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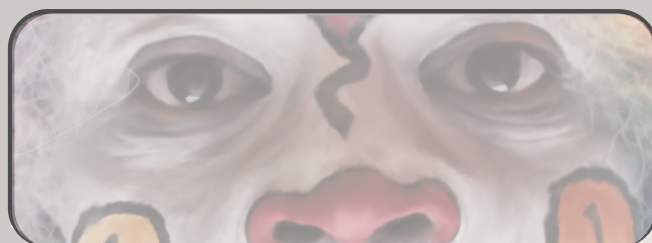
July 11, 2024



I was at a barbecue on the Fourth of July, eating burgers and drinking rum punch, watching store-bought fireworks belch and sizzle overhead, when Kendrick Lamar released the music video for his song “Not Like Us.” “Not Like Us,” released on May 4th, was the song that, by most accounts, ended the quickly souring beef. It concluded a long spring and helped the summer achieve its blooming. You can’t go anywhere without hearing it. It sounds like the beach and a cookout all at once. It’s got a buoyant, joyously repetitive beat, made by Lamar’s fellow-Angeleno Mustard, and Lamar’s verses showcase his array of finely honed talents: for percussive noisemaking, for punch lines with multiple meanings, for telling stories with political undertones.

All spring, from March to May, Lamar was in a pitched, often nasty battle with the rapper Drake. The two, opposite in ethos and, often, in sound, occupy rival archetypes. Lamar’s the experimentalist artist, interested less in image than in authentic expression. Drake’s the superstar party boy, the “hitmaker,” a missile aimed at fame and equipped to seek out its ensuing rewards. Maybe inevitably, then, the two have never seemed to like each other; occasionally, over the years, one would bury a barely veiled barb about the other in a song. Lately, though, they have been engaged in an open musical war—they insulted each other’s height and personal style, questioned the authenticity of each other’s attachment to hip-hop and its various regional cultures, and, harrowingly, accused each other of heinous crimes.

Lamar called Drake a pedophile—indeed, he established a new library of insinuating terms for pedophilia. Drake claimed that Lamar had physically abused his fiancée. If you grew up listening to rap and basking in battles like these, it was a queasy ride. Nice to know that rap could still create a culture-wide main event of this kind, full of narratives and lore and cathartic plot points—but the flagrant misogyny on display dampened the mood.



On Juneteenth, a few weeks before the “Not Like Us” video arrived, Lamar convened a California-celebrating concert called “The Pop-Out: Ken & Friends.” It streamed worldwide, on Amazon—no great friend of local neighborhoods, it must be said—but was an exercise in geographical specificity. One of Lamar’s guests at the concert was Tommy the Clown, the famous “hip-hop clown” who invented a dance called clowning, which evolved into the West Coast staple krumping. Tommy, with his blaring technicolor Afro wig, appears early in the “Not Like Us” video, too. He’s the one who presses play on a turntable and gets the song going.

LAMAR'S

The video, directed by Dave Free and Lamar, is, in some ways, very simple. It is, at least in part, about the pervasive presence of the song itself. Some of the most memorable shots are of huge crowds of ardent fans, glowing in the California sun. They're packed so closely together that you can't see the ground beneath their feet. They're all rapping the words to the song, and it's pretty obvious that they haven't been coached. Even in the staged atmosphere of the video, this essential outsidership is evident—everybody's heard it floating out of a car window, or banging out of a speaker set up outdoors. The social aspect of music—the hit song gone ubiquitous, as abundant as the air—is often downplayed in the era of Spotify and other streamers. Music videos don't appear at a dependable time on a channel we all watch anymore.

When the packed-crowd shots dissipate, the video often wanders off to what looks like a neighborhood get-together. A bunch of parked cars sit gleaming, and around them stand a bunch of guys wearing red and blue clothes and accessories, emblems of West Coast rap's entanglement and indebtedness to the byways of various gangs. Lamar's with them, in a cool olive-green jacket, dancing and grinning. Behind the men and the cars is a low-slung apartment complex, maybe a housing project, painted a dull yellow. During the battle, when Lamar wasn't busy proving the true depth of his popular appeal, he made hyperlocal appeals to his home milieu, Black Los Angeles. Hip-hop has gone global, of course—Drake is maybe the most fully realized sign of that development, short of Jay-Z—but it is rooted in regionalism, in “sounds” that sprout variously, like produce,

out of the soil and under the sun of particular places. The East Coast–West Coast binary produced another of rap's most famous—and most tragic—conflicts, the one between the Notorious B.I.G. and Tupac Shakur. The music's center of gravity soon travelled to the South, to cities like Atlanta and Houston. Two weeks after Kendrick's “Like That” verse premiered on Future & Metro Boomin's *We Don't Trust You*, I spent half of April 7th driving from my apartment in Los Angeles to LaRussell's backyard in Vallejo, racing against the clock to get to the Pergola by 2 p.m. The drive was anything but quiet. I've driven up and down I-5 and the US-101 more times than I'll ever be able to recall, but this time the soundtrack was different. With an ample amount of free time in my six-hour journey crossing California, I revisited *Good Kid, m.A.A.d City*, *To Pimp a Butterfly*, untitled unmastered, *DAMN.*, and *Mr. Morale & the Big Steppers*.

That fateful Sunday afternoon, I came to one conclusion: Kendrick Lamar is the greatest rapper alive. André 3000, if you decide to release another rap album, you can reclaim this title, but I've spent the past four months going back-and-forth, arguing with myself and anyone who will listen that Kendrick Lamar is the greatest rapper alive, and he has been the greatest rapper alive.

#1

“That fateful Sunday afternoon, I came to **one** conclusion: Kendrick Lamar is the greatest rapper alive.”

The most difficult part about writing about the Summer of Kendrick Lamar has been my sheer awe of Kendrick's attention to detail. It's been over four months and yet when my sister calls me to ask how I'm doing, I have to tell her that I can't stop thinking about how Kendrick began "euphoria" with an audio snippet of Richard Pryor playing the titular character in *The Wiz*. She laughs at me because I say it's "eating me alive," but as a fan of puzzles and brain teasers, these four diss songs feel like the ultimate challenge. With Kendrick silent and the lyrics up to interpretation, I spend my days mulling over each minute detail.

That's the logic of this video: a whittling down—first, the masses singing along in one oceanic voice, then smaller groupings suggesting home. Sometimes it's just Lamar and Mustard, rapper and producer, an irreducible unit of hip-hop songcraft. Even more intimately, toward the end of the video, there's a black-and-white scene in a living room, presumably Lamar's. He's there with his fiancée—the subject of some nasty bars by Drake—and his two children. At first, they're standing still and looking directly into the camera, reiterating Grant Wood's painting "American Gothic."

A concert on Juneteenth and a video on the Fourth! Lamar is a master of rap, it can't be denied, and his hard-won skill has earned him an undamnable flood of free expression. Perhaps this makes him equally a quintessential product of his country. He descends from the Revolution and the Emancipation, twin freedoms written in blood. The "Not Like Us" video is his V-J Day, his chance to stage happy pandemonium in the streets. One day we'll learn to do the right thing—throw a party, sing a song, make ourselves and somebody else free—without having to wage a war.

CAPTURE THE MOMENT

2024

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Hayao Miyazaki wins Magsaysay Award:

Why his animated films resonate
with audiences across ages

Arushi Bhaskar
September 3, 2024

Japanese filmmaker Hayao Miyazaki,

considered one of the greatest animators and directors, has won the 2024 Ramon Magsaysay Award. Named after the former President of the Philippines, the awards “honor greatness of spirit shown in service to the peoples of Asia”, covering fields such as community service and arts.

Miyazaki was born in 1941 in Tokyo. His father was the director of a company that manufactured parts for fighter planes during World War II. In his book *Starting Point: 1979 to 1996*, Miyazaki wrote that some of his earliest memories are of “bombed-out cities”. He attended Gakushūin University in Tokyo, graduating with a degree in economics. In 1963, he joined Tōei Animation, then Asia's largest producer of animated films. It was here, at Tōei, that he met and befriended Isao Takahata, who later became his business partner.

Toei made feature-length animated films for the big screen and later television. Among their works was the 1974 series *Heidi, Girl of the Alps*, produced by Zuiyo, directed by Takahata and with a screenplay by Miyazaki. They also worked on the series *Ōkami shōnen Ken* (Wolf Boy Ken), and *Taiyō no ōji: Horusu no daibōken* (Little Norse Prince) which marked Takahata's debut as a director.

Miyazaki and Takahata left Toei in 1971, and the pair continued to work for studios across the city. In 1979, Miyazaki released his first feature-length film *Rupan sansei: Kariosutoro no shiro* (1979; *Lupin III: Castle of Cagliostro*), which followed the adventures of gentleman thief Lupin.

In 1985, Miyazaki founded Studio Ghibli, along with Takahata and producer Toshio Suzuki. The studio's objective was to create animation films that diverged from the tropes of the time. Exploration of the human psyche, storytelling and creativity were to be at the base of their work.

Miyazaki's first two films with the studio, *Castle in the Sky* (1986) and *My Neighbor Totoro* (1988), failed to do well commercially. It was only with *Kiki's Delivery Service* in 1989 that the studio tasted success.

The Wind Rises was to be Miyazaki's last film, he said, announcing his retirement. However, in 2016, he announced that a short-film venture — *Kemushi no Boro* (Boro the Caterpillar) — was to be made into a feature-length film.



Recurring themes in Hayao Miyazaki's work

Miyazaki's work was steeped in the changing lives of Japanese people post World War II, which is seen in his obsession with planes in *Porco Rosso* (1992).

A major theme in his films is pacifism. In his essay 'A Pig, the State and War: *Porco Rosso*' for the journal *Animation Studies*, author Daisuke Akimoto described *Spirited Away* as "anti-war propaganda", saying that the "fundamental political message of the film is not only anti-fascism, but also anti-war pacifism". In *Princess Mononoke* (1997), the protagonist goes against tradition and history to try and end conflict between communities.

Environmentalism also finds a prominent place in Miyazaki's filmography. Margaret Talbot wrote in *The New Yorker* that he perceives modern culture as "thin and shallow", and is generally distrustful of technology. In 2008, Miyazaki told *The Japan Times* that he felt very frustrated growing up because he saw nature being destroyed "in the name of economic progress".



Women in Studio Ghibli films

Strong-minded women characters are another major feature of Ghibli films. "Miyazaki's girls display formidable know-how and independence. They take on jobs, organise households, fight battles and rescue boys from near death — all matter-of-factly, without ever trumpeting notions of girl power," *The New York Times* said.

He also chose to tell coming-of-age stories about young women without resorting to sexualisation or fluff, a phenomenon that is still rare today, especially in stories about women told by men. His heroines have a strong will, a good sense of humour, and an ability to navigate the complexities of the world while still being true to themselves.

He once said, "I want to depict the reality of present-day children in Japan — including their desire — and make films that will inspire heartfelt enjoyment. This is something fundamental, something we should never forget."



THE FUTURE OF
GAMING IS

INDIE

➤ Ben Sledge

June 13, 2024

Geoff Keighley kicked off Summer Game Fest by tempering expectations. It was a good call ahead of a triple-A-lite show, and is generally a good thing to say to gamers ahead of these showcases anyway. Whatever you're showing bar Elden Ring 2, if it's not Silksong and or Bloodborne Remastered on PC, people will be mad.

However, he followed this up with a surprising start to his reveal show. He mentioned the layoffs, as members of the industry have been asking him to for years at this point, but glossed over them in favour of getting on with the world premieres. It seems like he can't do anything right, but it's not too hard to show solidarity and support for laid off developers. We're asking for the bare minimum here.

After this, Keighley revealed his PowerPoint presentation of the best-selling games this year, stating that eight of them were made by small developers. "Two of them are considered big company games," he says. "But the other eight come from indie, mid-sized teams, or solo developers."

I'm not sure which of the Sony, Capcom, or Pocketpair games is considered in any way small (presumably the Palworld developer, as it doesn't quite match the billions of the former two), but his point is clear. Indies and double-A titles are ruling the roost in 2024.

The rest of the show followed suit. When your biggest name is a Lego spinoff of a PlayStation exclusive and the best-received was about a bean with a gun, you know this isn't like the SGFs of old. There wasn't even a Kojima cameo, despite the fact that Death Stranding 2 and OD are still in development. While other showcases had bigger reveals (Ubisoft and Xbox showed plenty of, well, Ubisoft and Xbox games), the livestreams and showfloor were dominated by indies.

First up was Crescent Moon Games' Screenbound, a first-person puzzle platformer... although perhaps that's underselling what this game really is. As the player character explores 3D environments, they are also navigating a 2D version of their surroundings on a Game Boy-like device simultaneously. Objects and obstacles that appear on this device might be invisible in the 3D world, so you're essentially playing two games at once.

You have to see it in action to understand how it works (and even then, I imagine you need to play it to fully grasp the concept), but the idea is absolutely genius. Already I'm filing it away in my brain with Portal and Viewfinder; seminal titles that really make you think differently about how you're traversing your environment, the video game equivalent of thinking fourth-dimensionally.

Beethoven and Dinosaur's Mixtape was the one that caught my eye the most, and can't come soon enough. A game with nostalgic vibes built around my favourite music coupled with skateboarding and a two-step animation style? Sign me up. And while it's said to be inspired by coming-of-age films of the '80s and '90s, the trailer makes it feel like its own thing which is refreshing to see.

Wanderstop is the latest project from Stanley Parable developer Davey Wreden, under his new studio Ivy Road. While this debut trailer initially lets you think this is just your typical cosy sim, it comes with a twist as lead character Alta deals with the complicated feelings stemming from her life changing from fighter/adventurer to tea shop employee.

Wanderstop looks like it'll tackle the paradoxical emotions of missing a life you don't have anymore even if you were happy to leave it, with some anger bubbling up in there that could lead to interesting gameplay and narrative. Either way, it was definitely my most favourite trailer of all the showcases and I can't wait to unravel this one.



There were a couple of games that pulled on my heartstrings, none more so than Nomada Studio's side-scroller Neva. The art style is gorgeous, and the idea of raising a wolf pup to become a forest deity has major Princess Mononoke vibes – especially with the heavy environmental storytelling. The art style took my breath away, and it's an adventure I can see myself being immersed in for hours and an emotional wreck by the end of it.

One game that took me by surprise was Beyond-thosehill's Albert Wilde: Quantum PI – not only in it being a game that truly encapsulates the film noir aesthetics I love, but that you play as a cat. It's bizarre and absurd (in a good way), and hits the noir tones. The gameplay also looks interesting, that being from a first-person perspective when walking around the streets of the city.

The future of the games industry is

indeependert

The highlights of the show were Blumhouse Games and Innersloth. Both are trying to support the indie scene by placing numerous small bets, instead of putting all their chips on *The Last of Us 3*. I assumed Blumhouse Games would be announcing *M3GAN: The Game* or something, but it is instead investing in half a dozen small horror games, approaching the industry much like it does movies. Blumhouse famously spends about \$10 million on each of its horror flicks, and it seems to be taking a similar tack with video games. Horror games and horror movies have a lot in common beyond the genre itself, and small budgets can be stretched further than in other genres.

Innersloth is following suit, announcing the Outersloth fund for independent developers. The *Among Us* developer is offering a pot of money for small teams and weird games, advice for devs who may be new to the industry, and won't steal any of your IP for its trouble. It's an incredible way of giving back, and may pave the future of the industry. Who knows what the next *Among Us* will be, but Innersloth (or Outersloth) may fund it.

While Xbox and PlayStation are duking it out in the ring, competing for every last dollar in your wallet, indie games are co-operating and coming together. They're helping each other onto the empty pedestal vacated by the behemoths of the industry. The future of the industry is not another middling *Assassin's Creed* game, it's not another *Star Wars* RPG.

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GAMECUBE



'The Bear' Is Back

Here are the Best Tools in Carmy's Kitchen.

Alaina Chou
July 8, 2024

FX's *The Bear* is back, with all of season three available for streaming on Hulu. If you haven't started watching yet, much of the new season takes place in the kitchen of *The Bear*—a space that oscillates between complete chaos and contemplative calm on what feels like a minute-to-minute basis. Carmy has good taste, and it shows in his allegiance to favorites like All-Clad cookware, Vitamix blenders, and the trusty Benriner mandoline. Read on for all the best ways Carmy outfits his kitchen.

Rubbermaid Commercial High-Heat Silicone Spatula

With its wide head and long handle, Rubbermaid's commercial spatula is excellent for working large batches. It's dishwasher safe, and its flexible head is less likely to become nicked over time than that of other silicone spatulas. This exact model can be found in commercial kitchens and bakeries, and the pastry station wouldn't be complete without it.



Cuisinart Chef's Classic Cast Iron 7-Quart Round Casserole

In the background of the show's braciolo flashback scene, Michael can be seen nestling meat into a blue Cuisinart Chef's Classic casserole—our former also-great Dutch oven pick. Though our testers did like its wide cooking surface, we think our long-standing top pick, the Lodge 6 Quart Enamelled Cast Iron Dutch Oven, is easier to manage (it's a bit smaller and lighter, but it has bigger handles and still delivers great results).





Mac Mighty MTH-80 Chef's Knife

We've recommended the Mac Mighty MTH-80 chef's knife for 10 years because, even after a decade of testing, it remains one of the most reliable, nimble chef's knives we've come across. It also stays sharp and feels good in the hand. The Mac Mighty made a guest appearance on Season 1 of *The Bear*, being used by sous-chef Sydney Adamu (played by Ayo Edebiri) to slice through an endless pile of vegetables.

Lodge Cast-iron Skillet

Of all the approved kitchen gear that passes through the doors of *The Original Beef*, perhaps none is as durable as the cast-iron skillet. Our also-great pick, the Lodge Pre-Seasoned 12-inch Cast Iron Skillet, makes an appearance in the opening minutes of the first season's sixth episode. This heavy, preseasoned skillet is excellent for searing, frying, and even baking, and if taken care of, it can last decades (which is why we've been recommending it since 2017).



Pan-Seared Fish with Blood Orange

This fish dish is a tricky one from Carmy's past. Though his former boss insists on serving the delicate fish with fennel accents, Carmy strikes out on his own to create a blood orange version of the dish, which is served with a beautiful citrus reduction. To mimic the dish at home, we'd recommend making your favorite flaky fish—like seared cod, for example—and pairing it with a light and fresh citrus salad with pomegranate & mint.

Kuhn Rikon Original Swiss Peeler

The Kuhn Rikon Original Swiss Peeler is one of the most ubiquitous tools in professional kitchens. Its incredibly sharp blade and lightweight build make it easy to use for long, repetitive tasks (such as when Sydney is seen peeling a huge stack of carrots). The Kuhn Rikon peeler is also one of the least expensive kitchen tools we recommend, and, despite its plastic body, it feels surprisingly sturdy.





Super Benriner Mandoline

While the mandoline used in *The Bear* is the ubiquitous seafoam-green model, we're fans of Benriner's updated, slightly larger Super Benriner mandoline. It has a rubber foot that keeps it in place over a cutting board or a bowl, and it has a comfortable handle—both of which are important when you're dealing with a kitchen tool that invites accidents. We don't recommend shaving down small nubs of shallots, as depicted on the show. But either way, the Benriner mandoline comes with a simple guard to keep your hands safe.



Ravioli with Peas and Parmesan

Since chef Carmy decides that *The Bear's* menu should change each day, that means the return of the ravioli to the menu. One day, the ravioli is served with fresh peas and a Parmesan mousse, which reminds us of a comforting lobster ravioli, which is served with a light cream sauce and studded with vibrant green peas and tender lobster. Of course, you could substitute your own handmade pasta for the store-bought kind for a tastier experience that doubles as a fun project.

San Merican Whole Peeled Tomatoes

In our exhaustive search to find the best canned tomatoes, we tried over 25 different cans of tomatoes, and we landed on San Merican Tomatoes (formerly named San Marzano Tomatoes) as some of our favorites. They're also popular in *The Bear's* kitchen, and probably for the same reasons we like them: their consistently high-quality, plump texture and rich flavor. (We have not, however, tested them as a method for hiding cash.)



KitchenAid stand mixer

In the background of Carmy's fever dream, you may have spotted a KitchenAid stand mixer. The KitchenAid Artisan Series 5-Quart Tilt-Head Stand Mixer has been our top pick for 10 years. We've tested models from plenty of other brands, and the iconic KitchenAid mixer still comes out on top, which may be why Carmy dreams of it.

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