

RCGNTN MAGAZINE

ISSUE #01  
MARCH 2010



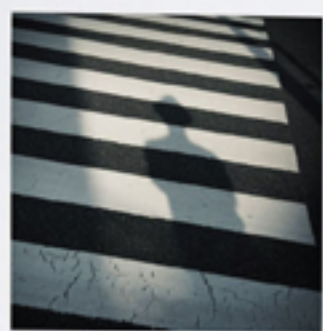
- > MARK ONG (SBTG/ROYALEFAM)
- > MAX TAN
- > ANTZ
- > SHERYO
- > KELVIN TAN
- > SYAHEED (BEOSTY MUSIC)

*Antz* + MORE









The 1500

Balance is everywhere.

new balance.



**TEAM**  
Founder/ Chief Editor  
Samantha Lo

Co-founder/ Editor  
Lu Yawen

Photographer/ Writer  
Yasin Rahim

Views expressed in RCGNTN are solely those of the contributors themselves and may not necessarily be in line with RCGNTN's. So if you're bummed out because someone said you suck, bear in mind someone else doesn't. Have a nice day!

**COVER ART**  
ANTZ  
[www.antzwashere.com](http://www.antzwashere.com)

#### NOTE FROM RCGNTN

Firstly, thank you for getting hold of the first issue of RCGNTN Magazine. It might seem like any other PDF file to you, but we have come a long way since we started in August 2009. We still remember approaching friends for advice on how we should go about doing this and in a blink of an eye, we've come to this. We must say that we are very proud of ourselves! Along the way, we've discovered a thriving arts culture in Singapore and made friends with the brave souls who dare break out from the mouldy office environment. We have also learnt much, knowledge that sometimes is both encouraging and discouraging, yet there's nothing else we rather do.

Here's to the first issue of RCGNTN Magazine and we hope to acknowledge your existence on Facebook and Twitter! And of course, it's about time you visited [www.rcgntn.com](http://www.rcgntn.com).

Lu Yawen  
Co-editor

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CHECK OUT MORE COOL STUFF OVER AT  
[WWW.RCGNTN.COM](http://WWW.RCGNTN.COM)





## REAL RECOGNIZE REAL

**MESHRADIO**

If commercial pop was all that's left of music, Meshradio will be the warriors fighting to save our ears. Started by a diverse group of individuals mostly made up of music veterans with a wealth of knowledge about music, they share a common passion and commitment to inject soul into the current music scene in hopes of giving you, the listener, a whole new level of listening pleasure. Covering a vast amount of genres such as jazz, drum and bass, dubstep, techno, punk and more through Fudge, Swing, Fixation and other shows, Meshradio broadcasts quality 24/7. So sit back, put Meshradio on your best sound system and let the music bring you on an escapade from the norm.

Check them out at [www.meshradio.sg](http://www.meshradio.sg)



## REAL RECOGNIZE REAL



### BRANDNEWFEELING

Talent knows no age, and it cannot come across any clearer than 21 year old Rauzan Rahman. Starting out as a child actor to producing amazing beats thought to be impossible through the most basic equipment (and in the shortest time), Rauzan humbly set up BrandNewFeelinG in 2004. Judging from the stellar line-up of up-and-coming artistes the label has signed on such as Zahidah and Zaki Razalo, this may just be the start of something big.

Check them out at [www.brandnewfeeling.com](http://www.brandnewfeeling.com)



### STAGE 57

Stage 57 Production is a one-stop destination committed to music and the arts. Formed by a group of young individuals passionate about supporting local music, arts and culture, they serve to create and deliver unique event experiences aimed at engaging the masses across diverse communities. Having met them personally, we can say their passion for promoting and pushing local to the forefront is inspiring.

Check them out at [www.fiftyseven.com](http://www.fiftyseven.com)



## STEAM-11

**P-77 IN PURPLE/YELLOW**

Phu's custom toys have seen much welcome with his 'phuturistic' approach, creating works of art based on heavy influences such as, yup, the future. His very own creation, the P-77 saw a red colourway in the previous release, and these toys produced by MyTummyToys sure do not disappoint. Get yours at [www.phuek.blogspot.com](http://www.phuek.blogspot.com).

**STONE FOR GOLD**

Though we've made an improvement in the economy, saving the bucks are still a priority amongst many locals and taking the path of filling the void between abandoning/ discarding your shoes and your sad wallet are Stone for Gold's leather strap. It pretty much transforms your Visvims and RedWings into a bloody cool shoe. Get yours and at the same time check out his other crafts over at [stoneforgold.com](http://stoneforgold.com).

**DOINKY DOODLES**

Handmade goodies have never looked better. Named Sexy Slugs, these definitely bear no resemblance to a slug at all but they are a good replacement for proving that you're an environmentalist without having to deal with real slugs. Besides, I have no idea how you live without a Sexy Slug. Find these real slug imitations at **Doinky Doodles**, located at 33 ball lane.

**RIPPER III BY LAZY**

The sneaker maestro has done it again, keeping true to building up local street culture by creating some of the best pieces you will ever lay your eyes on. Consisting of a half selvedge denim body, an olive green material, croc swoosh and contrasting red stitches, these kicks are fresh to death- and extremely limited. Get yours over at [www.akalazy.com](http://www.akalazy.com), and at the same time check out some of his other popular pieces such as the Jailbreakers. All sneakers come with original box and Lazy shoebag.

**EESHAUN X TRANSIT SKATEBOARDS**

Local and respected artist Eeshaun ([eeshaun.com](http://eeshaun.com)) came together with Transit Skateboards to collaborate on this special project. Sick drawings and characters from Eeshaun as always, not to mention pleasing to the eye (and feet). Get yours at **Boards n Stuff** and **Sup Clothing** (34 Haji Lane).

**SUP BACKPACK**

The weather has been a bitch recently, going hot and cold and raining and whatever it can be, especially if you're taking your bike out for a spin only for it to rain and soak all the documents you have in your backpack. Fret not, Sup is here to save the trouble with their simple yet functional backpack which is water-proof. Best part is, it fits like a glove. Get yours only at **Sup Clothing**, 34 Haji Lane.

**FABRIX HARD SHELLS**

The increasing number of iPhones have been crazy ever since the initial launch just last year, and tailoring to them are Fabrix' Hard Shells. Coming in an assortment of colours and textures, you can be sure to find something you like and know that your phone is pretty much protected from scratches, so you can continue using the pristine mirror backing to check if you have anything stuck in your teeth. Get yours at [www.fabrix.com](http://www.fabrix.com).

**SHERYO'S ASSORTED STICKER PACK**

The petite artist not only does illustrations, branding, stuffed toys and whatnot, but she's also spreading the love with some pretty dope stickers. Taking characters she conceptualized in her past work, the stickers come in a pack of 9 so you too can share the love with the surroundings. Available at [www.illustrromaniac.com](http://www.illustrromaniac.com).



# MARK ONG / SBTG ROYALEFAM

One of the most renowned sneaker customizers in the business, SBTG as known as Mark Ong, is surprisingly down-to-earth and it is evident that he has grown wiser from his years of experience. Although designing and hand-sewing shoes is the biggest passion of his life, SBTG did not earn his title by chance. He tells us of his self-discipline learnt from starting his own flourishing business and his route to self-discovery- all stemming from the time he picked up the skateboard.

## Give us a brief history of Royalefam and how the label started out.

It started out based on after I started my sneakers professionally in 2003. A lot of the designs were expressed on sneakers and there were a lot more ideas that were going on that I couldn't put on sneakers so I started a clothing line to express my ideas using other mediums.

## What kind of difficulties do you face?

My last collection, Dead General, I had this story in my head about war and militarism and the dark side of war; the other world that we never get to witness or read about in history books. So I had this vague interpretation of how war would look like, taking out the aesthetics and creating a collection. I didn't want to be constrained by sneakers alone; sneakers are sneakers, I wouldn't go all the way out designing a sneaker because I would still want it to be wearer unlike art that you put on the wall. I like things I can wear, I don't like things that people collect and display. Everything I make has

to be wearable.

Due to the restrictions of designing shoes, there has to be another medium that I can use so I started a clothing line, skateboards and bearbricks.

## What are the values that Royalefam bases itself on?

We base ourselves on a lot of integrity and to create something that sends a message but what I found out was that some people might think that my designs are eccentric and too over-the-top especially now when people go for more simple and basic. It is purely based on the fact that the design has to be honest, it cannot be based on what people like; it has to come 100% from the designer. It's just a full self expression; I can't make this because it sells well or I want to make a buck out of the person because then my relationship between customer and I will become a grey area. And if I have an exhibition, I can't talk to him; I'd be shifty-eyed because I would feel as if I lied to him.

## How do those values influence the label's direction?

Going by those values, it's very natural like putting a skateboard on the street. I wouldn't say there's not much consideration, you do have considerations like costs but it's happiness and satisfaction. And it shows. I have a very niche group of people who like my stuff, and they're always there.





## Do you find yourself compromising?

Yeah there are times. There was a period of time, after I designed the Nike SB, I started getting a lot of traffic on my site and requests and I went downhill, I did it for money. That wasn't a very good point in my life and I felt like there was a lot of dishonesty in my designs, so I cleaned up and stopped.

## How would you describe the entire style of the label?

It's just a mirror and journey of my life to how I was exposed to detail. Sometimes there's anger but I express it through punk rock, how I was exposed to music and visuals that I was exposed to as a kid.

## How was that journey, put in words?

Growing up, I was very rebellious. Being the first child in my family, my dad was really strict. I found skateboarding when I was 9 years old and during then it was viewed as a kind of rebellion whereas now it's viewed as a kind of extreme sport. My dad sawed my skateboards a few times and that gave me anger and energy to create the stuff I am doing today. I remember back then there was this trend where you wear baggy shorts in the early 90s, called the Big Pants Small Wheels. I used to wear that to church. I would wake up one morning, wanting to wear them and would find them cut. So I guess that gave me the energy to create what I wanted to wear, which is why I created a clothing line, to kind of fight back.

For sneakers, I'd skate and when they got worn out I would patch them up in a nice way. Of course I couldn't be a professional and used whatever materials I could find. When I could afford it, I bought all the sneakers that I could but then everyone else had them too so I made my own.

## What challenges did you face while building up the brand?

A few would be working with people and as a team. The one biggest obstacle, I guess would be decision making. When we started designing clothes, it's nothing like designing shoes where you can design a month before as with clothes, you have to consider the manufacturing process; you've to book the factory to produce the run. So six months before, you're so into this particular look and design your collection around it, but six months later you've progressed and no longer are into that look. I had to make up my mind. Once, I had clothes come in two months before their release and I wanted to change them! So decision making is really difficult. Another challenge would be budgeting. My partner and I are both creative, but he would rather be more of an investor and wants me to do what I want. When we first started out, we didn't budget so eventually we didn't make any money and even had to do more work. The solution is to seek balance, make decisions and sticking to them without having regrets. I learnt that through creating 2 to 3 seasons of Royalefam and things gradually got better.

## What's your view on the local street culture?

I'm not in the street culture now, but I miss the old days where street culture was all about hunting for rare pieces of garments. I guess street culture for me started when there was no internet and we would go around looking for sneakers in the old shops. Street culture now has many choices and come-and-go brands, it's competitive. It's easy to put yourself out there; not much quality control.

*For a continuation of Mark's interview, head to [www.rcgntn.com](http://www.rcgntn.com). You can also check out what the good people of Royalefam have to offer over at [www.royalefam.com](http://www.royalefam.com)*





# MAX.TAN

Max Tan's clothes first caught our attention at the Blackmarket Fashion Show at Zouk last year. His clothes stood out solely for themselves as pieces of sculptures (metaphorically, if not literally). Later on, he launched Pressed, his Spring/Summer collection that boasted even more of his clothes sculpting ability. We were thoroughly impressed and amazed at how clothes that seemed to hold their own shape. So when I finally got to meet with the brains behind it all, I have to admit, I was a little nervous.

Handshake and formalities aside, Max came across as shy and soft-spoken. He also brought along his partner in crime, Dawn who was equally friendly. When asked about the origin and reason behind his clothing line, Max as-a-matter-of-factly explains that he had decided to first put his clothes on consignment at eggthree and Blackmarket due to the surprising number of people wanting his creations (we, however, are not surprised). Currently holding a job as a part-time lecturer in NAFA, boring 9 to 5 jobs are things of the past and it allows him to fully focus on the first Max Tan store at

Parco which is slated to open end of March.

Known for his minimalistic and daring designs, Max's clothes essentially take up a life of their own. The first thing that strikes you when you look at his clothes are the how basic the shapes are on them; the wearer literally wears shapes. Such minimalism is not new in the era we are in; when we once were craving for detailed-laden pieces, we are slowly altering our choices towards the simple. And while some designers are resisting such change, this change is perfect timing for Max to bring his clothes into the world.

Having been in the fashion industry for just 3 years, the exposure and positive feedback Max has garnered is exceptional. He credits his supernatural ability for designing to his seamstress mother whose scattered fabrics ended up as his play toys. As the conversation progressed, I realized that Max draws inspiration not only from his childhood but from his beliefs and situations he encounters on a daily basis. For example his recent collection, Pressed,

came about as he found himself bored of his wardrobe.

Admirably proud of his sexual orientation, the one thing Max stays away from is sexual stereotypes. He fervently tells me that he absolutely rejects gay men and women in tight clothing, which is why his creations are mostly loose fitting and take on the form of their own. Clothing, to him, is a form of self-expression regardless of sexuality hence the unisex nature of his clothing construction. Together with Dawn, Max is an avid believer of anti-mass marketing and does not hide his disappointment when it comes to Singaporeans dressing alike - "I don't think we should remain victims of such huge marketing campaigns anymore".

Max's simple, fuss-free designs seem reminiscent of the Japanese's inclination for the minimal, yet again his forms and construction reminds you of something else. He is aware of the ambiguity of the origins of his designs and while feeling flattered, he is evidently pleased with the indistinctiveness of his creations.





When local designers are mentioned, Max is visibly excited and slightly distraught at the lack of support given at the same time and tells me designers here are generally misunderstood and underestimated. He becomes decidedly more animated as he explains his belief that buying a piece of clothing is akin to buying a piece of the designer given the amount of hard work that goes into each creation. Once again bringing up the topic of Singaporeans being victims to mass-marketing, he emphasizes that Singaporeans should be more "character-driven" in their clothing choices rather than "value-for-money". Indeed, a change would be in order but we both agree that it would take more than time.

He compares the present mindset the general public in Singapore has about the fashion industry to how it was in the 90s when exclusivity was more valued than the price of clothing themselves. Just like a regular artist, building up his brand's image comes first for Max. My gut feeling tells me it surely will not be an issue with the support and help of Dawn's savvy business strategies.

Horror stories of business partners falling out are not uncommon no matter the kind of industry but from the way Dawn and Max finish each other's sentenc-

**"I think a woman in men's clothes is very sexy, like your old school Sharon Stone re-vamped with an underground edge."**

es, there is definitely no need to be worried. I find out that they are neighbours and have known each other way before even Max had his clothing line. Both come from different fields and work together nicely just like two perfect pieces of the puzzle, which what I call a perfect business partnership and in fact, their bond most probably goes further than making the clothing line a success.

I ask him to describe the fashion industry and without hesitation he replies, "it's all greed and glamour" but then adds that it takes a lot of perseverance and capital to become a world-class designer. Obstacles aside, the conviction and determination he has will definitely be sufficient for him to break out of the Singapore market and he has already gotten recognition overseas; he will be featured as one of the 20 up-and-coming designers to look out for in architectural magazine, Space and Dutch magazine, Glamcult.

With his passion for clothing and non-conformism, Max Tan is definitely one of the designers you should keep an eye out for.





LOOK:

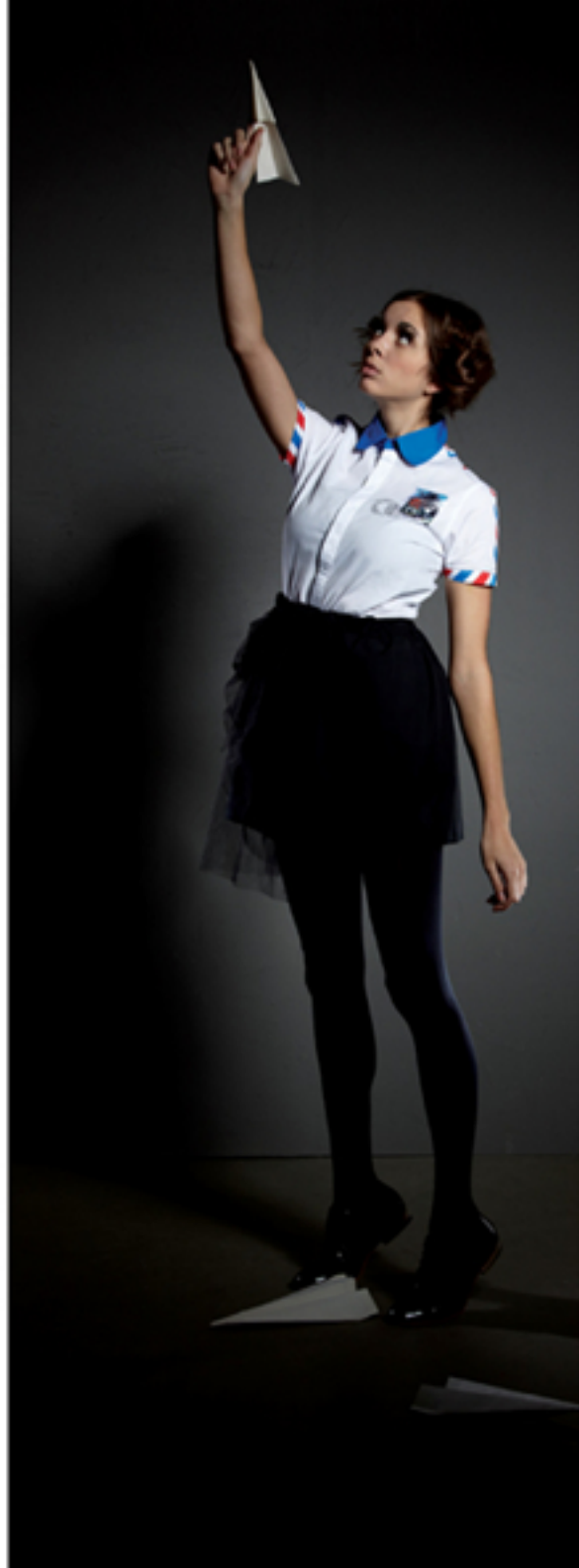
FULL INTERVIEW  
AT RCGNTH.COM

# DEPRESSION

## BIPOLAR DISORDER

S/S 2010

Apparel: DEPRESSION  
Hair & Makeup: Ivan Hoo (In-square)  
Photography: Soon Tong (Calibre)

















## VISUAL

# ANTZ

It has been nearly 5 years that Antz (aka Anthony) has been active in the Singaporean street scene, and like other graffiti artists, he indulges in both vandalism and commissioned art pieces; he recently participated in the *Is This Home, Truly?* exhibition. With a brain that works in a different way from the norm, Antz is the 'ah beng' that surprises you at every turn.

Presently working with Zirca as a graphic designer, Antz's recounts his first taste of art was all thanks to his grandmother who opened the door to drawing and since then, he hasn't turned back. Working as a graphic designer fulfilled his desires to draw but he soon realized that he needed something more challenging and hence decided to return to more traditional mediums – a spray can and any surface.

If you haven't met Antz before, what you'll need to know is that he is like a monkey on speed; his mind makes the most abstract connections and he works at lightning speed. In short, he is perfect for his job as a graphic designer. And this is what makes Antz's graffiti pieces stand out from the rest; his history as a graphic designer comes through in his planning and painting. He also credits his graphic background for his bad habit of compromising when it comes to doing collaborative works with other artists. However, he retains optimism and takes each challenge as it comes.

A non-believer of selling out oneself, Antz's trademark Sun Wu Kong can be seen almost everywhere (we once spotted his monkey at an eatery at Far East Plaza, slurping on noodles).

Graffiti originated as vandalism and although in other parts of the world it has been made legal, it still is considered vandalism here in Singapore. However, Antz is one of the increasing numbers of graffiti artists who go against the grain, earning money from painting and simply sticking to his beliefs. The blatant irony is a consequence of the government's indecisiveness in supporting the arts fully and approval is only given if "you're a big name or branded".

**“Why do something you like?”**

It is slightly discouraging when you're trying to break out of the mold without the help of your own, but we know Antz to be persistent and determined which I guess could be seen as stubbornness. His attitude is apparent as he tells us that creating art with a message is more personal than audience-related – “it doesn't matter if the public agrees with you or not”. Additionally, he uses the public medium of walls as advertising space and makes full use of the opportunity to reach the masses.







Antz is supportive of Singaporean artists as well; he has the kind of excitement that cannot be faked. When asked who he inspires him, he replies with Phunk Studio, Zero (Zul Othman) and Jahan who are all Singaporeans. It's a refreshing change to know that Singaporean artists inspire each other rather than a local artists drawing inspiration from foreign ones. His pride as a Singaporean Chinese pours into his work as the form of his characters and choice to use traditional Chinese characters.

Sun Wu Kong, his trademark character, is almost 3 years old and has grown together with its artist. Antz's continual use of Chinese influenced illustration reminds him of his roots and reinforces his pride in being what he is. His monkey, which he likens to himself, originates from the Chinese myth of a monkey deity who has 72 different appearances. Based on the myth and aided by his experience in the field of graphic design, Antz constantly alters the appearance of his character depending on the situation.

One of the perks of being an artist is that you get to go where your art takes you, and for Antz, his art has taken him to places as far as Denmark where he recalls his experiences before painting. However, going abroad is not just all fun for Antz as he tells us his intentions are to educate foreigners about the Chinese culture. Similarly, he plans to break the stereotypical mindset that only black people are active in the hip-hop scene. Antz is convinced that hip-hop is just another form of artistic expression and should not be exclusive – "it's an adaptation and there is no copyright to it".

"I travel all the way to Europe and the States to educate them about the Chinese culture and stories behind the characters; it's a joy for me. It's nice to see how they react to the Chinese culture, 'You're 27 and you're still living with your mum?' Why not? I'm Asian. Fuck you, I'm a Chinese!"

Even with the sometimes suffocating and restricted society, Antz has hope for big things and sees The Killer Gerbil as our equivalent of KAWs and Speak Cryptic our equivalent to Banksy. He lets us in on his future plans; working together with Zero to create toys and sculptures but sounds a little resigned when he adds that he would first have to work for necessary capital. We're not new to the double life syndrome Singaporean artists all lead, though we see it as the essential obstacle to cross for anyone to truly say they are passionate at what they do.

"We're like Batman; superheroes."

Antz is one of the most down-to-earth and real people you'd ever meet, it doesn't hurt that he also has passion and talent in what he does – our definition of a true artist.

**Check out more of his work at [www.antzwashere.com](http://www.antzwashere.com), and his adventures with ZERO in the IRSCLS guestblog on [www.rcgntn.com/irscls](http://www.rcgntn.com/irscls)**



## VISUAL

# SHERYO

If you are not familiar with Sheryo, it's highly likely that you should be familiar with her art, having been commissioned by brands such as Adidas, Don't Panic, Intel and the like. Bringing you to a happy, psychedelic wonderland inhabited by whimsical pop characters, the messages that she brings across in her art more often than not portray subtle messages that contrast the colourful images that she creates.

Ingenuity, skills, quirk and a massive brain filled with imaginations aside, what comes across most strongly about the girl with the tiny frame is indefinitely her passion for art and her big heart.

### introduce yourself

I was born and raised in Singapore. I grew up watching 80s cartoons and drinking milo. My art is quirky psychedelia pop!

### Did you start out doodling and end up with what you have today?

It started out with doodling, i guess that's how everyone starts? But no it wasn't just mindless doodling that got me here today. It was a lot of heart, time, effort and constantly challenging myself.

I believe in spontaneity and having fun in whatever you do, and drawing gave me that. But mindless doodlings and paintings got boring after a while, i felt something lacked, so i relooked at everything i had, got my act together, worked extra hard and opportunities started presenting themselves to me.

### How was it like starting out? Would you consider yourself lucky?

It wasn't tough considering i was doing what i loved (it could be worse), i just did what i did and things started picking up for me. Work hard, work smart. Luck's secondary but a little bit of it's always helpful along the way.

### Tell me about the birth of your characters

Putrid smelling folk tend to provide that extra bit of inspiration. Otherwise, it's the mundane drone of life that makes me sit up and want to draw something out of this world. I HATE boring.

### Where do you derive inspiration from?

Anything and everything. People, SITUATIONS, mistakes, LIFE and its unfairness, food! The world's a petri dish of inspiration!

### The colours, sometimes trippy and whimsical characters show tons of happiness and life. Are there hidden meanings behind them? A hint of the opposite?

Indeed these characters are actually predecessors of the dark arts and i have captured them vividly with my mad hypnotic skillz.

No seriously.

I love life, (most of the time) but sometimes i get frustrated with things, people and situations. When that happens, i like to document and illustrate them in my drawings. I'd like to think my art is relatively relatable





## VISUAL

and perhaps cruel or even encouraging at times. All the ironies, idiosyncrasies, stupidity, vices in a whimsical, happy, colourful world. Not so happy after all if you look closely. Maybe it was the 80s cartoons and its subliminal messages i grew up with.

### How would you describe your characters?

Weird looking bunch of folks. Generally nice unless provoked.

### What do you thrive on as an artist?

The 3 Cs. Competition: Healthy competition helps me improve. Challenges: School of hard knocks. There's no better/faster way to pick up new things/knowledge/skills. Constructive Criticism: Because everyone (including me) needs help and healthy criticism to keep in check.

### One of your strongest points in your work is probably your excellent colour composition. How does one develop an eye for that?

I like to believe all colours CAN go together. Keep to a maximum of 3 colour choices and play with the shades and tints instead. I like to pick out the colours before i start on an illustration.

### What are the internal struggles of a graphic artist in Singapore?

Things are getting better, people are becoming more receptive and more aware of their surroundings but i do wish they could be more appreciative towards art. Art takes talent, skill, time, HEART, soul and many people fail to see that here.

**Art is subjective, so would you say this also plays a part in hindering the progress of Singapore's art culture? Or are there other reasons for it being so underground still.**

My first visit to a museum was 18. Guess this tells us about the art education in Singapore. The kids here grow up realising their talents/interests will have to take the backseat for other "more important" priorities. Some people are starting to give a shit about the art here, its slow but at least things look like its going to get better. Support local!

### You've travelled a fair bit, what's the difference in the art culture in other countries as compared to Singapore?

The art culture here is varied, we've got all sorts of influences from the east to the west but nothing distinctly singaporean due to our "rojak" backgrounds. It's not a bad thing though, mish-mash can be fresh! This world is shrinking as we speak.

### Any future plans?

Exhibitions! Books, toys, shoes, movies, go everywhere do everything.

### Dream work?

Everything's my dream work as long as i know i'll have fun working on it, and still get paid.

*For more of Sheryo's work, check out her site over at [www.illustrromaniac.com](http://www.illustrromaniac.com), and at the same time pick up a couple of her artworks over at her webstore!*







left- "RAISED AS A  
PACK OF  
WOLVES" by Gen-  
evieve Chua:  
[www.genchua.com](http://www.genchua.com)

bottom- "BAYBEATS  
'09" by Bum Ariffin:  
[www.bumariffin.com](http://www.bumariffin.com)



"DADDY" by Halqal Anwar: [www.gilaphotos.blogspot.com](http://www.gilaphotos.blogspot.com)





"PSEUDO BRANDING SERIES" by ZERO: [www.zerostarfighter.blogspot.com](http://www.zerostarfighter.blogspot.com)

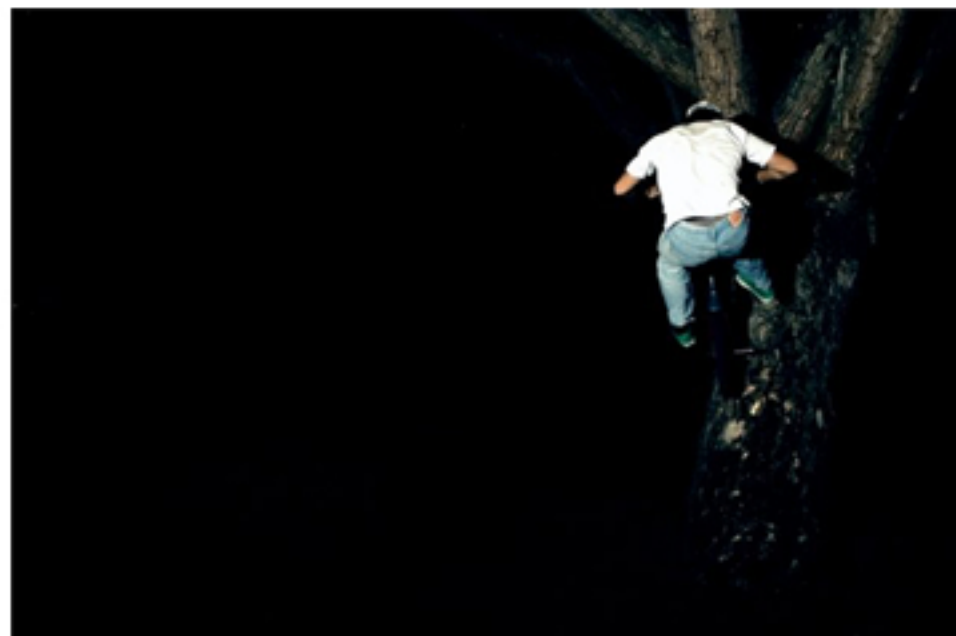


"APPLY/SUPPLY" by SPEAK CRYPTIC: [www.speakcryptic.com](http://www.speakcryptic.com)





"FATE TELL NO LIES" by Clogtwo: [www.clogtwo.com](http://www.clogtwo.com)



"YOU'RE STANDING ON OUR STREETS" BY Heider Ismail: [www.trnsm.blogspot.com](http://www.trnsm.blogspot.com)



"CIVIL WAR" by Raytoh: [www.raytoh.com](http://www.raytoh.com)





"SKATE" by Juffrie Friday: [ihardlyknowher.com/juffrie](http://ihardlyknowher.com/juffrie)



"BEAUTIFUL" by Anwar Afiee: [www.flickr.com/photos/hahasg](http://www.flickr.com/photos/hahasg)





"FADE" by Ivan Tan: [ihardlyknowher.com/ra1nforest](http://ihardlyknowher.com/ra1nforest)



"PANDA REVOLUTION V" by XIAOBAOSG: [www.mi50.blogspot.com](http://www.mi50.blogspot.com)



## EXPERIENCE

**A VACANT  
AFFAIR**

Hardcore band A Vacant Affair has gained much respect in the underground hardcore scene both locally and regionally with their energy-filled sets that bleed passion through and out. Lead vocalist Matt gives us a photographic account at an AVA gig at \*SCAPE.

Check out the band and their music at [www.myspace.com/avacantaffair](http://www.myspace.com/avacantaffair)





## LISTEN

# KELVIN TAN

Kelvin Tan, the most prolific musician dubbed Singapore's very own Bob Dylan may be the deepest and passionate individual one can meet. Coming from years of experience and one of Singapore's legendary bands, the Oddfellows, Kelvin has established himself as a multi-talented musician, songwriter and writer, having novels such as 'All Broken Up And Dancing' under his belt. He has even pulled off releasing 15 albums in a row, and most recently 12! We catch up with the man and find out what goes in his head.

### How did you first start out?

I started out learning the guitar on my own, then going to schools to play. When I was in NUS doing philosophy, I played covers and only started writing very late in my life. I started out with the Hope Singer-Songwriter school, Bob Dylan, James Taylor and as the years went by I got interested in other kinds of music such as avant-garde jazz, free jazz, rock and roll. Even right now, I'm a big fan of Radiohead, I think they're incredible and even the new bands coming out because they're very free with experimenting and creating structures. It slowly changed the way I look at music and life.

I like what Miles Davis says, "I have to change, it's like a curse." In a way it does feel like a curse, you always feel a need to reinvent yourself and can't stay in one place for too long because I find that people who stay in one place for too long become stagnant. That's where my musical journey started.

I would also like to say that I started out as a music fan, I still am. When you're a fan, you get excited

about the music around you. Even when I'm sitting here with you, I hear all these sounds and it's very interesting to me. I'm open to ideas and other things as well that's why I have an interest in clothing, design and games because all these shape how you look. Even at my age, I feel this need to keep changing. I feel like I'm an outsider looking in; you don't want to be part of the whole crowd because you end up in the trap (of not being objective).

### How is your thought process like?

I have a very strong literary background, because I did literature in university, at the same time I have a great love for jazz music. So I grew up listening to a lot of jazz musicians like Marv David, John Poulter, Onet Coman. Although I'm not a jazz musician, the elements of improvisation in jazz goes into the way I play my music and that is what is in my head. Also I like the idea of spontaneous freedom because then you can be who you want to be, you can sing about who you want to sing about, etc. I've developed a system where I get musicians to play what they are feeling and from there, add sounds to create something different. Basically I like the whole danger of not knowing what to expect and going to a studio and achieving it. So I'm not a jazz musician but I like the element of surprise and improvisation in music.

The other thing is that I'm also doing this for myself; I don't sell many albums every year, I'm not interested in sales but there is a small following who like my stuff. However, I'm interested in docu-





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-menting it (how I make music) and in doing something that excites me and creating from it. Perhaps in the future I might be playing around with the drum machine, gadgets, classical musicians to do something new and then it challenges me to do something different every year.

## Do you see the common drive in people nowadays?

I can see where this is going, and my answer to it is that one doesn't seem to understand how this country works. I have spent a lot of time thinking about Singapore and how this country works and this is what I've come up with; we're in the end an economical viable country and right now they are making an effort to support the arts and sports because they need more people to find Singapore attractive to come here. The government has funds allocated every year for the art and sports, they hire people to give the funds then they say 'we've done our part, next'. I think it's very different in America and Europe where it's known as 'culture' and has been there for thousands of years like the Renaissance; people need art. In Singapore it's different; you look at our history, go to the heartlands and tell the uncles selling vegetables about Radiohead, there is no way they know what you're talking about. We just

call it; the whole idea of creating a deep culture is a long way off for us.

So what do people who do art, like us, do? You either be like a rock star, go over to America, Australia and Europe, live there, do odd jobs, play in clubs then go on to a bigger stage. A lot of these bands, such as Kings of Leon, are doing. If you're in Singapore, you've to understand that you can only take what you do so far. A band, for example Electrico, they've done a lot for a local band but only for a local band and they're still struggling. They can't sing for a living, they have to hold other jobs. So I look at all this and I think, 'I'm sincere and passionate about music, I just want to make music. Even if I don't become a big star it doesn't matter, I'm not vain, and I just want to do music.' I'm lucky, I don't have all these vanity issues holding me down. I just get money from having a job, go into the studio, make some music, and release them on my own, put them in small shops here and there, people buy or not, I get it documented and that's it.

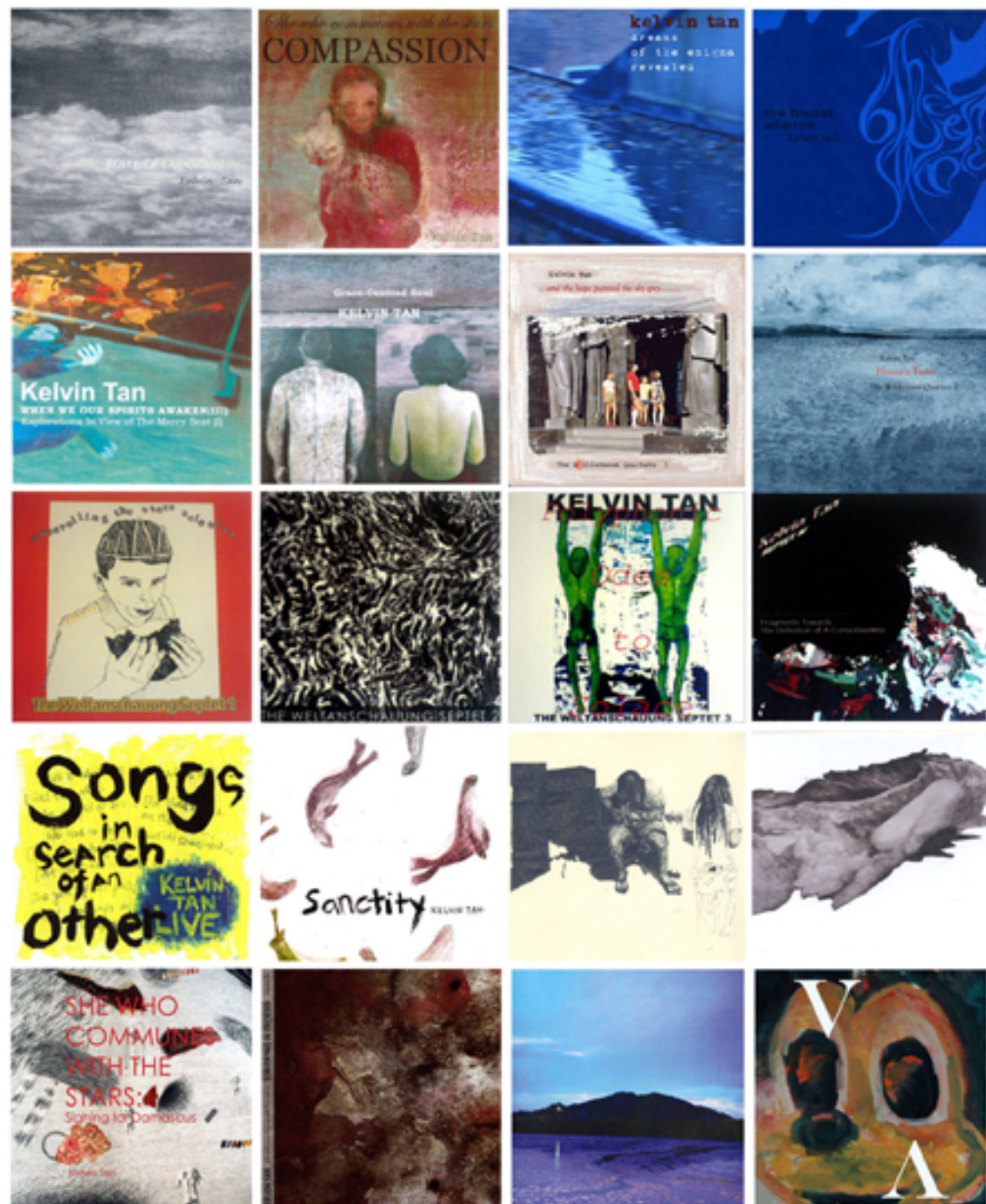
A lot of bands now, I call them, are Singapore Idol types. I have no criticism for them and I hope they make it big and we're looking for different things after all. The

They have to realize that they either do for passion, like me, or to make it to the next level, there's a possibility you have to leave. And there's absolutely no guarantee that you'll make it but at least you're going to the source, where it happens. The market in Singapore is very small, you've to go overseas where it's a big market but there will be millions of bands trying to make it.

I've seen all this and I'm contented with what I do as a musician, but the bands out there are not realizing this. I think when they do they become rather cynical about it when this has always been how it's been for 40 years. But that's not the mindset we want as well.

## What can be done?

I don't know how to answer this except that it's really a lot harder than what people think. It also depends on what your intentions for making music are. If you my option, it's easier because you do what you want but I don't envy bands that do it for the glory because it's not just about playing in clubs, it's about maintaining an image and your musical skill. For example Lady Gaga, who is not only a fashion icon but is a dancer, singer and songwriter. In terms of Singapore, we're way behind.





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# SYAHEED BEDSTY MUSIC

As Singapore struggles to identify her culture, very few of us realize that there is a hip-hop-influenced culture right under our noses. Perhaps we are confused as to whether or not we should embrace this 'rojak' as our culture and as a result, overlook the growth of new subcultures within the country. Although some might feel as if hip-hop belongs to where it originated from, there's nothing wrong in creating music that inspires you regardless of the common perception that people who create hip-hop music come from foreign countries.

To enlighten us on the tragically undermined hip-hop scene in Singapore, we talk to Syaheed who once was a rapper himself and is now helping others along with music production and events management at Bedsty music. He is one of the few who has witnessed the peaking of hip-hop in Singapore culture to its current low profile.

Syaheed first started listening to Bone Thugs N Harmony (BTNH) when the latter had already broken into the mainstream music industry and had already gained recognition from winning various awards. From there, he found out about Tupac and Biggie through BTNH's collaborations and discovered he was more interested in old school hip-hop. Just like musicheads in those days, Syaheed did not have the help of the internet and had to put more effort in finding music than clicking a search button.

Unlike how it was in the early days, hip-hop has grown and is now accepted by the general public. Syaheed believes that even though the hip-hop industry rakes in the big bucks, it still can be improved in terms of music making artistry. He mentions the rivalry between commercial and underground hip-hop artists which is apparent even in Singapore, but is hopeful for someone who is able to

**"Music production is one of the most underrated businesses in Singapore."**

strike a balance, naming Jay-Z as an example.

Aside from clubs, local radio has been increasing their airplay of both local and foreign hip-hop music. However, Syaheed tells us that this increased exposure and accessibility has resulted in the public's choice of mainstream hip-hop. It is true, commercial music is readily accessible through the radio and a preference for underground or 'hardcore' hip-hop would mean digging through Myspace.

In Singapore, hip-hop artist, Richard Jansen is gaining rapid success commercially while the hip-hop group, .XS Collective, continues to 'balance out' the scene with their 'hardcore' hip-hop music. When asked to share his opinions on the disparities of





**“A true hiphop head would admit that you have to appreciate all kinds of music to really appreciate hiphop.”**

of both groups of hiphop artists, Syaheed tells us there's nothing wrong in going commercial. To him, it's a personal decision and the ability to preserve your artistic integrity while catering to the general public is no one else's business but the artist's.

However, there seems to be an age-cap on the type of people who listen and are active in the hiphop scene in Singapore and Syaheed reasons that it all boils down to a personal preference of music. But he assures us that he is still very much into hiphop. In fact, his events company, Bedsty Music organizes Donuts which happens every Thursday at O Bar. As much as he is a supporter and lover of hiphop music, Syaheed is open to other kinds of music; he views it as a way to “grow musically”.

Being experienced at planning events, Syaheed has a different mentality from the common artist; he considers the not only the quality of music but the monetary profits as well – “you need to provide entertainment that contributes back to the scene”. He ensures that the hiphop artists he hires get paid market rate, if not higher, for their performances. While practical, Syaheed's views definitely are not the common mentality and he has gotten quite some flak for it. In spite of this, he remains unbothered and stands by his principle that good music deserves substantial monetary returns.

Besides holding Donuts at O Bar, Bedsty Music also organizes Good Times and both events have received

tremendous support from the public. With the initial aim of putting a face to old school hiphop in Singapore, both events have become a regular hang out for veterans and new faces in the hiphop scene. Syaheed is uncertain how both events have become so popular with the masses, but promises that the good quality of hiphop will remain a constant every week.

One of Syaheed's ambition is to provide talents with the opportunity to start their own careers and he is currently mentoring Rauzan Rahman, who he claims is “doing many good things”. Given his experience in the music scene, it's only in due course that Syaheed passes down his knowledge to younger artists so as to continue keeping the Singapore hiphop culture alive. He has big plans for Bedsty Music as well; produce music for regional artists and perhaps one day organize a music festival of sorts.

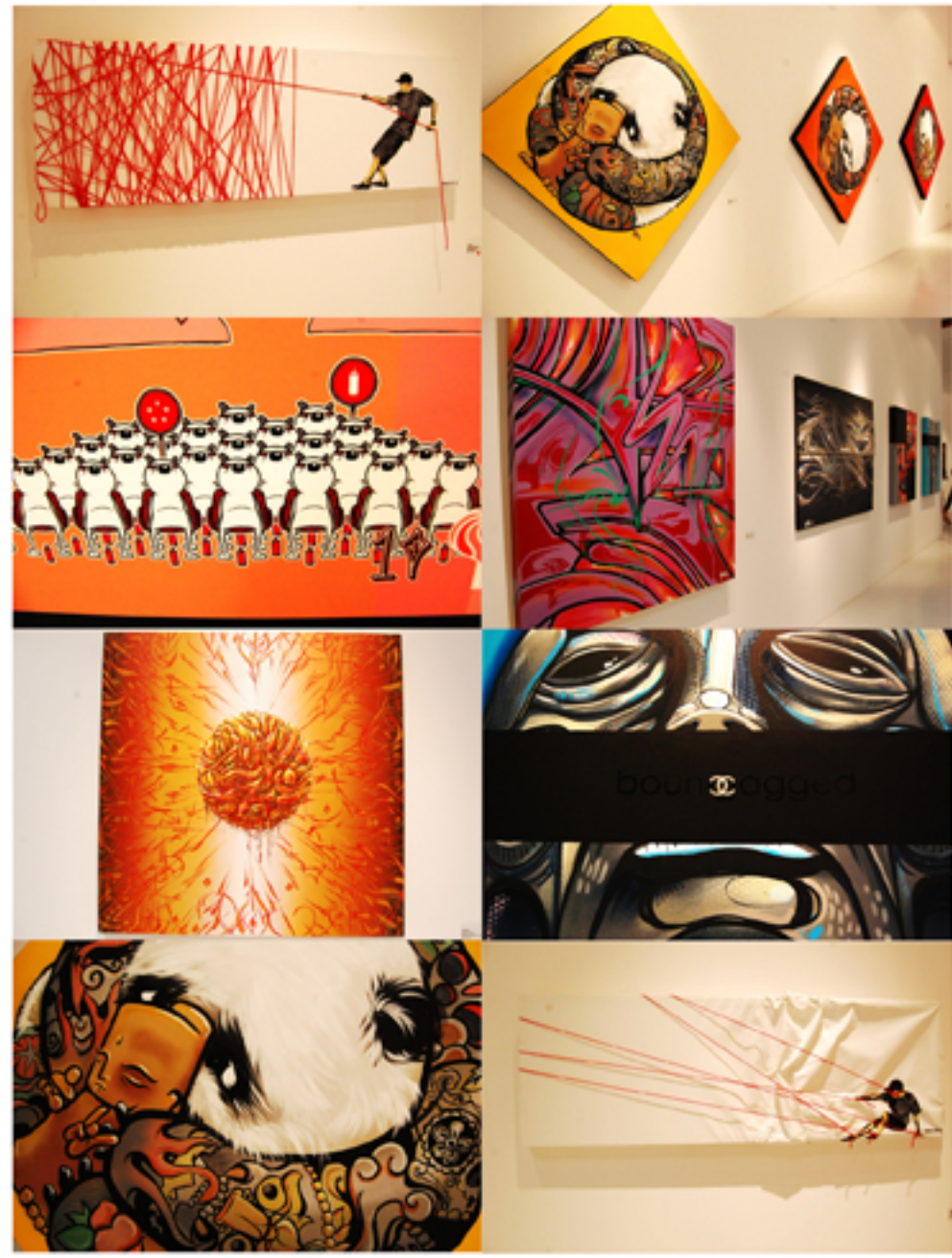
We're humbled and impressed by Syaheed's untiring efforts in improving the hiphop culture in Singapore. In the natural course of things, he has matured from an artist to managing and helping them. We will be expecting great things from him.

*Check out what they do at [www.bedsty.com](http://www.bedsty.com)*





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