

THE DEFINITIVE
YOUTH
MAGAZINE

SHOUT

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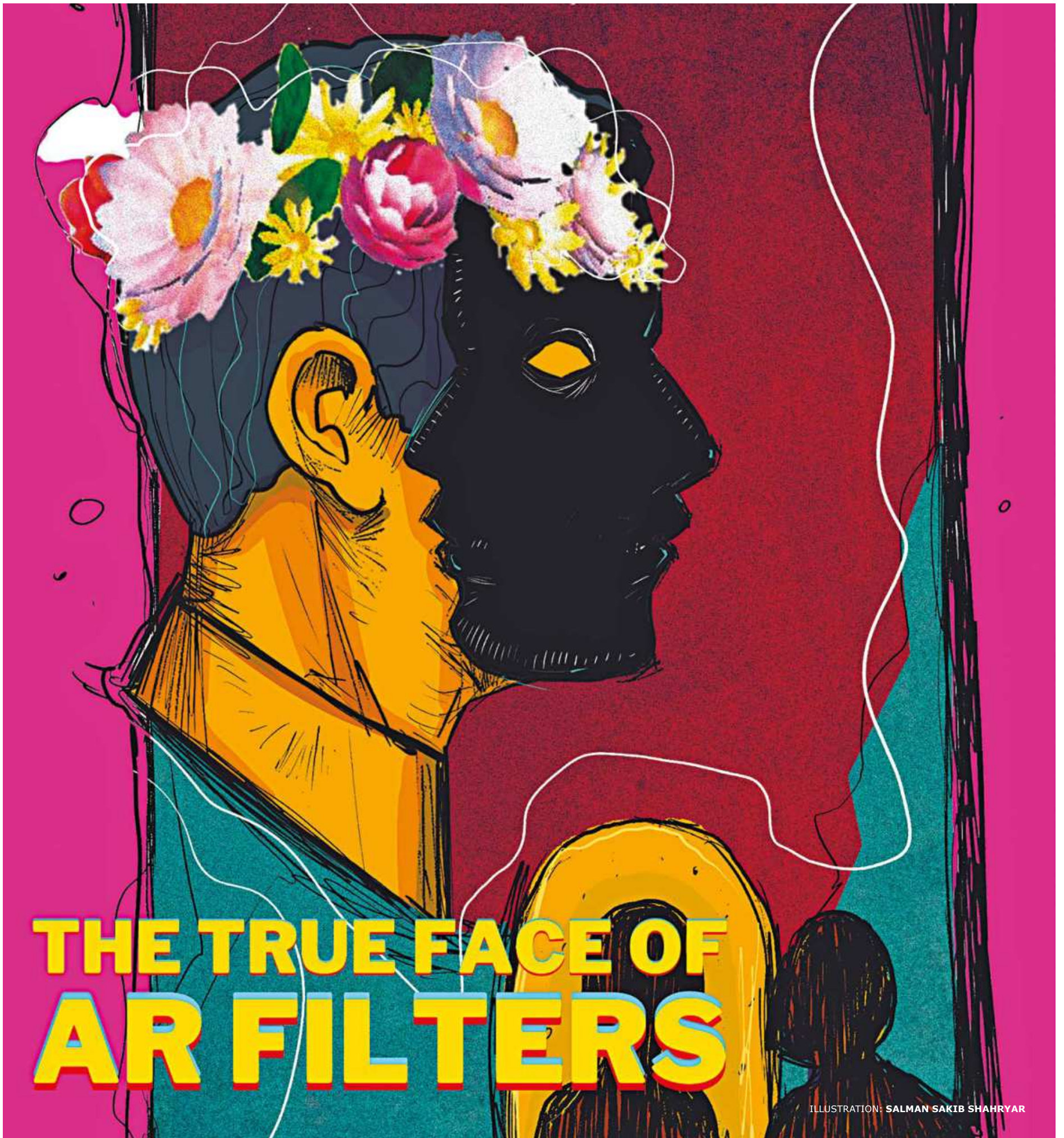


WHAT DOES ASTEROID
MINING LOOK LIKE?

PG 4

SITCOM OSTS THAT STILL
HAVE OUR HEART

PG 6



THE TRUE FACE OF AIR FILTERS

ILLUSTRATION: SALMAN SAKIB SHAHRYAR

EDITORIAL

I remember the days of the Snapchat filters. I'll admit, I've used a couple of them. There was a dog one, and the extremely popular flower crown which became a customary filter on Pahela Baishakh. While I've come far from my days of spending hours on the internet browsing through people's lives, I understand the momentary visual appeal of a perfect skin on my photo feed.

However, if you're living in an augmented reality, I have news for you. You're fooling yourself. The internet, and social media, does enough to make us feel both inferior and superior depending on activities and perspective; why get stuck in an endless loop and contribute to mental health issues that might create polarizing personalities?

This week's cover story unveils the true façade behind the mass usage of AR filters. Whether you know it or not, whether you agree to it or not – how you use the internet defines how it uses you. The question remains, can the people take back this power in their own hands?

-- Kazi Akib Bin Asad, Editor In-charge, SHOUT



PLAYWATCH

TV SERIES



Shows That (Perhaps) Ended Too Early

FARNAZ FAWAD HASAN

The common objective of streaming sites – to maximise profit by only renewing shows with massive viewership – has not been kind to the ones with a niche audience. Before you can get emotionally invested in one, they either get cancelled or are never renewed even after having the potential to be something great.

Here is a list of a few one-season shows that got scrapped way too early.

I AM NOT OKAY WITH THIS

I Am Not Okay With This is a teenage, coming-of-age story, with an enticing storyline. Based on the eponymous graphic novel by Charles Foreman, this diegesis revolves around 17-year-old Syd dealing with the distressing complexities of life along with the burdening consciousness of her budding superpowers.

Despite the clichés and recycled references, the slow burn nature of the plot and the intriguing twists keep viewers glued to the screen. The writers also meticulously tucked in clues foreshadowing the future while strategically ending the season with a cliffhanger.

LIVING WITH YOURSELF

Unhappy with his life and fizzling relationship, Miles Elliot, played by the charming Paul Rudd, decides to visit a sketchy massage parlour to undergo a treatment that will alter his personality. The treatment goes wrong, and the story follows him having to co-exist with the embodiment of how he wished he really was.

This compact 8-episode dramedy packs a dense premise but ends up being captivating. The amazing execution of the plot makes the viewers connect with Miles, and the manic turbulence of his life.

TEENAGE BOUNTY HUNTERS

Teenagers and bounty hunting? As odd as it sounds, the peculiarity of the premise somehow propels an excellent take on life, race, religion, sexuality, and gender roles.

Fraternal twins Blair and Sterling end up fighting crimes and tracking down felons, under the wings of ex-cop and froyo shop owner, Bowser. As the girls struggle to juggle their secret bounty hunting life and conservative ideals, they uncover mysterious family secrets. Forget the title; the show is terrific for getting out of a rut.

DASH & LILY

If you're looking for a heartfelt, romantic, swoon-worthy series that will put a smile on your face, *Dash and Lily* is the perfect fit for you.

It's a heart-warming tale of two individuals who happen to cross paths through a diary, and travel all over New York in hopes of finding bits about each other through clues left in there. The charming characters and whimsical holiday spirit add to this delightful love story.

THE SOCIETY

A group of students get transported to a world resembling their own with no inhabitants except for themselves. Soon, they realise the need for a competent leader and start fighting for power to build their civilisation.

Although the story has a skosh of ridiculous loopholes, the emphasis on how difficult it is to form a functioning society from nothing makes it worth watching. Teenage drama, politics, and mystery – certainly are the triad that make this a binge worthy show.

Farnaz Fawad Hasan is a disintegrating pool noodle wanting to stay afloat. Reach her at farnazfawadhasan@gmail.com

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Here's How You Become a True Horror Movie Bad Guy

SYED TAMJID TAZWAR

People think being a supernatural servant of evil is an easy job. It's not. Some pesky little human might lay waste to your plan and the next thing you know, you are shunned by the paranormal community.

If you are a metaphysical servant of chaos struggling with your job and interested in joining our ranks, read on.

DON'T HAVE TOO MUCH FUN

Yes, chasing people, collecting souls, metaphysical torture is fun. But at the end of the day, you have to do the job.

Don't get too caught up in scaring the newly relocated family or the scared teenagers and botch up the job at the end. Also don't misplace the icon of sin, the token of evil or whatever material object you have put the eternal curse on. We don't want some know-it-all to find the thing and foil our plan. Also, avoid putting it too close to the hunting ground. We also don't want them to learn about the same lazy substandard backstory we all have for the hundredth time and figure out how to break the curse.

BE VIGILANT

According to the Beelzebub Association for Paranormal Welfare, nine out of ten times the victim gets away because of the lack of proper oversight.

Remember, your victims can run but they can't hide. Check under the bed, check between the closets, the basement, the attic. These two-legged chardates are not as intelligent as they think they are. They usually hide in the same places. The same creepy dark places as if nothing's going to go wrong. You have the power, my dudes.

CHOOSE YOUR VICTIMS ACCORDINGLY

Be creative while picking the "hauntee." Picking the annoying kids has backfired way too many times.

Instead, go for the more likeable or smarter ones, after they split up and look around to see what's wrong in your little macabre lair like everything's perfectly normal. That way, they wouldn't be able to get away with their sorry little lives after losing their idiot friend to your masterful plans. Leaving the innocent kid for later is a terrible idea. They don't seem so innocent when they light you up with Greek fire or drown you in your very own eternally cursed body of water.

BE AWARE OF YOUR SHORTCOMINGS

Being aware of your shortcomings is an essential code of practice for the paranormally menacing and hellishly evil.

We should all craft our sinister designs based on our shortcomings and strengths. You don't want to be a hellish demon stuck in a house with exorcist couples or a cold-blooded alien huntsman stuck in a tropical rainforest with Arnold Schwarzenegger. Play to your strengths and pick the perfect scenario. You can also set up traps or death tokens of different kinds if you are not that paranormally gifted.

Subscribe to our YouTube channel for more tips!

Syed Tamjid Tazwar is too lazy to come up with an original blurb. Contact with him at syedtazwartamjid@gmail.com



Does your newfound love for a club deserve to get a lot of stick?

ALAVI ASHRAF ERAM

Who made you fall in love with football? Ronaldinho is a name that'll most commonly pop up. His Blaugrana torch was passed on to Lionel Messi, the rightful king. Being the rightful heir to Maradona, he drew a lot of staunch Argentine fans towards Barcelona as well.

I, for one, became a Milanista because of the club who played against Serie A's flow. I fell in love with Kaka and Pirlo (whose shirt I donned proudly over the years). I became a Madridista because of the Galacticos. My brother became a Kopite primarily because of their jersey and his eternal skipper, Steven Gerrard. Eventually, the Istanbul miracle solidified that love affair.

Whether we acknowledge it or not, most of us chose a club because of the badge, or any iconic jersey or more importantly, a player. Some picked up a club because of their fascination towards a certain country and their players.

We weren't quite brought up to speed on the club's ideology since we remotely didn't have any affiliation with the city the club was based in. Nor were we mature enough to have a football philosophy of our own.

Yes, some of us chose a certain club because of their iconic goals. Let's face it, we understood football just to be a game of goals in that age; we had very little idea regarding the tactical intricacies, disruption of passing lanes, the occasional but necessary tactical fouls and other facets of the game.

So, why do we take a dig on the first chance we get, on people who shift their allegiance towards a certain club? This is the player that made them watch football, put a smile on their face even in the toughest of

times, whose goals and skills compilations they were so enamoured with that they tried to replicate them on the field next day. Why the hate?

It would be mighty naive of me if I didn't take the fact into account that AC Milan doesn't hold the same philosophy anymore, nor does Real Madrid. Club philosophies are bound to change in accordance with the transition of the game and market. Clubs embrace new eras after the departure of important figures and other consequential changes.

Not that I am a big proponent of local allegiance but that at least gives the locals an incentive to cling on to their clubs, a fandom that was passed on to them generationally. Club's ideology was instilled into them which, in many ways, outweighs and to some extent, disallows enchantment for a non-club-individual.

For us outsiders though, is it wrong for our love towards a player, who was the sole reason for us to fall for this game, outweigh our love towards a club that we started supporting for reasons not so connected with the game?

Alavi Ashraf Eram likes to blabber about his favourite movies, songs and sports. Drop him your movie critiques at [facebook.com/alaviashraf.eram](https://www.facebook.com/alaviashraf.eram)

WHAT DOES ASTEROID MINING LOOK LIKE?

SABIBA HOSSAIN

Asteroids are truly a wonder. First, they brought iron to Earth that later dictated the course of humanity. Then, they swiped off dinosaurs to pave paths for us. Now, it's our time to pay back with gratitude.

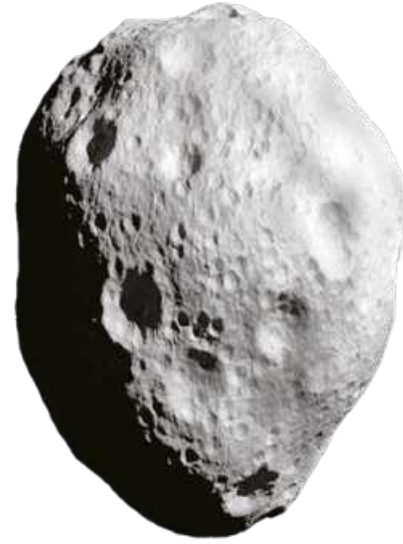
For that, we should traverse to our friends in the asteroid belt and extract the treasures out of them. As alluring as it sounds, experts opine that asteroid mining has some drawbacks, some of which are as deadly as the extinction of the human race.

Asteroids are rocky, metallic bodies that orbit the sun but are too small to be defined as planets. They are rich in rare-earth metals like gold and platinum. Mining asteroids could bring revolutionary changes in science, technology, society, and the economy. It could even solve fuel issues in terms of interplanetary travels. The knowledge asteroids will bring, along with the riches, is too tempting to give up.

Hence, the race between space agencies to excavate asteroids from space has already begun.

Sure, it sounds straight-out-of-science-fiction-type marvellous when hearing the proposition, but how long-headed is it?

For starters, asteroid mining could create the most wealth chasm we have ever imagined. Asteroid mining needs expensive tools and intricate technologies, so only the richest will get to invest and reap the benefits. The inflation of rare earth metals will change the direction of



the economy drastically. Therefore, an economic monopoly by developed nations over underdeveloped ones is bound to happen.

Next up, environmental risks. To propel commercial asteroid mining, space travel will become a regular thing. This will accelerate the emission of carbon dioxide and greenhouse gases, triggering global warming. Debris shed

in the mining process could create interference to satellites' functionality or destroy them altogether.

The third problem is feasibility. The entirety of an asteroid isn't a resource. In order to administer feasible mining, available asteroids need to be mapped so that we can determine which asteroid to mine and which ones to leave to prevent waste of energy and assets. The cataloguing is yet to begin due to our current technological limits.

Inconsiderate actions in asteroid mining could lead us to our own destruction. Tempering with an asteroid could affect its velocity, and in the worst-case scenario, it could come directly at us, cleaning our existence just like the dinosaurs before us.

Asteroid mining is an opportunity for us to explore. With proper implementation of the theory, we could bring revolutions and write new histories.

According to the present-day scenario, asteroid mining will be conducted by billionaires, which will give birth to the problems discussed above. To reap the benefits of asteroids for everyone on Earth, necessary acts need to be proposed and made.

To put it succinctly, awareness regarding the dangers of asteroid mining should be raised before it becomes too late.

Sabiba Hossain is a Hufflepuff who plans on going into hibernation every winter but never succeeds. Send her fantasy book recommendations at fb.com/Sabibastro

Why Do YouTubers Stop Making Videos?

ARYAH JAMIL

We've all grown up on YouTube. Whether it's cooking or commentary, you get to know your favourite creators and form parasocial relationships with them.

You watch them grow little by little each week till they have millions following them. However, consistency is rare.

Over time, they upload videos less frequently, the quality takes a hit for the worse, and they feel rushed. From uploading videos every week, they slowly fade until they upload once a few months. Why?

They may just be taking a break for their mental health. Fame takes a toll on people. Creating fresh content round the clock can be exhausting. It could also be burnout.

Pewdiepie took a break and said, "I wanted to say it in advance because I made up my mind. I'm tired. I'm feeling very tired."

The line between their private lives and the content they create become blurred. Creators market themselves. The more the intimate the content, the greater the number of clicks.

The YouTuber could also be working on bigger projects or may have chosen to prioritise quality over quantity, given their growing follower base.

An ongoing trend seems to be creators diverting to smaller second channels. They leave their main channels and work on small channels.

The answer to that is a long convoluted one. While it may seem redundant to "re-start," looking at the beginning of YouTube may bring about some clarity. When you observe some of the oldest creators like Lilly Singh, Ryan Higa, and Smosh, you may notice that they all started creating content for fun and for friends to see. The videos didn't have budgets or pressure of productivity. However, they soon became brands and had followings of millions, a



lot of which they may have been unprepared for.

For a lot of creators, this pressure isn't what they initially signed up for. Or maybe, they find themselves not being able to keep up with the rigid schedules.

So it is natural to see more vlog or gaming channels putting up content consistently where the creators don't have scripted content and the content focuses on the creator's regular life and activities.

The part of the audience who migrate

from the main channel to a second channel is the part that is most loyal to the YouTuber. The creators get to relax and take it slow and the subscribers get to enjoy their favourites be their authentic selves, the ones they fell in love watching at the beginning.

D'Angelo Wallace is a brilliant example of this. The YouTube sensation posts long researched video essays on his main channel and shorter more casual opinion based videos on his second channel.

We could compare the second YouTube channel to spam Instagram accounts or *finstas*. An account just for your friends, somewhere you can be yourself. The same logic applies to creators just on a larger scale because most creators are just looking for intimacy and the sense of community they had when they just started out.

Aryah Jamil is mediocre at everything except laughing at their own jokes Tell her to stop talking at jamil.aryah@gmail.com

The True Face of AR Filters

NASHRAH HAQUIE & RASHA JAMEEL

Who here remembers Snapchat's infamous "flower crown" filter from 2015? A show of hands, please.

Everyone with a smartphone simply couldn't get enough of it... until there was a new augmented reality (AR) filter to top the flower crown's popularity. And then came another. And yet another, leading up to the massive collections of AR filters that are presently available on every other social networking application.

Facebook eventually caught up with Snapchat's AR technology in 2017, with the release of Camera Effects on the former's platform. By 2019, AR filters had evolved from being a product from personal use to being an essential tool in promotional strategies.

Blogger Maisha Basharat Zakaria (@youknow_hue) discussed creating her first AR facial filter saying, "I came up with the thought of creating my own filter with a very clear purpose in mind. I wanted everyone to try and see how it'd be if I were to paint on them, with



PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA

substantially negative with respect to cosmetics and physical appearance.

AR filters and photo-editing tools are having a substantial impact on our self-image and shifting beauty standards across the world as customers are becoming increasingly drawn towards AR-based advertising which tend to offer a more immersive and overall customised experience compared to traditional adverts.

After the Covid-19 pandemic hit, the popularity of AR technology took a slightly different turn in terms of communication. Social networking companies adapted to the state of social disconnection across the globe, by making use of AR face filters to encourage social media-oriented interactions. The netizens welcomed the opportunity of being able to convene Zoom meetings from the comfort of their homes, with the only formal mandate being dressing from the waist up.

But when it comes to staring at our own faces the entire time, what effect does such an action have on our self-esteem?

Rather than focusing on the other person in online meetings, we often find ourselves fixated on our own appearance and the lighting, obsessing over the camera angle and getting distracted with the act of continually comparing our appearances to that of others. Enter AR filters. With one tap, the user can revamp both their appearance as well as their surroundings.

Sounds like a bit of a necessity on paper, but the reality behind the prolonged usage of such a technology is a rather murky affair.

The AR facial filters let you see what your face would've looked like if it were more conventionally attractive: if it had smoother skin, bigger eyes, and fuller lips, planting the illusion of "beautifi-

cation" in your head. Thus begins your unhealthy obsession with AR filters.

Pharmaceutical Sciences major Eliza Sadia Zahin spoke about her current state of dependency on AR filters, saying, "These days I feel like anyone looks better only when an AR filter has been applied to them. I've grown accustomed to thinking of AR filters as absolute necessities everytime I take a photo of myself. I understand that it's an unhealthy habit, but I don't know how to snap out of it."

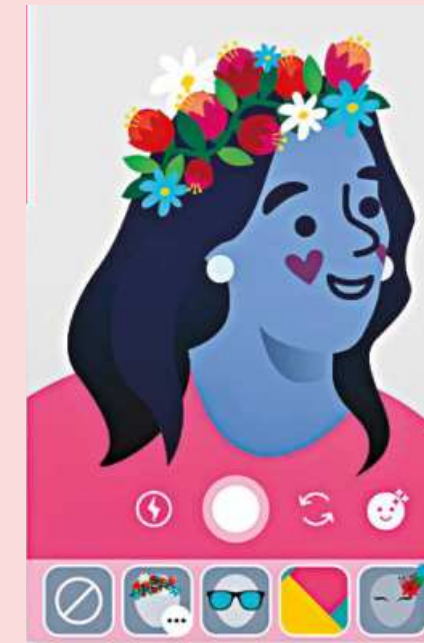
Frequent usage of AR facial filters can gradually result in the user falling out of touch with their actual physical appearance, since they grow dependent on the filters providing them with an instant AR makeover. Once a user becomes accustomed to seeing a conventionally-attractive, albeit unrealistic, version of themselves on the screen, the transition back to reality is unpleasant to say the least. All of this social media perfection is seeping out of our phones and into our actual lives.

You're not alone if you're feeling more anxious than normal about your physical appearance during these trying times. More individuals are thinking to themselves, "I want to look like that," and going to tremendous measures to achieve their goals.

The fallout from such incidents can be highly harmful to a person's mental health, especially their sense of body image.

Mixed-media artist Syeda Salwa Azam voiced her concerns, saying, "For digital artists, AR filters make for yet another creative avenue to be explored. But the toxicity begins when we're more focused on altering our appearance rather than creating actual art. Now it's all about having an unrealistic physical appearance."

It seems that how people believe they



the virtual face paint in question being the software which I used to create the filter. It was a way for me to reach out to my followers and give something back to them. My AR filter helped people connect with my work better, ultimately working out as a great promotional strategy for me."

Sharing her thoughts on AR facial filters, blogger Sharfin Islam (@atiny-reader) said, "The very first facial filter I created proved to be rather difficult in the making. But the experience taught me about the kind of creativity that goes into producing such facial filters that virtually mimic face art."

In the present day, brands have come to lean further and further towards AR to help boost sales after surveys revealed that consumers are more likely to respond positively to marketing campaigns which are conducted via AR technology. Unfortunately, amidst its widespread commercialisation, the impact has been

appear on the exterior determines their whole value and how they feel about themselves on the inside, which AR filters affect in detrimental ways, with people's insecurities manifesting as body dysmorphic disorder.

"I stopped using AR filters entirely because whenever I did it made me depressed. It made me want to look more like my filtered self and hindered my self-confidence a lot," shared 18-year-old Afra Islam.

The internet has evolved from "a place to be" to "a place to become", and it's imperative to recognise the difference. As the frequency of face-to-face contact decreases and our time spent scrolling online increases, it is more vital than ever to be wary of our mental health.

As digital natives, we are constantly bombarded with options to analyse one's looks and fixate on one's flaws. When you use social media filters to edit a photo of yourself, you may believe you've produced a better-looking version of yourself. Evading unrealistic beauty standards is easier said than done. The ultimate goal is to be able to take them with a grain of salt, and acknowledge AR filters for what they are: augmented reality.

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Rasha Jameel is your neighbourhood feminist-apu-who-writes-big-essays. Remind her to also finish writing her bioinformatics research paper at rasha.jameel@outlook.com

All Nashrah cares about is smashing the patriarchy: Help her at nashrah.haque01@gmail.com





Sitcom OSTs That Still Have Our Heart

RAYA MEHNAZ

*Whether it was the cast of *The Office* dancing to “Forever” at Jim and Pam’s wedding, or Jake Peralta making suspects sing “I Want It That Way” on *Brooklyn Nine-Nine*, music has always been instrumental in the mechanisms of television.*

However, sometimes shows go one step further and create an entirely new soundtrack from scratch. These goofy soundtracks have shown unprecedented creativity and captured the heart of their viewers. Here are five original soundtracks that still bring a smile to fan’s faces.

“101 RAP” FROM COMMUNITY

“101 Rap” is the freestyle rap that Troy and Abed made while sitting in Group Study Room F. It was improvised from the beginner Spanish phrases and words they were learning in their Spanish 101 class. This song reminds all of us that Donald Glover can make, “Where is the library/ My name is T-Bone/ The Disco Spider,” sound catchy.

“IN THE MOONLIGHT” FROM MODERN FAMILY

This is a song written and performed by Dylan Marshall, for his on screen love, Haley Dunphy. Haley, in order to prove to her parents that Dylan is not a bad influence on her, asked him to sing this song in front of her entire family.

Her family, almost appeased by the first verse, changes their tunes when the second verse of Dylan’s song suddenly takes a turn for the explicit. Despite their outrage at the crude subject of the song, the ending montages of the episode shows various members jamming out to Dylan’s song.

“5000 CANDLES IN THE WIND” FROM PARKS AND RECREATION

Performed by Pawnee’s best band, Mouse Rat, it

was a tribute to the beloved miniature horse, Li'l Sebastian, and was written by Andy Dwyer. Andy misunderstood Leslie Knope when she asked him to write a song that is 5000 times better than Elton John’s “Candle in the Wind”. Thus, 5000 Candles in the Wind was created. Despite the running gags, this song remains to be one of Mouse Rat’s best hits.

“A LITTLE BIT ALEXIS” FROM SCHITT’S CREEK

Taken from Alexis Rose’s critically reviewed limited reality series, “A Little Bit Alexis” stays true to its name. “I’m a Lamborghini, I’m a Hollywood star... I’m expensive sushi, I’m a cute huge yacht,” explains the fabulous life Alexis led before she moved to Schitt’s Creek. It also adds to the comedic timing of the show when Alexis decides to audition for *Cabaret* with this song.

“LET’S GO TO THE MALL” FROM HOW I MET YOUR MOTHER

Nothing will top the revelation of Robin Scherbatsky’s secret past where she was a teenage pop star named Robin Sparkles who hung around in the mall and sang this unbelievably catchy song. The song will effectively set off so many inside jokes, gags that it can be said that *How I Met Your Mother* would not be the same without “Let’s Go to the Mall.”

Raya Mehnaz likes to live life dangerously — one House MD episode at a time. Send help at fb.com/raya.mehnaz

How to Write Fanfiction As if It’s 2012

NUZHAT HASSAN CHOWDHURY

Being 13 can be rough — you’re dealing with teenage angst, awkward crushes and worrying about your favourite band being mistreated by their oppressive management. It can all get a little overwhelming.

Finding a creative outlet that will allow you to express your emotions can prove to be helpful. One way to do this is to write fanfiction about your beloved celebrity crush, and I’m here to tell you how to do it, like we did back in 2012.

THE FEMALE LEAD

Your female lead’s name must be y/n, meaning “your name”, so basically you. Make sure she doesn’t know that she’s beautiful, and that’s what makes her beautiful. Her hazel eyes should glimmer under the sunlight and her hair must always be in a messy bun.

She’s going to be the quiet girl that nobody really pays attention to, until your celebrity crush, who is obviously the male lead, notices her.

THE MALE LEAD

This character needs to be a nice guy, but with an edge; preferably with a dark and mysterious past. He’s the type to bring you flowers and shower you with compliments, but occasionally show red flags



such as overbearing jealousy or lashing out over trivial things.

Just convince your readers that those red flags aren’t actually red, but a soft crimson laced with a dash of burgundy. This way it sounds less concerning, and more romantic.

THE HOOK

POV: It’s 2012 and y/n was just sold to One Direction.

Now, doesn’t that sound like a dumpster-fire-quality fan fiction your 13-year-old self would want to read?

It’s important to start off strong. Don’t beat around the bush, straight up let the readers know that you’re going through some stuff and they better buckle up if they want to survive the roller coaster ride that your story is going to be.

ORBS

Don’t forget to overuse the word “orbs” when describing your male lead’s eyes. This way, you get to show off your linguistic prowess, because nothing says “I have an advanced vocabulary”, like using a pretentious synonym for a simple word, over and over again.

THE GRAND FINALE

All good things must come to an end, and all you can do is try to give your masterpiece a fitting finale.

To achieve this, stop writing after penning the biggest cliffhanger you can think of, because you grew up and would like to bury your fan fiction writing days like it was an embarrassing crime. Simple as that.

HAVE FUN

Your friends will inevitably uncover the literary work of art when they randomly Google you and won’t let you live it down. They’ll bring it up every few years for a good laugh as you realise that some mistakes can never be forgiven.

Do your best and who knows, you might even land a movie deal out of it.

Nuzhat has messed up her sleeping schedule once again. Tell her to go to sleep at nuzhatchowdhury07@gmail.com

FLUX

SARAH WASIFA

His mind itched to remember something, something lost down the back of a sofa, a copper penny just out of his reach.

"Shahed? Shahed, we need to bring Abba to Dhaka— Shahed, are you listening to me?"

In her eyes, Shahed never listened. Or maybe he did. It was hard to tell when his eyes were shut. When the taste of guilt got too heavy on his tongue, he would step out for air.

Abba had been brought to Dhaka. It had been 40 hours since a doctor had forgotten to check for bubbles in the IV, and 37 since he had had another stroke, 12,387 since Shahed had last seen him, countless since they had last spoken.

Waiting room. Then the dressing. Then the ICU.

"Salam, baba."

Beep.

Will he be okay? What do I talk to my father about? Does he still like gulabjamun? Does he care about the local election? What would he want to listen to?

How do I eulogise the essence of a stranger?

That's ridiculous. He's my father. He isn't a stranger.

Nilu watched Shahed leave, blindly reaching at a paper cup warming the seat next to her. It was hardly the first one; the intertwined sienna rings lay in lieu of their tangible forms.

Was she trying too hard? For what, though? Forgiveness?

This time, it was different. They both knew it. She sensed a certain guilt chewing on Shahed's psyche, stemming from a chasm inordinately old. An apology was out of the question. Grudges ran deep in this family.

"Ammu?"

She knew her daughter hadn't called out of filial piety. The gravity of the chasm had dragged many a bond into nullity.

"I'll be late today. We might head to Crimson after class. I won't have dinner at —"

"Shouldn't you be asking about your dada? You know exactly what's going on. You should come see him."

How could she even think of hanging out with friends when, when —

Beep.

I'll drop by tomorrow.

She knew she wouldn't be able to express her frustration through the monotones of printed text. Another coffee it is, then. To drown the anger.

When did I last meet dada?

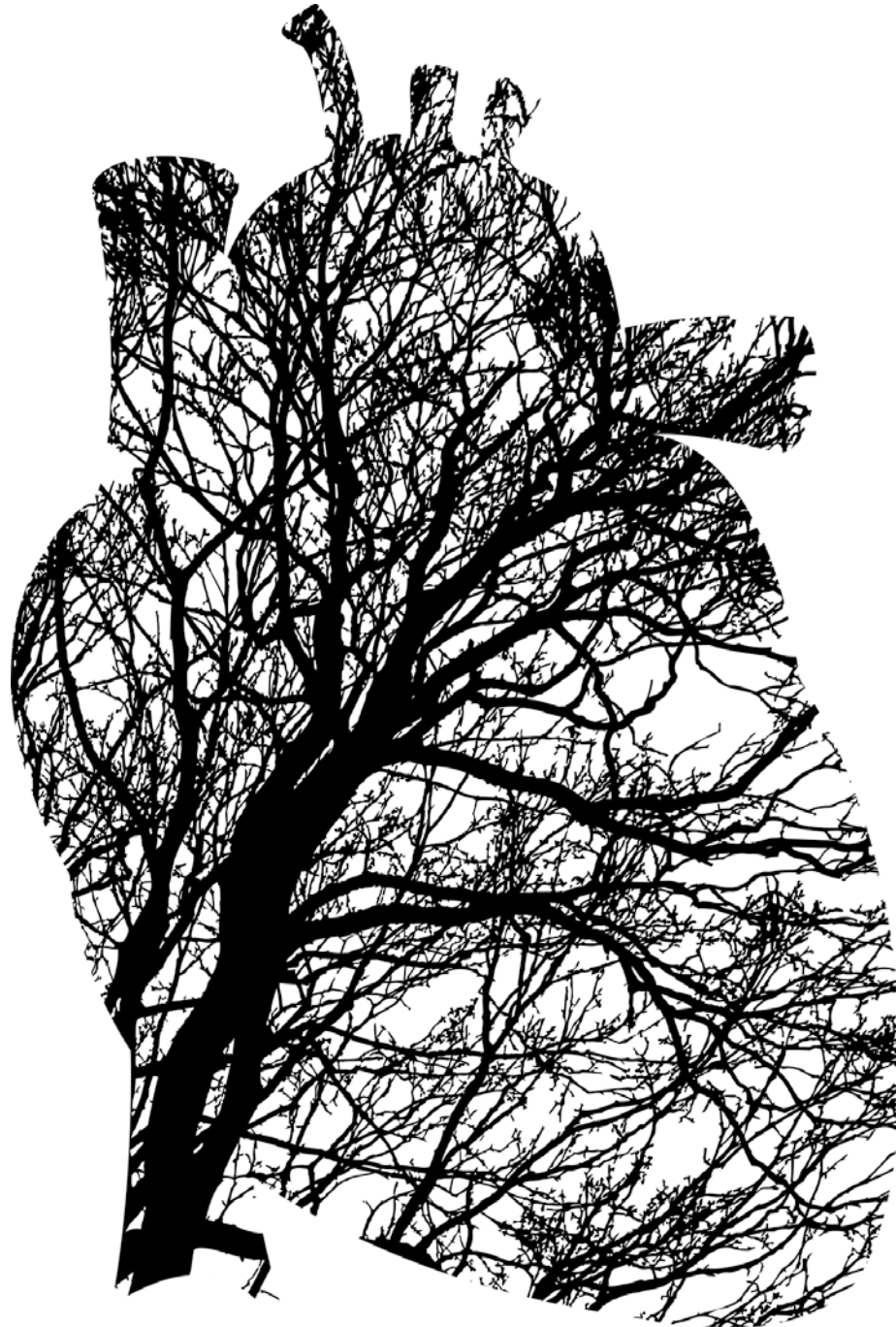
She glanced at her fingers. Skin stretched over supple bones. No frailty, no wrinkles.

Do I mourn him, a person I don't know, or do I just mourn, in general?

A sudden shove broke her out of this stupor. Professor was back in class, slides were to be read, work to be done. No time to age.

Damn. She needed a coffee.

Shahed took a day off. The sun set as he pretended to sleep, ears following Nilu as



she came back with empty tiffin-carriers, a vacancy reverberating through her bones. She hasn't been sleeping either. It's like she's carrying two, three times her quota of worry.

Why?

"You should go meet him."

Shahed shut the door behind him.

He heard Nilu sigh. She insisted, at every *dawat* she could, that he was no fun to argue with.

But where's the fun in arguing?

Uff, you won't understand.

Dressed in the stark gown, he could hardly recognise his father. Where has his frown gone? The lines into his nose, the ones into his wrists, stabbed into his chest, translating the soul into a metric of graphs and digits; is this my father?

He lifted the wrist, afraid to wake him up, but it was too thin. This wasn't the wrist that hurled rocks at him, screaming he didn't need a son like him. This wasn't the wrist of someone who took a life.

"Salam, Abba. How have you been?"

He felt closed eyes on him, expecting

more. He left.

"I'm afraid his situation is far worse than we initially thought. You see, the scan here shows that this region, the pressure..."

He is strong. He must pull through.

"This is as far as we can go. The rest is not in our hands."

"Is he in pain?"

Pause.

"Shahed, I've known your father for long. I think you should—"

"No."

There was hatred in him, boiled down to the last dregs of bitter sorrow. He couldn't forgive. The man lying on the bed was the sole reason he did not have a mother now. His mother, his dear sweet mother; she hadn't even seen his wife properly. She never got to see her grandkid. No blessings, no sweet shadow for him to rest under. A rock, a soul, and brute force. One had to go.

Was he wrong to marry Nilu? Why did his mother pay for it with her life? Why did she have to take the hit for him?

Nilu seethed as her daughter flailed and

moved to some song playing in her ears. This generation, really. No worries to spare for the old. Pathetic. Plain pathetic.

She heard the keys turn at the main door, and made no move. She was tired of this. The father-daughter duo. Apathetic towards death. Why was she the one running?

Shahed crossed the room, reeking of disinfectant and smoke.

"It's your fault she is like that. Never taught her any manners, no respect—"

A teacup shattered at his feet.

Nerves grated into nothings, they both screamed. Profanities laced with blame until they ran out of anger. Finding himself in the wake of such vehemence, Shahed could only pinpoint fear among the myriad of emotions. So potent was this fear that he broke down, right in front of his family, shaking like walls housing a storm.

That night, a phone call came. Dinners abandoned; no one knew how to drive. For two minutes, after the blind panic dissipated, they both froze and mulled over what they might see. A baby-taxi was called.

There had been a sharp drop in the BP, but it had been pulled back up.

No need to come over. It's late. Oh, you're here?

His eyes were burning.

The following day, Shahed found himself dragging a nurse's chair to the bedside.

"You know, she wouldn't have died if you hadn't, just hadn't... I can't even curse you."

He saw the lines forcing air into lungs far too unwilling to expand. The face looked bloated. This wasn't his father.

"I hadn't even given her my first salary, you know. I had been saving up for three months, thinking I would give her the entire thing. It wasn't much. I... Nilu and I just wanted your blessings. How is that even too much to ask for?"

He saw how waxen the skin looked. There was hardly any life left.

"Doctor."

He didn't look up. His voice was saturated enough.

"Is he in too much pain?"

He felt tears scratching the insides of his eyes.

"Can we end the pain? I can't bear it anymore."

He came back home on a bitter note.

Think it through.

It was when he was eighteen. Home for holidays. An earthquake, and blind panic rippling through him. The branch had just missed him. Grounded only by two arms. Were they wrapped around him?

Who was it? He did not remember. His mother had been away. Oh.

That night, Shahed slept. It was 4:12 AM when Nilu got the call. She knew. Shahed knew too.

His father had been smiling in his dream.

Sarah Wasifa sees life as a math equation. Help her find the limits of 'y' at sarahwf77@gmail.com



RED

Everywhere that I look
And deep and far inside my head
Lie you, your words and all your promises
And all the things that are red

PHOTOS BY **AMIRUL RIFAT**
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