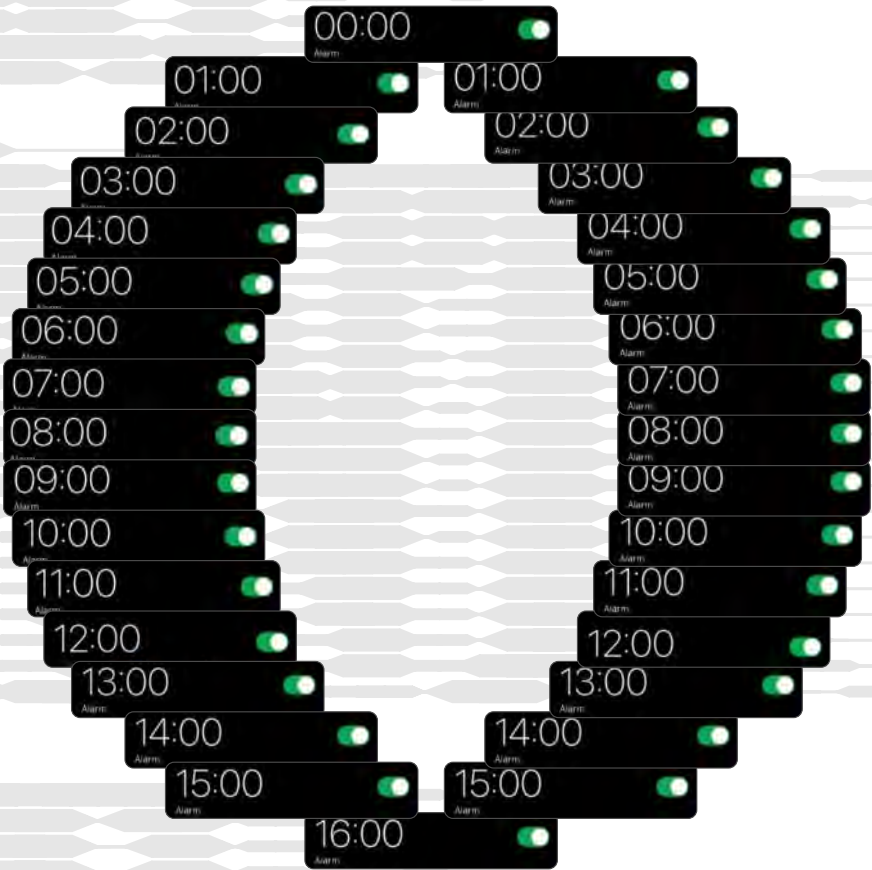




So here we are: Issue Two of The Mutant Eye. Still strange, still nosy, still obsessed with everything unfolding at the edges of culture and creativity, but in a format that feels a bit more unpredictable and true to our way of doing things.

In this issue, we dive BEYOND HUMAN to examine the shifting boundaries between biology and technology, self and simulation. We chart the MEDIA METAMORPHOSIS happening on our screens and in our streams, and embrace the SWEET ESCAPE as a form of cultural coping and creative resistance. From liminal spaces to skate legends, from AI aesthetics to alternate identities, this edition captures the signals shaping the next now.

There's a lot to unpack. Find us somewhere in between a trend report and a magazine.

Tune in, embrace the flux, mutate often.

AENEAS & JOVANA, MUTANT'S CREATIVE STRATEGISTS



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Beyond Human

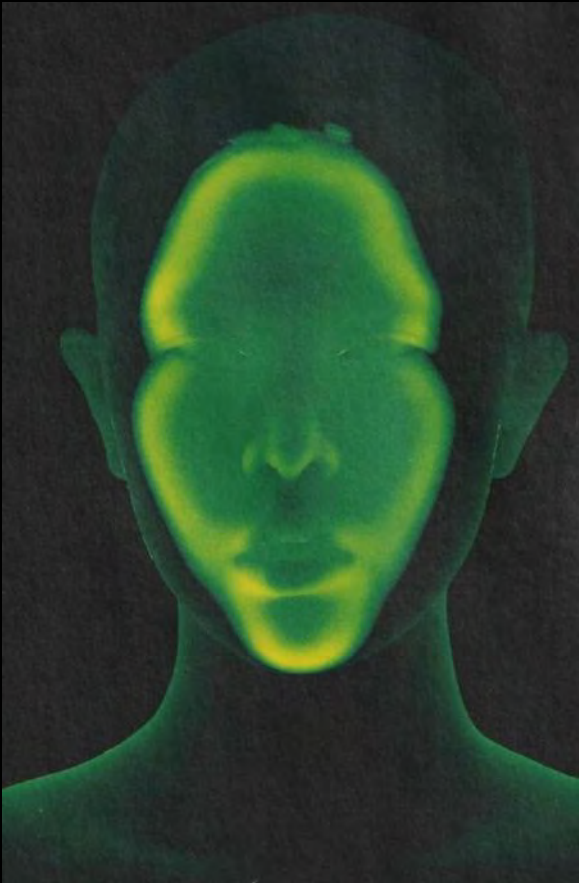


IMAGE CREDIT: @JAPPARI



Animalistic desires

“Faux fur is more polluting,
I only wear real fur.”

“Oat milk is poison for your
body, I only drink raw milk.”

“I want to smell like a cat. I wish
they hadn’t switched to vegan
perfume ingredients.”

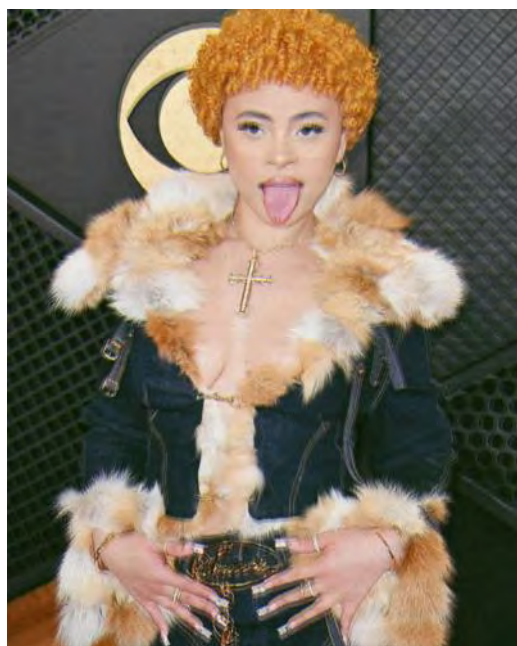
These sentences might have been hot takes a few years ago, but nowadays they seem completely valid. With influencers and public figures promoting an anti-vegan lifestyle, the pendulum has started to swing in a direction that opposes the values that have been regarded as a priority in the past decade.





As soon as we thought that the fight was over and the future was cruelty-free, an unexpected trend made a controversial comeback. It seems like nostalgia is more fun than activism, as young people embraced fur as a major fashion trend of the season, and celebrities went back to shamelessly wearing it.

Animal-based diets promise to make us both hotter and healthier. They go beyond just eating meat, incorporating raw milk, bone broth, collagen supplements. Recently opened in Paris, *48 Collagen Café* is a wellness-oriented cafe serving collagen-infused drinks.



The consumer mindset towards animals is changing. We're including them in our beauty routines, we're wearing them, we're eating them. It's time to take it a step further and start morphing into them.

Welcome the era of technology that gets us into ***beast mode***.



Smell-o-vision

Our dream of smelling the rotten flesh while playing zombie games on PlayStation is becoming a reality! Unveiled at CES 2025, the Future Immersive Entertainment Concept (FIEC) is Sony's new attempt to make gaming more immersive.

*"One of the pillars of Sony's creative entertainment vision is the idea of **narrative everywhere**, where stories from Sony are transformed across new and exciting mediums," explains the FIEC trailer.*

The most notable feature of this project is a detachable smell-tech accessory that allows players to fully immerse themselves in the game.



Regeneration

“If health were an Olympic sport, I’d be the gold medalist,” reads the website of Bryan Johnson, an entrepreneur, venture capitalist and biohacker who took social media by storm with his *Project Blueprint*: a personal endeavor to reduce his age through a rigorous regimen.

He managed to reduce the biological age of his organs, and made his hair regrow. His goal is to reach biomarkers similar to those of his 18-year-old son. He is his own guinea pig, and he believes this project will greatly benefit society and change the way we perceive death and longevity. *Don’t Die: The Man Who Wants to Live Forever*, a Netflix documentary following his unusual lifestyle, premiered on January 1 2025.



Asexual Reproduction

Are you tired of changing rooms? Have you ever wished to asexually reproduce yourself so your clone can try on clothes for you? Say no more, the AI-startup Doji has you covered.

Doji is a fashion tech startup transforming online shopping with personalized AI avatars. Users can create a custom photorealistic avatar using just a few pics, and their clone is ready to try on clothes, explore new looks, and shop from their favorite e-commerce websites.

While virtual try-on technology isn't entirely new, Doji takes it a step further by offering a hyper-personalised experience. Highly accurate virtual try-ons are the future of online shopping, and major innovation-led brands have the chance to lead the revolution in how consumers engage with fashion.



Echolocation

JBL has introduced a revolutionary AI-powered software that utilizes echolocation to make gaming not only more immersive, but also more accessible, even for those with complete vision loss.

The JBL Quantum Guide Play currently is a Windows-only software for first-person shooter games that converts in-game objects and structures into audio cues, mimicking echolocation. This initiative marks a significant milestone in gaming accessibility.

“I believe gaming is now a real possibility for me” said Sophie Soon, Paralympic Athlete and visually impaired gamer.



CBS PHOTO ARCHIVE // GETTY IMAGES

Immortality

While longevity might be fresh territory to explore IRL, we've already reached immortality on the web.

With consistent reminders on our phones showing us what happened on this day one year ago, and profiles of deceased people casually continuing to exist on social media, it feels like we're living in a digital time loop.

There have been many discussions about the digital privacy and safety of our data, and how it affects our lives. But how does it affect our death? We spend such a big part of our lives online, but what about our afterlife? It's concerning territory that companies are already beginning to explore.

Deathbots are AI-clones created from a deceased person's data to mimic their personality and interact with loved ones. Uploading voice notes to an AI-audio program can create a convincing voice-clone.

Similarly, training a chatbot on a deceased person's emails or texts enables ongoing conversations. The demand for deathbots is strong enough that several companies, including HereAfter AI and StoryFile, specialize in them.

Cyberthanatology is a term used to describe the articulation of death and related phenomena within cyberspace, and it will become a topic that society will have to deal with increasingly.

With the advancement of AI-technologies new regulations regarding cyberthanatology will need to be revisited and updated.





Hibernation

Are you still sleeping like a caveman? Or do you diligently tape your mouth, wear your toe separators, magnetic nose strips, an anti-aging silk mask, a bonnet and spa socks? Do you make sure that you're reaching maximum health potential of deep sleep?

Sleep has become the ultimate luxury beauty trend, marking a new era where health is the most coveted ideal.

The philosophy of “beauty from within” is at an all-time high with supplements and wellness-rituals becoming staples of skincare routines. This intersection of beauty and health will continue to fascinate consumers, opening doors to much needed personalisation in the beauty industry. Soon biometric tracking devices won't be just a fitness and health tool, but direct assistants for our beauty routines. The next-generation beauty consumer will be a biohacker, prioritizing more than just physical health. Mental well-being will also take on a new layer of vanity.



Media meta morphosis





True Crime



True Crime Documentary Series



Documentaries



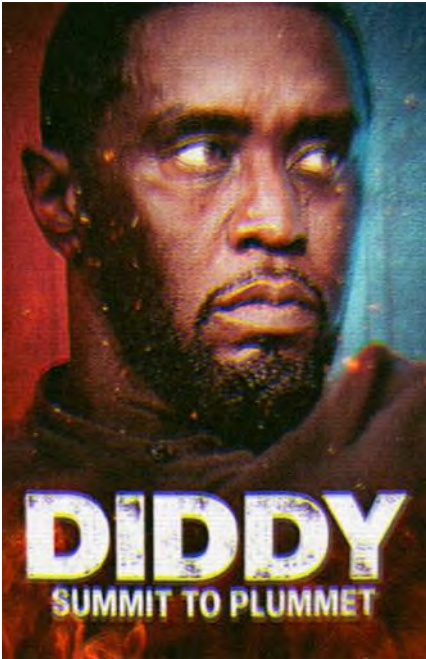
The golden age of docutainment

Streaming platforms have transformed documentary filmmaking into a high-volume content churn, prioritising quantity over quality in a race to capitalise on the latest in-vogue topic. What was once a space for investigative depth and meaningful storytelling, is now cluttered with rushed productions that favour aesthetics over actual journalism.

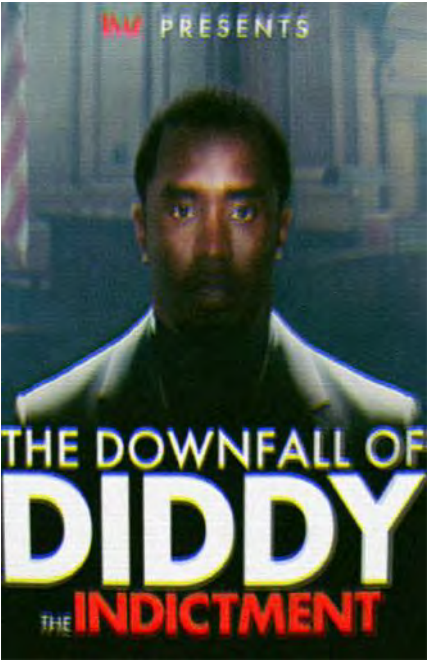
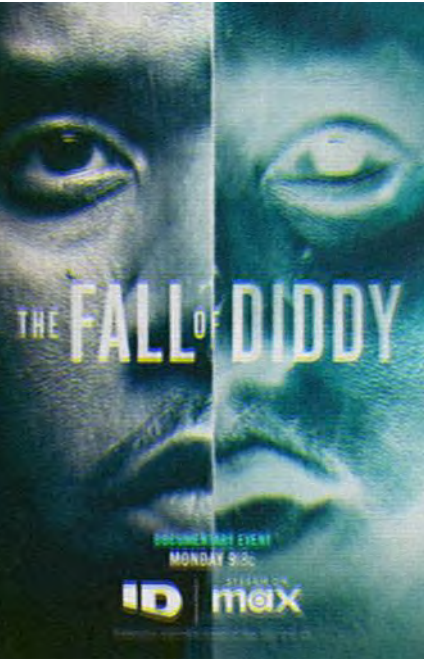
With little regard for whether a story has reached its natural conclusion or even if all the facts are on the table, these films serve more as visual fodder than insightful analysis. Just look at the current P. Diddy documentary cycle as an example. His trial doesn't even start till 5th May, 2025.



DIDDY: SUMMIT TO PLUMMET
(AMAZON PRIME) - 1 AUGUST 2024



THE FALL OF DIDDY
(HBO MAX) - 27 JANUARY 2025

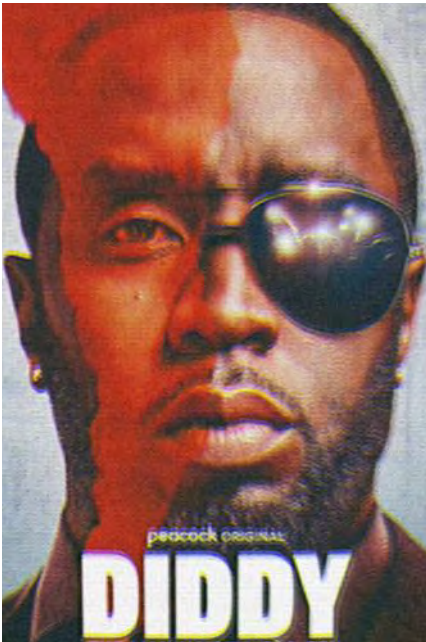


THE DOWNFALL OF DIDDY
(TMZ) - 27 APRIL 2024

DIDDY: MONSTER'S FALL
(AMAZON PRIME) - 1 FEBRUARY 2025



DIDDY: THE MAKING OF A BAD BOY
(PEACOCK) - 14 JANUARY 2025



DIDDY DO IT?
(NETFLIX) - TBA 2025



These so-called documentaries are little more than brain rot for an audience with a slightly longer attention span - functioning as background noise while viewers scroll on their phones. What was once the domain of long-form journalism has morphed into an assembly line of trend-chasing content, echoing the disposable nature of reality TV rather than the depth of true documentary filmmaking.

This new wave of documentaries essentially repackages the visual essay format popularised on YouTube, adapting it for a different medium while stripping away much of its original nuance and critical depth. The format itself has been retooled for mass consumption, borrowing heavily from the hyper-produced conflict narratives pioneered by reality TV giants like Endemol. When the subject matter lacks inherent drama, artificial stakes are inserted to keep audiences engaged, turning what should be a nuanced exploration into a contrived spectacle. In the absence of real conclusions, many of these films simply fade to black without adding anything meaningful to the cultural discourse.



Worse, some resort to biased, tinfoil-hat theories disguised as investigative journalism. More often than not, they become a vehicle for fleeting fame, offering subjects a final cash grab rather than delivering a truly investigative or educational piece. As the documentary format becomes increasingly diluted, the challenge for audiences is to distinguish between genuine storytelling and the next algorithmic cash-in.

TAKEAWAY

The documentary landscape appears to be at a crossroads, caught between the algorithm-driven demand for rapid, flash-in-the-pan content and the true ethos of the format. While mass-produced, surface-level documentaries will likely continue to dominate streaming platforms as they seek to fill their content libraries, the growing backlash against low-quality content could pave the way for a resurgence of well-researched, high-calibre films. As audiences become more discerning, we may see a shift towards independent funding models, interactive storytelling, and immersive formats.

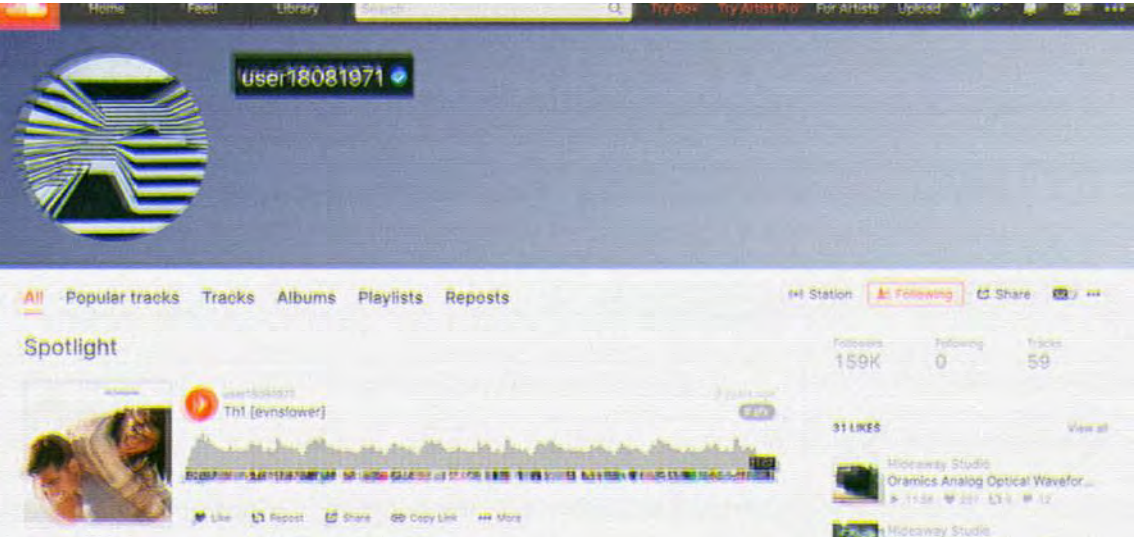


The great hard drive purge

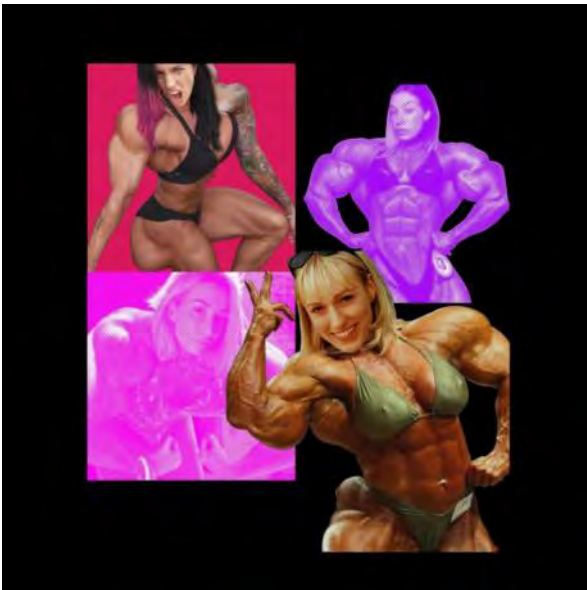
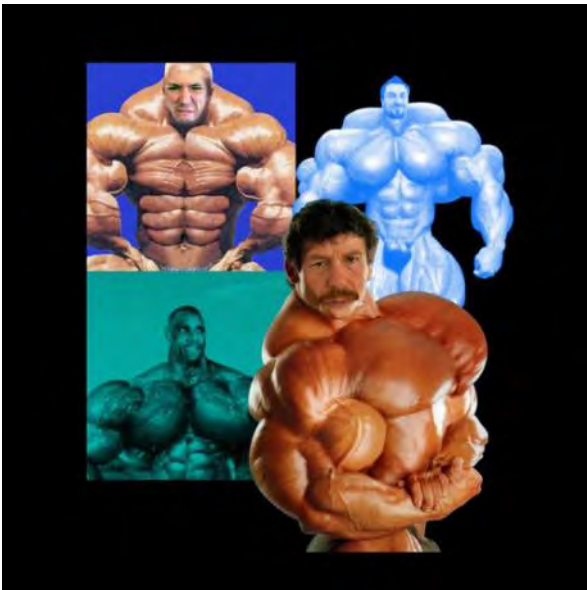
Creatives have increasingly turned to releasing large bodies of work, driven by a sense of creative anxiety over hoarding unfinished ideas on their desktops and hard drives. This trend reflects a desire to clear the backlog and share raw, unfiltered material with fans.



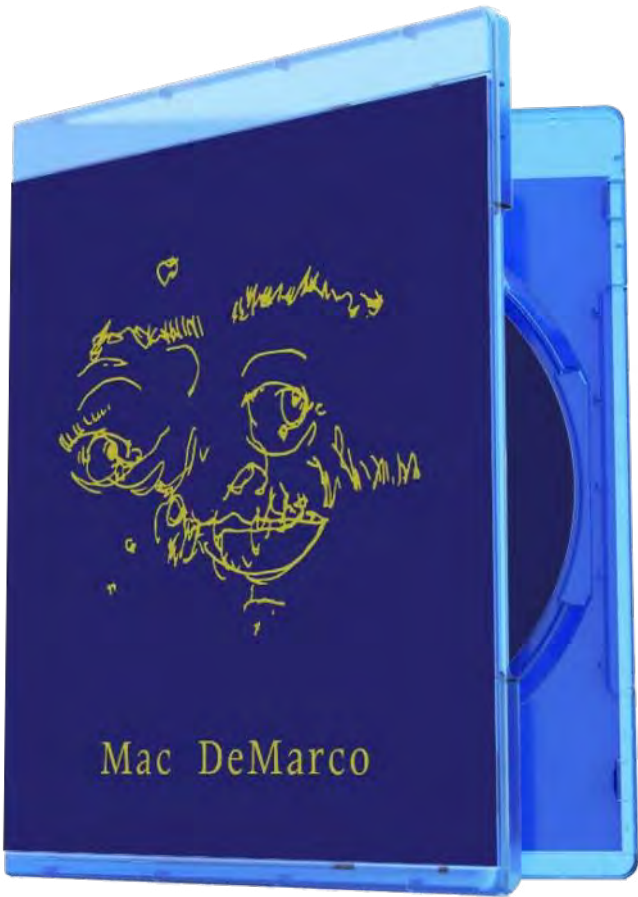
DURING THE PANDEMIC, DAVID LYNCH (RIP) LAUNCHED "THE DAVID LYNCH THEATER" ON YOUTUBE, WHERE HE SHARES A VARIETY OF PERSONAL PROJECTS, SHORT FILMS, DAILY WEATHER REPORTS, AND IDEAS THAT DIDN'T QUITE FIT INTO HIS LARGER FILMS.



APHEX TWIN'S INFAMOUS SOUNDCLOUD DUMP UNDER THE ALIAS OF USER18081971 SAW HIM RELEASE HUNDREDS OF UNHEARD TRACKS. "I'VE GOT SO MUCH STUFF. I WANT TO GET IT ALL OUT, BECAUSE I DON'T REALLY WANT TO LEAVE ALL THAT FOR MY KIDS TO SORT OUT. I'D PREFER THEY DIDN'T HAVE TO CARRY THAT BURDEN."



HUDSON MOHAWKE DROPPED THREE MIXTAPES (B.B.H.E., POOM GEMS, AIRBORNE LARD) IN 2020, EMBRACING A FREE-FORM APPROACH TO SHARING TRACKS. HUDSON MOHAWKE HAD THIS TO SAY: “I’VE HAD STUFF JUST GATHERING DIGITAL DUST FOR YEARS AND THE IDEA OF PUTTING IT OUT THERE WAS JUST LIKE, WHY NOT? IT’S A FREEING FEELING.”



DRAKE AND HIS TEAM ATTEMPTED AND FAILED TO RESHAPE THE NARRATIVE AFTER HIS RAP BATTLE DEFEAT TO KENDRICK LAMAR BY ORCHESTRATING THE ANONYMOUS RELEASE OF A MASSIVE 100GB OF MUSIC THROUGH A BURNER ACCOUNT. THIS STRATEGIC MOVE APPEARED TO MIRROR THE AUDACIOUS SPIRIT OF MAC DEMARCO'S ONE WAYNE G, A SPRAWLING COLLECTION OF 199 MOSTLY INSTRUMENTAL TRACKS.



THIS WAVE OF DIGITAL RELEASES HARKS BACK TO THE ERA OF DATPIFF AND HIP-HOP MIXTAPES, WHERE ARTISTS BYPASSED TRADITIONAL INDUSTRY GATEKEEPERS TO SHARE EXPERIMENTAL WORK DIRECTLY WITH FANS. JUST AS MIXTAPES ON PLATFORMS LIKE DATPIFF CREATED AN UNDERGROUND CULTURE OF UNRESTRICTED CREATIVITY.

TAKEAWAY

Today’s digital dumps and surprise releases signify a return to the ethos of the mixtape era - favouring immediacy and authenticity over perfection. The result is a shift in the format of creative output, where the pressure to perfect each project is overshadowed by the urge to let go of digital clutter and offer fans a more intimate glimpse into the creative process.



WE CARE ABOUT NEW YORK - NEW YORK DEPT OF SANITATION (1991)
TWIN PEAKS - GEORGIA COFFEE (1991)
SUN MOON & STARS - KARL LAGERFELD (1994)
PASSPORT - HONDA (1997)
WELCOME TO THE THIRD PLACE - PLAYSTATION 2 (2000)

The New Age Of Virality

We're entering a new era of viral content where traditional promotion channels like radio play, TV ads and press tours are being replaced by chaotic, unexpected moments that originate from deep corners of the internet.

A perfect example is LiAngelo Ball's track Tweaker, which exploded in popularity not through official channels, but after a brief, offhand snippet was played during internet personality N3on's livestream. That moment proved that sometimes all it takes is a few seconds in the right digital rabbit hole.





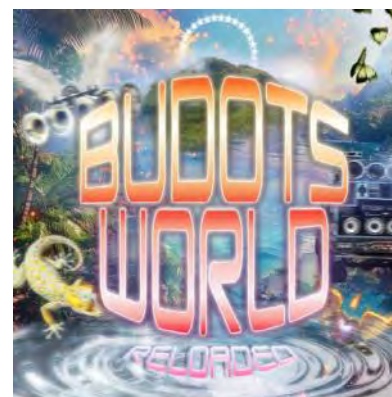
SIMILARLY, A SCENE FEATURING THE ULTRA-RARE CHICKEN JOCKEY (WHICH HAS ONLY A 0.25% SPAWN CHANCE IN-GAME) FROM THE MINECRAFT MOVIE WENT VIRAL BEFORE MOST AUDIENCES HAD EVEN SEEN THE FILM, THANKS TO A TIKTOK CLIP FROM THE PROMOTIONAL ROLLOUT. THE CLIP SPARKED A MASSIVE TREND AND CAUSED REAL-WORLD DISRUPTIONS, WITH THEATERS REPORTING THE REMOVAL OF GROUPS OF KIDS MID-SCREENING DUE TO LOUD REACTIONS TO THE CHICKEN JOCKEY MOMENT.



Meanwhile, TikTok continues to globalize hyper-niche subcultures, like the grassroots Budots genre from Davao City (Philippines) which went from local barangay discos to a Boiler Room set by DJ Love, simply because its chaotic energy matched the app's meme able aesthetic.

Even experimental artists like Aphex Twin are finding new audiences: his decades-old track QKThr went viral via the emotionally fragmented "Corecore" trend, which blends melancholic soundscapes with existential video edits, glitch art, and social commentary.

In November 2023, a woman filmed her Stanley Cup inside a car engulfed in flames, with the ice still miraculously intact. The clip took off on TikTok, turning a freak moment into a cultural win for the brand, which quickly leaned in and rewarded her with a new car and more products, earning widespread praise and boosting brand loyalty. More importantly, Stanley's sales surged from \$70 million to \$750 million.



TAKEAWAY

The common thread is that today's viral culture thrives on randomness, remixability, and recontextualization. For brands, the message is clear: success now lies in embracing the unpredictable edges of digital culture, where the next big hit could be hiding in a low-res meme, a sped-up audio snippet, or a chicken-riding zombie.

Revival of tangible reads

Book clubs have been all the rage in recent years, with celebrities and influencers jumping on the trend as a unique way to connect with their fans. It's one of the markers of a new era of tangible reads, driven by a young audience drawn to analog alternatives in a digital world.

DUA LIPA STARTED A BOOK CLUB ON HER PLATFORM SERVICE95. MEMBERS ARE INVITED TO READ ALONG WITH THE BOOK OF THE MONTH, DUA'S COMMENTS, DISCUSSION GUIDES, AUTHOR Q&AS, AND FURTHER READING LISTS TO BRING READERS CLOSER TO THE AUTHORS, THEIR INSPIRATIONS, AND THE WORLDS THEY CREATE.

BOOKS HAVE BEEN ACCESSORIES FOR CELEBRITY PAPARAZZI PICS IN THE PAST YEARS. PICTURED IS A 2024 HALLOWEEN COSTUME OF THE POP STAR, TROYE SIVAN. HE'S DRESSED AS ADDISON RAE'S VIRAL PAPARAZZI PIC OF HER HOLDING A BOOK.





With the rise of tangible reads, new innovative publishers started popping up in recent years. Isolarii is a modern book club and publishing platform that takes its name from the extinct Renaissance genre of "island books." It aims to challenge conventional thinking, featuring a diverse range of contributors. Their books have an unusual iPhone-sized format, making them very handy to read on the go.

"I was working at a smartphone factory — which was as depressing as you might imagine — and wanted to create a media system that produced an antithetical reality to that of the iPhone. To not just think differently, as Jobs put it, but make differently. Book publishing — which has failed to innovate, reimagine how it produces value, and remains largely dejected — felt like a good starting point. Embracing books does not mean we're Luddites — we want to hybridise book publishing with the slickest digital interfaces and technologies."

SEBASTIAN CLARK, EDITOR AND CO-FOUNDER OF ISOLARII
IN THE INTERVIEW FOR DO YOU READ ME.





HOTHEAD RADIO IS AN AMSTERDAM-BASED
CREATIVE COLLECTIVE WITH A PHYSICAL
STORE IN DE PIJP (VAN WOUSTRAAT
96A). THEY'RE A HUB FOR INDEPENDENT
PUBLISHING AND HELPING REVIVE PHYSICAL
ZINES AND PRINT THROUGH A CURATED
SELECTION OF SELF-PUBLISHED WORKS.





This new wave of digital detox represents both hunger for quality content, as well as exclusivity. Many of the magazines relaunching print versions will stick to a biannual or even annual issues, highlighting the quality that these publications can offer as a direct answer to an overload of AI-rubbish that people are exposed to daily.



Content that's available only when you purchase the physical version eliminates the fatigue we're experiencing by consuming media online. It turns reading into a positive, productive, and enjoyable activity that separates you from the overload of fake social media news and doomscrolling. It feels not only trustworthy, but truly worth our time.



"I think for the same reason that 18-year-old kids are buying Taylor Swift on vinyl, we can introduce those same kids to the notion that a print publication is a much richer way to consume media"

JORDAN LAFLURE, THE ONION'S EXECUTIVE EDITOR
FOLLOWING THE RELAUNCH OF THE PRINT EDITION

- > The Onion relaunched print publication in August 2024.
- > Playboy will relaunch print publication in February 2025.
- > Vice will relaunch print publication in March 2025.
- > i-D will relaunch print publication in March 2025.
- > Condé Nast added a new addition to its portfolio by launching Vogue Adria last year.
- > Harper's Bazaar Hommes is set to launch for the first time in France.



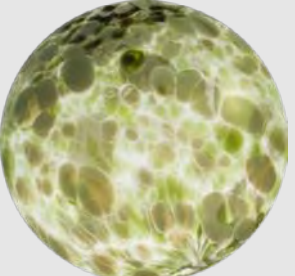
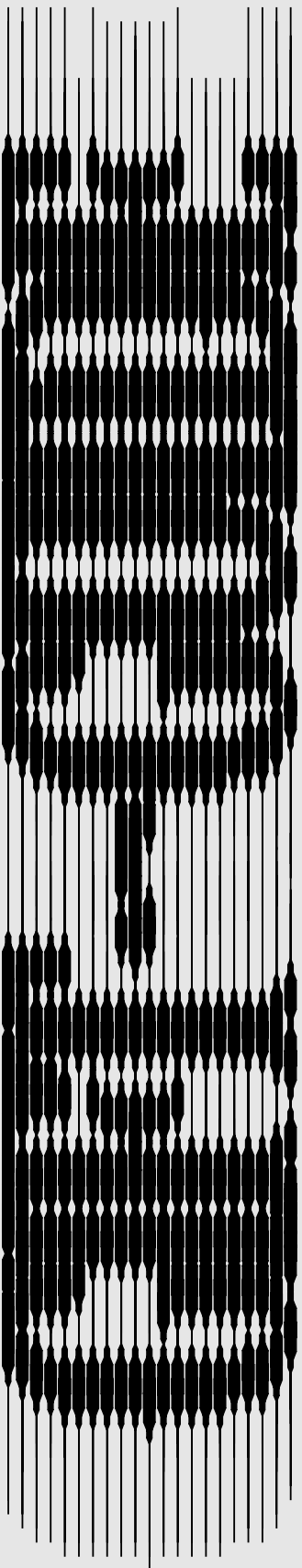
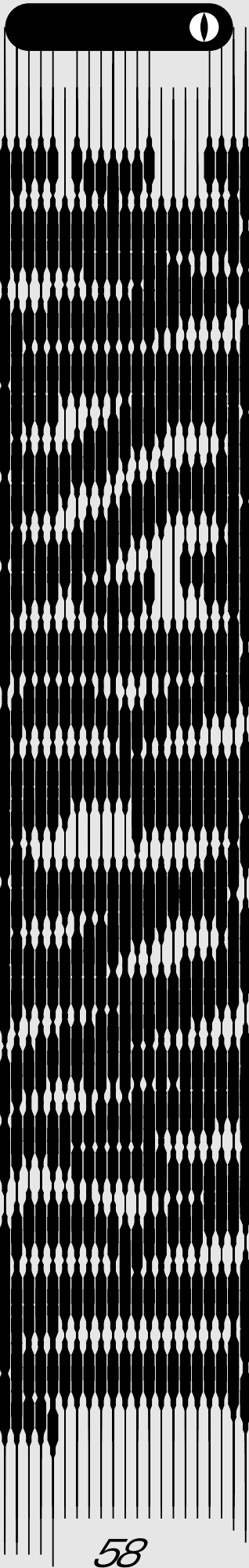
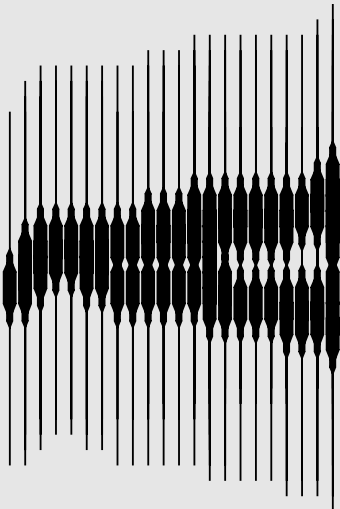
Lara Violetta is a fashion influencer who recently started a print-run only publication as an extension of her online platform. It's called Violet Papers, and the second issue was published in November 2024. In addition to the magazine, she also designed a special bag that allows readers to proudly display their current reads as accessories.

"I have a digital point of view, but I've always had this appreciation for print. So my idea was to play around with the two media. I think social media works because it feels personal, so I'm trying to flip this approach to paper."

LARA IN INTERVIEW FOR OFFICE MAGAZINE

TAKEAWAY

People pay to stop seeing ads online, but when they buy a physical publication they pay to see them. There are plenty of social media pages reminiscing about old print advertisements, celebrating their impressive craftsmanship, and introducing them to new consumers. Surrounded by low-quality AI-generated content, young generations are craving this old-school approach. While it's easy to assume print is for an older audience, young people are increasingly interested in seeing them. They want to see ads worth paying for, and not the other way around.



A
PROPHETIC
DREAM



MINI
BONSAI
TREE



HANDMADE
CERAMIC
EXPERIMENT



A SCENT OF A
PLACE THAT NO
LONGER EXISTS



PRODUCTIVE
MELANCHOLY



FOMUTATIONS

24.04.2025 FOMUTATION #1 MARCEL VELDMAN
05.06.2025 FOMUTATION #2 LOIS COHEN
02.10.2025 FOMUTATION #3 FRANCESCA GAVIN
11.12.2025 FOMUTATION #4 MARIA CLARA MACRI

IN COLLABORATION WITH FOMU, WE DEVELOPED AN EXPERIMENTAL FORMAT OF IN DEPTH TALKS BY INTERNATIONALLY RENOWNED IMAGE MAKERS THAT CHALLENGE EXISTING PERSPECTIVES ON VISUAL CULTURE AND SPARK DEBATE. FROM FASHION TO DOCUMENTARY, ADVERTISING TO ART, FOMUTATIONS EXPLORE HOW IMAGES SHAPE - AND RESHAPE - OUR COLLECTIVE PERCEPTION. GET TO KNOW THE GUESTS IN A SERIES OF EXCLUSIVE MUTANT EYE INTERVIEWS.



Marcel Veldman is a self-taught photographer and skateboarder known for his raw and honest approach to both skate culture and other forms of visual art. He's also proven himself as a documentary and portrait photographer, documenting the lives of athletes, artists, and everyday people.

As co-founder of *Fluff Magazine*, an unconventional skateboard magazine known for its quirky design and irregular publications, Veldman has had a lasting impact on the way skateboarding is presented in the media.

IN A WORLD WHERE ATTENTION KEEPS WANING AND AI CAN GENERATE IMAGES IN SECONDS, WHAT DO YOU THINK IS AT STAKE FOR IMAGE CULTURE, VISUAL LITERACY, AND THE WAY WE EXPERIENCE PHOTOGRAPHY TODAY?

Marcel Honestly, I'm still figuring that out day by day, because things are changing so quickly, especially with AI and the sheer volume of images being generated, many of which are either fake or entirely fabricated.

I've always been drawn to documentary-style photography. I think there's real value in capturing what's actually around you. But with everything that's happening now, I'm not sure anyone has a clear answer yet. We're still in the very early stages of understanding the full impact. Some of it can be helpful in certain contexts, but it also opens the door to a lot of uncertainty.

It's a slippery slope. Suddenly, you're questioning whether a photograph or a model is real. That doubt doesn't just affect photographers; it has a ripple effect across the entire creative industry, impacting make-up artists, stylists, and many others.

AS AN OG PHOTOGRAPHER IN THE GAME, WHAT WOULD YOUR DEFINITION OF "VISUAL LITERACY" BE?

Marcel That's a tough one. I think that's more a question for the people who view my work rather than for me to define.

But if I had to try, I'd say that visual literacy, for me, comes from being present. Everything I shoot just happens around me. I'm not staging moments or forcing narratives. I just exist in the spaces I care about, whether that's skateboarding, the street, or any other environment, and I shoot what unfolds naturally. I try to approach it with honesty and intention.

Take skateboarding, for example. It's not just about the tricks. It's about the scene: the people, the culture, the energy. It's the individuals and the collective, the big moments and the quiet, seemingly ordinary ones, too. Those are just as important.

I shoot the people I meet and the situations I find myself in. I've been lucky to always be surrounded by extraordinary people, so I've never had a shortage of subjects worth capturing.

DO YOU SOMETIMES FEEL A RESPONSIBILITY
OR AN URGE TO 'SCHOOL' OR 'TEACH' YOUNG
IMAGE MAKERS?

Marcel Yes. Well, maybe not so much an urge at first, but over time I've definitely felt a responsibility to share what I've learned.

One thing I always try to encourage is for people to print their work. Don't just stop at a website or an Instagram page. I tell people: make something. Do it yourself. Don't wait for someone to give you permission or for your photo to be picked up by a magazine.

If you want your work out there, start by doing it yourself. Make a zine, make a book, make something physical. Then it becomes real, something you can touch. And because it's printed, it can't just be edited endlessly or deleted. It exists. It becomes an artifact.

That's something I've always loved about printed work. The Fluff books, for example, or older magazines like Slap. You can look at issues from 20 years ago and immediately be transported. The writing, the fashion, the layout, the photos: all of it comes together to capture a distinct moment in time. It doesn't just reflect a scene, it defines an era. It becomes its own kind of time capsule.

I just try to inspire people to make things you can actually hold and experience, instead of only scrolling through them. And more importantly, don't get too wrapped up in all the spoken and unspoken rules of photography.

There will always be voices telling you what's right or wrong, what you should or shouldn't do. But in the end, you've got to trust your instincts and make what feels right to you.

DOES THAT MAKE YOU FEEL LIKE A BOOMER?

Marcel Holy shit, I'm not that old.

My parents are boomers!

In terms of teaching or feeling a sense of responsibility, sure, that comes in different shapes and forms. But I definitely don't feel like a boomer. Sometimes I feel older than the people around me, but not in a way that matters too much.

I grew up and still exist in a scene where age isn't really a big deal. Sure, things change physically. With skateboarding, for example, I'm not throwing myself down stair sets or grinding handrails like I used to. But the culture itself? It's timeless. It brings together people of all ages, from the super young to the much older, all sharing the same mindset and love for it. That part hasn't changed.

Just last weekend, I went to see some friends play in a band. I've been skating with some of those guys for over 30 years, and honestly, not much has changed. The vibe is still the same.

Of course, younger generations will have that "we're the new wave" energy. I remember being 19 or 20 and thinking people who were 24 were ancient. But in skateboarding, especially, it's pretty spread out now. You've got pros in their 40s and 50s still killing it. Andrew Reynolds just dropped his first signature shoe with New Balance, and Eric Koston is still going strong. I think he turns 50 this year. And they're still pushing skateboarding, both technically and creatively.

It's not just about age, though. It's a mindset. It comes from skateboarding, from music, from the creative circles I'm part of. A lot of my friends are doing their thing, whether it's throwing events, designing, skating professionally, you name it. I think that's what keeps it all feeling fresh. The times may have changed, but the energy's still there.

WITHOUT GIVING TOO MUCH AWAY, WHAT THEMES OR PROVOCATIONS ARE YOU HOPING TO EXPLORE IN YOUR FOMUTATION LECTURE, AND HOW DO THEY REFLECT WHERE YOU'RE AT CREATIVELY RIGHT NOW?

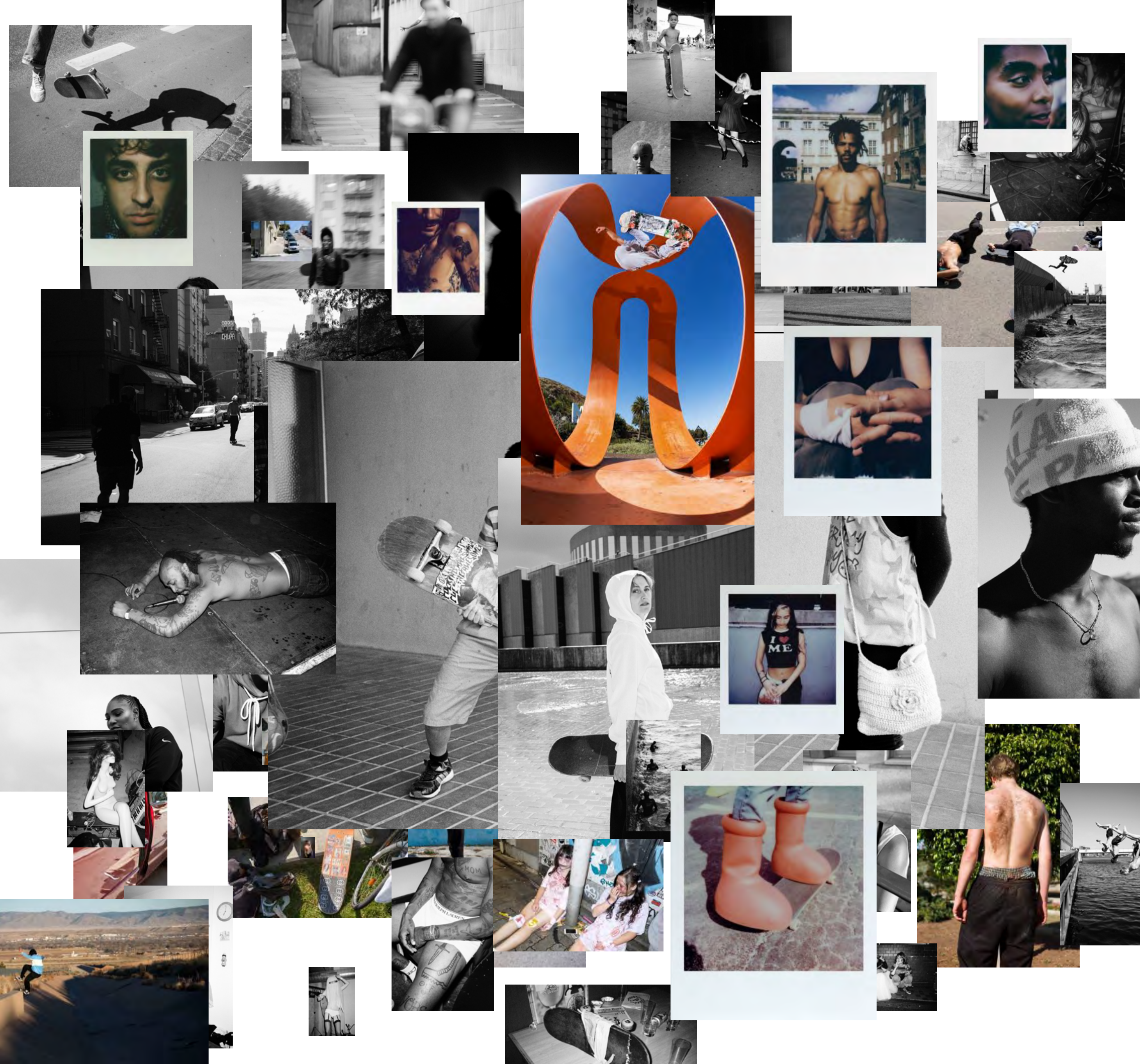
Marcel I'll definitely touch on a few key subjects that feel important right now. A lot of what we've already been discussing: the rise of AI, the value of do-it-yourself culture, and the idea of "real" or untouched photography. Those are all things I'm interested in exploring.

Most of my photos aren't staged or set up. They're captured in the moment, which is why I always carry a camera with me. Sometimes I don't shoot anything for days, and sometimes I end up taking loads of photos in a single afternoon. It's unpredictable. But that's also the point: it's about staying open to whatever's happening around you.

I could never plan the things I end up shooting. I'm not great at set design or staging scenes. So much of what I capture happens spontaneously. Even when I'm shooting a portrait, I often find that the moments happening around the main subject can be just as interesting, sometimes even more so.

I think that's what keeps me curious. I just really like people. You only get to live one life, but through photography, I feel like I get to witness so many others. Different personalities, different ways of being. That's what I find interesting.

So I'll probably speak about that. But it also depends on how the conversation flows, the questions that pop up during the session. I'm always up for talking about photography. Just not so much the technical stuff. I know how to use my gear, but I'm not a camera technician. I'd rather talk about what the tools allow us to see and feel, not the specs.





Sweet escape

The gamification of sports

The gamification of live sports is rapidly evolving as leagues and organisations seek to engage younger audiences by blending the thrill of traditional gameplay with interactive, gaming-inspired elements. This shift stems from a sharp decline in traditional sports viewership over the past 20 years, driven by changing media habits and growing competition from gaming and other entertainment. With a plethora of options available, many viewers now experience a paralysis of choice, finding it harder to commit to traditional live broadcasts when faced with so many alternatives. This shift in consumer behaviour has been further accelerated by younger generations' growing preference for on-demand, bite-sized content on social media and gaming culture.

However, it's a nuanced picture: while traditional viewership declines, streaming platforms are striking record-breaking deals for exclusive sports rights, driving up athlete contracts, and ballooning ticket prices. Live sports are one of the last true cultural unifiers, bringing people together through shared, real-time emotions. They transcend demographics, geography, and differences, creating a rare sense of connection. In the past year, 75 of the 100 most-watched telecasts were live sports, up from 56 in 2023. As a result, the sports industry is undergoing a transformation, blending the old with the new to attract a broader, more diverse audience.

Formula 1's F1 Kids broadcasts provide a prime example of how Formula 1 and its parent company, Liberty Media, are trying to engage the next generation of fans. By offering simplified commentary, vibrant graphics, and an engaging tone that mirrors gaming environments, they make the sport more accessible and entertaining for younger viewers. This also allows for an intergenerational viewing experience.

TNT Sports has taken this a step further with gamified alt-casts of the NBA Cup, partnering with Genius Sports and NBA 2K25 to deliver real-time statistics and visuals reminiscent of video game interfaces. Even the next generation of rising stars, like Lamine Yamal, reflect this shift, embracing a gaming mindset in their approach to sports. When asked about how he learned his trademark "trivela" pass, Yamal casually replied, "L2, I think it is", likening the skill to a video game controller input.





This trend isn't just affecting how games are broadcast or consumed, but also how athletes themselves interact with the sport. Many professional athletes today grew up with video games as a core part of their lives, and we're seeing this influence manifest in their in-game antics and celebrations. From Fortnite dances to gaming-inspired touchdown celebrations, athletes are incorporating elements of gaming culture into their sports personas.

ANTOINE GRIEZMANN DOING THE FORTNITE "TAKE THE L" DANCE.



The connection between sports and gaming is nothing new. Take the 1999 San Antonio Spurs for example. The NBA and its players have long been known for their love of Bourré, A gambling card game commonly played during downtime, like on team flights between games. However, after winning the 1999 NBA Championship, photos surfaced of the Spurs players having a StarCraft LAN party on their team aeroplane – a scene that seemed out of place in an era before widespread gaming culture.

Now, with esports and gaming culture so mainstream, that scene would feel almost commonplace. Those photos from the 1999 Championship celebration feel surprisingly current, as gaming has become a routine part of professional athletes' lives.

This shift has also fueled the rise of "new media," with athletes using their platforms to launch podcasts, vlogs, and livestreams. Sergio Agüero (SLAKUN10) has amassed one of the most-followed Twitch channels, with 4.8 million followers regularly tuning in to watch him play video games.

The influence of gaming on live sports broadcasts continues to grow. This past holiday season, ESPN, owned by Disney, pushed boundaries by streaming an alt-cast of the NBA Christmas Day game between the San Antonio Spurs and the New York Knicks, titled "Dunk the Halls".

The broadcast used Sony's Beyond Sports Technology to transform the players into Disney characters. Similarly, Disney and the NFL embraced gamification with The Simpsons Funday Football special, which utilised the same cutting-edge real-time visualisation technology to create an interactive viewing experience for the Cincinnati Bengals vs. Dallas Cowboys game. Both broadcasts showcased advanced technology to merge sports with immersive graphics, allowing fans to engage in real time and further blurring the lines between sports, gaming culture, and iconic animated franchises.



Nickelodeon, in partnership with CBS Sports, has long been a pioneer in this space with its annual alternate broadcast of the Super Bowl, which began in 2021. The slime-filled broadcast features child-friendly commentary, colourful on-screen graphics, out-of-this-world touchdown celebrations, and appearances by popular Nickelodeon characters. The concept has been so well-received that it has quickly become a hallmark of Nickelodeon's offerings.

Additionally, the Australian Open expanded its broadcast offerings by live-streaming a unique Wii Tennis-style alternative broadcast on its official YouTube channel. This move was born out of necessity due to the tournament not owning all its broadcasting rights, but it further demonstrates how sports organisations are embracing gamified, interactive experiences to reach new viewers.



This blend of sports and gaming-inspired entertainment is becoming more common, and with the global esports market projected to surpass \$1.9 billion (USD) by 2025, and over 60% of Gen Z identifying as regular gamers, the influence of gaming on traditional sports is set to grow exponentially, reshaping how fans and players interact with the sports they love.

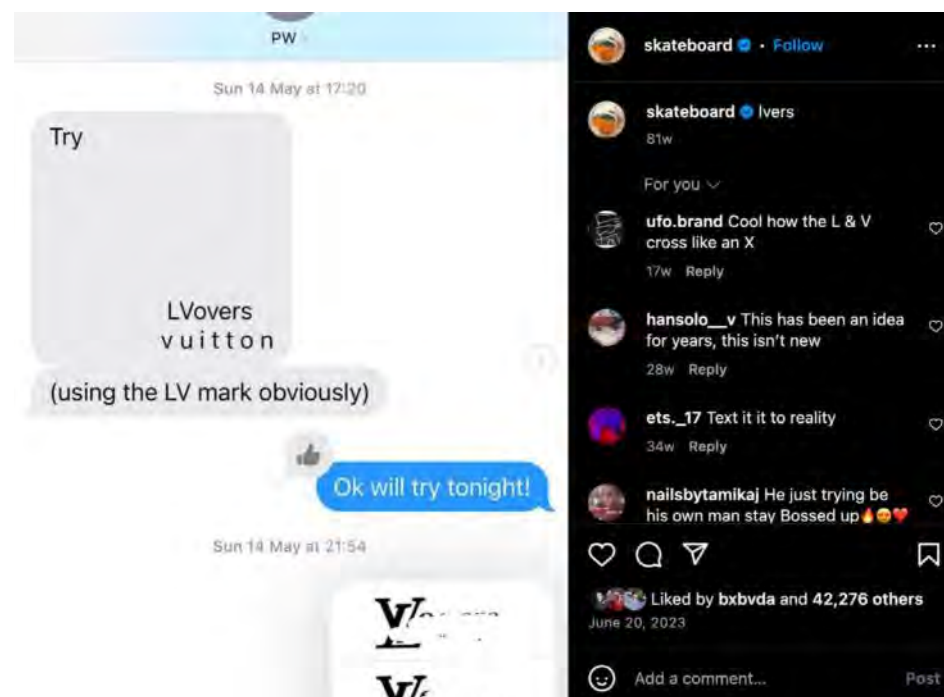
These alt-casts open up a world of new opportunities for sponsorship, endorsement deals, and in-game advertising.

However, is this a slippery slope? Will we one day have to sit down with our kids to explain that it's not actually Mickey Mouse slam-dunking the ball, but a real athlete using the latest real-time visualisation technology?

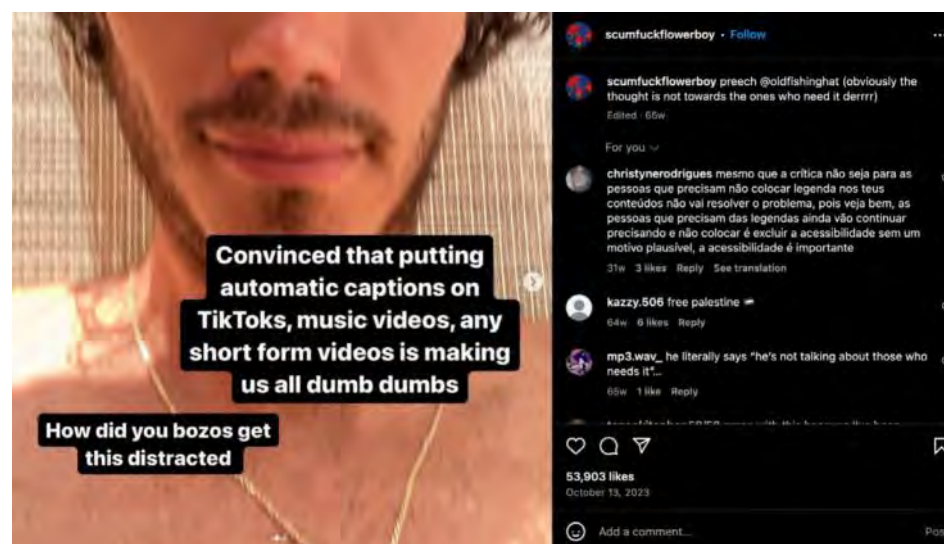
My finsta is the real me

In an era where social media often feels heavily curated, contrived, and airbrushed, some creatives are increasingly turning to finsta (fake Instagram) accounts to show a more unfiltered side of themselves.

These private or semi-public profiles are becoming the go-to spaces for musicians, artists, and designers to break free from the constraints of their polished public personas.



PHARRELL WILLIAMS USES HIS HANDLE @SKATEBOARD TO SHARE BEHIND-THE-SCENES CONTENT, TEASE UPCOMING LOUIS VUITTON PROJECTS, AND SHOWCASE HIS CREATIVE PROCESS WITHOUT THE USUAL BRAND GLOSS.



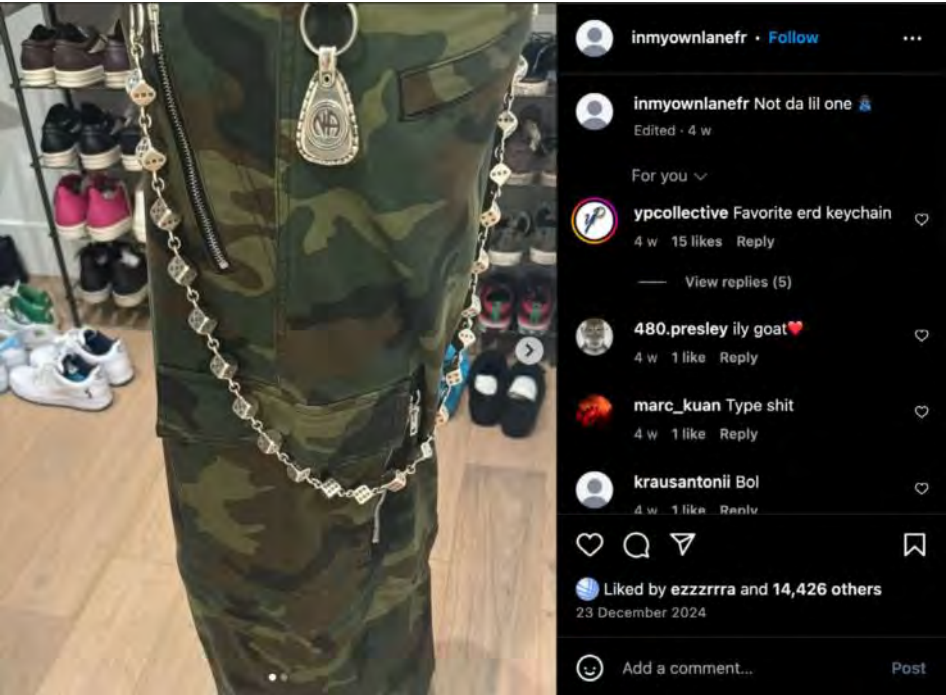
TYLER, THE CREATOR, WITH HIS ACCOUNT @SCUMFUCKFLOWERBOY, OFTEN SHARES ROUGH IDEAS, SKETCHES, AND PERSONAL RANTS, ALLOWING FANS TO SEE THE MESSY, ITERATIVE SIDE OF HIS CREATIVE JOURNEY.



LORDE'S QUIRKY ACCOUNT, @ONIONRINGSWORLDWIDE, DEDICATED ENTIRELY TO REVIEWING ONION RINGS, HIGHLIGHTS THE PLAYFUL SIDE OF HER PERSONALITY WHILE SIDESTEPPING INDUSTRY EXPECTATIONS.



KENDRICK LAMAR'S FINSTA, @JOJORUSKI, OFFERS A RAW AND INTIMATE LOOK INTO HIS LIFE, REVEALING SPONTANEOUS SKETCHES, UNRELEASED SNIPPETS, AND OFFBEAT MOMENTS THAT WOULDN'T FIT INTO HIS OFFICIAL FEEDS. NOTABLY, KENDRICK ALSO USED THIS ACCOUNT TO TEASE HIS 1987 BUICK GNX EIGHT MONTHS BEFORE SURPRISING FANS WITH HIS ALBUM GNX, NAMED AFTER THE AMERICAN MUSCLE CAR.



NBA PLAYER BOL BOL ALSO TAPS INTO THE UNFILTERED NATURE OF FINSTA WITH HIS ACCOUNT, @INMYOWNLANEFR, WHICH HE USES AS A PLATFORM TO EXPRESS HIS LOVE FOR FASHION AND STREETWEAR. BEYOND SHOWCASING HIS PERSONAL STYLE, BOL BOL HAS TRANSFORMED HIS ACCOUNT INTO AN INTERACTIVE HUB, ENGAGING WITH FOLLOWERS TO SOURCE RARE GRAILED ITEMS AND EXPAND HIS COLLECTION. THIS DIRECT INTERACTION ADDS A UNIQUE, COMMUNITY-DRIVEN LAYER TO HIS ACCOUNT, ALLOWING FANS TO CONTRIBUTE TO HIS FASHION JOURNEY IN A WAY THAT FEELS AUTHENTIC AND ACCESSIBLE, FREE FROM THE POLISHED IMAGE OF HIS PUBLIC PERSONA.

Finstas have become a safe space for celebrities and public figures to experiment, test ideas, and connect with fans on a more genuine level, emphasising that not every piece of content needs to be well crafted.



As the image-controlled landscape of social media becomes increasingly saturated, these finsta accounts are reshaping how public figures maintain authenticity in the digital age.



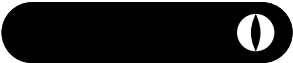
For brands, gaining an endorsement or validation on one of these finsta accounts carries significant weight, as the audience is organic, deeply engaged, and often comprised of diehard fans, increasing the likelihood of the content resonating authentically.

Kawaiification

As conservative values rise and the geopolitical climate becomes harsher, people are looking for ways to escape reality. Kawaii is a Japanese word that translates to “cute” or “adorable”. But in Japan it’s more than a word. It’s a cultural phenomenon. While this aesthetic might be mistaken for “childish” in the West, it carries a much deeper significance. It’s nostalgic, stylish and humorous. And incredibly powerful. It makes us indulge in it, it makes us protect it, it makes us consume it. **It softens the unpalatable** and that’s exactly what society is craving. Kawaiification is taking over the whole world.



SANDY LIANG, A NYC BASED FASHION LABEL, RECENTLY LAUNCHED A LINE OF CLOTHES FOR MONCHHICHI DOLLS.



EVEN THE VATICAN ISN'T IMMUNE TO KAWAIIIFICATION. IN THE 1999 MOVIE DOGMA, THE CATHOLIC CHURCH INTRODUCES BUDDY CHRIST AS PART OF A PR CAMPAIGN TO MODERNIZE THE CHURCH'S IMAGE. FAST FORWARD TO 2024, AND THIS IS NOT A HOLLYWOOD PARODY ANYMORE. MEET LUCE, THE NEW MASCOT OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH'S 2025 JUBILEE. LUCE AND FRIENDS ARE KAWAII CHARACTERS THAT REPRESENT CATHOLIC PILGRIMS.

ARCHBISHOP RINO FISICHELLA, THE ORGANISER FOR THE JUBILEE, SAYS THE MASCOT WAS INSPIRED BY THE CATHOLIC CHURCH'S DESIRE TO LIVE WITHIN THE POP CULTURE SO BELOVED BY OUR YOUTH. THE CHARACTERS ARE DESIGNED BY TOKIDOKI, A LIFESTYLE BRAND INSPIRED BY THE KITSCHY AND CUTE WORLD OF JAPANESE POP CULTURE. LUCE STORMED THE WORLD OF FAN-ART AND COSPLAYING, WINNING THE HEARTS OF MANY.

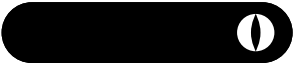


IN MARCH 2025, A WAVE OF CHATGPT USERS BEGAN GENERATING DREAMY, HIGH-SATURATION IMAGES IN THE VISUAL VERNACULAR OF STUDIO GHIBLI. ALL WIDE-EYED INNOCENCE, WATERCOLOUR SKIES, AND AMBIENT NOSTALGIA. THE PHENOMENON, PART OF A BROADER KAWAIIIFICATION OF THE DIGITAL LANDSCAPE, SAW CONSUMERS GLEEFULLY POSTING AI-FABRICATED GHIBLI-STYLE IMAGERY, BLURRING THE LINE BETWEEN HOMAGE AND HALLUCINATION.

WHEN PRESSED, OPENAI CEO SAM ALTMAN OFFERED A TECH-OPTIMIST GLOSS: "I THINK THE DEMOCRATISATION OF CREATING CONTENT HAS BEEN A BIG NET WIN FOR SOCIETY..." MEANWHILE, HAYAO MIYAZAKI, GHIBLI'S CO-FOUNDER AND ONE OF AI'S MOST VOCAL SKEPTICS, REMAINED AN ALMOST MYTHIC COUNTERWEIGHT, AN ANALOG SPIRIT IN A WORLD RAPIDLY PIXELATING. THE RESULT? A CULTURAL DISSONANCE THAT FEELS VERY NOW, ALGORITHMS PLAYING DRESS-UP IN THE SKINS OF THE SACRED.

THIS OCCURRED DESPITE THE OBVIOUS TENSIONS AROUND COPYRIGHT AND ARTISTIC SOVEREIGNTY, AN AESTHETIC LAND GRAB IN REAL TIME. EVEN THE OFFICIAL X ACCOUNT OF ISRAEL'S DEFENCE FORCES HOPPED ONTO THE TREND BY POSTING DISTURBINGLY KAWAII MILITARY PROPAGANDA IMAGES, WHICH CAUSED A SHOCKING REACTION OF MANY SOCIAL MEDIA USERS.





MOO DENG, THE WORLD-FAMOUS BABY HIPPO, GAVE **THAILAND'S ECONOMY A BOOST** AS TOURIST VISITS SURGED AND BUSINESSES CAPITALIZED ON THE HIPPO CRAZE. MOO DENG'S HOME PROVINCE SAW A 27 BILLION BAHT BOOST IN TOURISM REVENUE FROM JULY TO OCTOBER 2024, A 4% INCREASE COMPARED TO THE SAME PERIOD LAST YEAR. WORKERS AT THAI AIRPORTS REPORTED BEING SHOCKED WHEN INTERNATIONAL VISITORS LISTED MOO DENG AS THE PRIMARY CAUSE OF THEIR VISIT.



SELF-DRIVING DELIVERY ROBOTS CAN SOUND LIKE AN INVASIVE HUMAN-THREATENING CYBERPUNK NIGHTMARE. NOT IF THEY ARE ADORABLE THOUGH. HOW COULD YOU EVER KICK OR HARM SUCH A CREATURE? HOW CAN YOU NOT HELP WHEN IT GETS STUCK? CUTENESS SUBTLY MANIPULATES OUR SENSE OF POWER, ALMOST TO THE POINT OF PARODY, IT HAS A WAY OF MAKING US DO EXACTLY WHAT IT INTENDS.



While this phenomenon used to be associated with East Asian cultures, globalization made sure that we're all exposed to a fair share of cuteness. In an era where technology often feels more intimidating than exciting, it's exactly what we need.

Cuteness reassures us that the future doesn't have to be as scary as it often seems.

But the line between dystopian and kawaii is thin: brands need to pay attention to the context in which such imagery is used, otherwise they risk creating an adverse effect.



Obsessions

WELCOME TO A CHAPTER DEDICATED
TO THE WORMS THAT JUST WON'T EXIT
OUR BRAIN AT THE MOMENT.



Liminal Spaces

Liminality refers to the quality of ambiguity or disorientation that occurs in the middle stage of a rite of passage. When an environment evokes the threshold-like state, we call it a liminal space. Historically, the concept has roots in anthropology, particularly in the work of Arnold van Gennep, who described "liminality" as the middle phase of a ritual, where individuals transition from one status to another.

In modern times, liminal spaces have gained attention through internet culture, particularly in discussions of eerie or dreamlike aesthetics, such as the "backrooms" phenomenon, where seemingly mundane locations take on an unsettling, otherworldly quality.

The aesthetic is so popular due to a strong emotional response it awakens. There's even a subreddit *r/LiminalSpace* dedicated exclusively to users to share and discuss photos of liminal spaces.





How to evoke liminality?

Liminality is something you get an inexplicable sense for, but there are some general expectations when it comes to liminal spaces.

Often they are defined as transitional or in-between places that evoke a sense of unease, nostalgia, or surrealism. They are often characterized by emptiness, dim lighting, or a feeling of being outside of time.

It's almost like there's something odd about them: an abandoned mall, a school during summer vacation, isolated hallways, and being the only passenger on the train. But liminal doesn't simply mean creepy, it represents a state of consciousness that feels unusual.

It is not just a transition in one sense. A road is transitional in itself, but not all pictures of roads are liminal. It's about a sense of lingering in a region or state that would usually be passed without a second thought. It's the feeling of trying to make sense of something we don't normally focus on. The emptiness allows us to see details we would normally just brush off.



This odd emotional response is a great tool to play with when it comes to spatial design. It's proof that sometimes *less is more*. Especially in a retail environment, where *more is usually more*, it's not about simply filling the space with elements that evoke emotions.

It's about looking at things from a different angle. It's the abstinence of elements that triggers our brain.

Feeling stuck in a liminal space?

Want to discuss the dark side of cuteness?

Or maybe you want to watch highlights of goofy posterizing mickey mouse?

Let's have a chat!

AENEAS@MUTANT.BE

Mutant™ is an independent, multidisciplinary brand agency known for its audacious style of campaigning and branding. Since our inception in 2019, we've grown to 40+ Mutants operating from our dual hubs in Amsterdam and Antwerp.

Led by our Mutant™ Eye philosophy, we create work that builds and solidifies a brand's influence within contemporary culture.

