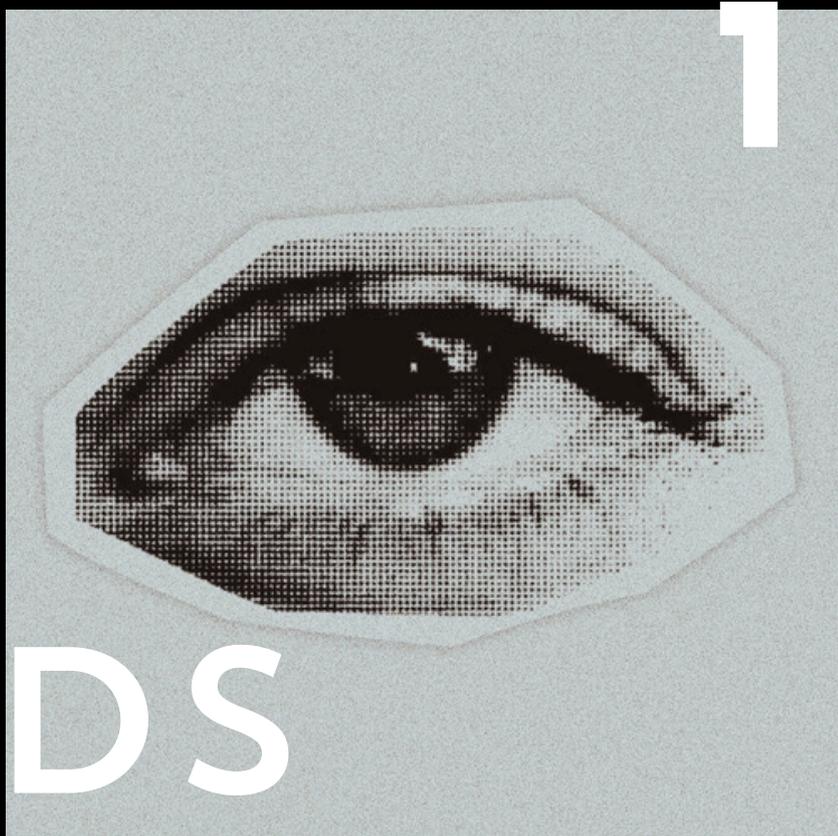4
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DO TRENDS ALWAYS COME BACK?

Editor's Note

Dear Readers,

This edition is the product of our experiences as humans living in a period of instability and uncertainty. When deciding the theme, we came to the realization that these anxious and worrying feelings that we have about the future are also a consequence of the current political, economic and social landscape that influences us every day. We hope that you can identify in these topics as much as we did and that, in a way, reading these articles will have a cathartic effect on you.

Enjoy reading our 41st edition,

Gaia Martini
Editor-in-Chief

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Retro

The Power of Nostalgia in the Music Industry

Everyone loves music. It touches us, makes us feel alive, brings us back, gives us hope, and soothes us. The resurgence of retro music encapsulates all these feelings. The genre takes inspiration from older hits but gives them a modern twist, combining the best of the past with the best of the present. This creates megahits that not only attract nostalgic listeners who are craving a trip down memory lane, but also a much younger crowd, showing that trends are always coming back.

Feeling of Nostalgia

The biggest reason for the enormous popularity of retro music can be found in the feeling of nostalgia. People are longing to go back to 'the good old times,' when they were young and didn't have a worry in the world. These retro songs bring us back to these important moments in our life, and let us relive these old memories, even if we had forgotten about them initially, creating a personal connection with the song.
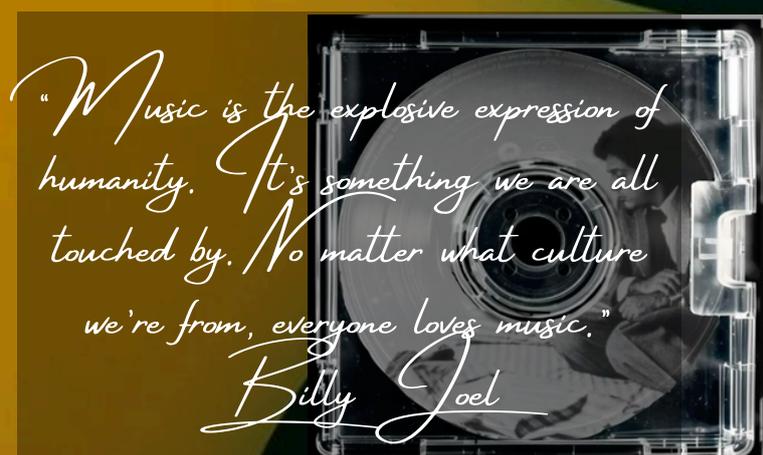
As we live in a world that is continuously changing, people want to cling to what is familiar to them, making remixes of old songs and the use of retro-style beats very successful. Artists wake up this familiar and nostalgic feeling through these remixes, using the same production techniques and the same genres as old songs. These artists produce these songs to get more streams because tracks that play on this feeling of nostalgia generally get streamed more. Especially millennials and Gen Z seem to adore the retro-inspired music.

Older songs tend to have more of an emotional impact, while modern songs sometimes lack this feature, resulting in people turning towards these old songs with a new look. As we are young, we like to experience much more with new styles, genres, and artists, ensuring a very diverse playlist, but as we get older, we tend to cling to what sounds familiar more and more. This leads to music platforms advertising for these nostalgic music genres.

Appearance of Retro Music in the Media

Social media and streaming platforms make use of the feeling of nostalgia and contribute to the rise in the use of retro music. Streaming platforms such as Spotify are actively pushing listeners to check out new songs with a retro vibe through generated playlists. TikTok plays a huge role in this as well, reviving old songs, making them popular again, and enabling videos that use these songs to go viral. Movies and TV shows also often make use of retro songs, contributing to their popularity.

To gain popularity through the media, retro music does not only look at old tunes for musical inspiration, but also when it comes to the appearance of the song. Artists observe earlier trends when it comes to the cover of the album or to the music videos, contributing to the nostalgic experience of the listener. Retro songs are released in a complete retro aesthetic, making them more noticeable on social media.

"Music is the explosive expression of humanity. It's something we are all touched by. No matter what culture we're from, everyone loves music."
Billy Joel

Retro Music Stands Out

For a song to be listened to, it needs to stand out in some way. Artists use vintage influences and exceptional vocal and recording techniques for this. It makes them stand out from the crowd and create a musical identity that is nostalgic and has something new to it, creating retro songs that appeal to the people.

Vinyls with a retro-influenced cover are also eye-catching, and with vinyls coming back in recent years, this leads to a rise of popularity of retro music. In current times of digital media, people still love to get real vinyls because of its look and excellent sound quality. These people tend to have a bigger connection to the songs they're listening to. Retro music tries to make use of this connection, which can't be replaced by streaming services. That the genre is being bought on vinyl shows how it is loved by music enthusiasts for its nostalgia and unique vibe

What Music Means To Us

The resurgence of retro music shows what music really means to us. The music we listen to is part of our identity. It reflects the trends we grew up listening to, the experiences that led to us being who we are, brings us comfort in good and bad times, makes us connect with people from different generations, and builds friendships.

The nostalgia and unique vibe in retro music make everyone feel this music in their hearts. So, let's hope it will stay a trend for a while, and otherwise retro music will for sure come back, because, as Billy Joel ones said, everyone is touched by music, and everyone loves music, no matter what culture you're from.

by Evi van Hengel

From Suffragettes to "Clean Girls":
Trends as Setbacks in the Feminist Movement?

"Women need to subordinate themselves to men" -- at least according to the German influencer Millane, who has more than seven million followers on TikTok. In recent years, sexist and misogynistic content have become widespread on social media. This makes us question: What role do trends play in promoting sexism?

Where Does Feminism Derive From?

To answer this question, some context is needed. According to Cultural Studies, there have been four waves of feminism in the West. The first wave started around 1850. Feminists of that time demanded access to basic civil rights, such as the right to vote. The second wave of feminism, in the 1960s-1990s, focused on challenging women's roles in both workplace and family environment. The third wave, emerging in the late 20th century, emphasized intersectionality and women's right to free choice. The last wave, the one we are in right now, combines these ideas through digital activism. Platforms such as TikTok are thus so interesting, because they feature both sexist statements such as Millane's as feminist activism. While naturally, social media companies, algorithms and influencer popularity do play a major role in what we take in, a huge part of what we watch depends on the user's activity and their choices about what to interact with. Trends in opinion, therefore, are heavily influenced by how far the users are willing to engage with them.

The Issue

The issue is not that social media features sexist content, but that it is shown because of previous engagement and already formed opinions, not because of accuracy or social impact. Provocative, polarizing, and simplified content gets promoted, while educational influencers often fall under the radar. Instead, influencers and people in power profit massively from sexism through social media's algorithms. In a more complex world, teenagers, one of the largest user groups of social media, are looking for reassurence and orientation online. Trends such as "cottagecore" or "that-girl" are ultimately so popular because they do not require complexity in an ever-more complex world and are therefore frequently promoted by influencers, who earn from clicks and becoming role models for their insecure audiences.

For instance, one internet aesthetic and subculture is the 'clean girl' trend, that has been going viral since the beginning of the 2020s, during COVID-19. Mainly, it emphasizes wellness as the ultimate goal for women. However, instead of improving quality of life, the trend implies that women's worth and happiness are dependent on their appeareance. Such as sports: oftentimes, the trend does not promote sports because it is healthy for one's mind, but because it will 'make our skin glow'. Through this hyperfocus on traditional beauty standards, traits that we would otherwise value in women, such as spontaneity or individuality, are threatened to become forgotten.

Perfection is supposed to be reached through not only 'cleanness' in lifestyle, but also the purchase of "clean" products, such as expensive water bottles, or the resurgence of pink and bows. Standing for a hyper-femininity, traditional gender roles are often reinforced through the popularity of these objects. Both are usually associated not with women but girls, with softness and 'cuteness' – women are infantilized. The encoded messages of these objects are patriarchal: The man as the dominant gender, protecting subordinate women — while women should be caring and soft, supporting their husband. While pink and bows seem harmless, what they stand for is gender hierarchy.

Finally, "Tradwife" is the most obvious subculture to illustrate this regressive trend. It is an entire internet aesthetic circling around the subordination of women under men and a patriarchy within the home, and the promotion of a lifestyle as in the 1950s. In this, women's purpose is to serve total obedience and solely as caretakers of the house and the family. This itself is historically rooted in white, colonial, and upper-middle-class understandings of gender and femininity, and as such normatively promotes eurocentrism.

All three subcultures leave no room to deviate from the norm, the mainstream way to live. Heteronormativity, women as beautiful but empty shells, the devaluation of intelligence – all that gets promoted through social media. A role model that has taken feminists centuries to battle. Women are free in their choices of who to become, but in what ways does "influencing" step over into manipulation?

Why Is the Feminist Movement Experiencing This Setback and How Do We Counter It?

People turn to social media to escape reality: A globalized world which offers so many opportunities, that many people feel as if they are falling behind. Of course, social media is not the only cause of the phenomenon described here. The impact of conservative politics cannot be underestimated, as visible in the United States. All impacts make people prone to follow trends that ultimately set back the feminist movement: The trends are not capturing the reality but instead provide an escape from it. Education can make clear that the easy solution is not always the right one, and that going back to traditional gender roles will not solve globally shared issues. This can start in schools, through better media coverage of the dangers of social media influences, and in conversations with friends and family. Whatever the cause, it is essential we make sure that we do not lose the progress toward gender equality that was achieved through significant hardship.

By Julia Schlebush

The Comeback of Authoritarianism

For the first time in 20 years, there are more countries living in closed autocracies than in liberal democracies. After the Cold war, a world traumatised by repression saw a historical expansion of democracy. The West (European powers and the US) incentivised democracy at a global level, but nowadays authoritarian regimes are making a comeback. Authoritarian leaders are evolving, becoming increasingly repressive in their home countries and more destructive on the global stage. Usually, countries start to experience "autocraticisation" when authoritarian political movements gain direct influence over governmental policy, allowing them to dismantle democratic institutions such as free media, civil society, and the judicial system.

How Modern Authoritarians Dismantle Democracy

Scholars have referred to this authoritarian comeback as the 'autocratic revolving door phenomenon'. Emphasising the fact that this type of regime is coming back after a democratic transition. People living in liberal democracies might ask themselves; why, after suffering through dictatorship, would the population allow authoritarian elites to take power?

Unlike the coups of the 20th century, nowadays democracy often dies gradually, as the legal, institutional and political constraints on authoritarian leaders are chipped away, one by one. This "salami tactics", used by the USSR back in the cold war, allows modern authoritarians to cement themselves in power. Most of them follow a specific set of seven patterns, often referred to as the "authoritarian playbook". These patterns go from politicising independent institutions to corrupting elections and spreading misinformation.

Why Strongman Politics is Rising Again

The world is experiencing the early shocks of a sphere shaped by leaders who govern by personal will instead of rules and consensus. Promises of democracy are seeing the rise of these leaders- Kaîs Saied in Tunisia and Victor Orbán in Hungary (proving that the European Union is not safe from this trend), following in the footsteps of well-established authoritarians such as Putin and Kim Jong-un. As explained before, democratic backsliding rarely happens overnight. It often arises when the democratic systems fail to meet peoples' expectations, creating a space for strongman leaders to promise rapid solutions. When democracy faces economic stagnation, voters are receptive to leaders who can promise stability. This also applies when the country faces periods of national crisis such as civil conflict or terrorism, people become afraid and opt for political repression in exchange for safety.

Authoritarian leaders often rise because they are exceptional political communicators, for example, putting themselves as the voice of the people and using narratives that create a hero, themselves, and an enemy, the outsiders. They also tend to offer oversimplified solutions to complex problems, an example would be the 20-point ceasefire proposed by Trump , to 'resolve' the Israel-Palestinian conflict.

Even the Oldest Democracies Are Not Immune

This trend is not limited to the Global south or post-Soviet states, as some would expect; it is increasingly visible within Western democracies. The United States, who have long been advocates for liberal democracy, are now experiencing a leader who has this political style, often contradicting his own words whenever it is convenient, bending the law to fit his individual will. We have seen this when President Trump repeatedly announced tariffs on trade partners, only to reverse himself soon after. President Donald Trump is often referred to as autocratic, some see this claim as too alarmist. He has not suspended the Constitution or executed any of his rivals, as some dictators have.

Modern autocrats do not resemble the 20th Century model, they play with soft power a lot more.

Rather than terror many manipulate the media to their will, to shape public opinion and promote nationalist narratives. They might also use their charisma to make themselves more appealing, showing that they are part of the people and will always have their best interest at heart.

Democracy's Ongoing Challenge

In the end, the return of authoritarianism isn't a mystery but rather a warning. Democracies not always collapse with tanks in the streets. Today, they also erode slowly, through fear and leaders who promise order, while quietly rewriting the rules. The trend reminds us that democracy is not a one-time achievement but a continuous project. One that only survives if citizens defend their institutions, rights and norms. The comeback of strongmen is real, but the power to resist should also be.

by Beatrijs Salgado

IMPERFECTION

For centuries, because of human imperfectionality, we as humans have always strived for perfection. Perfection in our work, perfection in the things around us, perfection in ourselves. Yet, this state most of the time proved unachievable. Even when something appeared perfect, it would break, it would fade, it would misplace, go wrong, in essence, become imperfect, and with that, the momentary ideal of perfection would shatter.

But in chasing perfection, something else began to emerge, something opposite, something complementary: the acceptance of imperfection and appreciation of its beauty. Across history, in many ancient cultures and civilizations, people have found meaning in flaws, in irregularity, in the traces of time. This mindset became embedded in art, in architecture, in philosophy, and through it, in our modern life, which affects our everyday lives to this day.

With the rise of artificial intelligence, endlessly capable computers, and perfectioning technologies like plastic surgery, this mindset feels especially relevant today, as with these methods' perfection seems achievable, maybe even too easily to certain measures. In the shadows of this phenomenon, however, the appreciation of mistakes, of imperfection, is becoming newly important. It reminds us of the importance of our humanity, naturalness, and realness, whether we talk about an essay, a building, or a human being themselves.

ANCIENT ROOTS

We'll take an aspect present in Japanese culture as our first example. The philosophy and aesthetic of *wabi-sabi* (侘び寂び) finds beauty in imperfection, impermanence, and simplicity. A cracked tea bowl, the fading colour of old wood, or an uneven brushstroke are flaws that need to be appreciated, not hidden according to this philosophy. The *wabi-sabi* mindset reminds us that nothing lasts forever, nothing is finished, and nothing is perfect, accentuating that that's exactly what makes it beautiful.

Similarly, in Islamic art, artists sometimes included a small, deliberate flaw, the so-called "Persian flaw", as a reminder that only God is perfect. A single knot out of place in the carpet, a slightly misaligned tile, or a line that isn't quite straight were irregularities that proved that the artist's hand was human, and not a divine force. And interestingly, this imperfection became the mark of authenticity and humility in these artworks.

But Japan isn't alone in this thinking. In ancient Greece, imperfection was what made people human. Tragic heroes like Oedipus or Achilles were defined by their flaws, their mistakes, pride and missteps, which gave their stories meaning and emotion. Even Greek sculpture often captured motion and tension of life instead of focusing merely on symmetry, revealing life in its purest, imperfect form

MODERN TIMES

For most of history, perfection was something we had to work for. It took time, effort, and skill and it was valuable because it was rare and hard to achieve. But now, technology changed everything. With the rise of varying assistant tools and artificial intelligence perfection became effortless and easily achievable. Grammar can be fixed in seconds, essays can be polished instantly, even photos can be retouched automatically. With a few clicks, anyone can produce something flawless. And in doing so, it slowly loses its meaning. And that's exactly the problem.

When perfection becomes easy, it loses its meaning. As Enrico Tartarotti notes in his video essay, imperfection is becoming the new proof of humanity. A double space, a small typo, or a slightly uneven photo now stands as evidence that a real person was behind the work. Some professors even celebrate small mistakes, seeing them as signs of real thought and effort in an AI-dominated world.
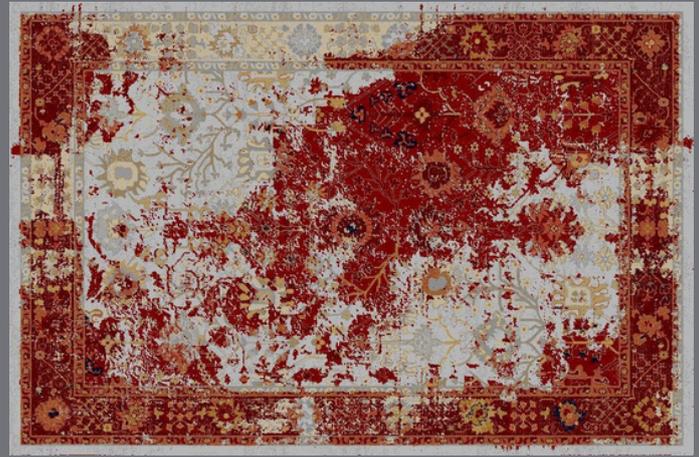
And yet, even here, maybe for this very reason, the cultivation of imperfection appears. On social media, the raw, unfiltered "photo dump" is gaining new came popularity. In design, rough textures, handmade details, and uneven layouts are becoming more and more celebrated. Even in tech, companies that are famous for their precision and clean interfaces, are beginning to embrace this imperfectness: Google's Material You draws colors from your personal wallpaper, creating combinations that are sometimes strange, sometimes imperfect, but always unique. Apple now lets users tint icons in any color, personalizing their user platform, which even though sometimes chaotic, is undeniably human. Imperfection is celebrated and finally allowed to be personal again.

In the end, we can see that imperfection is not a flaw to fix anymore, but a mark of life itself. Across centuries and cultures, in art, philosophy, and even our own faces, it has been a sign and a reminder of what is natural, real and human. Today, as technology makes perfection effortless, imperfection becomes rare, and therefore more and more precious. It stays present in our lives as a reminder that our flaws, mistakes and individuality is what make us memorable and authentic, not our essentially unachievable strive for perfection. Perhaps the true trend coming back is not imperfection itself, but the courage to embrace our imperfect selves.

by Timea Schrek

Ex...
Come...

It can be observed that ... is more" is shifting towards "more is more". When it comes to fashion, we have seen how layers have become a trend again. Do you remember the early 2000s and 2010s, when, as kids, we would wear tops on top of each other, or when we would use long sleeves below the t-shirts? Nowadays, we see it as layers of pants and skirts, or some tops also. The color and textile combinations are also more present. In the past decade, there has been a notable shift in style, pushing towards minimalism: neutral and beige colors or textiles, simple and basic objects... This used to give a kind of emptiness and neutrality, and was related to the feeling of calmness and maturity. However, in the last few months, there has been an increase towards the opposite side. In all environments, be it fashion, food, architecture, design, and more, colors and fullness are making a comeback.

On the one hand, we have "Quiet Luxury," a term that refers to a lifestyle filled with elegance and refinement, related to wealth, old money, and silent luxury, even though the objective is to subtly signal it. It's characterized by muted colors and quality materials, attempting a timeless design. Social Media has played a big role in this context: In 2023, a trend towards this style was seen. The series "Succession" portrayed the wealthiest New York inhabitants wearing and using subtle, expensive fashion pieces. This trend does not stay only in fashion; another big environment is interior design.

When discussing minimalist home decor, the notion at its core is centered on simplicity, austerity, and modesty; in terms of interior design, it signifies functional and uncluttered spaces. This style is usually defined by the following characteristics: use of a monochromatic palette, classic geometric shapes, and natural materials and lights. Some people argue that minimalism has several advantages, such as offering a sense of order and visual cleanliness, and prioritizing functional and useful objects. The main argument is "timeless"; therefore, the style never runs out of being trendy and is sustainable and adaptable. Examples of minimalism are the Feng Shui, for instance, or the Nordic hygge.

On the other hand, maximalism argues for the comeback of ornamental or excessive elements. It is an aesthetic embracing bold colors, layers, and an abundance of patterns, objects, and textures. Is it something new that just emerged? No. Ashley DeLapp, an interior designer, takes this style back to the Hollywood Regency Era, which had and used all of the characteristics just previously explained. Maximalism can be observed in the art stages too, for instance, in Baroque, Rococo, and Neoclassicism; however, it reaches its peak in the Victorian era. For some people, this maximal style has been a way to deal with darker feelings, such as insecurity or sadness. The "maxi" amount gives them dopamine and energy instead. It's a tool to express identity, filling a space with color and prints of own liking. Contrary to minimalism, it does not follow certain looks or characteristics, and I would say that is what is fun about it! Colors used are bold and intense, ranging from emerald and navy blue to fuchsia and sapphire. Favorite patterns among people include tropical jungle, palm leaves, or leopard print, and for fabric, plus and velvet are the most popular. All of this can be incorporated through wallpaper, painted walls, furniture, cushions, throws, or wall art.


If I look into my own room, each object has a story to tell. The rug was hand-made by my grandmother, the shelves were found spontaneously and brought home, and the chair was given by a kind neighbour whom I met during my first days of moving. I went to IKEA for some basic items, and I fell in love with one of the lamps, but I did not have the budget to buy it. A few days later, I found it on Marktplaats! (God bless Marktplaats) Each furniture or decoration has its own story of how I acquired it, making the room a conversation starter when people visit.

Maximalism is a form of self-expressing identity; it could even be considered a language. It involves creativity; to know how to combine and plasm all those colors and textures in one space, to be able to harmonize all the "different" characteristics in one; it's a reflection of joyness and individuality. However, this shift back does not mean the end of minimalism. It actually started with hybrid styles, such as "midimalism", which combines the clean structure and lightness of minimalism, with the richness and warmth of maximalism.
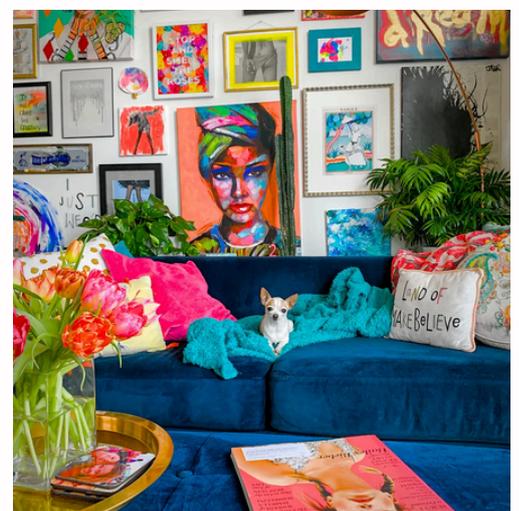
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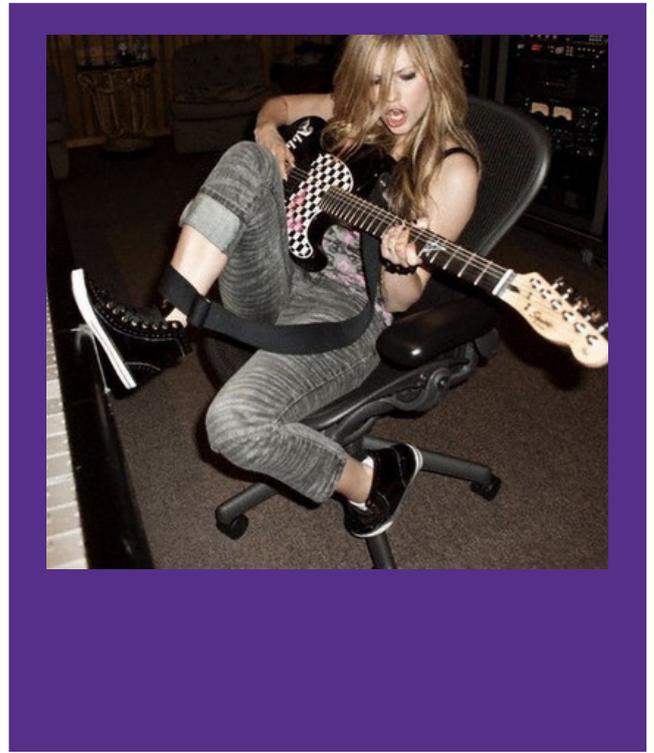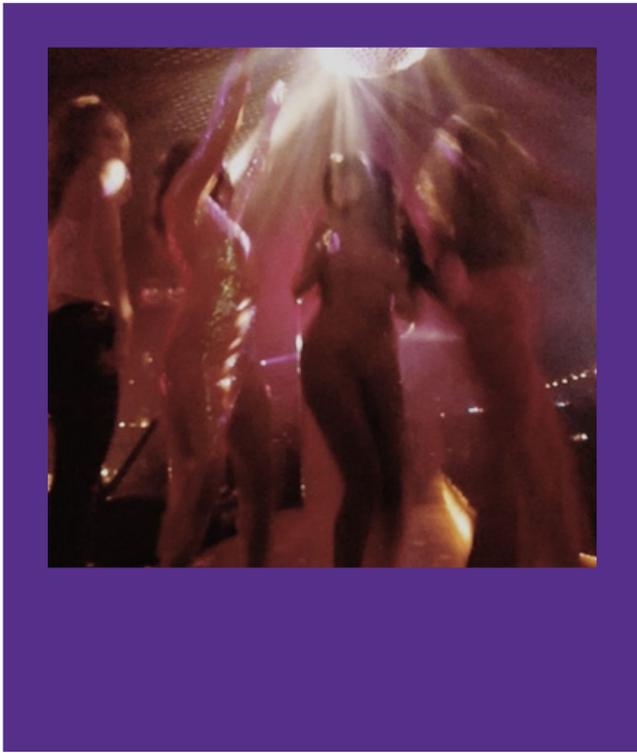
FASHION IN THE 2020'S

It would be impossible to publish this issue without including the most obvious theme when it comes to trends that come back: FASHION– yes, spelled in all caps.

Whenever we think of cyclical trends the first thing that comes to mind is without a doubt clothing styles. From the 1920s Art Deco to the 80s Disco Fever; 70s Hippie Flow to 90s Grunge, every era with its own distinct fashion trend.

But what about nowadays? What do we picture when we talk about the 2020s? A single defining look? ....Not really, more so its the lack of a specific signature look that defines our current time period.

The cycle of trends changing every decade or so seems to be disappearing. Instead, today's fashion landscape is a giant chaotic, fun, mix-and-match of every previous era. We are living in a time period where sweatpants, garden dresses, chunky 2000s belts, cowboy boots, crocs, miniskirts and yes– skinny jeans (which unfortunately refuse to die) coexist. Basically anything goes, and everything is happening at once, not one specific style but a wide variety of them. And so these past few years we have seen the comeback of many different iconic fashion trends that effortlessly blend in with each other: Flared jeans are finally coming back, along with flowing long skirts and dresses, referencing the 70's Bohemian era. Crochet-inspired pieces have resurfaced and gained increasing popularity, adding creativity and handmade artistry to outfits.

by Alisha Amador

Denim is generally also experiencing a renaissance from the 90s, reappearing in everything from miniskirts to oversized jackets. Other staple clothing items from the 90s such as combat boots, slip on dresses and everything that is baggy are still widely seen today.

At the same time, the early 2000s are having their moment, with the increasing popularity of Y2k fashion. Who would have thought low rise jeans would make such a strong comeback? Their revival paired with colorful crop tops, chunky belts, butterfly clips and cute handbags are bringing back early 2000 celebrities' fashion in full swing. These trending styles then evolve and are shaped thanks to contemporary pop-culture, such as movies and TV-shows, giving them a modern take: The 2019's series Euphoria for instance reignited the love for colorful, glitterally and unapologetically bold makeup and styling. Events such as movie premiers and modern music festivals also provide spaces and opportunities for styles to interact and gain popularity. Take Coachella for example, where boho, rave and grunge themes blend in, later spilling into mainstream closets.

And so, although stylistic diversity has always existed, these past few years have completely magnified it, something that can definitely also be explained due to the rise of social media. TikTok trends are coming and going faster than one could blink, giving rise to a multitude of fashion trends grouped and merged into categories based on aesthetics: cottagecore, clean girl, old money, dark/light academica …. The list goes on and on. Other apps such as Pinterest reinforce this, with mood boards grouping fashion styles together, creating neverending micro-trends.

What's the result? Dynamic fashion trends that are everywhere, constantly disappearing and reappearing making it basically impossible to predict what will gain popularity next. Moreover, while fast fashion has become an increasing problem and consequence of today's consumer and fashion culture, during recent years sustainability has been growing in popularity —also partially due to social media— with thrift shopping and vintage clothing becoming more and more mainstream. Upcycling is therefore contributing now more than ever to the exploration of past fashion pieces, allowing for reinterpretation of old trends in a manner that encourages eco-friendly, accessible and unique creative practices.

On a more sour note, however, even though the increasing accessibility and availability of styles contributes to a more diverse fashion landscape, some would argue that we are instead losing the true meaning and attachment behind these fashion statements: people wearing rock shirts don't actually listen to said music or the revival of the punk aesthetic but without the political aspect. Symbolic fashion statements are now purely about looks: No subcultures, just aesthetics.

Is this the price of having infinite choices available? Which is also exactly what makes this decade unique: An era not defined by one specific trend but the availability to try and combine all of them.

THE RETURN OF PHYSICAL MUSIC MEDIA

Vinyl's, cassettes, CDs: physical music media of the past have become trendy amongst the young people of today, as evidenced by increasing sales and social media pages awash with people using physical music media. Listening to music is unprecedentedly available and convenient to the owners of smartphones and other computers – streaming services such as Spotify and Apple Music are now almost ubiquitous, allowing users to access vast amounts of music for a very low cost anywhere they have their digital devices. Considering this convenience, and prevalence of smartphone use amongst young people today, one could assume that outdated technological devices would fall out of favour, fading quietly into the obsolescence, as they tend to have done in the past. Why, when it has never been easier, cheaper, or more convenient to listen to music online, do so many young people insist on using analog music media? It's bulky, expensive, time-consuming, and generally much less convenient than handheld device streaming apps. To delve into the reasons behind the emerging trend of analog music, we will look at meaning creation, rituals, and interviews of fellow Leiden University students who use record players.

RITUALS AND FINDING MEANING IN THE INCONVENIENT

For a generation raised with the convenience of digital technology, purposefully choosing to use inconvenient items can be subversive, and even refreshing. Because you must go through the effort and ritual of purchasing and using vinyls, cassettes, and CDs, the experience can feel more meaningful and special. One student who uses a record player noted in an interview that listening to the music felt more meaningful due solely to the higher cost of acquiring the record. The sheer action required to play a piece of physical music forces you to appreciate it more intensely, a rarity in a dizzying world of the Internet where media comes and goes at breakneck speed. Intentionality is an important force at play in this conversation: physical media encourage you to take a step back and experience the music more presently. The experience and ritual of using physical music media is another factor of attraction. The extended effort and multiple steps involved in playing records, CDs,and cassettes constitute a ritualistic routine that can be meditative and deeply satisfying. Byung Chul-han, a contemporary philosopher concerned with the impacts of capitalism, algorithms, and the Internet on society, offers one perspective on the importance of such experiences in his book *The Disappearance of Rituals.* He posits that smartphones and their many functions constitute 'non-things': due to the inherent restlessness of the constantly changing Internet, smartphones lack a sense of concreteness and endurance that stabilize life and identity. Physical music media on the other hand, allow one to linger on the experience of the physical object and have an enduring quality to them that has a stabilizing effect. (Han, 2020 3-4) Amidst the chaos and dynamism of current digitalized society, stability and physicality are no longer the norm for media -- and are thus that much more satisfying. To put it succinctly, a Spotify playlist is always vulnerable to change and even disappearance, while a record will be the same for as long as its atoms stay together, allowing it to contribute over time to a sense of your identity by nature of its physical being in the world.

IDENTITY AND PERFORMANCE

Music has long been as essential site of identity creation and assertion for young people; physical media further this endeavour in the digital age by their unique nature of promoting performance. For young people going through the process of identity creation most potently, it is thus no small wonder that such props as turntables and CD players have become treasured objects despite their anachronistic nature in 2026. Culture is, in one sense, performative – and to a generation raised in a highly-globalised world with nearly infinite access to other cultures, physical music media is one agential manifestation of putting one's own culture out into the world. Physical music media, then, becomes an essential site for the creation and assertion of one's culture and identity as a means of performance to bring an inner dialogue of music into the physical and tangible world – much more saliently than tapping album icons on a Spotify interface.

STREAMING SERVICES: DO WE REALLY OWN ANYTHING ANYMORE?

Under the streaming service regime, individuals don't actually own the music they listen to – it's temporarily rented to them by the mega-corps who offer their services to them. Although the user receives the benefits of convenience and an exceptionally low cost, your music doesn't ultimately belong to you. It can be at any moment taken away due to a server crash, a password leak, or any number of events out of your control. Especially for a generation that has grown up with streaming services of all arrays as the primary access point for media and cultural products (films, series, music, e-books, applications, games, etc), many crave tangible personal ownership. One student interviewed noted that the high cost of LPs was worth it for this very reason: actually feeling like you own the music you love and care about, and being able to hold a physical representation of it in your hands. Additionally, buying physical music directly supports artists you care about in a substantial way, as opposed to the paltry price-per-stream paid by Spotify and Apple Music. Vinyl records, cassettes, and CDs have the added benefit of aesthetics; they look wonderful put on display, and the album covers themselves are a form of art that provides an added benefit of owning the physical record.

THE STAYING POWER OF TRENDS

Despite their technology being outdated in the constantly evolving digital age of 2026, it seems that physical music media have come back – and are here to stay. New forms of value of these older technologies have been assigned by young people, bringing new meaning to existing objects. As dynamic youth cultures and adapt to changing conditions, so does the ability for people to find novel enjoyment and imbue new life into nostalgic ways of indulging in music.

by Hannah Bowman

DIVINE SAFETY IN A VIOLENT SECULAR WORLD

Once again, we find ourselves living in a period of crisis: conflicts outbreaking around the globe, economies crashing and a cultural revolution on the verge of changing our reality yet another time. We are living in an uncertain world, where people are looking for safety and reassurance. It is in these times that we see the emergence of extreme solutions, one of them being trying to find comfort in a higher presence and seeking refuge in the theological.

Religion and Politics in History

The escapade towards the Highest is not a new phenomenon. Humans have gone through moment of crisis since the beginning of recounted history.

Already within the first civilization, religion played an important role in the political, economic and cultural aspects of life. The role that the divine had, and still has, in societies has been a constant throughout different moments of human existence. By looking at the past, we find many examples of the meddling of religion in the political sphere.


In a speech from 2003 Bush recounts that God had told him about Iraq plans of mass destructions that would have posed a high threat to US National security. With his divine prophecy, he managed to justify one of the most brutal invasions of the 21st century. Right now, while reading this article, it might seem weird that American citizens became complicit in one of the most inhumane invasions just because of a man's "divine dream". But if we take into consideration the context in which people were living at the time, the fear of the unknown led to believing that their president had been reached out by God to invade a sovereign nation.

Is It Time to Give Up On God?

Until ten years ago, there was a prominent line of belief that religions were slowly disappearing, with the number of atheists constantly growing. Approximately 13% of the population identified as a non-believer. In his article, "Giving up on God: The Global Decline of Religion," political scientist Ronald Inglehart claims that between 2007 and 2019 the world had experienced a decline in the importance of religion. This decline would eventually lead to the extinguishment of religion. Contrary to his opinion, this was not the case, and some scholars came up with a different opinion. The professor of sociology and author of *Living the Secular Life*, Phil Zuckerman, claimed in his book that religion has the function of bringing stability to the believer during a moment of uncertainty. He looked at history and at how societies and religions interact, and he realized that countries that have higher standards of living and flourishing economies were the states with the highest number of non-believers. Therefore, he theorized that security in society consequentially diminishes religious belief. His theory opened an on-going debate on the future of religions in developing states and their dependency on human living conditions. Following Zuckerman's idea, people kept developing the theory and delved into the many cases of human catastrophy and their relation to religion.

Examples regarding these events are life-changing, and affect societies massively. One of those consequences has to be found in the religiosity rates among the population. An example that fits this case is the earthquake that struck Christchurch, New Zealand, in 2011. This was the second earthquake to hit the city in less than a year and it caused massive flooding and power outages. The seismic disaster led to 185 deaths and 6.659 injuries, making it one of the biggest national tragedies. After the tragedy New Zealand, being notoriously a not very religious country, experienced a spike of religiosity after the accident.

Similar experiences were found in other parts of the world, such as in Japan were the engagement in spiritual shrines increased, in Thailand with the creation of more spiritual retirements and in China were the youth turned towards spirituality after the pandemic period. If religiosity rates depend on the socio-economic and political condition of a society as Zuckerman claimed, then we can assume that, although there might be times of declines, religions will always have a comeback after a seriously threatening event that alters a society. The debate remains open and the perception that we have of religion changes every day, as do our faith and our society.
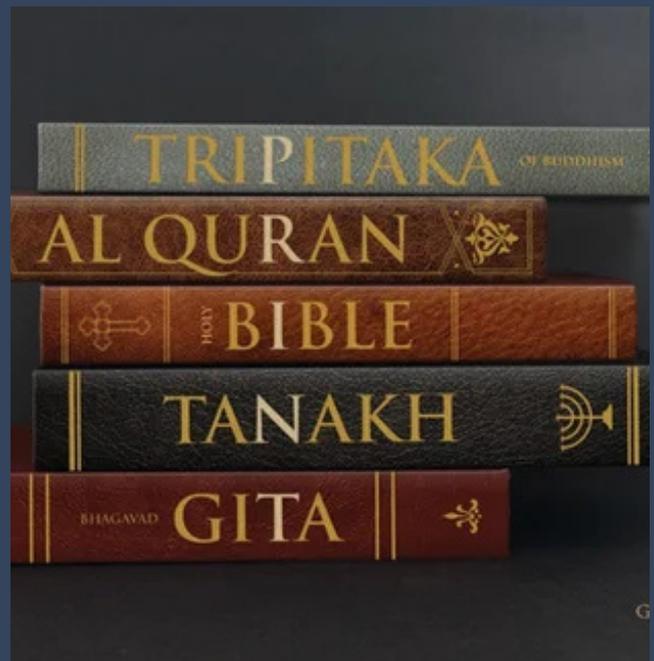
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