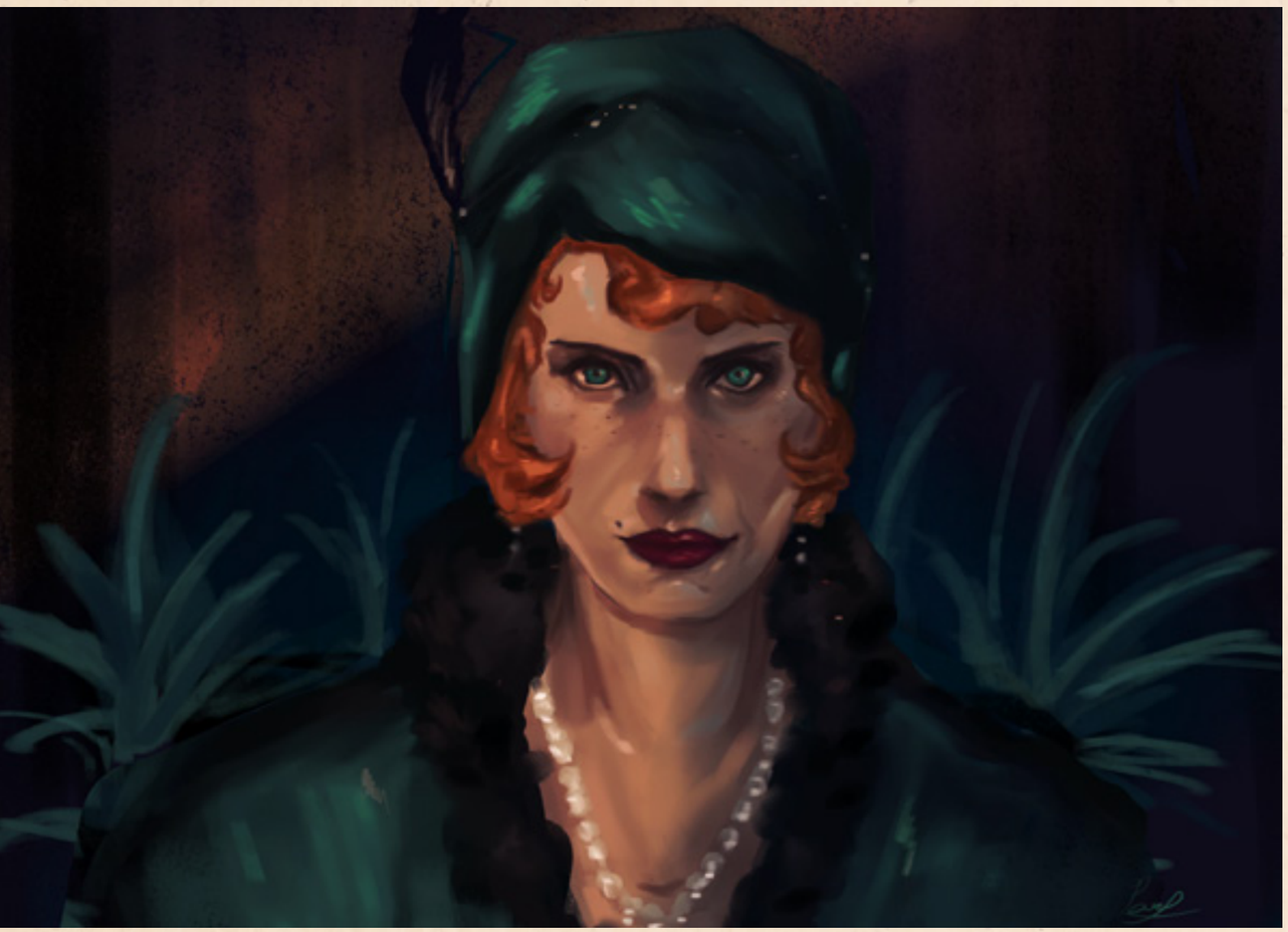
Of course, this doesn't mean pubs are unproblematic, and they can often be the epicentre of modern-day British racism. From football hooliganism and sexism to pure intolerance of people of colour, many pubs can be considered no-go zones for queer people, religious minorities or people of different races. One pub in my own town is known for older men preying on younger women, and Nigel Farage – prominent Islamophobe, homophobe and all-round bigot–has even turned up at my own local to spew his untruths. Many pubs can be considered time machines, providing a space for people to complain about the 'good old days'. However, these traditional values often include women staying at home, racism being acceptable and UK isolationism. They can be vacuums for all aspects of the past, from floral wallpaper to prejudice.

This all reflects the modern nature of Britain – a country that aims to hide from its harmful past and looks to spend time with others through its own culture, but still retains the ideologies and patterns that led it to said reputation.

JAZZ, DANS OCH FJÄDRAR

EN FLAPPER GIRL'S BEKÄNNELSER

Text Linnea Marie Granlund
Visual: Julia Hak IG: j.j_the_art_joey



9:30 1927
Kära dagbok,
Att få vakna omringad av fjädrar i alla regnbågens färger är ren lycka! Gårdagens spektakel var fantastiskt! Jag kröp runt under täcket och hittade dem en efter en. Min första tanke var att min boa måste se förfärlig ut, men hängande på min stol fångade den min blick. När jag fick nog av att ligga och dra mig steg jag upp för att inspektera den, och som tur är såg den fortfarande ut att vara i perfekt skick för kvällens dans. Jag och min väninna Clara ska ut och röja på stan! Men först frukost!

10:00
Som vanligt blev det en stor kopp kaffe och en cigarett till efterrätt. När jag slukat i mig kaffet var det dags att välja kläder för en dag ute på stan. Det stod mellan min gröna raka chiffongklänning och en ny kjol som slutar precis innan knäna. Kläderna har blivit mer anpassade till att fritt kunna röra sig nu för tiden, det tycker jag är fruktansvärt bra. På senaste tiden har jag och mina vänner ägnat oss åt att måla på knäna, nu när vi får bära kjolar som slutar över knäna, kan vi lika gärna göra det med stil! Innan det var dags att bege sig behövde jag leta fram min clochehatt, jag går ingenstans utan den.

12:00 Lunch på restaurang
20 minuter senare satt jag och Clara på en liten diner nedför gatan från min lägenhet. Hon satt mitt emot mig och puttade runt sin surströmming på tallriken, medan hon babblade om allt från musik till kvinnlig rösträtt. Allt gick så fort, kom vi fram till. I bakgrunden kunde man höra jazz spelas på radion.

14:00 bokaffären
Efter lunchen bestämde vi oss för att besöka en bokaffär som enligt ryktena på stan ska ha fått in fler exemplar av Scott Fitzgeralds bok *All the Sad Young Men.* Både jag och Clara var fullkomligt förälskade i Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby* hade stor påverkan på våra liv. Ibland har vi även stött på honom i sällskap med sin fru Zelda Fitzgerald som anses vara den första amerikanska flappern! Vi har fått höra att hon brukade skriva fräcka och roliga recensioner av hans böcker för att de skulle få uppmärksamhet.

16:00 Fika och promenad genom stan
Nu är det dags att dra vidare. När världen rusar framåt, är vi hack i häl i högklackat.
Längs ner för gatan susar Ford-bilar förbi oss.

18:00
Jazzbar
Och jazz, åh jazz!
Louis Armstrongs trumpet får mig att tro på magi! Vi dansade precis som Josephine Baker.

20:00 kvällsbio
"The Jazz Singer" stod med stora bokstäver utanför Warner Theater biografen. Hela staden har snackat om just denna film, det var nämligen ingen vanlig film utan det var en talkie! för första gången kunde man höra karaktärernas röster, det var hysteriskt! Alla i publiken och jag blev helt förälskad i Al Jolson.

Visual: Michaela Černá IG: misacernafanacc,
Tiba Daoud IG: @tibadaoud & Kateryna Pyzh IG: unkateable

Feeling the Decades

RECESSION INDICATORS

ALICE IN THE 20'S LAND

QUEEN OF BROKEN HEARTS

Feeling the Decades

Text: Julie Inksmith IG: ju.li_5

Feeling the Decades is a project meant to take you on a journey through time – from the dazzling ‘20s to the iconic ‘00s. Essentially, vintage style merged with a modern edge. Beauty, fashion and makeup are timeless. They have always played a big role throughout time, and they continue to shape modern trends.

That is why we wanted to embrace, celebrate and take inspiration from the evolution of fashion. We were influenced by specific styles from the 1920s, 1950s, 1970s as well as the 2000s. However, reimagined with a modern flair. We also drew inspiration from Alice in Wonderland and its enchanting style and whimsical themes.

Each decade brings its own unique characteristics. The boldness of the ‘20s. The femininity of the ‘50s. The carefreeness of the ‘70s, and the iconic playfulness of the ’00s. Combined with our contemporary twist and fantastical inspiration, we wanted to bridge the past and the present, the retro and the modern, the familiar and the new – capturing the timelessness of beauty. So, join us on this modern journey down the rabbit hole.

00’S IT GIRL

EDGY MEADOW FROM THE 70S

THE SKIN OF A 50S BEAUTY KILLER

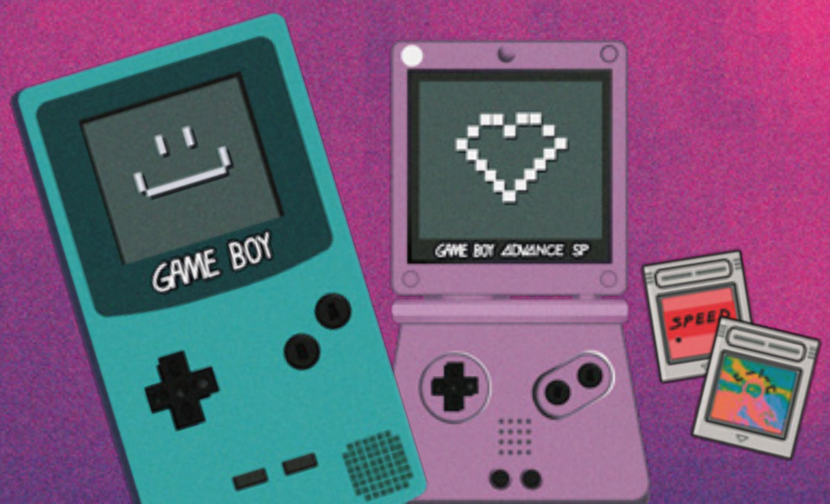
PRESS START TO REMEMBER

Text: Julie Inksmith IG: ju.li_5
Visuals: Annika Ronner IG: annikaronner

Press Start to Play.
When I think back on sneaking my Game Boy under my pillow so that I could play all night long, an indescribable feeling hits me like a tsunami. The faint light shining through my blanket and the not-so-soft clicking of buttons bring me back. That was true freedom. The only consequences were being tired for school the next day or getting scolded if caught. I can recall the way the world outside of my bed would disappear, leaving me with only pixelated adventures. While the real world slept, I saved kingdoms, caught Pokémon, and pretended the world inside the tiny screen was more real than the one that was waiting for me in the morning. At that time, playing past bedtime was a small and innocent rebellion – a secret mission carried out beneath a pillowed fortress.

Press Start to Escape.
In those days, we didn't need life-like graphics to feel amazed, immersed or impressed. Our imaginations filled in the gaps between those pixels. Super Mario, The Legend of Zelda, and Pokémon – those worlds were simple, yet they felt infinite, and in some way, real. Each one of these games offered something the real world couldn't at that time: control, adventure, and a strong sense of purpose. Even today, we have games like Stardew Valley that remind us that the magic never came from the realism of the game – it came from control, comfort and the simplicity of it all. The relaxing routine of watering crops, fishing, and bothering villagers left and right was, and is, enough to silence the real world. Before, we didn't need to use meditation apps or doomscroll to escape. We had saved files that we looked forward to every day. All we had to do was press "continue".

Press Start to Cheat.
Ah, there was no better feeling than typing out "motherlode" and becoming as rich as your greedy heart desired. At any moment, you could build giant mansions and decorate every corner of a world that was at your mercy. There was something completely intoxicating about that – infinite money, infinite power, and no hard labour. At that time, we didn't yet understand that shortcuts, in real life, rarely led to true satisfaction and happiness. We just wanted some sense of control and power. Maybe that's what the cheat codes really represented back then: the fantasy of bending rules, of not having to struggle, and getting everything we wanted without any responsibility. Sadly, growing up means realising that real life doesn't have a cheat menu. It requires hard work, time, and patience. Things that, at times, we wish to avoid.



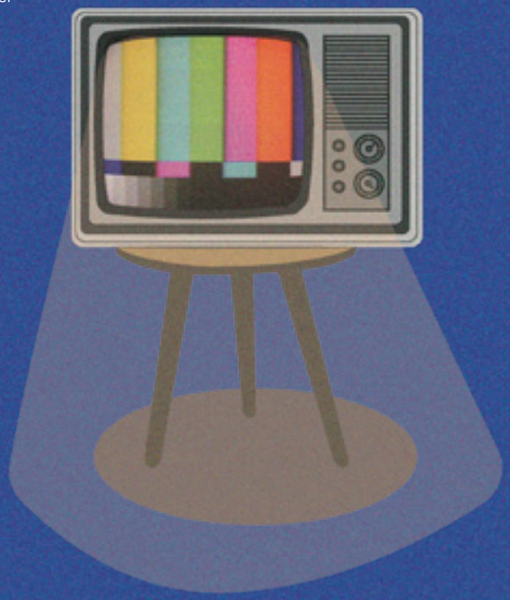
Press Start to Rewind.
Now, replaying those retro games just doesn't feel the same. Some still work, barely, and some are completely unplayable. But most importantly, their magic has faded, like a song you've had on repeat for far too long. However, the difference isn't just the games – it's us. Back then, we had all the time to lose on a single level, and we even had the patience to start over after every "Game Over." Now, as adults, we play to relax, to wind down after a long, stressful day. We don't have that same patience. When we get stuck on a level, it is more frustrating and not worth our precious time off. Nowadays, we wish to play those retro games to feel what we felt back then – something we can't quite put our finger on. It's a strange, aching feeling of sadness, safety, and comfort. Maybe what we miss isn't the pixels, or the clunky music, or the simple stories. Perhaps it's the version of ourselves who had once believed that pressing start meant anything was possible. That we were capable of anything. That we could achieve anything.

Press Start to Continue.
The Game Boys are now tucked away in attics or drawers, slowly collecting more and more dust. One day, we'll reunite with them, and we'll hold them like relics from a completely different lifetime. The buttons are now smooth from overuse, the screens scratched, and the batteries long dead. But turning them on – if they still work, that is – will feel like opening a time capsule. We'll remember the friends we used to play with, and the late nights we spent chasing high scores. Maybe one day we'll show them to our kids or grandkids, and they'll laugh, call them "ancient relics". We'll probably laugh too – but quietly, because we'll remember the good times. We'll remember that before the world became so fast, this loud, and endless, we once had time to pause. To play. To dream.

Press Start to Remember.
I'd like to think that maybe video games aren't so bad for us after all. They taught us to keep going even after failure, to dare to explore, and to use our imagination beyond our limited reality. Perhaps nostalgia isn't about going back and feeling sad. It's about remembering that no matter how many times we lose, we can try again – even when we get old.

Reclaiming Broadcast & the Digital World

Text: Chris Culling, Website: chrisilly.com
Visuals: Annika Ronner IG: annikaronner



TV and radio never went away, but I would argue that the “For you” algorithms of TikTok et al. have taken the spotlight. Don’t get me wrong: I love getting served a uniquely curated feed as much as the next second-hand thinker, but let’s take a moment to discuss one of the greatest gifts of TV and radio broadcasts:
SHARED KNOWLEDGE🗣️

Shared knowledge is a fundamental ingredient in forming relationships and communities, and something that TV and radio broadcasts help build. Cities like Malmö can only curate and broadcast so many TV channels, giving us all the time to familiarize ourselves with the same limited set of options. Even though the content is fleeting, the channels are constant. No matter what they choose to air, TV4 and SVT are not going anywhere.

This brings me to how I fundamentally view TV and radio broadcasts more as places than just content—and when my dad asks ”Did you see the game last night?” it’s not really different from asking ”Were you there last night?” The couch? The stadium? Whatever. The point is that the same thing happened in front of us both at the same time.

Now, your ”For you” TikTok feed can help build shared knowledge, especially for the chronically online, such as yourself. Directly sharing your ”For you” content with others (usually in-app DMs) even brings this social work to the foreground—in the same way that watching TV together on a shared living-room couch would. However, if you and your friends exist on different platforms, I guess you’ll just have to hope someone at the bar has seen the same set of niche and obscure TikToks as you—be it the gnomes and the knights, women dressed as Alexander Hamilton climbing out of windows, or countless people doing the recent Sabrina Carpenter ”tears” trend (you freak❤️). I’m willing to bet they’re more likely to have seen the latest episode of Invandrare för Svenskar.

Okay, so assuming that you’ve grown hopelessly apart from your local communities ever since you cheated on your TV with your phone—which you now pervertedly hook up with your smart TV—what can you possibly do to feel whole again? How would broadcasting media need to change and present in order to even begin rivalling the appeal of your Swiss-Army slot-machine?

Broadcast to a decentralized web. In other words: leverage the Internet protocol that the World Wide Web Consortium has been recommending since 2018! Let me explain:

Imagine that an over-the-Internet broadcasting (livestreaming) platform like YouTube is a thousand metropolises stacked on top of each other. All the traffic, all the buildings, all the business is so amalgamated that it’s like architectural soup. Even Malmö is in there somewhere, except it’s been morphed, stretched out, and shattered across the entire amalgamegalopolis. Everything you could ever want exists somewhere within. But when newcomer Selma tries to get her Malmö-centric crocheting group organised, it’s like trying to see the night sky by shining a laser in each eye for every star that exists before glueing your eyelids shut.

Now forget that monstrosity and imagine if all content were stored in the respective city it was made in, and that roads connected the cities so that we could still share with one another. This is essentially how decentralized apps/platforms work; they are more like actual places! There is no big corporation that stores or controls your content; each community is responsible for its own. This also means that when Selma streams her Malmö-centric crocheting content, it will be visible to everyone in Malmö first and foremost, regardless of what roads may or may not be sending her content elsewhere.

The best part? TikTok-like platforms can be built on the decentralized web, too! In fact, every social media platform you know of could be made to work with the decentralized web. The actual best part? Social media platforms on the decentralized web can even talk to each other. Local, over-the-Internet broadcasts could be shown on all the kinds of platforms that you already use! Conversely, imagine if posts on Instagram were automatically visible on Twitter. Imagine being able to follow an Instagram account—or a broadcast—from your Pinterest account. You would only need one social media account, and how you use it wouldn’t get in the way of whatever content you want to consume.

Why haven’t you heard about this until now? Why are existing social media giants not incorporating the new and recommended Internet protocol that will make all of our lives easier? Uh oh, it hurts their itty bitty bottom line... ow ow, poor billionaire company would be so jealous if your eyeballs weren’t exclusively on them anymore... now that you and your friends have independent yet compatible options.

Anyway, if you want to learn more about platforms that already exist on the decentralized web, you can check out ”PixelFed,” an Instagram alternative, ”Loops,” a TikTok alternative, ”PeerTube,” the YouTube alternative, and maybe you’ve already heard of ”Mastodon,” the Twitter-like platform. Other developing platforms include:

- “Bookwyrm,” for tracking and reviewing your books.
- “Funkwhale,” for sharing and consuming music and podcasts.
- “Mobilizon,” for organizing and sharing events.
- “Lemmy,” a traditional forum.
- “Ibis,” a collaborative encyclopedia platform.
- “Owncast,” which enables livestreaming independently of any platform.

The list goes on and on. These tools are growing every day, and hundreds more niche platforms keep appearing in this open and interconnected ecosystem now called The Fediverse. We have the tools. Now, all we need to do is give them a place in which to live. Why not start with Malmö? How would we do that? By hosting our own “instance,” “pod” or “branch” of whatever platforms we like. Things are changing at a rapid pace, so stay tuned and keep a lookout.

Humanity's Toy Box:
How to Steal Characters Legally

Text: Theodor Iftimie, Story Architect
Visuals: BellaZino IG: z.name_

Are you writing a book and the characters don't seem to come alive as they do in your mind? You might get the urge to borrow characters you've already fallen in love with and give them new life in your own work. Do this at your own peril with any modern character, as you might get slapped with a copyright infringement lawsuit even before you've finished your thought.

What you can do instead is take a peek inside humanity's collective toy box – The Public Domain. These are characters, stories, paintings, and music so old that nobody has any copyright claim on them. They are free for everyone to use, remix, and reimagine as they see fit.

How do you find these characters? Well, there isn't really a comprehensive, searchable list (The character copyright page on the Wikimedia Commons website is a solid start). However, a good rule of thumb is that anything published before 1930 is in the public domain in 2025.

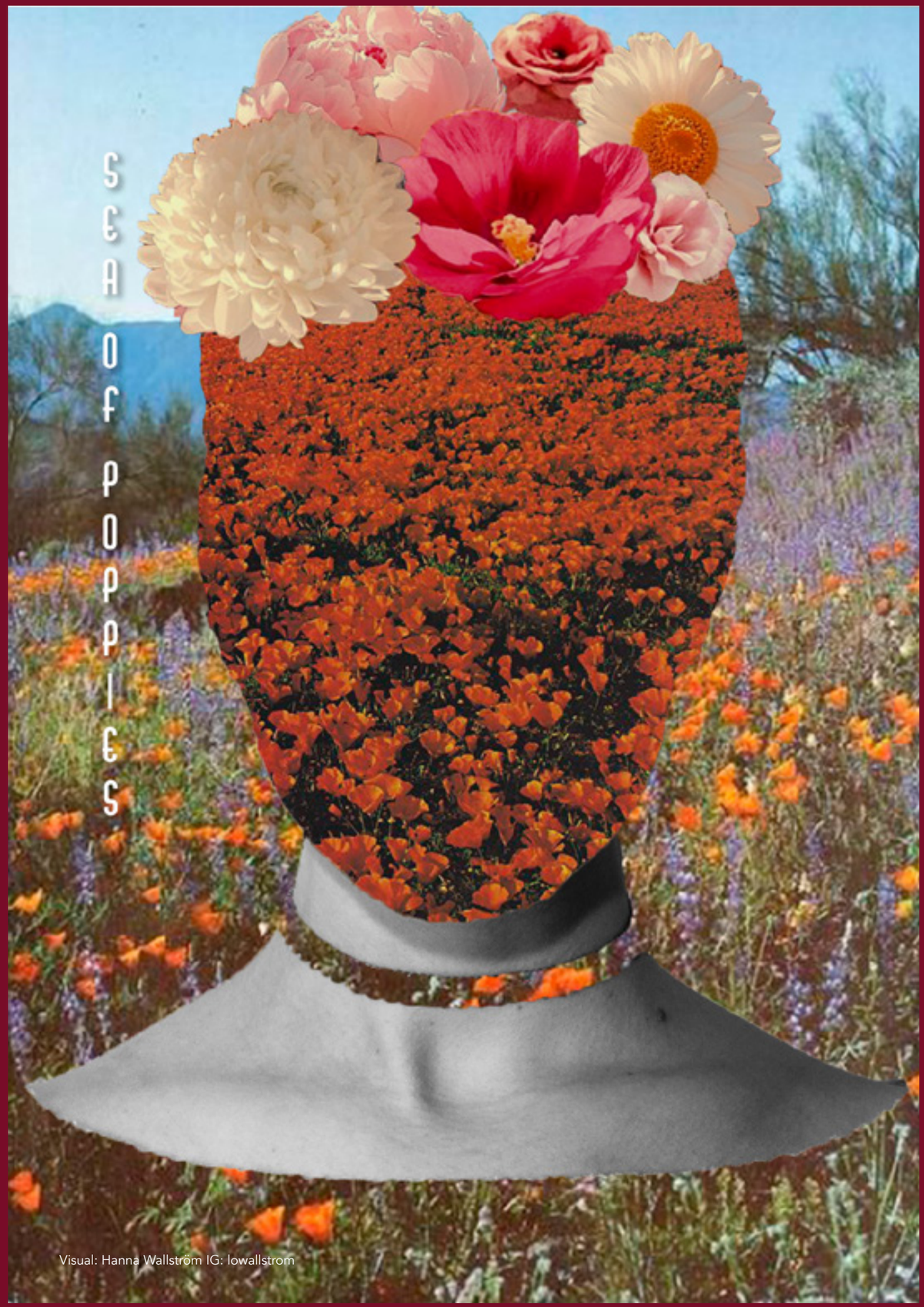
Beware that many times, only the original story/ characterization/design is in the public domain. For example, the original "Wizard of Oz" books are in the public domain. The iconic ruby slippers, however, are an exclusive addition to the movie, which is under copyright. Confusing? This is the tip of the iceberg! Add to this the fact that many countries operate under different time frames (e.g., "The Hobbit" has already entered the public domain in Canada but will not do so in the United States until 2034), and it becomes clear that you need to conduct some serious Google research to unravel the copyright web of your chosen character.

Here are some highlights I have pulled from my own research. Where possible, I have included a couple of traits that have helped the character maintain its cultural relevancy. I've done this to help inspire you, since it can be daunting to just take someone else's creation and fit it into your own narrative. If the character is famous enough, the story can quickly become all about them, leaving your own creations in the dust. Thus, I encourage you to scratch out the names and be left with a collection of archetypes that have been proven to resonate with audiences throughout the ages.

- **Sherlock Holmes** - Hyper competent specialist who is right 99% of the time (making the times where somebody else gets the better of him all the more impactful). He becomes humanized in the eyes of the reader through his relationship with the more "normal" Dr. Watson. He is synonymous with the word "mystery", so any crime setting can use a variation of the quintessential detective. Other variants on the detective trope include Agatha Christie's mystery solvers, Hercule Poirot and Miss Marple (a subversion of the archetype, an old lady with incredible deductive skills).
- **Robin Hood** - A good-hearted thief who fights corrupt authorities. The set-up (fighting corruption) is what makes Robin's nature shine through. As such, the cyberpunk genre (known for its use of deeply corrupt and oppressive corporations) could prove a perfect home for our archer (who might become a revolver-wielder, keeping the idea of a simpler, old-fashioned weapon while giving him a chance against the bionic arms and lasers of the future). Two more characters serving the same purpose of outlaws fighting corruption and righting injustices are the sword-wielding Zorro and Arsene Lupin, the gentleman thief.
- **Cthulhu** - An unknowable, all-powerful entity whose awakening heralds the end of the world. This character should not be used as a simple monster to be defeated, but as a mysterious, supernatural background threat, whose pressure is felt throughout the plot.
- **Old Cartoon Characters**. Popeye the sailor man,

- **Tintin, Felix the cat**, Steamboat Willy (the first iteration of Mickey Mouse), Winnie the Pooh, Peter Rabbit, etc. - People associate these designs with childhood fun. Place these characters in slightly more mundane/serious situations and use the inherent contrast for humour or to hook people into a more complex exploration/deconstruction. How about a corporate drama for the cast of Winnie the Pooh? Now that's something Eeyore can be truly depressed about!
- **Jenny Everywhere** - The first open-source character ever created. You don't have to wait 70 years after the death of her author, Jenny just appeared in the public domain right from the start. Her characterization leans into this by having her be able to hop between different dimensions at will. Think Everything Everywhere All at Once. Use her as a silly Deadpool-esque character who is aware of their role in a story.
- **The monster squad** and assorted adventurers - The Invisible Man, Frankenstein, Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, Van Helsing, Captain Nemo, Alan Quartermaine, Mina Harker, Sinbad, etc. Feel free to plunder this category when you need to name-drop some recognizable figures into your Victorian setting to make the world-building feel more believable. Most of these are archetypes with plenty of room for further exploration and reinterpretation. What could Captain Nemo's next adventure be? What creepy monster will Van Helsing hunt next? Let your imagination run wild!
- **Every fairy tale** you can think of - The big player you need to be aware of in this space is, of course, Walt Disney. He basically built his empire on taking public domain fairy tales and creating his own version. Make sure the characters you use have only traits that are in the original books and not the Disney adaptation. A common trope for stories with fairy tale characters is to have a bunch of recognizable figures all live and interact with each other in the same universe, like the Shrek movies, or the comic book series Fables and its video game adaptation, The Wolf Among Us.
- **Every myth and** legend you can think of - Every pantheon of gods has a treasure trove of character relationships and dynamics to unpack and use as inspiration. The Song of Achilles and Circe are two contemporary mega-hits that explore 2000-years old characters in a new light. Perhaps look into your country's own folklore and legends. It worked out for The Witcher, turning Polish superstition into a worldwide phenomenon.
- **Dracula** - A sophisticated, cunning villain. The ultimate antagonist, with the heroes usually having to study, find, and wear him down enough to barely defeat him. You can either lean into the original characterization and write an aristocratic, blood-thristy monster, or you can do what the Hotel Transylvania movies did and make him a middle-aged dad at a family reunion.

Even though we look at culture with its great stories and characters as big, inevitable bursts of isolated creativity, the truth is that culture is built one step at a time. Even though it might not feel like your silly story about Robin Hood fighting laser-shooting cyborgs is culturally significant, I can assure you Walt Disney didn't know he was making history at the time, either. He just didn't have enough money to license contemporary characters. So throw your hat in the ring, write something fun, and I'll bet you'll find someone out there who'll say, "I've wanted to read something like this for ages!"



Visual: Hanna Wallström IG: lowallstrom

WEAVING THE WEB OF RETRO

Text: Cecile IG: k.vs.g
Visual: Kateryna Pyzh IG: unkateable

I recently started to notice a rise in TikToks where creators are speaking up about community – precisely, the lack of it. It struck me – it's not the style that we, mainly Gen Z, essentially crave; it's the community. The idea that hyper-individualism and prioritisation of productivity over lived experience are taking society on a path to an isolated future has sprouted in the minds of many young people, whether they share these thoughts online or within their real-life circles. It's not just one individual bubble of thought; the digital space now holds a thread that connects countless such bubbles around the world. It piqued my interest in researching alternative ways young generations are forming new paths of community – what can escape the digital, and what cannot?

One of the main tools used for non-verbal communication online is digital mimicry, or to simplify, trends – such as style, makeup, using specific hashtags and -core prefixes which serve as stylistic signifiers. This not only helps with self-expression but also community building, when done right.

I say "done right" because self-curation through aesthetics is not the long-term answer, as anything curated could, and often does in the digital space, be rooted in performativity and the desire for external validation. Self-curating is not a problem in itself when you take it as a critical development of your own being, which should evolve from online influences to self-made decisions. Mediated authenticity over the years has taught users to always express the self through the current frame of authenticity, which is shaped by algorithmic trends, even if it requires an adjustment of the self.

Yet the frames and mediations seem to be crumbling as users keep finding ways to evade the algorithms. Some users even speculate that contemporary online spaces, advertised as "community nourishing", at their core, are tools for data collection. Distrust of anything digital is slowly approaching as more and more people get to know and believe the dead internet theory[1], but in my eyes, there is a good side to this phenomenon. Nowadays, more and more young people are once again coming to value the analogue connections vs. digital ones. I'm not talking about being a kid and going out to play outside – I'm speaking of Gen Z, who grew up during the massive changes of the digital world, who experienced enriching times as children playing online, and now are rebuilding their outside communities and expressing their yearning for a retro age of the internet, the space where everyone could feel a part of something.

This retro age is creeping up as people are trying to ditch platforms serviced by Almighty Google and prioritising alternative spaces and websites. Users who are well-versed in aesthetics are noting that fashion trends such as monotonous beige apparel and interiors and clean-girl aesthetic are new mixtures of an anti-community concoction, promoting stylistic tones of boredom (and needless to say, it emphasises the Eurocentric standard of beauty that is the easiest to digest: white, clean, tame, and glossed over). As these trends rose, so did the pushback for creativity, self-expression – even if it was through new trends (such as-core). Of course, this point is seen through a dichotomy of bland/colourful, boring/interesting, but if there is a link between clean-girl aesthetics and Eurocentric beauty standards, we can assume that it also could be working as a tool for minimising algorithmic exposure to creative, expressive, alternative and "unclean" communities. What helps battle these algorithms is not only an increase in various users explicitly stating their concern over them, but a continuous push online to educate themselves on questions, such as "what are the goals of the people managing these algorithms?".

After the COVID-19 pandemic and isolation that affected the entire world, there was a shift in mindset regarding online communities – at some point during lockdowns, many felt that no matter how authentic, digital communication and friendships only last for so long. It prompted me to question the quality of connection – are our bodies still able to interpret connections online as actual community building? Do we feed the impulse for community our ancestors passed onto us with digitality, or do our bodies reject it as indigestible, thus pushing us to the brink of a break, still motivating us to seek out real-life connection? Now that a lot of people are dealing with emotional post-isolation consequences such as anxiety in real-life spaces, is there something to make it all easier?

One such real-life communal activity that could be seen as having "escaped" the internet recently is "Performative Masc Lesbian Contest" in Toronto this September, or "Timothée Chalamet Look-alike Contest" in New York last year. Neither are connected to any sort of specific community in real-life, but the online obsession with pop-culture garnered popularity for these sorts of contests, which are playful in spirit, and most importantly, do not require much commitment from an individual. This reminded me of when the various communities of a website called Tumblr organised their own convention in 2014, DashCon, a cultural event where different communities of online fandoms get together to celebrate, support artists by buying their merchandise and participate in various entertaining activities. The key difference between the two examples of digital communities transforming into analogue is their nature: DashCon seemed to be a playful event, yet it was an overly ambitious and underdeveloped project, which led to a lot of disappointment among attendees, and these short-term meet-ups for a contest had a very simplistic approach to a successful community-building activity.

People are learning every day just how much social media algorithms can be challenged and bent toward weaving the webs of community. A tool set up for distraction is being turned into a site of action for everybody. As this process continues, I'm sure we will soon be seeing more signs of the digital world reverting back into an enriching retro space that serves as a tool for real-life community building.

1 The Dead Internet Theory (DIT) suggests that much of today's internet, particularly social media, is dominated by non-human activity, AI-generated content, and corporate agendas, leading to a decline in authentic human interaction. (Prathamesh Muzumdar et al., 2025, Asian Journal of Research in Computer Science, vol 18, p. 67-73, USA.)

Explore the world of the students!

STUDENT UNION MAGAZINE

SUM

Looking for more to read? We have all the previous issues online!

Got the taste for reading? Or disappointed that the issue has come to an end? Don't worry! SUM is constantly working to make sure you have pieces to read and enjoy. Since the next issue won't come out until spring, there are always more things to read on our website. Read about student tips on studying, recipes and so on. We have unique voices from people around the world and much more!

"SUM online is a fairly new and exciting extension of the physical student magazine. We offer our contributors the space to explore journalism and every part of making something special." - Co-editor-in-chief Hanna Wallström. As the saying goes, "The world is your oyster", but for Malmö University students, it's more than that. It is a space to put yourself out there without the pressure or judgment, safely.

Student Union Magazine is a part of the Student Union, and it is mainly for students by students."Taking part in our magazine is like opening a door, you take part in the creativity and get a chance to share your voice," - Co-editor-in-chief Julie Inksmith. "It might seem scary, but if you are interested in sharing your opinion and experience, what better way to do it than at a small student magazine?"

The most essential part of participating in the creation of the magazine is to have fun. "You do as much or as little as you want or feel comfortable with. And we're always here to help".

SUM Online

SUM Online

EXTRA: SUM IS LOOKING FOR YOU

INSPIRED TO CREATE?

Have you ever been interested in taking part in a Magazine? As a writer, illustrator, graphic designer or perhaps photographer?
Then we are looking for you! SUM is always looking for contributors who want to explore their creativity.
Whether it's online or for the next physical issue, there is room for you!

REQUIRMENTS

To be part of the Student Union Magazine's team, you have to be an active student at Malmö University and be a Student Union member. And no prior experience needed.

GET IN CONTACT

If you want to join SUM, you can get in contact with the editors-in-chief via email: sum@malmostudenter.se or Instagram at sum_magazine.

Yours,
Hanna Wallström & Julie Inksmith

KÅRENS SIDOR

PRESIDIET HAR ORDET / THE PRESIDIUM HAS THE WORD

A warm welcome from the Student Union

Welcome to Malmö—an exciting city brimming with opportunities and possibilities. We encourage you to step outside your comfort zone, explore your surroundings, and make the most of your time here.

Your first assignment - Acctivate your Union membership

Unlock a world of benefits by activating your Student Union membership. From discounts to exclusive events, there's plenty waiting for you. Visit our homepage to discover our 14 diverse associations and four sections—each offering unique interests, communities, and ways to get involved. Joining one is a great way to enrich your student life and meet new people.

Make your voice heard

Student influence is at the core of everything we at the Union do. We encourage you to be curious, critical, and engaged in your education. Talk to your teachers and program coordinators and talk to us—your feedback helps shape a better learning experience for everyone and further improves your education.

Join the Student Union Council (FUM)

FUM is the highest decision-making body for student matters at the Student Union Malmö. As a member, you'll have the power to vote on key issues and propose new ideas that can impact all 27,000 students at Malmö University. From housing and academics to social life, career support, and political advocacy—your voice matters.

Your journey starts here

We wish you a smooth and successful academic journey. Let your university experience be a time of growth, fun, and discovery. Dive into activities, build connections, and stay focused on your goals! Good luck!

Lastly, always check our website and follow our social media for updates on fun activities and freebies.

Bojana Drljaca

Bojana Drljaca
President of the
Student Union Malmö

Damilare Latinwo

Damilare Latinwo
Vice President of the
Student Union Malmö

Ta studentlivet till nästa NIVÅ

Få ut mer av ditt studentliv på Malmö univeresitet genom att engegera dig i Kåren.

Engagera dig i Studentkåren för en rolig möjlighet att träffa nya vänner och få värdefulla erfarenheter inför arbetslivet. Välj det som intresserar dig mest, så blir det extra givande.

Som aktiv inom Kåren får du träffa människor med liknande intressen och kan skapa livslånga vänskaper. Hur mycket tid du lägger avgör du själv. Du får även ett intyg på ditt engagemang, vilket kan ge dig ett försprång på arbetsmarknaden.

Kårens verksamhet är indelad i två delar: **student-inflytande** och **representation** för den som vill vara med och fatta viktiga beslut, samt **studiesocialt** för den som vill planera event och aktiviteter.

Skanna QR-koden för att läsa mer om hur du kan engagera dig i Kåren.

Get engaged in the Student Union for a fun opportunity to meet new friends and gain valuable experience for your working life. Choose what interests you most and it will be extra rewarding.

As an active member of the Student Union, you will meet people with similar interests and make lifelong friendships. How much time you spend is up to you. You also get a certificate of your involvement, which can give you a head start in the work market.

The Union's activities are divided into two parts: **student engagement** and **representation** for those who want to be involved in making important decisions, and **study social** for those who want to plan events and activities.

Scan the QR code to read more about how you can get involved in the Union.

Kaffe med KÅREN

Direktdemokrati på riktigt!

Varje månad dyker vi upp på din fakultet med Kaffe med Kåren. Häng med dina kursare, träffa våra föreningar, sektioner och andra externa organisationer och snacka om allt som rör studentlivet.

Vi vill höra dina idéer om hur universitetet kan bli bättre, och varje gång kör vi på ett nytt tema för att hålla samtalen levande.

Självklart bjuder vi på gratis kaffe och godsaker. Mellan 10:00 och 14:00 är vi alltid på plats. Så kom och fyll på energin och hjälp oss göra Kåren ännu bättre!

Datum för Kaffe med Kåren:

Oktober	November	December
14 - Orkanen	11 - Kranen	12 - Orkanen
15 - Niagara	18 - Orkanen	12 - Niagara
16 - HS	19 - Niagara	12 - HS
	12 - HS	

Every month, we visit your faculty with Coffee with the Student Union. Hang out with your classmates, meet our associations, sections, and other external organizations, and talk about everything related to student life.

We want to hear your ideas on how the university can be improved, and each time we have a new theme to keep the conversation lively.

Of course, we offer free coffee and treats. We are always there between 10:00 and 14:00. So come and recharge your batteries and help us make the Student Union even better!

Dates for Coffee with the Union

October	November	December
14 - Orkanen	11 - Kranen	12 - Orkanen
15 - Niagara	18 - Orkanen	12 - Niagara
16 - HS	19 - Niagara	12 - HS
	12 - HS	

Kom på STUDENTRÅD

Påverka din utbildning!

Studentråd är en viktig mötesplats där studenter, klassrepresentanter och kursrepresentanter från hela universitetet samlas.

Genom ditt deltagande på studentråden bidrar du till spännande diskussioner där åsikter uttrycks rörande utbildningskvalitén och frågor om studiemiljö, undervisning och andra aspekter av universitetslivet lyfts fram - du bidrar till förbättrad utbildning.

Under vårterminen äger studentråden rum under vecka 43 och 49. Mer information om datum finner du i våra sociala medier.

Local Student Council is an important meeting place where students, class representatives and course representatives come together from all over university.

Through your participation in the Local Student Councils, you contribute to exciting discussions where opinions are expressed on the quality of education and issues are raised on study environment, teaching and other aspects of university life - you contribute to the improvement of education.

During the spring semester, the Local Student Councils take place during week 43 and 49. More information on dates can be found in our social media.

Kontakta Kåren / contact the Union

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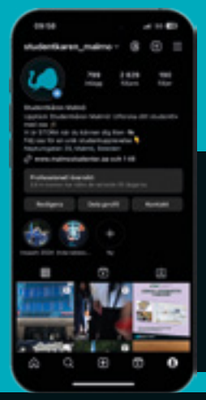
receptionen@malmostudenter.se

Öppettider / Opening hours

Måndag/Monday	STÄNGT/CLOSED
Tisdag/Tuesday	10:00- 16:00
Onsdag/Wednesday	10:00- 16:00
Torsdag/Thursday	10:00- 16:00
Fredag/Friday	10:00- 13:00



Följs oss på sociala medier!
@studentkaren_malmo
/studentkarenmalmoe
Studentkåren Malmö
Studentkåren Malmö

BLI MEDLEM I KÅREN!
SKANNA QR-KODEN.
FÅ RABATTER OCH FÖRMÅNER.
STÖTTA ARBETET AV STUDENTER FÖR STUDENTER.

malmostudenter.se

Kåren Studentkåren Malmö

CROSSWORD ANSWERS

RETRO

ACROSS

4. Arcade
6. Nostalgia
9. Analog
12. Polaroid
15. Classic
16. Retro
17. Vintage

DOWN

1. Camera
2. Gameboy
3. Rewind
5. Vinyl
7. Sepia
8. Boombox
10. Cassette
11. Disco
13. VHS
14. Pixel

THANKS FOR READING!

The Editors-in-Chief would like to express their deep-felt gratitude to each talented writer and visual artist who has contributed to make this issue.

INTERESTED IN JOINING SUM?

We are always looking for new members to help create the next issue. Writers, illustrators, photographers and many more are always needed at SUM.

Send us an email: sum@malmostudenter.se
Or send a DM on Instagram: SUM_Magazine

SUM

sum.malmostudenter.se

Vi fortsätter stödja Kåren!

Vi är stolta över vårt mångåriga samarbete med Student-kåren på Malmö Universitet.

Vi dyker upp regelbundet exempelvis på Kaffe med Kåren och Introduktionsdagar.

Passa på att prata med oss om dina tankar kring ekonomi. Vi har massor av tips på hur du får pengarna att räcka längre och hur du tänker smart inför framtiden!

Swedbank