

Book review

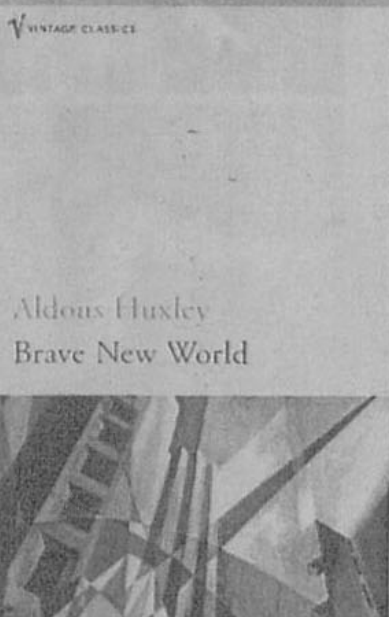
# Brave new world

**L**AST week, I had a fairly intense discussion with Niloy about an article called Generation L, in the centrefold of last week's issue of Star Lifestyle. For those in the dark, the article talked about today's youth, and how utterly lacklustre and de-motivated she finds them.

My argument on the issue was that you can blame this on modern city life. Cramped apartments are replacing the playgrounds, and don't offer space to move. The now-inescapable coaching centres rob the young of free time after school. The lack of proper entertainment facilities leave no option but to turn to mindless 'boxes' like the television, gaming console and computer for amusement.

Niloy talked about how the mind set of people have changed. It's become so that you let a bunch of teens loose on an open field, the chances of them clustering around the corner to smoke and gossip about cell-phones outweigh the chances of them starting a game. (Of course, allowances must be made for the World Cup-induced football craze prevalent at the moment).

I was thinking back on that conversation when I started on Aldous Huxley's controversial sci-fi classic *Brave New World*. This book is considered as one of the principal dystopian or anti-utopian novels of the twentieth century, along with Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty Four*, Koestler's *Darkness at Noon* and Zamyatin's *We*. In other words it's an ultra-pessimistic way to make one think about the consequences of one's thoughts and actions.



Aldous Huxley  
*Brave New World*

The story is set in 632 AF, 632 years after the advent of Henry Ford, the American car magnate, whose highly successful Model T was the first automobile to be manufactured by purely mass-production methods.

Ford is in fact the presiding deity of the World State, a global caste system set up after the Nine Years War that ended all form of government that we know today, and the industrial philosophy of this deity manages to enter into every aspect of life. We're talking of a world where people are mass-produced in laboratories, their cast and creed pre-determined by lab pre-sets. A world where words like 'parents' and 'family'

are considered as smut, and promiscuity and materialism are literally moral obligations, and when the people of this system aren't consuming or consummating, they're high on the get this government approved dope called 'soma'. The great Ford had once said 'History is bunk'. Just so, there's no place for history, art or culture in this new world order.

Against this shiny, colourful backdrop, where everything is new and clean and everyone is happy, the story opens with two upper-caste 'Alpha Plus' men, Bernard Marx and Helmholtz Watson finding themselves inexplicably, (and in the view of the authorities 'dangerously') disenchanted with the current system. Marx takes off for a visit to the Savage Reservation which are like protected safari parks where the old way of life is still preserved. He meets a Savage called John, who is actually an Alpha Plus who has been born inside the reservation. Marx brings this Shakespeare-loving monogamous creature back to London with him, and life is never the same again for either of them.

Huxley's description is thinly laced with an almost fanatical hatred of the American culture, which is mainly what this story snipes at. His narration is cold and detached, like William Golding's *Lord of the Flies*, and he is merciless with his characters. I have a feeling that people who watched *V for Vendetta* or *Aeon Flux* will be able to relate to this book. When it comes to food for thought, this book brings out a banquet, so go read it!

By Sabrina F Ahmad

## WÊTE-Â-WÊTE WITH IOBAL ASIF JEWEL

### FROM CENTRE

About Miles's new album...

The new album of Miles maybe wasn't up to the expectation of some of us, so we asked Jewel why Miles's new album lacked that X-Factor vibe. He replied, "X-Factor, was completely my own project. In the case of Miles, the band gelling is a bit different. Miles appeals to a certain crowd and a certain mass. The sales were pretty good however, and it is a big hit in the rural areas. They are already asking for the next album! God knows when that will be!"

Jewel wrote the lyrics of *Protikkha* in the latest album of Miles. We asked him about their foreign tours. "Miles probably has a bigger number of fans in India. If we walk down the streets of Kolkata, many people would recognise us. In our recent show in Bangalore, April 11<sup>th</sup>, there was a long queue of autograph hunters when we went to the movies, which was great. We played for the earthquake victims of Gujrat and there were other bands-Junoon, Euphoria and Silk Route. It was a great feeling."

About the present underground scene...

If you have a guitar and have practised plucking for two to three months, you can easily get a show no matter how poorly you play! Bands are bubbling up here and there. What did Jewel think about it? He said, "All the kids today are after stardom. What they don't realise is that senior musicians like me have twenty to thirty years of musical experience. It took us some time and hard work to come to this level. Nowadays, most of the bands sound like either Artcell or Black. They have to come up with their own unique style if they want to make it big. They shouldn't jump to shows without practising a lot. If you are good, Rocklink will find you...you don't have to come to us!"

Hmm...so we asked Jewel for any advice to the budding bands. Jewel said, "Listen to all kinds of music. Explore everything and then come up with your own unique sound."

### CELL PHONE TIMELINE: THE PAST



# Cell phones of the '90s

**I**MAGINE you didn't have a cell phone; imagine that your only source of telecommunication with the outside world was the land phone conveniently placed in your parents' bedroom. Yeah, you're imagining all right and due to the immensity of the calamity you're imagining, you've probably already started to rip up this article into little small squares.

But contrary to popular belief, there was a time when cell phones weren't that widely spread, that is in the '90s. You could only see them in movies or in the hands of some rich uncle who guarded this plastic miracle with his life. You're probably already in tears by now reminiscing about those times when the only time you could talk to your boy/girlfriend was when you actually met them.

Talking about the cell-phone-less '90s most people have different views. There're those who blandly rate those times as the worst times of their lives. These are the people whose love lives flourished then and you can obviously guess that a cell phone would have made carrying out their romantic endeavors a lot less hazardous (due to the fact that their mothers always listened in on their conversations on the land phone).

On a less serious note, cell phones in the '90s weren't really all that fashionable being extremely huge, so huge in fact that quite a few people reckon that you could actually kill people by whacking them on the head with 'em. There were these mondo-sized Philips and

Motorola sets that weren't really all that endearing. Also they proved a barrier to people's freedom, since a cell phone can be succinctly described as a hi tech leash.

There are those who claim that life was a lot better in the '90s when they didn't have cell phones. Prank calls in the middle of the night; incessant amount of missed calls from unknown numbers were obviously non-existent and a lot of people were grateful for it.

These days a cell phone means insomnia, what with these all night free offers helping the prank callers. Back in the '90s the call rates could literally reach the moon and the network signals were almost non-existent. Also back in those days cell phones weren't used for arcane yapping; these days you can see people with their phones glued to their ears, forever yapping into god knows whose ears.

Unlike these days, cell phones in the '90s were kept well out of the reach of children. This may have been because of the exorbitant call rates and because if the kid accidentally broke the cell then finding a fix-it-up guy would have been difficult and fixing it would have been expensive. The other thing to notice was that the second a person got a cell phone the whole family from all corners of the city would suddenly arrive at their doorstep to drool over it. These days a cell phone means zilch. Most of the people I asked were a lot happier without mobile phones and only took one to keep contact with their

beloved special someone.

People's feelings towards cell phones have changed. A cell phone in the '90s was a sign of aristocracy while these days cell phones have made it onto the list of necessities. Back in the '90s a cell phone was bought when necessary and used when necessary, while today every 10-year-old brat's got one to keep contact with his friends. Back in the '90s cell phones were just that, a mobile telecommunications device. These days a cell phone means a device to store unsolicited pictures of unknown girls.

To lot of us cell phones back in the '90s meant a thing to be boasted about to our friends in corner of the school playground. I remember when my father first got hold of a cell phone. It was one of them huge Ericsson sets and he always kept it standing upright on his bedside table.

One day, plucking up all the courage I could I decided to see what happened if I pressed the number one button. Being an obvious novice you can guess my horrified feelings when I saw that the number 1 had flashed on to the screen and the whole cell phone had lit up.

Obviously I thought the goddamn thing had gone bust on me and I took the liberty of running out of the room and sleeping a sleepless night thinking about what I had done. When nothing really happened you could guess the hugely spun story I told my friends.

By Tareq

### THE PRESENT



### THE FUTURE

