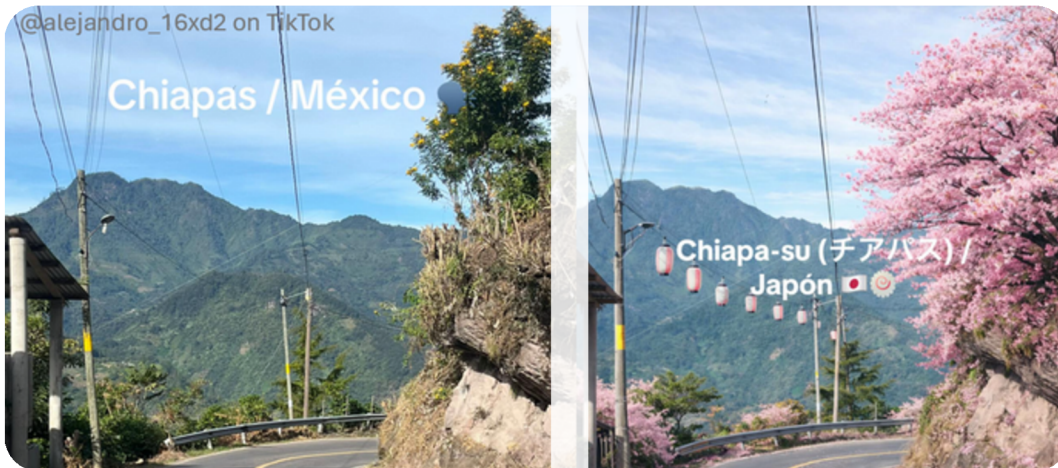


HOW EAST ASIA HAS BECOME AN “IDEA”

OPINION - MINNATALLA



“I watch anime, so I basically know all of Asia like the back of my hand!!!!”

When you think of Asia, what’s the first country that comes to mind?

For many, especially those from the west, the answers tend to repeat themselves; Japan, South Korea, maybe even China! Music idols, cherry blossoms, late-night convenience store visits, and anime characters. These visuals surface in your head almost instantly, polished and aestheticised, as if an entire continent can be summarised through a handful of very selective visuals. Funny, isn’t it? Asia, home of more than 50% of the world’s current population alongside a dozen more vastly different cultures, has now been compressed into nothing more than a measly trend.

In recent times, the world’s fascination with Asian countries, specifically those in East Asia, has reached an all time peak. Social media pages are flooded with vlogs titled ‘Day in my life living in Seoul!’, posts telling you how ‘ahead of time’ Japan is compared to the rest of the world, and endless pictures of people dressed up in rented Hanfus posed amongst sacred temples. On the surface, this all seems harmless, even appreciative. Cultural exchange, by all means, isn’t a bad thing. Somewhere along the line though, this admiration turns shallow, selective and very much so obsessive.

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A relatively recent example of this can be found in the form of yet another viral trend that's made its rounds on TikTok and Instagram. The poster would post two photos: the first one being the original image alongside the original location, for example; a quiet street in Baku or a local beach in Dubai. The second being the exact same image but with a filter slapped onto it, now captioned 'Tokyo, Japan' or 'Seoul, South Korea'. The punchline? Suddenly the comments flood with praise. It goes to show that people only truly begin to care once a specific country's name is attached onto posts. Of course, in this case, it's all satire, but the implications are very clear: the image was never beautiful on its own, it's beautiful because it's from there.

This trend has resurfaced a much deeper issue – the fact that many people aren't engaging with these places as real environments with real citizens. They're engaging with an idea. A brand. A vision. Japan isn't viewed as just another country; it's seen as an aesthetic. Korea isn't viewed as just another country; it's seen as K-pop and skincare. China (when it's even included,) is also often flattened into either ancient history or a hyper-modern city living one thousand years ahead of us all.

Nowhere is this more visible than with the international (and still growing) obsession with K-pop. The rise of Korean pop, the performers are viewed less as humans but more as marketable products. Fans obsess over every little thing, from their appearances to mannerisms and have thus created this toxic perfection standard that all idols must abide by whilst turning a blind eye onto the industry's own rigid standards, intensive labour and mental health struggles these idols face behind the scenes.

For many foreign fans, Korean culture begins and ends with its idol music. History, social issues, political tensions and everyday life are all often pushed aside because they don't fit this polished image that's being sold globally. The culture becomes diluted into surface-level symbolism: beauty standards and fashion trends. What remains is exportable and conveniently detached from the harsh truths of reality.

Japan, of course, faces a similar, if not worse, fate. Anime, Manga, and J-pop have all been gateways into Japanese culture for millions, but they've also been turned into narrow lens to which the country is now being viewed by. Tokyo is imagined as a neon-lit bustling city, rural Japan as a peaceful, timeless escape. And whilst these images aren't completely false, they're incomplete. They leave no room for conversations about Japan's aging compilation, work culture, the immense social pressures many of their citizens face or even the many historical controversies Japan has been a part of. The cool parts are amplified; whilst the more uncomfortable truths are shunned.

China, meanwhile, is often treated as an outlier. Either it's being overly politicised or reduced into very poor stereotypes, rarely being allowed the same admiration given to the likes of Japan or Korea. Yet Chinese culture, in both its history and modern creative scenes, is just as rich and influential! Crazy isn't it? An entire world that's frequently overlooked simply because it doesn't align with what's currently trending.



Unfortunately, this has become a reality for many Asian countries. This absurd level of selective obsession has somehow managed to erase the rest of Asia all together. Countries in Southeast Asia, Central Asia, South Asia and even the Middle East are being routinely excluded from the conversation unless tragedy strikes or a trend briefly touches upon them. **Believe it or not Timmy, Asia isn't just made up of three countries.** Global attention just seems to conveniently circle around the same handful of countries, having then created a hierarchy to which cultures are deemed more 'interesting' or 'valuable' amongst one another.

Even within said 'creme-de-la-creme' handful, people still continue to cherry pick what they wish to acknowledge. Cultural appreciation becomes more and more conditional. Traditions only ever celebrated when they're visually pleasing or marketable. Food praised until it smells odd. Customs considered cool until they get too inconvenient.

None of this is genuine curiosity; it's just straight up consumption.

This isn't to say that enjoying K-pop, anime or visiting any of these countries is inherently wrong. These interests can be methods to which we could use to gain a deeper understanding of said cultures and the stories behind them. This only becomes an issue when engagement stops at the surface, when cultures turn into a few 'Instagram selfies' instead of living, breathing realities shaped by very real people.

So the next time you find yourself on a friend's trip abroad photo dump, ask yourself: Are you really interested in the place itself, or just the idea of it? More importantly, are you willing to see it in both its good and bad, or just the parts that fit neatly onto your feed?

**DRIFTING
ALL**

ALONE:

**A SATURN
WITHOUT
A STAR**



**SCITECH
~ SARA**

There have been countless cultures throughout history that worship celestial bodies such as planets. For instance, in Ancient Babylonian/Greek/Roman beliefs these bodies were deified as gods, lending them their namesakes: Venus as the Roman goddess of love, Saturn as the god of agriculture, etc. But what happens when one of these revered celestial bodies is found all alone drifting aimlessly through the greater Milky Way?

A planet is typically defined as an astronomical object that exhibits an elliptical orbit around a star, but the special subclass of planets commonly referred to as "rogue planets" completely disregards these rules. A rogue planet drifts alone in space and ranges in size; they are not gravitationally bonded or tethered to a star. The International Astronomical Union's criteria for planethood include: orbiting a star, being large enough to self-gravitate into a spherical shape and being able to have its own clear orbital zone. Since rogue planets do not meet these benchmarks, they are their own subset of exoplanets.

Rogue planets typically form via ejection from their prior star systems due to gravitational chaos forcing them out of their typical orbit. Gravity is renowned for being easily predictable in simple systems; however, when things get more complicated and involve many bodies, it can sometimes be chaotic and difficult to predict. Sometimes these planets don't originate from a star system at all and form independently from collapsing clouds of gas called nebulae. They follow paths that are influenced by the galaxy's gravity and the force of nearby massive objects.

On the second of January, 2026 a highly skilled team of astronomers/astrophysicists part of the Kavli Institute for Astronomy and Astrophysics at Peking University in Beijing reported a confirmation on their most recent discovery. This discovery was none other than a rogue planet with a size equivalent to Saturn (approximately 9 times wider than Earth) residing about 9,800 light-years away from Earth, completely detached from any star. It has been coined the label of KMT-2024-BLG-0792. The investigation to identify its characteristics has been going for a little under 2 years. Multiple ground-based telescopes identified the event on May 3, 2024. Incidentally, the object was within the Gaia space telescope's field of view at the time, meaning that astronomers could simultaneously observe the same event from space.

Gravitational lensing is an observational effect that occurs because the presence of immense mass warps the fabric of space-time. It is a phenomenon predicted by Einstein's theory of general relativity and has been used for years to study distant, faint objects, map dark matter, discover exoplanets, and understand cosmology by magnifying, distorting, or creating multiple images of background sources, revealing details otherwise impossible to see. Lensing is extreme around extremely massive objects such as black holes or galaxies, but with smaller objects it is referred to as microlensing.

Microlensing was the key principle used to identify KMT-2024-BLG-0792. Scientists were able to observe a star near the exoplanet via multiple ground-based telescopes and serendipitously the object itself was within the field of view of Gaia. This granted the astronomers vantage points to measure parallax (the shift in the planet and star's position), which allowed them to pinpoint how far apart they are. This measurement allowed them to accurately calculate the mass of KMT-2024-BLG-0792. Additionally, they combined the planet's distance with light curves from Gaia and ground-based telescopes that show how the star's brightness was magnified over time; this led the team to find out that the planet has a mass around 22% of Jupiter's.

It is suspected that a gravitational interaction, perhaps with another planet or star probably flung this exo-Saturn completely out of its system into an extremely wide orbit. A predominant astronomer at Peking University, Subo Dong, states that it is possible for a passing star to pull a planet away from its host star but it is rare for a planet of this magnitude to experience such wide separation. This highlights how unexpected this discovery truly is and how it has shaken priorly established beliefs on free-floating planets. Additionally the discovery of this exo-Saturn is highly significant because it is the very first free-floating planet to have both its mass and distance directly and accurately measured. Moreover, this breakthrough in observation methods confirms the existence of a population of starless worlds that were previously only theorized, which underscores how much of an achievement this was for the team at Peking University.

In short, this is much more than a fun fact or interesting discovery; this is an accomplishment and a massive step in revolutionizing the world of celestial object detection. Identifying KMT-2024-BLG-0792 has kickstarted a whole new perspective on gravitational microlensing and Einstein's general theory of relativity in the astronomical community. If anything, it has proven that sometimes it's okay to be all alone!



THE U.S. MIDTERM ELECTIONS

INTERNATIONAL : YUVIN



This November marks the start of the U.S. midterm elections, a very crucial part of America's senate that could make or break their democracy. The November elections symbolises the half term of the Trump administration, originally winning with over 64% of votes from the public in 2024.

Although the midterm election lacks the climactic nature of the presidential elections, it still plays an important role as 1/3rd of the senate will be elected by the coming election. Although Trump had won by a significant margin in the presidential elections, research done by the The Marquette School Of Law and other national polls done in the U.S show that the percentage of citizens voting for the Republican Party may drop to 40%, possibly due to the rather controversial acts done by the Trump administration in the past 6 months.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR THE U.S.?

Many bills including the "One Big Beautiful Bill" passed by the Republican senate may be pulled back, bringing back free healthcare and food stamps to millions of lower class Americans, This step may also bring back the right to be an American through birth, a law that survived years before the election of the current president.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR THE REST OF THE WORLD?

Several of the tariffs that the president had held onto countries such as Canada and Mexico may be taken back with the rise of democrats in the senate, this also has a massive impact to the rest of the world which may include a drop in precious metals such as gold and silver which have been in an all time rise since the election, especially silver which has had more than a 150% percent rise in price since Trump was elected. Immigration may also be more loose compared to the harsh process of getting an American visa currently.

MEDIA: AALIYAH

A MESSAGE **RELEVANT** TO THIS DAY: A LITERARY ANALYSIS OF ANIMAL FARM



Ever since the start of civilization, groups have experienced states of unrest and war against each other for religion, land, gold, and glory. From the War of Roses to the American civil war, we have been well accustomed to all types of conflicts. One of the most notable conflicts in our history is the Russian Revolution, starting in 1917 until 1923 and the rise of communism in Russia, from 1922 until the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991. On August 17 1945, around the start of the rise of communism and near the end of World War II, an English writer George Orwell published Animal Farm– a satirical, allegorical novella that creates parallels to the most crucial, important events in Russian and World history.

In the book, Tzar Alexander's rule is reflected at the start, when Mr Jones subjected the animals on his farm to neglect while he and his wife lived comfortably inside their home. Later on, the animals revolt against the humans, casting them out and taking over the farm. One notable leader figure was a pig named Napoleon, who subjected all other animals besides the other pigs to hard labour and harsh rations. He also instills propaganda, spreading the prejudice against all humans, even to the point where wearing clothes and standing on two legs, similar to humans, were grounds for severe punishment. The animals were miserable, being overworked with lack of food and other resources. However with the heavy propaganda that was distributed justifying their labour as a benefit to them, not humans. The pigs however, live in much more luxury compared to the others: receiving more rations, living in the home that Mr Jones once lived in, and even following human mannerisms. As the story concludes, we see the pigs indulge deeper into human pleasures as the other animals are forced to watch in silence and helplessness.

Nationalism plays a huge role in many of the events that take place in the book. Nationalism is an ideology that is heavily centered around absolute loyalty and devotion to one's nation. For many of the animals, the main reason why they accepted these nationalist ideals so easily was because of propaganda and distortion of information given by their leaders. Most of this propaganda included hatred towards humans, and the belief that the pigs needed extra resources as they were the main leaders taking charge of any projects taking place. Another reason why these radical ideas were positively received was because of the mistreatment from Mr Jones. To them, any concept of overthrowing him would've seemed perfect to them. The key detail that pushed any of them to have such loyalty to the pigs' regime was that they promised equality for all animals, which was something they had never experienced. However as the book continues, the pigs become less concerned about equality for all and more so with their own benefits.

The pigs also become progressively greedy and gluttonous as the book continues. They start to eat and drink things that other animals are not allowed to or are not given in their rations. They start off with milk and apples, arguing they need these kinds of foods to fuel their minds to further provide and plan for their nation. Later on however, they eat foods that were once completely prohibited for animals to eat: alcohols and human foods such as bread and sugar. They also moved into the farmhouse that Mr Jones used to live in, declaring that they needed a quiet place to work in as they considered themselves the “brains” of the farm. The power dynamic between them shifts further, “Napoleon was now never spoken of simply as ‘Napoleon.’ He was always referred to in a formal style as ‘Our Leader, Comrade Napoleon.’”



A poster for "Paging Doctor You" with a dark blue background. It features various medical icons: a stethoscope, a bandage, a pill, a syringe, a heart with a pulse line, and a medical bag. The text "COME JOIN US AT" is in small white letters above the main title "PAGING DOCTOR YOU" in large, bold, red letters. Below the title, it says "AFTERSCHOOL ACTIVITY EVERY TUESDAY FOR STUDENTS INTERESTED IN PURSUING MEDICINE". Further down, it reads "LEARN ABOUT DIFFERENT AREAS OF MEDICINE AND PRACTICAL SKILLS THAT WILL PREPARE YOU FOR A FUTURE CAREER IN HEALTHCARE". At the bottom, contact information is provided: "FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT US SARA021221@SHEFFIELD-SCHOOL.COM TO REGISTER SPEAK TO MR. NAZEEH OR EMAIL NAZEEH.NISAR@SHEFFIELD-SCHOOL.COM (ALL SESSIONS CONDUCTED ARE APPROVED BY REAL DOCTORS AND MEDICAL STUDENTS)".



Ultimately, Animal Farm is a warning about what happens when a group is blindly nationalistic and when their leaders have absolute, unchecked power. It exposes how a movement of equality could soon completely shift once leaders become consumed by greed and tyranny. It becomes a dark reminder of the use of deception and lies to spread propaganda to benefit themselves at the cost of others. Although the world is constantly shifting, there is still such corruption and lies deep in our society. There have been people with radical ideas that to many, seem revolutionary and could change their lives for the better.

However, some leaders only care about their own gain. Time and time again, helpless people get abused and deceived by people of higher power, working hard for the hope that one day, they could live the life they dream of. Animal farm serves as a dark reminder about our history, that every change, every revolution, there will always be one thing, greed and corruption. Some push their way to the top, unconcerned for those who they shove further down. No matter where we may turn, corruption and greed will always be there, lingering in the dark, ready to pounce onto whoever and wherever it chooses.

TOP TECH

SHOWCASED @ CES 2026

TECH: AYUSH

Imagine having an entire PC inside a keyboard – that is peak portability! A 163-inch display with vibrant colours or even a 4-directional immersive speaker from Samsung! Well imagine no more, as all of that is a reality hosted by the Consumer Technology Association (CES), the world's biggest tech show. Every year at the CES, companies showcase their latest innovations set to change how we all live, learn and work. This year was no different, and it did not disappoint, with groundbreaking tech that will soon impact everything from classrooms to your future careers.

THE 163MX – 163 INCH DISPLAY BY HISENSE

Yep! You read that right! One Hundred and Sixty-Three Inches! This whale of a display, is the industry's first MicroLED display which features four primary colours – RGBY (Red, Green, Blue, Yellow). This adds the yellow subpixel to the traditional RGB structure, expanding the colour range and covering 95% of the colour space (BT.2020) – this is a 5% improvement from older systems, which doesn't sound like much, but it is noticeable with all the vibrant colours it can produce.



SIGNATURE OLED T-LG'S TRANSPARENT TV

World-first, groundbreaking, transparent, 4k OLED TV!!! Imagine that in your living room. It features a self-lit screen that is invisible when turned off. Blends very nicely with your decor. Comes with a true wireless audio/video Zero Connect Box. And it is a 120 Hz display for high frame rate gaming with NVIDIA G-SYNC and AMD FreeSync Premium.



It is highly aesthetic – just imagine this in your room! It does cost over \$10,000 and has a lower peak brightness level compared to conventional OLED. It also highly depends on your environment / where you can actually use it properly.





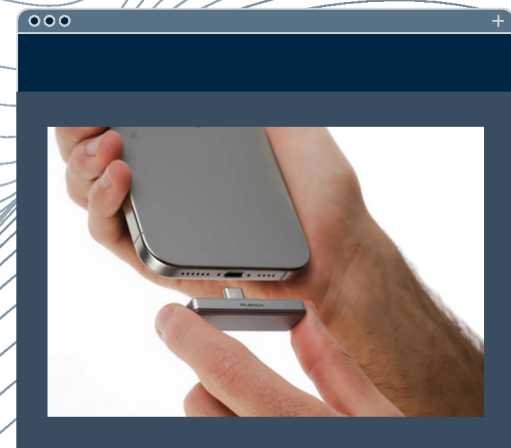
HP ELITEBOARD G1A - NEXT GEN AI PC



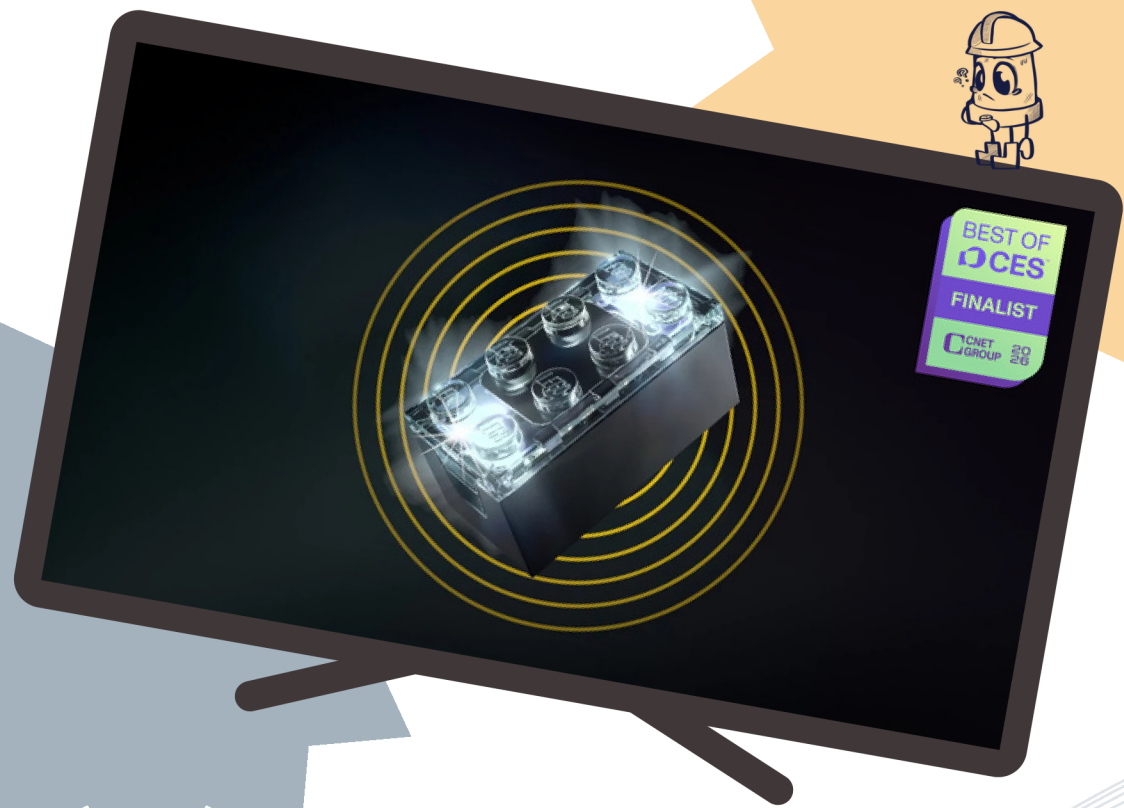
This remarkable keyboard features a fully built-in Windows PC! Delivering reliable enterprise performance in a low-profile, portable form factor. It completely removes the separate tower of a PC you need, and it will support secure productivity and device control. Imagine having full PC functionality wherever you go! A clutter-free desktop experience. The device is ultra-compact (12 mm thin, under 750g,) making it highly easy and portable for moving from one place to another. It connects to any external USB-C display. It also features a 32Whr internal battery which provides up to 3.5 hours of active use time. Though, there are doubts on how well the device will perform! We will find out when HP releases this to consumers. But isn't it cool to think that just one and a half decades ago we had huge PCs that could barely run editing software, whereas now we are on the cusp of professional-grade devices that weigh less than a bottle of water? This changes the game with its portability, but you'd need a display and probably have worse performance because of the size. Nevertheless, very impressive.

CREATORSSD – WORLD'S FIRST PHONE-FIRST SSD

The Planck CreatorSSD is built for mobile creators shooting videos and doing photography. Most SSDs showcase peak speeds but can't sustain them. CreatorSSD solves it by optimising for sustainable recording speeds! It is also plug-and-play across iPhones, Android devices, iPads, MacBooks and Windows PCs/laptops without any additional cables or software! This can also come in very handy if you ever require some extra storage; you can move your old photos in here and make room for new memories! This is very versatile and useful to most consumers, especially now that we do literally everything on our phones.



LEGO SMART BRICK -- A COMPUTER IN EVERY BRICK?



The Lego smart brick is a 2x4 brick with a lot of tech inside! It's designed to work with new Lego Smart Minifigures and Smart Tags (special tiles) which can bring your awesome creations to life. It uses a bunch of sensors, such as accelerometer, a light sensor, a colour sensor, and a sound sensor (microphone). This allows it to detect movement, distance and a ton of things. This tech is essentially "invisible" to preserve the classic look. It is screen-free, which I think is what Lego is all about. Imagine needing to connect yet another device with your phone! It features pre-recorded sound clips to generate sound in real time, which can fit certain situations. Initial demos did show a 45-minute battery life, raising questions about reliability during longer play sessions.

From TVs that are transparent to a keyboard which houses an entire PC, 2026 CES has made one thing clear: the future isn't coming – it is already here! All the tech unveiled this year was MASSIVE, reshaping how we learn, create and work! And CES also proves that tech is evolving faster than ever!

RELATABLE SHENANIGANS

VOLUME 2 - MAESHA



MEDIA: MINNA

THE ANATOMY OF A MODERN SUMMER STORY

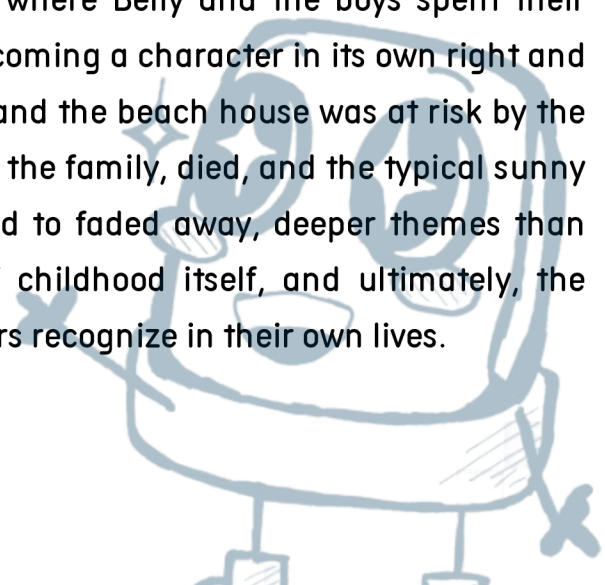
Some cultural moments are defined not by their quality alone, but by their timing most of all. In the summer of its release, *The Summer I Turned Pretty* crossed borders with ease as it quickly went from entertainment to a unifying universal experience.

The success of *The Summer I Turned Pretty* cannot be separated from the moment of its arrival. By the summer of 2022, the world was returning from years of global isolation. Young people especially struggled with ridding themselves of the loneliness that had clung to them all throughout lockdown, to reconnect, to attempt to have the typical teenage experience they would've had in any other circumstances. It comes as no surprise then, that a show rooted in familiarity, rather than novelty, would draw in an audience that's had enough of uncertainty.

The narrative is almost overdone: a teenage girl, two boys, a love triangle. Yet this cliché is what made the show work. This, paired with the release of the show during the very season it depicts, served only to increase the immersive feel, bringing familiar comfort to real life.

This, in turn, brought younger viewers a sense of nostalgia for a life not yet lived; one where there was independence and summers free of the restrictions of a pandemic-ruled world.

Belly (Isabella Conklin), the leading protagonist, also provided the most relatable character arc for people of all ages: coming of age. From the first episode to the last, her story grows from one where romance is the leading decider of her actions, to one where she's a confident young woman who's aware of her own value away from Conrad and Jeremiah (the two boys of the love triangle). This globalised the outreach of *The Summer I Turned Pretty* despite it being an American drama—everyone can relate to Belly's uncertain feelings of first love and adolescence, as well as the gradual growth that follows it. The Cousins Beach house where Belly and the boys spent their summers also garnered many fans and much love itself, becoming a character in its own right and a symbol of childhood and nostalgia. As the show went on and the beach house was at risk by the second season, as Susannah, the boys' mother and heart of the family, died, and the typical sunny fun-filled summers both the audience and Belly were used to faded away, deeper themes than romance were explored. This turn mirrored the death of childhood itself, and ultimately, the knowledge that everything comes to end, which many viewers recognize in their own lives.



The global summer sensation that was *The Summer I Turned Pretty* was not just universal, but also distinctly and unmistakably feminine. It created a collective bonding experience for women of all ages over a shared liking. It validated tropes that were once written off as 'guilty pleasures', including love triangles, romance-centered narratives, even the blatantly imperfect heroine with questionable life choices. Elements familiar from fan fiction, Wattpad culture and teen dramas were suddenly mainstream.

The show itself leaned heavily into these themes, exploring more concepts relating almost solely to women, including female friendships and mother-daughter relationships. Popular artists like Taylor Swift, Olivia Rodrigo, Phoebe Bridgers, whose substantial fan bases are made up almost entirely of women, were deliberately featured throughout the soundtrack, marking the show as a shared experience of modern female expression.

Despite so many reasons for the plot of *The Summer I Turned Pretty* to find the right audience, it didn't create its own fan base; the internet did. The beautifully curated edits of the two brothers and Belly behind colorful tints and filters, with the lyrics to Taylor Swift's 'Cruel Summer' behind more than a few, drew in many users already. Then, as the show progressed, and people were invited to participate in joining a 'team' to support either of the two brothers in the love triangle, things skyrocketed.

There was also a kind of cleverness in the release schedule. A new season came once every year, ensuring people would have to rewatch the last season in order to keep up with the plot, as well as building anticipation between seasons and giving quite a lot of time for marketing build-up, which, by the last season, had reached a very high peak. Then, during the summer of the release of the last season, episodes were released weekly, on Wednesdays, all throughout the summer, giving the audience something to look forward to every week. A lot of viewers released this excitement in the form of even more edits, posts, short videos about the show, which, in turn, obviously grew the fandom even more.

By the time the last episode came around, the excitement had reached an all time high as viewers watched Belly choose herself first, and Conrad second, as she stepped into her very own summer house as an adult and a woman in her own right, with the lyrical tones to Phoebe Bridger's 'I Know the End' echoing in the back.

The cyclical ending of *The Summer I Turned Pretty*, set in the same beach house where it all started, showed its legacy and mark it left behind went beyond just the love triangle, but the feeling of warmth it left behind, and the summers that brought everyone together.

TOUCHDOWNS UNDER THE

TREE: A HOLIDAY SHOWDOWN BETWEEN THE COWBOYS AND COMMANDERS

SPORTS:
AARON MATHEW

Christmas is supposed to be quaint and peaceful—but nobody told the Dallas Cowboys and Washington Commanders. Their festive showdown felt less like a regular American football game and more like a holiday action movie, complete with plot twists, intense performances, and frequent defensive meltdowns. With families and friends gathered around the TVs, this enmity delivered the ideal mix of chaos and entertainment.

The Cowboys came out swinging like they had the first pick of presents under the tree. Dak Prescott carved up Washington's defense with surgical precision, threading passes that left defenders grasping at air. Dallas's offense moved with purpose, exploiting mismatches and keeping the chains moving. The run game complemented the aerial assault perfectly, grinding down Washington's front seven and controlling the clock when it mattered most.

To their credit, the Commanders didn't just roll over and let Dallas turn the game into a holiday special titled *How the Cowboys Stole Christmas*. Washington's offense showed flashes of creativity, mixing quick passes with gutsy runs that kept the Cowboys honest. Their young playmakers stepped up, turning short gains into big moments and giving fans a reason to stay glued to the screen. Even when Dallas pulled ahead, Washington kept swinging — the football equivalent of refusing to let your older cousin win at backyard games.



Dallas dominated the stat sheet like they were checking off a holiday wish list. More yards, better third-down conversions, and cleaner execution across the board. Prescott played like a quarterback who wanted to make Santa's "Nice" list, while the Cowboys' defense created pressure that forced Washington into tough situations. Still, the Commanders had standout moments and individual performances that showed their potential — even if the final score didn't go their way.

Every great Christmas story has a turning point, and this one came in the third quarter. A crucial interception by the Cowboys flipped the momentum faster than a kid ripping open wrapping paper. Dallas capitalized immediately, punching in a touchdown that stretched the lead and deflated Washington's comeback hopes. Later, a fourth-down stop by the Cowboys' defense sealed the deal, shutting the door on any late-game holiday miracles.

Cowboys-Commanders isn't just a rivalry — it's a decades-long family feud. These teams have been trading blows since the 1960s, and every matchup feels personal. Dallas came into this game with recent dominance, but Washington's physical style always makes things interesting. Add Christmas lights, national attention, and playoff implications, and you get a rivalry game that feels bigger than the standings.



THE END OF PROG?



In 1969, a British progressive rock band released one of the most influential albums of all time. In the Court of the Crimson King was the debut album of King Crimson. Songs like Epitaph and 21st Century Schizoid Man were considered legendary in the British prog scene, completely redefining the bounds rock music could go to.

During this time, bands like King Crimson used purely analogue forms of mixing. This was done on 8-track tape recorders, which meant a song could only have a maximum of eight instruments recorded at a time. The real challenge was recording the drums. A single room mic used for the whole drumset would sound muddy and blunt, so naturally, bands resorted to attaching multiple mics to multiple drums and recording them altogether. This allowed for higher accuracy in sound, but it also resulted in a more expensive production cost as multiple 8-track recorders would have to be used to record an entire song, and a dozen tracks would have to be edited hundreds of times for tens of takes. Multiply that with around 10+ songs on each album and the expense added up quickly.

Soon after, in the late 70s, the Digital Audio Workstation (DAW) was introduced. The initial reactions were mixed, to say the least. Some producers were in awe of their technological power, though some thought they sounded "cold" and "lifeless". They allowed for tracks to be recorded and edited on a computer *without* having to discard endless rolls of tape. One of the main selling points of DAWs was the significant reduction in production cost, though this was in the 90s when computers were becoming cheaper.

Bands now started incorporating DAWs into their albums. This led to the birth of overproduction. When short-form content was introduced (Instagram reels, TikTok, etc.), small-scale garage bands soon resorted to using these as advertisement tools for their shows and upcoming albums. However, the constraints of a 60 second video that anyone can skip with a simple upward swipe meant that their songs had to be catchy. These bands then resorted to fitting the most catchy sections of their song in just one minute. The rest of the album could be produced horribly with minimal effort put into it, but if the title track had a 60 second catchy section, the views would roll in. Publishing their work onto Spotify or similar platforms meant that the bands would earn money even if nobody bought physical copies (as long as they acquired listens on that platform). The use of DAW software proved to be even cheaper on the small scale band's already shallow pockets. Pair easy production with cheap costs, it created the perfect 'formula' for lazy musicians to capitalize off of. A profound form of art quickly transitioned into a mere money-making method.

Anyone can be a musician.

But should everyone be musicians?

Yes. As long as you put effort into your work. World famous bands like King Crimson, Metallica, Pink Floyd and even The Beatles started from very humble beginnings. Arctic Monkeys didn't even know how to play instruments when they were formed! What separated them from lazy, "instagram-famous", overproducing musicians is the fact that they spent decades perfecting their craft, putting years into one album and going through countless hardships. Just because we don't own thousand-dollar track recorders doesn't mean we can't make good music.

There are countless examples of objectively good artists who use modern production techniques too, and still continue to drive the prog scene. Tame Impala, Arctic Monkeys, Sade, Daft Punk, Hozier and Massive Attack are prime candidates of musicians who make such work.

One example is Tame Impala's hit album, *Currents*. A 2015 release that took the world by storm with its weird (but cool) prog amalgamation of 70s psychedelia, funk and modern synthesizer techniques. Kevin Parker and many such artists have creatively driven the genre, constantly evolving it and changing its form to fit the modern era.

To answer the header question: no, prog is very much alive!

We have the ability to be lazy with what we're given, or the ability to be creative with what we're not. The instrument doesn't do the thinking - the producer does. An artist without expensive equipment has just as much of a chance at making good music as an artist with expensive equipment!

"It's a question of using the tools that are available when they're available. It's all extensions of what's coming out of our heads. It's like saying 'Give a man a Les Paul guitar and he becomes Eric Clapton'. It's not true. Give a man an amplifier and a synthesizer...and he doesn't become us."

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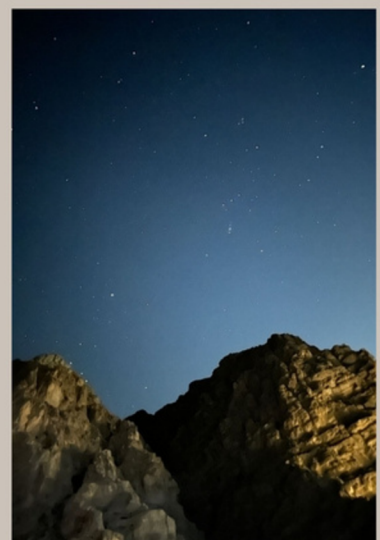


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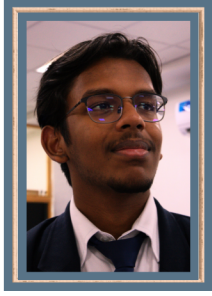


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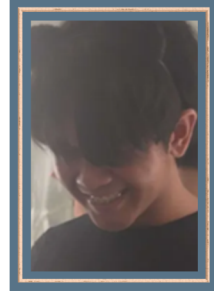
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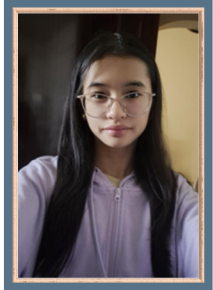


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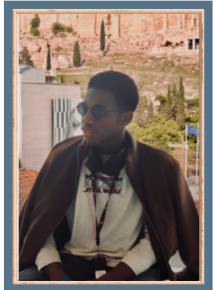


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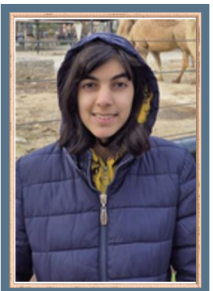
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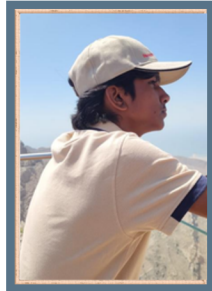


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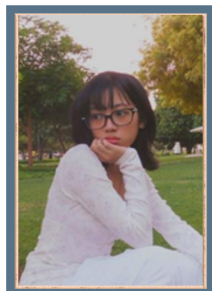
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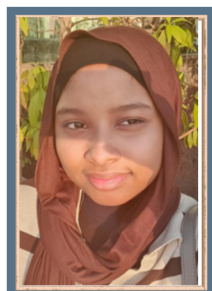
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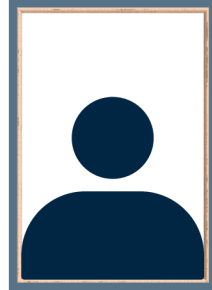
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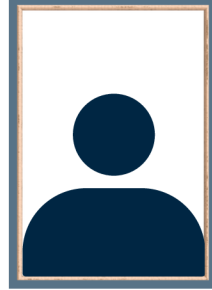
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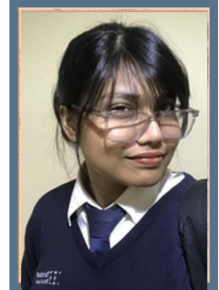


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