

EDITORIAL

Are things getting back to normal? Do I even dare entertain the thought?

I sat in familiar Farmgate traffic this week, the sort where after half an hour, or maybe seven, you start imagining minuscule movements of the vehicles ahead of you. It was familiar but also jarring, and if I didn't have work to get to I think I would have run away. Farmgate traffic is too real for the fantasy version of a life I've been living these last 18 months. I am not ready.

I wonder if anyone is ready, to be quite honest. We all want to be ready, everyone's desperate for things to be like what they used to be. But, we are also scared that things will get much worse if we rush it – a valid fear. Many of us have forgotten how terrible things were back when no one knew Wuhan was a thing, and getting back to normal will include remembering the coping mechanisms and lost habits that we used to survive life in this city (and in this reality in general) from day to day.

Who knows how long it'll take for them to come back?

– Azmin Azran, Sub-editor, SHOUT



PLAYWATCH

MOVIES



How is *Perfect Blue* Even More Relevant in 2021?

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Satoshi Kon's 1997 film *Perfect Blue* never intended to predict anything at all. Yet, the unusual themes and storyline seem to be more relevant now than ever before.

Perfect Blue is the story of a singer called Mima Kirigoe as she shifts careers to become an actress, and the horrors that result from that attempt.

"I'm always looking at Mima's Room," someone says when Mima is surrounded by fans. This sets the movie in motion and summarises a central theme that is more relevant today than at the time of the movie's making. When Mima decides to undergo a significant change in her public image, she realises that her identity as a pop idol has become larger than who she is.

The audience is first introduced to Mima with contrasting shots of her performing at a concert and doing everyday activities. This makes the scary things that happen to Mima leave us shaken, feeling that it can happen to any of us.

And sadly, it can.

We all have our own highly curated social media image and at least a micro audience. The contrast between ourselves and the avatars we create often become disorienting. We may find ourselves painstakingly devoting our entire lives trying to conform to this fictional concept of ourselves we put on display online. The prevalence of influencer culture is a very real manifestation of the scope and scale of these dangers.


Mima's Room is a website run by a stalker who posts diary entries of Mima's everyday life from Mima's point of view, initially with unsettling detail and accuracy. Eventually, the entries no longer align with what Mima presently stands for as an actress. Here, someone else is indirectly telling Mima who they would like her to be, in contrast to who she currently chose to be. Mima is tormented and eventually starts losing grasp of her own identity. This thrusting of a persona more favoured by fans could be symbolic of the society telling us who we should be, or the obligation to conform to a more marketable identity.

Obsession with and rampant idolisation of celebrities is nothing new, but *Perfect Blue's* depiction of it over 20 years ago feels incredibly suggestive of present day climate. Mima's stalker's violent response to her no longer fitting his idea of her illustrates how, at present, the slightest slip up leads to the most dedicated fans losing all compassion and devoting themselves to cancelling their idols and their careers.

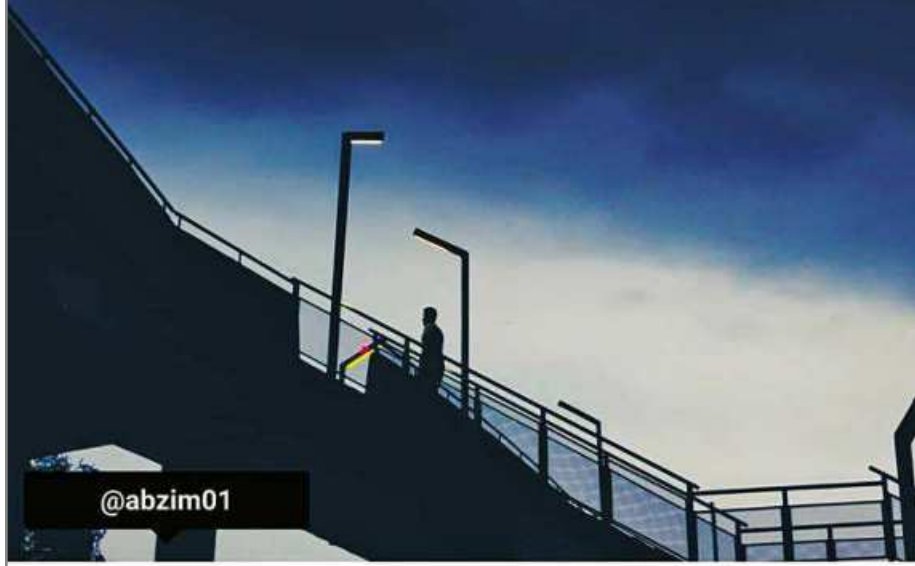
Uncanny predictions are far from the only thing exceptional about this film. The beautiful cinematography is aesthetic, bold enough to tell an impactful story, and subtle enough to be open to interpretation providing each viewer with a personal experience.

If you haven't seen it already, this article gives away nothing. *Perfect Blue* is one film you will not regret watching.

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