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Winter 2025

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Redefine Success, Become Unapologetic

LADY GOGO

NO INTRODUCTIONS NEEDED

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THE SILENT EPIDEMIC: OUR BREATHING

we have become a population of chest-breathers

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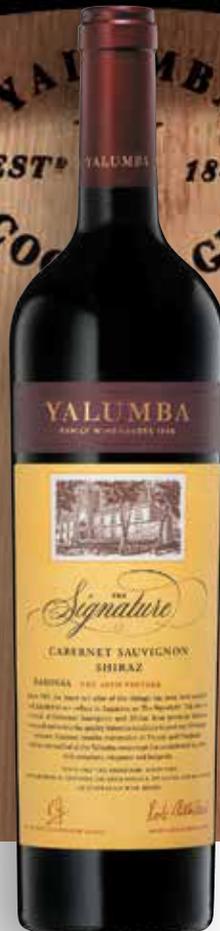


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M2WOMAN

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EDITOR'S *letter*

We talk a lot about resilience. Usually in sweeping terms. Grit. Grind. “Bounce back stronger” and “Survive to 25” (Congrats to those of you who did). But what about the quieter kind? The sort that doesn’t make headlines or LinkedIn posts. The kind that looks like showing up to a meeting when your confidence is in pieces. Or replying to that one email you’ve been avoiding for three days. Or putting on real pants for once.

That’s the flavour of resilience we see across this issue.

There’s Lady Gaga, of course, our cover star and the reigning empress of emotional evolution. From stadium tours to film sets to quietly reshaping conversations around trauma, she’s proof that reinvention isn’t about shedding who you were, it’s about expanding into who you really are. Which, as it turns out, might involve fewer filters and more boundary-setting.

But closer to home, we also find this strength everywhere. Jo McFadden, who took the parts of a disparate and widely undulating career path and turned it into a superpower to help others live and work well. Jennifer Whittle, who learned leadership is less about commanding the room and more about creating space for others to thrive. And Patrice Green, who admits that some days, being a business owner, a mum, and a human feels like a high-wire act over a flaming pit of logistics and self-doubt, but she still shows up anyway.

Then there’s the team at Oxygen Yoga & Fitness, whose version of resilience involves far-infrared heat, sweat, and a surprising amount of clarity. It turns out, slowing down and tuning in can sometimes get you further than pushing harder ever could. Who knew?

So maybe this issue isn’t about resilience in the chest-thumping, bootstrapping sense. Maybe it’s about restorative resilience. The kind that lets you exhale, say “not today,” and pick your battles with a little more self-kindness.

Because here’s the truth: some days, showing up is enough. And on the days when it’s not? That’s okay too. Try again tomorrow.

Héloïse Garrity, Editor

PORSCHE



Simplicity in its most
exaggerated form.

THE NEW 911 CARRERA T. THE ONE AND ALWAYS.



Discover model.

M2WOMAN

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UP TO DATE

We keep you in the know in the world of design, fashion, and entertainment.

Next time you find yourself in Queenstown make sure you block out one (if not several) of your dining experiences at Sean Connolly's new Pavillion Bar & Kitchens, a bustling hospitality venue that promises the perfect pairing of good times and the great tastes of a region steeped in a rich food heritage.

"Pavilion is all about simple, fabulous food with local provenance, heroing a range of outstanding ingredients from the region. We celebrate casually chaotic social dining, damn good food, and the simple joy of gathering around a table," says Sean Connolly.

Guests at Pavilion can expect unforgettable fare, featuring ingredients grown by locals who love the land and prepared by Sean and his talented team led by Executive Chef, Tomoya Kodera. Tomoya trained by a protégé of the great Salvatore Cuomo and has worked alongside Sean to open Auckland Restaurants Gusto and Esther, with Josh Clegg taking the reins as General Manager.

Pavilion Bar & Kitchens located at Queenstown Central, 19 Grant Road, Frankton.

WATCH



MATERIALISTS

Written and directed by Celine Song *Materialists* stars Dakota Johnson, Chris Evans, and Pedro Pascal. Dakota plays a young ambitious New York City matchmaker finds herself torn between the perfect match, Pedro Pascal, and her imperfect ex, Chris Evans. That's all you need to know so let me use the rest of this spot to say, usually you've broken up with someone for a reason, move on to new pastures girl. Don't fall for Chris Evans' puppy dog eyes AGAIN.

In cinemas 12 June

JANE AUSTEN WRECKED MY LIFE

Meta-Jane Austen media has become a cottage industry and “Jane Austen Wrecked My Life” is going to show that it’s not going anywhere anytime soon. French bookstore runner and writer Agathe (Camille Rutherford) finds herself swept into the estate of Jane Austen where her ancestors run a retreat incubator for writers. On her way to England she kisses her best friend, but quickly finds romance abroad. Complications, a love triangle, and a beautiful mansion with surrounding wet farmland provide the backdrop for a modern romance but with all the frills of a classic Austen novel. Will she randomly get injured while frolicking in a field and get swept up by a dashing gentleman? There’s only one way to find out.

In Cinemas 24 July



TOGETHER

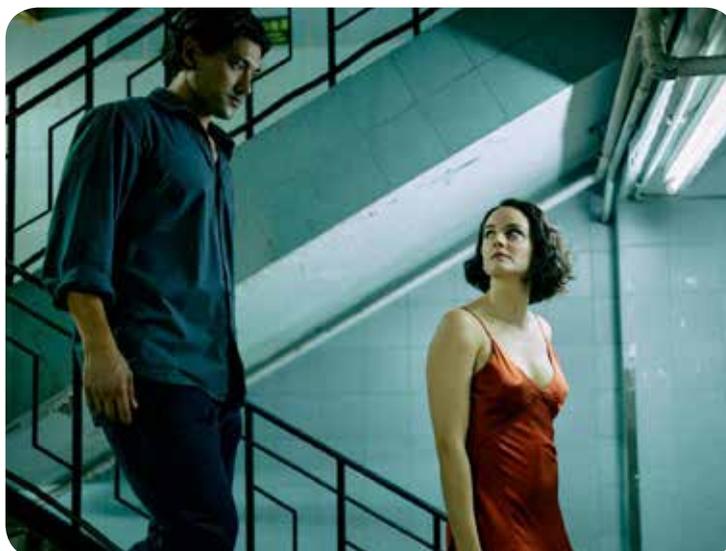
I wanted to make my review of Together just the word “No” over and over again till I hit the word count, but instead I’ll attempt to make this space useful by actually talking about it a little. Together is a body horror film which explores the extremes of Codependency. It’s all triggered when loving couple Alison Brie and Dave Franco move to the countryside together, and trip into some supernatural shenanigans. Funny, off kilter, and jaw shatteringly intense. They give the performances of their life and even this movies trailer is going to live rent free in my head for the rest of my life. Thanks.

In Cinemas 31 July

EMMANUELLE

Does it say something about the French that one of their most successful films is X-Rated? Let’s not dwell on this line of inquiry, but the Emmanuelle film is a reboot of a series that pushed the boundaries of what was acceptable to put on the big screen. The series was based on the 1967 book of the same name which was pulled from the shelves for its raunchiness describing a bored housewife finding fun where she could. This new film follows Emmanuelle to Hong Kong where she samples the pleasures the city has to offer with a more 21st century feminist edge. You need to be into BDSM if you want to watch this film though because it’s pure torture. A cadre of talented actors are wasted on an empty script that will leave you thirsting for... the door.

In Cinemas 29 May



ATTEND

BODA CHEF SERIES

Boda Restaurant, Auckland is hosting two nights of culinary excellence and cultural storytelling. For two exclusive evenings only, Executive Chef Hyokeun Choi of BODA Restaurant (Auckland) and Chef Migo Razon of Miss Mi (Melbourne) will come together to present a fusion of modern Korean and Filipino cuisine.

This chef-led series is more than a meal—it's a four-course journey across Korea and the Philippines. From flavour-packed canapés to two innovative fusion-style mains and a final course featuring a traditional Korean dessert, each dish draws on the rich culinary heritage and personal stories of the chefs.

"Guests will enjoy not only bold, contemporary flavours but also the cultural roots and techniques behind each creation," says Executive

Chef Hyokeun Choi. "It's an opportunity to connect through food and tradition."

Whether you're a passionate foodie, a curious diner, or simply looking for an unforgettable night out this winter, this limited-time event is not to be missed.

Thursday 17th - Friday 18th July

booking.resdiary.com/TablePlus/Standard/BodaAccor



Dish in image: Paua Gu Jeol – Pan, platter of 9 delicacies. It represents harmony and abundance. From an eating experience, it brings a satisfying combination of flavours, colours and textures.



WORLD PRESS PHOTO EXHIBITION AUCKLAND

The internationally acclaimed World Press Photo Exhibition returns to Auckland this year, showcasing the best and most

important photojournalism and documentary photography from around the globe. The exhibition, which presents the winning photographs of the prestigious annual World Press Photo Contest, will head to Tāmaki Makaurau thanks to the Rotary Club of Auckland, from 26 July – 24 August at Level 1, Smith and Caughey's Building.

Presented in more than 60 cities each year, the World Press Photo Exhibition 2025 invites viewers to step outside the news cycle and think critically about important topics in our world. Key themes range from politics, gender, migration, to conflict and the climate crisis.

**Saturday 26 July – Sunday 24 August –
Level 1, Smith and Caughey's Building,
Elliot St Entrance**

SILO THEATRE PRESENTS: MOTHER PLAY

This Tony Award-nominated Mother Play, by Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright Paula Vogel, is a darkly comedic family drama exploring shifting identities and generational tensions. Following a critically-acclaimed Broadway run with Jessica Lange in 2024 and an upcoming 2025 season at Melbourne Theatre Company, Mother Play will arrive in Tāmaki for its Aotearoa premiere. This poignant exploration of motherhood and queerness stars theatre legend Jennifer Ludlam, alongside Amanda Tito (Scenes from the Climate Era) and Leon Wadham (The Rings of Power), with direction from Sophie Roberts.

**4 – 20 September | Q Theatre, Rangatira |
silotheatre.co.nz/show/mother-play**



NOW THAT'S ONTRAC

The new Dyson OnTrac exudes luxury. These are headphones you wear while pretending to care about your vinyl record collection. These are headphones you wear next to your private pool but not too close because they are your precious babies and no amount of water should ever threaten them.

The first thing you'll notice about the OnTrac's is their solid weight, not enough to make your head tired, but enough to let you know that this is a luxury item, not a throwaway headset for wearing during a zoom call. Weight is distributed evenly via the headband which also contains the battery cells. Multi-pivot gimbal arms ensure the high-grade foam cushions always fit snugly and firmly with very little discomfort during long sessions. The earcups also have capacitive capabilities, so whipping them off to talk to someone will instantly pause the music. I found that wearing it around your neck while you talked to someone would make them a bit fussy, making bonk sounds occasionally thinking I was putting them on.



This is about my only note or critique about an otherwise beautiful piece of tech.

Connecting to your phone and customising your experience via the MyDyson app is a breeze. Settings include noise control preferences as well as full equaliser settings to get the perfect audio profile for you. Double tapping the replaceable outer cap will switch between isolation and transparency modes. 8 microphones on the outside make sure they can help successfully tune out 40db of outside sound. There are also dual beam-forming microphones that pick up your voice clearly and isolate it from background noise while you chat to people on the phone via bluetooth.

Apart from that one example I appreciate that most controls are left up to physical buttons and an audio joystick, a small nub on the right ear you bump in various directions to control pausing, volume, and

skip. Moving back to physical controls made of premium materials feels more opulent and reassuring than having to rely on fiddly gesture controls that look like I'm trying to fight a bug on my head.

One charge delivers around two weeks of use, up to 55 hours. On the technical side 40mm, 16-ohm neodymium speaker drivers reproduce frequencies from as low as 6 Hertz to as high as 21,000 Hertz, providing deep sub-bass that you can feel, and clear highs at the upper end of the frequency range. All I know is that it sounds good to me.

You can get a range of mix and matchable colourways which can be easily switched out, but personally I adore the copper shell which looks appropriately lux.

Dyson.co.nz RRP\$849



you can even go ahead and pair it with your phone and use it to print photos from your phone instead.

The “Degree Control” function allows precise adjustments to light intensity and color gradation. With 10 lens effects (including “Magenta” and “Monochrome”) and 10 film effects (such as “Light Leak” and “Color Gradient”), photographers can mix and match to create up to 100 different styles. Film Style mode adds a unique frame to prints, while Wide Angle Mode captures expansive, cinematic shots. Combined, these features offer over 100,000 creative possibilities.

Coinciding with the launch, Fujifilm is also releasing a matching camera case and the new WIDE format film, brushed metallics, featuring soft gradients and a metallic-like finish.

The Fujifilm instax WIDE Evo, RRP \$649.99 NZD, is now available online at [instax.co.nz](https://www.instax.co.nz).

INSTANTLY WIDE

The instax scene never fails to surprise me, cashing in on the huge popularity of the Instax Mini Evo the brand new WIDE Evo is bigger and better in every way. It allows you to take wide format shots and prints as is befitting its name.

This makes group shots and landscape photography instantly easier and more appealing, although half the fun of these cameras are the crowded blown out party shots. An LCD screen takes the guesswork out of shoots, and you don't need to be stingy with its use anymore. Take as many shots as you need and browse for the one photo where everyone's not blinking. For maximum versatility



MET

Each year the Met Gala's dress code takes inspiration from the exhibition theme and references ideas explored in the show. This year's theme was Superfine: Tailoring Black Style. It explores the importance of sartorial style to the formation of Black identities.

GALA

The show presents a cultural and historical examination of Black style from the 18th century to the present through an exploration of the concept of dandyism. So it's time to suit up.

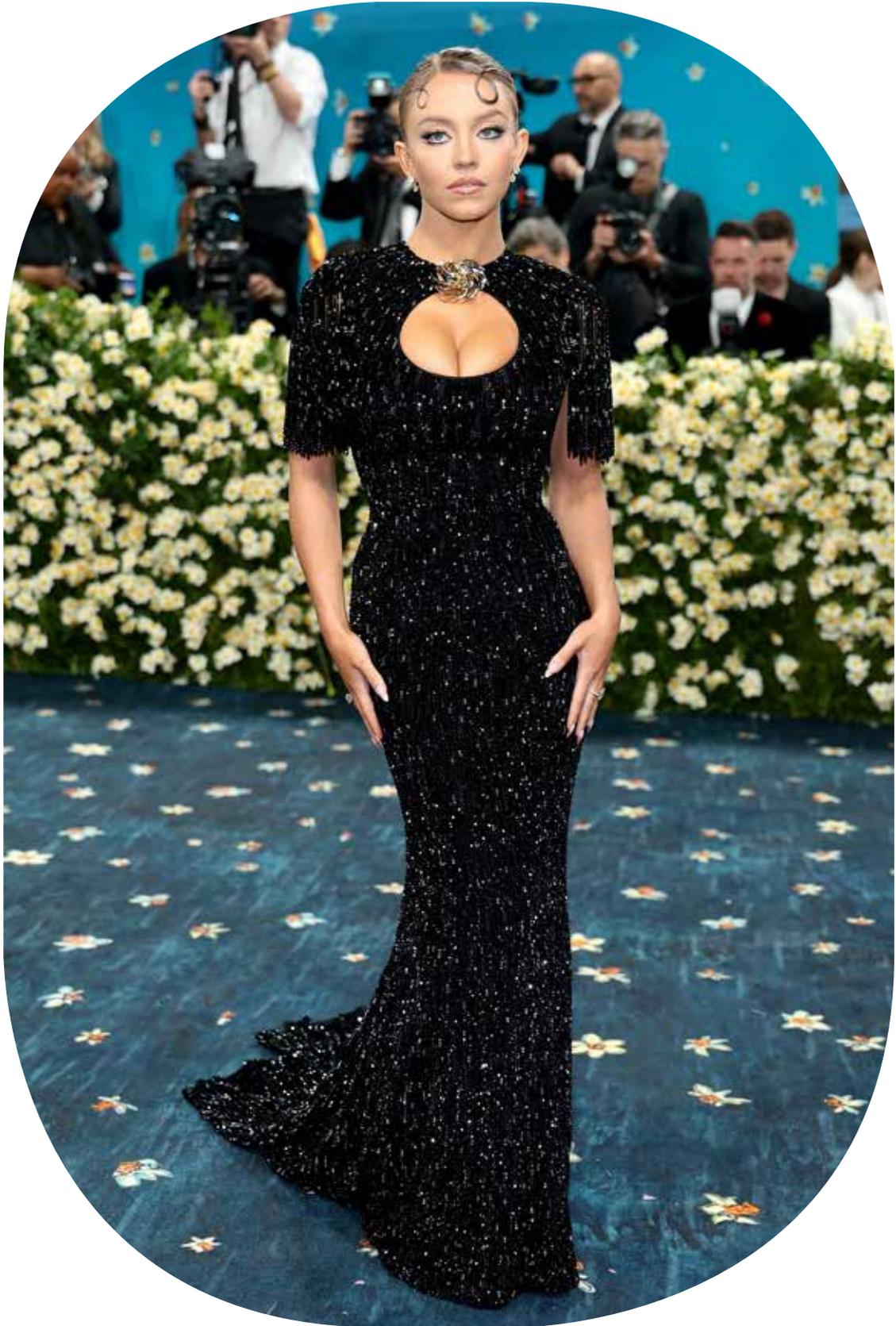
2025



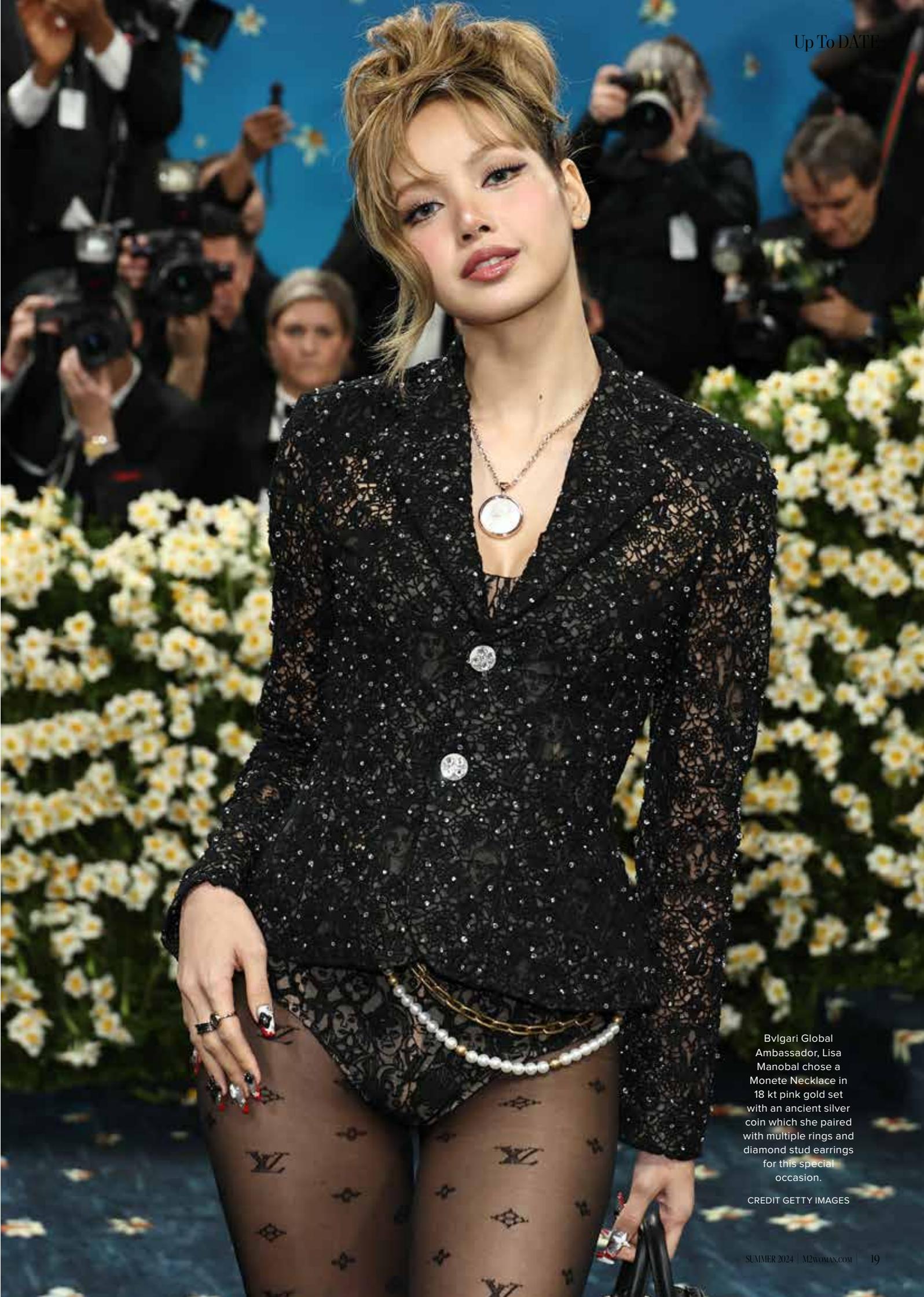


Bvlgari Global Brand Ambassador, Zendaya debuted a High Jewellery diamond brooch from the collection which she paired with a High Jewellery diamond ring and Fancy Vivid Yellow diamond studs for this special occasion.

CREDIT GETTY IMAGES



Sydney Sweeney wore a black crystal embroidered gown with stones ton sur tone, featuring a gold pin and cut out detail. She completed the look with black satin platforms and a black satin pouch. All by Miu Miu.



Bvlgari Global Ambassador, Lisa Manobal chose a Monete Necklace in 18 kt pink gold set with an ancient silver coin which she paired with multiple rings and diamond stud earrings for this special occasion.

CREDIT GETTY IMAGES



The Bvlgari Cosmic Vault Necklace, worn by Anne Hathaway is a stunning tribute to celestial beauty and architectural grandeur. At its center, this necklace features a 123.35-carat sugarloaf sapphire that belongs in the exclusive pantheon of stones for its deep, intense colour. It was accompanied by multiple High Jewellery rings for this special occasion.

CREDIT GETTY IMAGES



Gigi Hadid wore a gold velvet gown with draped detailing, embellished with crystal embroidery, and completed the look with a pair of gold leather slingback shoes and a satin clutch. All by Miu Miu



Joey King wore a green kid mohair embroidered suit with mirrored crystals, printed gazarres shirt, jacquard necktie, and completed the look with green satin platforms and a yellow satin clutch. All by Miu Miu.



The Magnus Emerald Necklace, worn by Priyanka Chopra Jonas, mounts one of the largest and most exquisite precious stones in the world, an emerald of 241.06 carats, the largest faceted stone ever set by Bvlgari.

CREDIT GETTY IMAGES



Bulgari Friend of the House, Monica Barbaro debuted a High Jewellery Monete brooch from the collection in pink gold with 1 silver coin which she paired with multiple diamond Serpenti rings and diamond stud earrings for this special occasion.



CAUSTING



MAYHEM

In late January of this year, billboards around America changed, almost simultaneously, to a countdown clock ticking down the day, hour, minute and seconds to a mysterious event.

WORDS BY JAMIE TROWER



Possible mayhem, perhaps? Maybe to apocalypse? As time ticked on by, the aesthetics of the countdown changed too. What was going on?

‘Omg! Mother is being so cryptic,’ wrote u/thewindthatmovesyou on a Reddit post of the reveal.

‘HEAL US MOTHER!’ another equally excited Monster added on the same site.

It didn’t take long for legions of fans to catch-on that the countdown was from the Mothership of Motherships herself. It was Lady Gaga’s doing.

Lady Gaga—Mother Monster—the Rah Rah Queen. The chart-topping singer, relentlessly robust songwriter, creative record producer, award-winning actress and successful businesswoman. Lady Gaga has reinvented herself as one of the most recognizable faces in the world and one of the greatest living musical legends.

The recipient of Academy Awards, nine Grammys, two Golden Globes, an MTV Movie Award, earned a Guinness World Record for the fastest selling single on iTunes ('Bad Romance'), 13 MTV VMA's and supports hundreds of charities as a philanthropist on the side.

She's a fashion icon too. From her earlier days in sweaty nightclubs in downtown New York nightclubs, wearing skimpy brassiere and thong, to her very bizarre meat-dress at the 2010 MTV, to her Marie Antoinette-inspired look at the Brits that same year with an all-white ruffled ball gown and pompadour wig four times the size of her head, Lady Gaga is the Queen of stretching art her way and creating a type of brilliant mayhem.

Born in 1986 in the Upper West Side of Manhattan to a hard-working upper-middle class Italian family, Stefani Germanotta found music at an early age. Written by Stefani herself on her first self-named website, she explained the process

she took to writing her first song. 'My dad was listening to what I now know was Pink Floyd's "Money"; she wrote, 'and understanding only the sounds of the cash register in the intro, I [then] wrote a song called "Dollar Bills" on my Mickey Mouse staff paper.'

Her mum, Cynthia, enrolled her in piano lessons from the age of four, hoping that she would learn the stepping stones to becoming a 'cultured young woman'. The young Gaga much preferred creating music by ear, however, and felt her natural talent for music hook onto her soul whenever she tickled at the ivories.

'I don't know exactly where my affinity for music comes from,' Gaga told MTV News in 2017, 'but it is the thing that comes easiest to me. When I was like three years old—I may have been even younger—my mom always tells this really embarrassing story of me propping myself up and playing the keys like this because I was too young and short to get all the way up there.'

By the time Stefani was 11 the young superstar was set to join the private performing arts conservatory, Julliard. Though a wonderful opportunity for her to study at the art school, Stefani quickly pivoted away to the Convent of the Sacred Heart instead, at the behest of her parents. Must be an Italian-Roman-Catholic thing.

Fun fact: Germanotta's schoolmates included the likes of Paris and Nicky Hilton, reported by Ranker in 2021. The Hilton girls, admittedly, seemed to have far more impact on the young Gaga than the nuns ever would.

'I am fascinated with the blonde woman as seductress,' she told The Telegraph in 2010 on a press junket for the release of her then-freshly-released hit song 'Bad Romance'. 'There's a way that these women position themselves in front of the cameras. There's a real art to fame.'

According to multiple online sources, Gaga saw herself as a hugely passionate learner back then. She was focused, very dedicated, very studious. As Stefani worked harder and harder at school, on the side-line was her mum who got her in touch with her first (and only) vocal coach, Don Lawrence. Lawrence was also working at that time with another young star, Christina Aguilera, and had truly impressive names on his weekly schedule. Names like Whitney Houston, Mick Jagger, Axl Rose, and Bono, to name a few.

As she floated into her teenage years, the torment and bullying began to start unfortunately. Her eccentricity at that age was fodder for a bit of ridicule from her classmates. That gave her some tough skin, thankfully, yet still hurt from time-to-time. 'I used to do these really big Evita brows. I used to self-tan too.'

"I don't know exactly where my affinity for music comes from,' Gaga told MTV News in 2017, 'but it is the thing that comes easiest to me. When I was like three years old—I may have been even younger—my mom always tells this really embarrassing story of me propping myself up and playing the keys like this because I was too young and short to get all the way up there.'"





People would say, “Why the f**k are you so orange, why do you do your hair that way, are you a d*ke? Why do you have to look like that for school?” I didn’t even want to go to school sometimes.’

At age 17, Stefani gained early acceptance into the Collaborative Arts Project 21, a music school at the Tisch School of the Arts at New York University, and studied assiduously to improve her creative ability—writing essay after essay on religion, social issues and politics through art. In her early 20’s Germanotta formed the band, SGBand, and became a regular fixture in the New York clubbing scene.

‘I was onstage in a thong,’ she recalled in her 2017 doco-film, *Five Foot Two*, directed by Chris Moukarbel, ‘with a fringe hanging over my arse thinking that had covered it, lighting hairsprays on fire, go-go dancing to Black Sabbath, and singing songs about oral sex.’

Whilst studying at NYU, her classmates created a now-deleted Facebook page called ‘Stefani Germanotta, you will never be famous’. The group had 12 members, all unnamed, and they all reportedly mocked Gaga for her ambitions and posted pictures of her in these nightclubs, like the infamous *The Bitter End*, mocking her ferociously. One can only assume the members of this group were her classmates. Little did they know back then that that very girl who they had mocked would go on to become one of the biggest stars the world had ever seen, truly becoming a part of pop culture.

Recently, she responded to some posts made on TikTok about the private Facebook group. ‘Some people I went to college with made this way back when,’ she wrote. ‘This is why you can’t give up when people doubt you or put you down—gotta keep going.’

Ultimately, she’s managed to draw strength from her dark teenage years. ‘Bullying really stays with you your whole life,’ she told Yahoo CEO Marissa Mayer. ‘And it really, really never goes away. And I know you’re using words like superstar.

But I was never the winner. I was always the loser. And that still stays with me. And do I want to stick it to anybody? No. I just wanna make music.’

At the 2006 Songwriters Hall of Fame New Songwriters Showcase (in which the SGBand had secured a place) talent-scout, Wendy Starland, spotted the bright-eyed Stefani and referred her to music producer, Rob Fusari.

Funnily enough, it was actually Rob who came up with the Lady Gaga moniker.

Inspired by Queen’s hit song, ‘Radio Ga Ga’—Freddie Mercury being one of Germanotta’s biggest idols—it was a perfect fit. The name thankfully stuck. In 2007 she had her first big break performing in a homemade bra at Lollapalooza, performing risqué dance moves to heavy-metal instruments with friend and collaborator Lady Starlight. All a bit ga-ga, I must say.

In 2010 at the Garden Arena in Boston, Gaga gave a shout-out to Starlight mid-show. ‘For those of you who know who Lady Starlight is, that means you’re a super, super, super fan!’ The crowd roared and cheered in approval. ‘Tonight’s a very emotional night for me because she’s here watching the show and she’s stuck by me since the very, very beginning since I was playing in clubs and DJ’ing. She always believed in me. She said: “Gaga, you’re not just a singer, you’re a performance artist!”’

At the beginning, Gaga was signed and consequently dropped by two record labels by the end of 2007. In a last-ditch attempt at travelling anywhere in the music industry, she hitched a ride on the Sony/ATV bandwagon and wrote some hit songs for The Pussycat Dolls, Fergie and Britney Spears.

In 2008, Gaga, a determined, fresh songwriter, released her debut album, *The Fame* to rave reviews with several producers helping her find her own, unique voice. That album completely catapulted Gaga not just as a national name but an international icon.

In an interview with MTV, DJ Tommie Sunshine said that ‘there wouldn’t be a David Guetta Top 10 Hit...there wouldn’t be this Black Eyed Peas record...if it wasn’t for *The Fame*. The influence of that record is epic.’

The Fame consequently won several top awards in the industry, gained international acclaim, and was nominated for six Grammys, including Album of the Year in 2010.

Three years later, after touring and promoting *The Fame*, Gaga released another stellar chart-topper: the 2011 album, *Born This Way*. Alongside the album (which created global shockwaves and swathes of Little Monster fans) Lady Gaga and her mother, Cynthia, also started the *Born This Way* Foundation with the ‘goal of creating a kinder and braver world.’

In 2013, her critically acclaimed 2013 album, *ARTPOP* making Monsters scream in excitement. It won big gongs alright. Lady Gaga also dipped her toes into acting too, a goal she wanted to achieve from a young age when she performed as lead role in *Guys & Dolls* at high school.

In 2015, Gaga was cast as Elizabeth, a ghoulish vampire hotel owner on the fifth season of Ryan Murphy’s *American Horror Story: Hotel* for which she won the Best Actress in a Miniseries or Television Drama.

‘I wanted to create something extremely meaningful by exploring the art of darkness,’ Gaga told *Billboard* in 2015. ‘The reason I love watching horror films, mysteries and documentaries about crime is that it somehow numbs me from the pain I experience in my own life.’ She later joined Murphy again in 2016 in the *American Horror Story: Roanoke* where she played Scottish witch, Scathach.

As well as playing Scathach, Gaga was busy working behind the scenes on her next album, which was a far cry from her *Monster Ball* and *Artpop* brilliance.

Called Joanne—named after the singer-songwriters late aunt—the album was definitely a way for the artist to ‘draw a line’ through the audience’s ideas of her.

Shortly before the release of the album, she announced her Dive Bar Tour, a way in which to pay homage to ‘the raw Americana vibe’ where she visited several dive bars in the states. The album, Joanne, consequently earned a tonne of praise that garnered her with more awards under her belt.

But it was her portrayal as Ally in the fourth and most-recent rendition of *A Star Is Born* in 2018, directed by Bradley Cooper, that really got fans talking. Ally, introduced as a waitress and struggling with her dreams to become a professional singer, was Gaga as a hybrid talent. The song, ‘Shallows’, written by Gaga herself, still sends shivers down our spines whenever we hear it.

‘This is a conversation between a man and a woman, and he actually listens to her,’ Gaga said about the role. ‘And I think we live in a time when this is something that’s really important to women. Women want to be heard.’ The role earned her Golden Globe nods for Best Actress and Best Original Song (‘Shallows’), three Grammy selections and a SAG Award nomination.

The next two big milestones for Gaga was the release of her 2020 album, *Chromatica*, alongside her portrayal of real-life convicted criminal and former socialite, Patrizia Reggiani, in the Ridley Scott-directed film, *House of Gucci* alongside the likes of Adam Driver, Jared Leto and Jeremy Irons.

‘I used all of these memories, all of these traumas, all of these moments in my life,’ Germanotta told BBC News in 2021. In doing so, to really dig deep into the character, she reached deep into the recesses of her soul and revealed breakdown after breakdown as a result of a sexual assault that left her pregnant when she was 19.

‘I was 19 years old, and I was working in the business, and a producer said to me, “Take your clothes off.” I said no and I left,

and they told me they were going to burn all of my music. And they didn’t stop.’

When asked by the BBC correspondent, Lizo Mzimba how these experiences helped inform her character, she said: ‘The poison of experiencing a man’s world all the time as a woman being in the music industry, I would say. Feeling endlessly controlled by men as I continued my career and tried to find my own voice and be in my own empowerment—not power, but empowerment, as a woman.’

It was with that devotion to her character that Gaga successfully pulled Reggiani off, revelling in her brilliance.

With much anticipation from audiences worldwide, last year *Joker: Folie à Deux* hit cinemas to rapturous anticipation. Directed by Todd Phillips, Germanotta played Harley ‘Lee’ Quinzel, the mentally unstable henchwoman to Joaquin Phoenix’s *Joker*. In pre-production, Phillip’s noted to press that he wanted his version of the infamous Harley Quinn to be very different to the version depicted in the DC comics. And he knew that Lady Gaga had the acting chops to go all the way with it. Phillip is quoted in saying that he wanted his version of Harley Quinn to be more manipulative, amoral and more grounded than other renditions of the character.

The world was utterly flabbergasted by the brilliance of the first *Joker*. Everybody was so excited for the second to hit cinemas. Alas, when it did hit, the musical style of it wasn’t particularly what people expected. Critics took the film and slammed it to the ground, having anticipated the same sort of story as the first film.

The genius of *Joker: Folie à Deux* is that it is campily self-indulgent, extremely meta, and does its own thing in a completely thought-out, artsy, and overwhelmingly-bleak way. The joke is on the fans who didn’t enjoy it, then, who allowed the film to fly completely over their heads.

In late January this year, Gaga made a comment to *Elle* magazine on the effect the film had on audiences. ‘People just sometimes don’t like some things,’ she

said candidly. ‘It’s that simple. And I think to be an artist, you have to be willing for people to sometimes not like it. And you keep going even if something doesn’t connect in the way that you intended. ‘When that makes its way into your life, that can be hard to get control of. It’s part of the mayhem.’

Her performance in the film was fantastic allowing her to show off her acting abilities in tackling a difficult character.

So as the countdown ended on her latest project around *America* in January, fans’ speculations were confirmed by the announcement of the long-awaited followup to the star’s *Billboard*-topping LP, *Chromatica*. Her eighth studio album, *Mayhem*, is set to be released in full on the 7th of March. An official announcement trailer confirmed it. A flashing montage of red and white images on a black background—and the date too, also in red, 03.07.2025.

The teasing started back last year, when Gaga started dropping hints for a mysterious LG7 with the release of dark-gothic-pop anthem, ‘Disease’ which had her legion of fans (her *Little Monsters*) in a state of utter frenzy. Another single, ‘Die With A Smile’, alongside Bruno Mars, was released last August too, and features on *Mayhem*.

Inspired by a ‘deep introspection and personal challenges’, *Mayhem* is set to be Gaga harking back to her love for creating pop as art.

‘Every song I wrote emerged from surrendering to different dreams tied to my past,’ Gaga told Liam McEwan from *Rolling Stone* last year. ‘[It’s] almost like a recollection of all the bad decisions I’ve made throughout my life. There are moments where we sonically push the sound to extremes, and others where everything revolves around love. That, to me, represents true chaos. It’s sometimes difficult to see the light, but I think what makes inner chaos more challenging is when you occasionally catch a glimpse of the sun.’



ADHD

DISABILITY OR SUPERPOWER?

Talk to almost any adult these days and the first thing they'll proudly tell you is they've just been diagnosed as having ADHD. What?! But I thought ADHD was a kind of 'learning disability' some kids have and that you showed off your new phone at a party – not your prescription of Ritalin! Obviously attitudes to ADHD are changing – and possibly with good reason.

WORDS BY CY SINDERSON

ADHD (Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder) is a neurodevelopmental condition characterised by difficulties with attention, impulsivity, and hyperactivity, though symptoms vary widely among individuals. It affects executive function, making tasks like organisation, time management, and sustained focus challenging, but it can also come with strengths such as creativity, hyperfocus, and high energy. Typically, it was diagnosed in children who struggled to focus in classroom situations but now it increasingly is being identified in adults as well.

BE POLITE? WHY? I HAVE ADHD!

Okay, sure some adults might really have ADHD but - boy oh boy there are also some juicy symptoms in there one could cherry pick to use as excuses for impatience or disinterest: 'Sorry, I have ADHD so I don't have the patience or concentration to listen to your point-of-view, follow your company rules or sit still in one place long enough to complete any task (unless it's to watch a movie or finish a jug at the pub!)

Plus, as 'no two people have ADHD in exactly the same way' you could be running around like a mad thing or sitting still staring into space daydreaming - and have ADHD. This makes it some sort of vague condition like a shapeless sweater that can fit pretty much anyone who tries it on. Little wonder so many people are seizing their diagnosis like a driver's license or new credit card - because it's so damn useful!

IS ADHD MORE COMMON NOW?

Certainly, more people know about it. In the States diagnoses of ADHD have gone up from around 6% of the population to over 10% just since the '90s. Does that mean it's on the increase? That's less clear.

In the past ADHD was diagnosed in children who struggled in class situations, with the term: Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) appearing in 1980, although by the late '80s this had been tweaked to 'ADHD'. Then in the '90s research started showing that ADHD often persists into adulthood, leading to an increased diagnosis in adults. There's an argument too that it's only on the increase now because a lot of adults with ADHD weren't diagnosed as children and are only just realising it.

IT'S OKAY TO TALK NOW

But why tell all and sundry about it? Surely if a warrior informs an opponent about his own weakness, the opponent will use that against him?

It's easy to argue social reasons for this change in attitude. Ever since the 'Me! Me! Me!' decade of the '70s in the Western world we've become progressively more self-absorbed - Me is more important than We. My problems are everyone else's too, rather than the other way around. So much so, we now look at the Greatest Generation's willingness to self-sacrifice for the good of others during World War II incredulously, as though peering through a telescope at alien life forms.

Even in the '80s there was still a reluctance to talk about our personal problems as perfectly illustrated by Crocodile Dundee in 1986: 'If you got a problem, you tell Wally. And he tells everyone in town. Brings it out in the open. No more problem.'

But today the world has changed so much you can even make a living posting your most personal thoughts and issues on platforms like TikTok, and the more posts the better! Thus, whatever dross you can dredge up about yourself, whether it be true or not - it's all content, baby! Keep those eyeballs sticky!

COULDN'T MODERN LIFE CAUSE ADHD?

Modern life hasn't caused ADHD, as learning disabilities have been noted in children long before the Digital Age. The same symptoms of hyperactive and inattentive behaviour were given such onerous labels as Minimal Brain Dysfunction and Hyperkinetic Reaction of Childhood way back in the early 20th century. Although it's certainly no stretch to see modern life exacerbating ADHD as the same daily bombardment of digital content, fast-paced entertainment and social media that have wrecked our attention spans are probably not helping our ADHD symptoms either.

COULD ADHD BE BECOMING THE NEW NORMAL?

Maybe, but what is 'normal' anyway? I'm not sure I know anyone who couldn't easily be plonked somewhere on The Spectrum (although maybe that has more to do with the company I keep!) For example, two teenage girls who sat at my table on the ultra-packed Waiheke ferry I was on, said this in a 2-minute burst:

'Oo, there's that 21-year-old perv that's always hitting on me at the gym! Oh wow, those clouds are Cirrus and that's Nimbo-Stratus! See this? I got it coz I'm so sick of foundations that look boring on my face. Hey, have u heard this banger on TikTok? And you know, I heard Billie Eilish does surf lifesaving as a sport? (Ed: Yeah? Really? Of all people!) Hey, wanna go to Italy, Greece or whatever and wear those funnyass beige shorts we saw? And I bet we see some sleazebag Italian dude with an ultra-hairy chest!'

ADHD DIAGNOSTIC CHART

- Talks excessively
- Easily distracted
- Difficulty waiting turn
- Blurts out answers
- Difficulty with quiet activities

AHA! OBVIOUSLY, THEY ARE BOTH ADHD!

Really? I just thought they were completely normal teenage girls excited to be alive. If they are then I'd have to plead guilty too, as sometimes I get a bit babbly like that too - especially when I've had a few! Maybe we all really do have a bit of ADHD.

A FUTURE NEW DAWN FOR ADHD

Really the only reason we've regarded ADHD as a 'disability' in the past is because it didn't suit us as employers or schoolteachers. Being easily distracted from boring tasks or situations 'isn't what we want from our workforce or schoolchildren dammit! Don't they understand that the Company has no accountability code for: Goofing Off?!'

But our current paradigms of 'work' and 'school' are starting to change with the influx of app-based learning along with AI and automation. The days of sitting in a classroom or in an office cubicle in front of a computer monitor are numbered so having ADHD is less of a problem. If you don't have to grind out a 9 to 3 or a 9 to 5 doing the same thing in the same spot 5 days a week - then your inattention, impulsivity, and hyperactivity cease to become a problem. Leaving your creativity, hyperfocus, and high energy free to come out organically.

THE POST-WORK LANDSCAPE

So, what will our future look like if we're all trending ADHD and our workflow is veering toward zero? Automation and AI have absorbed most of what we regard as 'labour' eg; farming, manufacturing, data entry and logistics. With no work to do our economies have changed to a Universal basic income (UBI) and decentralized resource systems have freed us from the yoke of survival-driven work.

How will we fill our days? And how will an ADHD-diagnosed person cope in this (not so distant) future vs a non-ADHD person - so valued as 'normal' in our current times?

Let's have a look at how a typical day might unfold for Rio (diagnosed ADHD) and Mei (non-ADHD):

Morning: 7:00 AM – 10:00 AM

Rio

7:00 AM: Wakes to a neuro-pulsing light (simulates sunrise, regulates circadian rhythm). Skips caffeine—uses a dopamine-triggering nasal spray (AI-prescribed).

7:30 AM: Joins a VR chaos garden—a gamified mindfulness app blending Zen rock gardens with Pokémon Go. ADHD brain thrives in the sensory overload, achieving calm through controlled chaos.

Why not meditation apps? Traditional mindfulness felt restrictive; hybrid play respects their need for stimulation.

8:30 AM: Dives into a 48-hour climate hackathon hosted by Nairobi's Green Vortex Collective. Hyperfocuses on designing a fungal bioreactor to break down microplastics.

Why not a 9–5 job? Linear work is obsolete; urgent planetary fixes need bursts of creativity.

Mei

7:00 AM: Wakes to a sonic chime (calibrated to her sleep cycle). Practices AI-guided tai chi with a holographic instructor.

8:00 AM: Joins a slow-story pod—a Kyoto-inspired group writing a decade-long novel. Her sustained focus helps weave intricate plot threads.

Why not binge TV? Depth culture replaces rapid consumption; legacy media is now "fast food for the mind."

Midday: 10:00 AM – 2:00 PM

Rio

10:00 AM: Gets bored of bioreactors. Switches to a Seoul-style "idea storm" via neural-link, brainstorming with a decentralized collective to retrofit abandoned malls into coral farms.

Why no deadlines? AI handles project continuity; humans contribute ephemeral "sparks."

12:00 PM: Lunch at a neurodivergent food lab—experimental dishes (e.g., cricket ramen) crafted for sensory-seeking palates.

Mei

10:00 AM: Teaches calligraphy-as-code at a hybrid dojo/tech hub. Students turn brushstrokes into AI-training datasets.

Why not traditional teaching? Skills are cross-disciplinary; art trains AI emotional nuance.

12:00 PM: Joins a Silent Tea Collective—a Shanghai-inspired group refining ceremonial matcha while syncing breath to algorithmically generated ambient soundscapes.

Afternoon: 2:00 PM – 6:00 PM

Rio

2:00 PM: Hyperfocus crashes. Uses a neuro-divert collar (vibrates to redirect attention) and sprints to a pop-up parkour park in a decommissioned parking garage.

3:00 PM: Joins a Lagos-inspired "Jam Session"—improvising solutions for a cyberattack on Mumbai's water grid. ADHD brain's lateral thinking spots a vulnerability in the AI's code.

Why not cybersecurity certs? Crises demand adaptive, not credentialed, minds.

Mei

2:00 PM: Collaborates on a 10-year bonsai project with a global guild. Her patience shapes an AI-assisted biodigital tree that filters urban air.

4:00 PM: Attends a neo-Ikebana workshop where flower arranging trains AI in aesthetic balance.

Evening: 6:00 PM – 10:00 PM

Rio

6:00 PM: Drags Mei to a Rio de Janeiro-style "Carnival of Crisis"—a dance party where crowd-sourced moves unlock climate funding. Rio's impulsivity invents the "meltwater shuffle," trending globally.

8:00 PM: Crashes a modular film set in VR, ad-libbing dialogue for an AI-generated anime. Earns "creativity tokens" exchangeable for niche experiences (e.g., zero-gravity ballet).

Mei

6:00 PM: Hosts a hygge-hacker lodge—a Copenhagen-inspired gathering where participants code cozy AI companions. Mei's focus debugs a sentient quilt algorithm.

9:00 PM: Unwinds with a Korean "slow K-drama"—a 500-hour series designed for deep emotional immersion, updated weekly by fans.

GEARING UP FOR THE FUTURE

Freaky? Maybe, but the future really is going to be happening tomorrow so we're going to have to figure out how to cope with all this extra time we're not used to having. Plus, in such a world, community and chaos might not be regarded as being mutually exclusive – and where distractibility is not just tolerated but optimised. ADHD, so long penalised for 'failing' in the Industrial Age, might finally find a home.

Maybe that's why so many are getting their diagnosis done now, it could be just the ticket to a more interesting life in future.



SUMMER COLLINS

Chief AI & Data Director
at One NZ

How do you define effective leadership?

Effective leadership, to me, is about creating an environment where people feel safe to challenge the status quo and explore new ideas. Early in my career at Air New Zealand, I experienced this firsthand during a time when innovation was truly encouraged. It gave me the confidence to suggest changes to long-standing practices—things people thought were untouchable, like self-service kiosks and seat-only fares—and those changes worked. That experience has shaped my leadership philosophy at One NZ: when people feel empowered to question, create, and take risks, extraordinary things happen. Over time, my focus has evolved from simply delivering results to enabling others to lead and grow with the same freedom and confidence.

What strategies do you use to build and inspire a high-performing team?

Build trust and connection. We are all human after all, as much as I might talk about AI, it's people that matter most. I'll never forget a moment when one of my team members, who had initially doubted their abilities, led a major project with outstanding results because they felt trusted and supported. By accepting people's whole selves, the trust becomes real, and the results speak for themselves.

What roles do mentorship and networking play in your approach to leadership?

Networking as a working mum has been hard, but it's always worth it when you manage to pull it off. I've been lucky to have incredible mentors throughout my career, including Jeff McDowall from Air New Zealand and One NZ CEO, Jason Paris, who have both provided invaluable guidance. Jason taught me to think big and take bold risks, while Jeff helped me understand the importance of stepping back to see the bigger picture.



How do you balance maintaining authority while fostering collaboration and inclusivity?

I've found that authority comes from respect, not position. As a woman who doesn't always lead with traditional confidence, I've noticed throughout my career that it can take longer to gain that respect—but I think that's okay. It has taught me the value of showing up authentically and consistently, even if others take a different approach. I aim to lead with clarity and decisiveness when needed, while ensuring that every voice is heard. Inclusivity breeds innovation, so I focus on encouraging open dialogue and creating psychological safety within teams to help people do their best work.

What is the most challenging obstacle you've faced in your career, and how did you navigate it?

Navigating a divorce and becoming a single parent while balancing my career was one of the most challenging experiences of my life. I decided to step back from my career but not entirely step out, and I was fortunate to have people who trusted me enough to offer part-time work and consulting opportunities. This flexibility allowed me to focus on being present for my daughter while staying engaged professionally. It was a period of growth that taught me the importance of leaning on a support network and knowing that by making this decision now, it doesn't mean I'm choosing this forever.

How do you maintain resilience and focus during periods of uncertainty or failure?

I anchor myself by focusing on the “why”—the bigger purpose driving the work. Leaning on my support system, whether it's my team or my family, also helps me regain perspective. Also, I genuinely love what I do almost every day. I've learned to embrace uncertainty as part of growth and treat failures as data points rather than end points.

What are your go-to strategies for managing stress and avoiding burnout?

Gah! Don't ask me—I can assure you I'm no expert at this! But I've learned that when my brain is in overdrive, thinking more is never the answer. I remind myself to breathe, take a walk, and notice the simple joys—the birds singing, my children laughing. My husband is my daily reminder too! These small moments bring clarity, and while it's a work in progress, they help me reset and stay grounded.

Can you share a time when you turned a significant setback into an opportunity for growth?

Early in my career, I chose a manager role at a company over a “doer” role in what would have been an amazing company. On paper, it felt like the right move—it seemed like a step up the ladder. But I quickly realised that chasing titles wasn't the same as pursuing meaningful growth and loving what I did. That experience taught me to be more intentional with my career choices, focusing on opportunities that align with my values and where I can make the biggest impact, rather than just chasing progression for its own sake.

How has your perspective on resilience changed as your career has progressed?

My perspective on resilience has evolved from thinking it's about sheer grit to realising it's more about adaptability, prioritisation, and knowing when to take a step back to recalibrate. Earlier in my career, I felt pressure to push through challenges no matter what, but I've learned that true resilience is being self-aware enough to pause, reassess, and lean on others when needed. It's also about finding strength in the lessons and connections formed during tough times.

What habits or routines have been instrumental in your personal and professional growth?

Making time for reflection has been a game-changer. I regularly step back to ask myself if I'm aligned with my goals and purpose. Lifelong learning—whether through formal education, reading, or engaging with others who challenge my thinking—has also been key. And, while it's not a “habit” in the traditional sense, prioritising time with my family, and making sure I'm there for some of the mundane stuff like making sure I drop off or pick up the kids always gives me a boost.

How do you stay motivated and continually strive for improvement in your career?

Staying motivated comes down to purpose for me—knowing that the work I do can make a difference, whether it's for my children, my team, or others in Aotearoa. I also set goals that stretch me out of my comfort zone, surround myself with inspiring people, and stay curious about new ideas and technologies. I love learning and it really motivates me.

What advice would you give your younger self when you were just starting out?

So many things! How long do you have?

Trust your instincts more—they're better than you think. Build strong relationships; they'll carry you through challenges and open unexpected doors. Don't feel pressured to follow a linear path or have a five-year plan. And don't give in to mum guilt—it's okay to prioritize family, just as it's okay to have a full-time nanny. You can have it all, just not all at once.

What role does feedback play in your journey of self-improvement, and how do you approach it?

Feedback is never easy, and one of the toughest pieces I ever received was when a boss clearly articulated, “What got you here won't get you further.” It was a bitter pill, but one I chewed and eventually swallowed. That moment taught me the importance of evolving and not resting on past successes. While feedback can be uncomfortable, it's essential for growth—I now see it as a chance to recalibrate, push my boundaries, and get closer to the leader I aspire to be.

JENNIFER WHITTLE

Director of Communication
and Engagement at
New Zealand Green
Building Council

How do you define effective leadership, and how has your definition evolved over time?

It's important to enjoy what you do, why you do it and be generous in sharing with your teams. They've been recruited for a reason and so empowering each team member with enough information to understand where they fit in delivering on the wider vision and strategic intent is important for them to focus, while feeling respected and valued.

Increasingly, I've tried to work to foster a positive environment that encourages bringing ideas to the table, working collaboratively, celebrating our successes, unlocking barriers, and learning from mistakes. It's important not to wait for those half-yearly or annual reviews to give feedback. Letting people know how they're progressing and providing feedback along the way, sets us all up for success and rights the wrongs – no surprises.

What strategies do you use to build and inspire a high-performing team?

I'm proud to have worked in and across teams that have delivered some outstanding results in challenging times. Understanding our purpose and where we fit is important, as well as appreciating the strengths and skills of those around us to help us all achieve. I've been lucky to work across a range of industries, countries and cultures, so I also try to introduce ideas from outside our business or industry as I think we can easily fall into group-think. This can be as simple as buying tickets to TedX for team members to "step outside" our everyday and seek inspiration from others. Our team works to share our learnings and build that sense of community.

Can you share an example of a leadership challenge you faced and how you overcame it?

There are times when leaders can be asked to take on tough decisions that have the potential to affect individuals and relationships. I try to stay connected with my values, maintain my integrity while also



Photography By Danilophoto

respecting others impacted by the decision.

I've worked on projects that were challenging in terms of time, conflicting stakeholder interests and mismatched outcomes across the parties involved. One project that wasn't going well resulted in my being put front and centre during a discussion. At the time I took ownership of the issue, I was fortunate to be in contact with the senior leaders involved, so I worked through a plan to move forward and reset the relationships across my team and the partners involved.

It was uncomfortable but we can learn a lot from being uncomfortable.

What roles do mentorship and networking play in your approach to leadership?

I started my career as a qualified accountant and was fortunate to be given the opportunity to move into brand, marketing and communications, alongside some very talented people and global agencies. I'm a sponge. While I may have had the commercial knowledge, I needed to learn to apply it creatively and across wide-ranging cultures.

Self-awareness is also important. What works for some, may not work for others. I'm fortunate to have worked with highly respected individuals who have helped me understand how to adapt, and carve my own pathway.

I'm also really proud of some of the opportunities I've had to pass learnings on or create opportunities for others. As a leader of a new team, it's important to identify what's important to each team member, and if they don't feel they're succeeding, to understand why and whether it's possible to help develop a plan that supports their success within or outside the organisation.

How do you balance maintaining authority while fostering collaboration and inclusivity?

I work hard to create a safe environment by understanding personal and professional goals. Often, this means being as transparent as possible in your communication and the knowledge you're sharing, while also being open to questions, feedback and further discussion for problem-solving.

Sometimes as a leader, we can talk too much! Inviting others to lead a project, discussion or meeting while playing your part as a member of the team can often allow us to see and learn from a different perspective.

What is the most challenging obstacle you've faced in your career, and how did you navigate it?

Uncertainty is tough. I've been through some company acquisitions and restructures when there wasn't much information flowing, so people were speculating and filling the void. People often have a different response to change. Some were pulling the ladder in behind them, others retreated and attempted to wait it out. At the time, I was a single mum, so the pressure was very real. I had to work out what was important to me personally and professionally, and stay focused on what motivated me. I was able to find some projects that were important to the business, continue to build my experience and further relationships. Maintaining self-respect was important.

Looking back, I could have done a few things better. Perhaps been faster in my response; procrastinated

less, but I try to be objective and reassure myself that you have to learn from the experience.

What are your go-to strategies for managing stress and avoiding burnout?

It's important to recognise and communicate when pressure is building. I try to be mindful and understand where the pressure is coming from and what I can do about it. We all work hard to manage our time effectively, so being willing to re-prioritise is important. Sometimes, the expression, "slow down to speed up" can be a useful reminder.

I admit I'm not always succeeding here and at times, the expression on my face can say it all! In most of my professional relationships, people know they can call me out if the worry lines are showing.

Growing up, my family has always used exercise to release tension. I like to reset my thoughts with something as simple as a daily walk to reconnect with the world outside.

I've moved cities and countries, and have somehow always found my tribe. I'm fortunate to be surrounded by a diverse range of friends and connections who are generous in their willingness to share their experiences, give constructive feedback, and often just listen.

How has your perspective on resilience changed as your career has progressed?

It's refreshing to see resilience recognised as a positive characteristic. In the past, I've heard people described as tough or robust. The ability to reflect, learn and adapt may take time but it can be a healthy trait, even if it's uncomfortable.

What habits or routines have been instrumental in your personal and professional growth?

Over the years, I've worked in roles where I felt I wasn't totally sure of myself and my knowledge, so I invested in further study. This was also helpful to meet others who felt the same and build out my networks of those on a similar journey.

Being authentic, open to feedback and willing to learn. Recently discussing one of the characteristics we enjoy across our teams is curiosity. It's ok not to know everything or to be unsure.

How do you stay motivated and continually strive for improvement in your career?

Working out my why – what gets me out of bed everyday. When I find myself in difficulty, understanding what needs to change. Often it's not the people or organisation, sometimes I just need to adapt while staying focussed on the end-game.

What advice would you give your younger self when you were just starting out?

I first qualified with one of the large, international accounting and advisory firms, so for some reason, I always felt pressure to be productive and deliver. I would tell myself not to think in six-minute units (i.e. chargeable hours). It's good to slow down to speed up!

What role does feedback play in your journey of self-improvement, and how do you approach it?

I both share and invite feedback. At times, I may suggest my impression of my performance to elicit honest feedback from others. Having said that, women are naturally hard on themselves, so it's important to trust others when asking for feedback.

TRISH ADAMS

Director at Ray White
Synergy Realty Ltd

How do you define effective leadership?

Effective leadership for me involves setting an example and following through in what you say you will do, providing a vision and inspiring others while always maintaining integrity. Over time, it has evolved to what is best for the business is making sure I have created an environment where the team feels supported and appreciated. This then rolls on to your clients being provided with a service that your team can be proud of and makes your business a desirable place to engage with and work in.

What strategies do you use to build and inspire a high-performing team?

Clear and consistent communication, acknowledging achievements no matter how big or small in public and in private. Fostering a positive work environment with empathy and respect being expected at all times. Ensuring each team member feels valued and heard.

Can you share an example of a leadership challenge you faced and how you overcame it?

Sales meetings can often be a challenge, managing a team with large personalities, which often means they have potentially conflicting interests, practices and principles. Uniting them by encouraging honest and constructive discussions and helping them see that although there is often a difference of opinion, it is not by any means an invitation to wage war. It's the ability to get them to see that as a team, we share a common goal.



Photography By Danilophoto

What roles do mentorship and networking play in your leadership approach?

As a mentor, I offer insights based on my own experiences and those of others I have worked with, providing valuable perspective and advice to help my team navigate challenges that allow them to make informed decisions. I prefer to always empower them with potential scenarios and consequences so they learn to evaluate and assess outcomes that work in the best interest of themselves and their clients. Coming from a place of authenticity is essential.

How do you balance maintaining authority while fostering collaboration and inclusivity?

This is by far the biggest speed hump for most leaders. “How do I make sure they like and respect me but still adhere to what I’ve asked them to do?” Managing out of fear is common and many leaders’ biggest downfall. By creating a culture of openness where ideas are freely shared, respected and constructive feedback is encouraged. A leader then needs to uphold a clear decision-making process by taking on board the feedback and concerns to maintain structure and direction. Support the team post the decision being made to understand the reasons and considerations that were taken to arrive at the final decision.

What is the most challenging obstacle you’ve faced in your career, and how did you navigate it?

Adapting to major regulatory changes was challenging. I tackled it by investing time in myself, learning and understanding the implications for the team and our clients. Staying more updated and knowledgeable is my key focus to protect and advise. Then conducting training sessions for the team as they can relate to me and me to them. The freedom to ask questions about the changes that personally relate to their work and daily practice.

How do you maintain resilience and focus during periods of uncertainty or failure?

I am always mentally three months ahead of the present. We can’t change what’s been, but we can prepare for what we forecast to come. This way we still have choices or options and it’s about assessing what the best ones are based on the current situation or market conditions. If you are experiencing a great period and planning for growth then build off this momentum. If you are hitting a rough patch look for plans to re-strategise and re-prioritise.

Maintain focus by anticipating market trends, set flexible goals, and reflect on past successes and lessons learned to guide future strategies. Practice mindfulness (truly being present in the moment), stay grounded, and focus on continuous learning in order to adapt quickly. Communicate with your team often during uncertain times as the answers are often with them. You just need to listen and read between the lines.

What are your go-to strategies for managing stress and avoiding burnout?

Delegation - we often take on board far more than we need to. Prioritise what needs to be done and what you hope to accomplish. Our high expectations of ourselves are what burns us out, not the expectations of others. If you have people around you who don’t value your mental health and well-being then you need to re-assess your tribe.

Can you share a time when you turned a significant setback into an opportunity for growth?

A tough market takes its toll not only on the business but most of all your team morale. I decided to look at ways to increase my company’s pipeline through channels that were not normally considered. Reaching out and offering a complimentary service to organisations resulted in great working relationships that turned into exclusive contracts with guaranteed business, making future projections more tangible. It also allowed us to be able to provide business to our team rather than rely on them to create opportunities that also put us as leaders, in a position of adding value to their businesses.

How has your perspective on resilience changed as your career has progressed?

I’ve learned that resilience is about how you react to hard times and difficult people. One size doesn’t fit every situation and not all outcomes will be what you’d hoped for. It is important to say “sorry” if I’ve got it wrong and it is okay to say “I don’t understand” and it is okay to say “that you are disappointed”. I can’t control people’s emotions or reactions, but I can control my own. Find calm in listening, not talking.

What habits or routines have been instrumental in your personal and professional growth?

Value the opinions of people that support you and tell you what you don’t always want to hear. Listen to your body. If you’re tired then sleep, sad then take a day. Habits can be good and bad. Set routines can get boring and can become a chore, but within routine is freedom, otherwise we’d only do stuff when we feel like it, which most of the time we don’t. My preference is to get up each day with massive purpose and energy. My commitment to my family and my team is what makes me driven to make the most of each day.

How do you stay motivated and continually strive for improvement in your career?

By always setting out to beat my personal best. Like an athlete.

If last month was the best ever, then how do I make next month better again? If last month was the worst ever then, I know I can only do better than last month.

A mindset based on how I can add value to the business through change, innovation and time. Always looking for ways to improve either by accessing better tech or improving processes, allowing for better use of time and resources.

What advice would you give your younger self when you were just starting out?

Don’t stay where you are not valued or respected.

SHARYN CATT

Managing Director &
Founder at Virtual Blue

How do you define effective leadership, and how has your definition evolved over time?

Effective leadership is the ability to inspire trust, align people toward a shared vision, and empower them to do their best work. Early in my career, I focused on delivering outcomes and leading from the front. Over time, my definition has evolved - now I believe true leadership is about listening deeply, enabling others, and creating an environment where people feel valued and heard. It's about influence, not authority.

What strategies do you use to build and inspire a high-performing team?

At Virtual Blue, I place a strong emphasis on trust, collaboration, and clear communication. We've built a remote team that thrives on shared purpose and proactive engagement. I encourage open dialogue, welcome ideas from every level, and give my team the autonomy to innovate. Empowerment, transparency, and celebrating wins together are key pillars of our high-performance culture.

Can you share an example of a leadership challenge you faced and how you overcame it?

One challenge was leading a digital transformation project with multiple stakeholders and resistance to change. I overcame it by listening carefully, engaging change champions early, and showing quick wins. Building trust and maintaining open communication helped shift mindsets and align the team around a common goal.



What roles do mentorship and networking play in your approach to leadership?

While mentoring has played a valuable role throughout my career, networking has been just as pivotal in shaping my leadership journey. Building strong, authentic connections across industries has opened doors to new opportunities, fresh perspectives, and meaningful collaborations. I view networking as an ongoing conversation - not just about exchanging business cards, but about building trust and contributing to a wider ecosystem. It helps me stay current, learn from others' experiences, and bring more strategic insight to the table for both my team and clients.

How do you balance maintaining authority while fostering collaboration and inclusivity?

Authority shouldn't be a barrier to collaboration, it should serve as a platform for others to contribute and grow. I strive to lead with humility, clarity, and consistency. By setting clear expectations while creating space for diverse voices, I ensure that decisions are inclusive, and leadership is shared.

What is the most challenging obstacle you've faced in your career, and how did you navigate it?

Starting Virtual Blue during a time of great uncertainty was one of the biggest challenges I've faced. Building a business from scratch, while advocating for emerging technologies like AI and automation, required grit, adaptability, and resilience. I leaned into my purpose, surrounded myself with great people, and kept a strong focus on delivering tangible value for our clients.

How do you maintain resilience and focus during periods of uncertainty or failure?

I ground myself in the "why" behind the work. Having a clear mission helps me stay focused when things get tough. I also break challenges down into small, actionable steps - progress over perfection. Staying connected to my team and mentors helps me maintain perspective and energy.

What are your go-to strategies for managing stress and avoiding burnout?

I have a strict gym routine that I do six days a week, including cardio and weights. I try to do daily walks to get out of the house. When you work from home you can go for days without leaving the house, so it's important to get out and walk around the neighbourhood. I find I use that time to work through problems I am facing and come up with ideas that I then come home and put into action. I certainly use my Italian Greyhound as emotional support, she gives the best hugs. I also value humour - it lightens the load, in particular having a good laugh with my husband. Delegating effectively and prioritising tasks with impact helps me to stay centred and avoid spreading myself too thin.

Can you share a time when you turned a significant setback into an opportunity for growth?

Over five years ago, my business partner with whom I founded the business with decided to move on. I had to make the decision to either go with them or keep Virtual Blue and go it alone. There was a lot of self-doubt around being able to keep the business going alone. After a lot of reflection and amazing mentorship from people I had grown close to in business I made the decision to do it, and haven't looked back. The business has continued to grow year on year and we have gone from being a reseller of others products to a business that is creating our own.

How has your perspective on resilience changed as your career has progressed?

Earlier in my career, I equated resilience with pushing through. Now I understand it's also about knowing when to pause, reflect, and recalibrate. Resilience isn't just about strength - it's about flexibility, learning, and the ability to bounce forward, not just back.

What habits or routines have been instrumental in your personal and professional growth?

As mentioned above working out six days a week is great for not only my physical but mental health, intentional goal-setting, my husband and I review our one year, two year and five year goals that are both personal and business goals. I also regularly review what's working and what needs adjusting, which keeps me growing purposefully.

How do you stay motivated and continually strive for improvement in your career?

I'm naturally competitive and driven by seeing my customers being successful. Seeing how automation and AI can transform businesses and lives, keeps me energised. I also surround myself with people who challenge and inspire me - it creates a feedback loop of motivation and continuous learning.

What advice would you give your younger self when you were just starting out?

Trust your instincts. Don't wait for permission to lead. Seek out mentors, stay curious, and know that it's okay not to have it all figured out - clarity comes with action. And always remember your voice matters.

What role does feedback play in your journey of self-improvement, and how do you approach it?

Feedback is a gift - it's how we grow. I seek it actively, both from clients and my team, and I encourage a culture of constructive, two-way dialogue. It's not always comfortable, but it's essential for evolution, both personally and professionally.

JOANNA HOEFT

Director at Studio Italia

How do you define effective leadership, and how has your definition evolved over time?

Effective leadership can be defined as the ability to inspire and guide individuals or teams towards achieving common goals. Over time, my understanding of effective leadership has evolved to encompass not just the ability to direct, but also to listen, empathise, and adapt to the needs of the team. It's about fostering an environment where everyone feels valued and motivated to contribute their best efforts.

What strategies do you use to build and inspire a high-performing team?

Building and inspiring a high-performing team involves several key strategies. Firstly, fostering open communication is essential, as it encourages team members to share ideas and feedback. Secondly, setting clear goals and expectations helps align the team's efforts towards a common objective. Additionally, recognising and celebrating achievements can boost morale and motivation. Lastly, provide training on product knowledge, and encourage creativity in marketing our unique offerings.

Can you share an example of a leadership challenge you faced and how you overcame it?

A significant leadership challenge I faced was navigating supply chain disruptions during the pandemic. I overcame it by fostering strong relationships with suppliers and diversifying our sourcing strategies.

What roles do mentorship and networking play in your approach to leadership?

Mentorship and networking are crucial in my approach to leadership. They allow me to learn from industry veterans and connect with other business owners, which helps in making informed decisions.

How do you balance maintaining authority while fostering collaboration and inclusivity?

It's important to find a balance between maintaining authority and encouraging collaboration and inclusivity. One effective approach I have found is to establish clear guidelines and expectations while also inviting input and feedback from team members. This way, you can lead with confidence while creating an environment where everyone feels valued and heard.

What is the most challenging obstacle you've faced in your career, and how did you navigate it?

In the realm of design, one of the greatest challenges I have encountered is the need to adapt to evolving styles and the ever-changing expectations of clients. To navigate this, I focused on continuous learning and staying updated with industry innovations and international developments. Engaging with fellow designers and business owners helped me gain fresh perspectives, allowing me to turn challenges into opportunities for growth and creativity.

How do you maintain resilience and focus during periods of uncertainty or failure?

In the world of design and retail in particular, maintaining resilience and focus during uncertain times is key. Embrace challenges as opportunities for growth, and remember that every setback can lead to a new creative breakthrough. Stay connected with your team and most importantly, clients, and keep the lines of communication open. Together, you can navigate through any storm and emerge stronger than before!

What are your go-to strategies for managing stress and avoiding burnout?

My go-to strategies for managing stress include regular exercise, setting aside time for creative thinking, and ensuring I have a support system in place.

Can you share a time when you turned a significant setback into an opportunity for growth?

Turning a challenging moment into a chance for growth was a great experience! During a slow sales period, I decided to focus on training our amazing team. This not only boosted our customer service but also helped our sales performance soar!

How has your perspective on resilience changed as your career has progressed?

My perspective on resilience has changed to recognise that it's not just about enduring challenges but also about learning and evolving from them as a business owner. Also, not taking yourself too seriously and enjoying the journey.

What habits or routines have been instrumental in your personal and professional growth?

As I reflect on my journey, I realise that some of the key habits that have helped me grow include setting clear goals, checking in on my progress regularly, and always being open to feedback from my amazing team and valued customers!.

How do you stay motivated and continually strive for improvement in your career?

Staying motivated is all about celebrating those little victories and always being curious about the world of furniture and the kitchen design industry, whether here in New Zealand or around the globe!

What advice would you give your younger self when you were just starting out?

If I could share some advice with my younger self, it would be to really embrace taking risks and to not shy away from being innovative. The furniture market is constantly changing, and it's such an exciting journey!

What role does feedback play in your journey of self-improvement, and how do you approach it?

Feedback is super important for my journey of self-improvement! I always try to keep an open mind about it because I see it as a great chance to enhance my leadership style and business strategies.



Photography By Danilophoto

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The Silent Epidemic: Our Breathing

A curious and silent phenomenon has crept into society. Its effects have become evident in our workplaces, our schools and our homes. Without realising, we have become a population of chest-breathers, and when we shallow breathe, into our chest, it intricately changes our state.

WORDS BY SARAH LAURIE

Disguised as anxiety, poor sleep, fatigue, constant rushing, insecurity, lack of focus, overthinking, and more, the way we breathe is a little-understood factor contributing to the modern-day epidemic of overwhelm.

This is not about breathwork. It's not about mindfulness or meditation. It's about understanding how humans are designed to breathe with every breath, how and why this has changed, and the direct impact this has on our physical and mental capability.



Breathing Physiology.

Science is catching up with a deeply inherent aspect of our physiology.

From prolific, neuroscientist pod-casters, to leading, world-class health-journalists, to elite athletes – think Dr Andrew Huberman, James Nestor, Novak Djokovic, the All Blacks – the way humans breathe is recognised as directly linked to high performance and mental capability.

And, like pieces forming the perfect puzzle, we have learned that shallow, chest-breathing activates our Stress Response, and deeper, diaphragmatic breathing ensures optimal functioning of our Executive Systems and indeed all of our biological systems.

To use a familiar example to explain this, think about when you get a fright – someone unexpectedly appears in the dark when you're walking at night, or you inadvertently step onto the road in front of a moving car – in those moments you take an involuntary breath of fright, short and sharp and into your chest. You will have experienced a version of this, however what you probably didn't realise is that the short, sharp, shallow breath is designed to activate your stress response, so that you are best prepared to deal with the danger. It's that chest breath that changes your state.

Conversely, good functional breathing, fully into your lungs, signals to your body that all is well, and ensures that each of your biological systems work efficiently. This is the state that we should be in most of the time - breathing properly, into our lungs with each breath, enabling optimal function and good health. We are designed to work well and live fully, all while breathing properly – getting ready for work, meeting deadlines, managing priorities, dealing with challenges. Breathing properly is our natural state. We were born breathing properly, and we continued to breathe properly, until the pressure of modern life changed it, and sadly, it's happening to us younger and younger.

Why has our breathing changed and how have we missed this?

Over the last three decades the pace and pressure of our lives has created an 'always-on' culture. Screen-time, being constantly accessible, eating-on-the-run, blurred lines between home and work, rush, change, uncertainty have caused our breathing to shift from where it's supposed to sit in our belly, into our chest. And

as this pace of life has continued, our shallow, chest breathing has become a pattern. What we've failed to realise is that almost all factors of today's fast-paced, pressured life shift our breathing into our chest.

When we understand this, we can see that our breathing is literally holding us in a state of overwhelm.

'Breathing' has typically been the medical domain of the respiratory system and lung function, or at the other end of the scale; yoga or meditation which some people perceive as flaky.

For this reason, when people experience anxiety, poor sleep, feelings of panic, headaches, poor recall, nervousness, mood swings, forgetfulness, trouble making decisions, overwhelm, these symptoms would typically and understandably be explained as the result of an over-burdened life and rarely, if ever linked to breathing patterns.

As a result, 90% of us aren't breathing properly, and it's remaining unchecked.

We desperately need to circuit break our poor breathing patterns, and train our body to breathe properly again. And when we do, we will be staggered at the difference it makes.

A New Zealand case study.

In 2021, we commenced the first of its kind 7-Day Challenge with 350 participants from The Warehouse Group and Microsoft NZ. We sought to measure improvements in sleep, anxiety and energy by changing the way participants breathe, every day, while they worked, within a 7-Day period.

All other conditions of the employees life and work remained the same – the only change made was to their breathing.



I had spent the previous four years gathering research about breathing, anxiety, overwhelm and modern-day pressures, and wanted to trial my theory in a workplace setting, at scale. Most of the research and insights were from academic and clinical settings and I wanted to test the application of this science with a cohort of everyday, real people under pressure.

The challenge returned swift and compelling results with 76% of people improving their sleep, 96% of people feeling calmer, and 86% of people having more energy, within seven days. This further fuelled our curiosity – if this was the impact on 350 people simply by adjusting their breathing; what has happened to our breathing in this era, and what could this mean for society.

Do you breathe properly?

Breathing has a very complex role in our body. Despite this complexity, it can be easy to change and regulate once you're aware of it.

How to reset your breathing patterns.

Changing your breathing patterns will feel as unusual as attempting to fold your arms the opposite way – awkward, over-engineered, hard to remember. However, you'll notice this changing within a few days.

When you wake in the morning, place your hands on your tummy and take 10 relaxed breaths so that your tummy rises gently. This helps you get familiar with what breathing properly feels like before you start the rush of your day. If you get distracted while you're counting [very common] simply start again.

Download the Take a Breath app and use the Breathe-trainer [free] to set regular intervals during the day that remind you to take a proper breath. The recommendation is every 30 minutes. This sounds like a lot, however you needn't stop what you're doing – just take one good breath. Continue this daily for a minimum of seven days.

When you go to bed, place your hands on your tummy again and take 10 relaxed breaths so that your tummy gently rises. If you wake during the night, do the same.

We're living in an incredible era of technology and innovation, that places so much emphasis on optimising the world around us. Now more than ever, it's essential to rediscover the extraordinary system within us. Be curious about your breathing. Be deliberate about correcting it. It could very well change your life.

Sarah Laurie is a Best-selling author, speaker. Founder of breathing software company; Take a Breath.

takeabreath.world

Check your breathing using these simple indicators:

1

Place one hand on your tummy and the other on your chest. Take a deep breath and see which hand moves. It should be the one on your tummy [if the hand on your chest moves it's an indicator that you're chest breathing.]

2

Count how many breaths you take per minute. When you're at ease a satisfactory rate is between 10-12 [if your breathing rate is higher it's an indicator that you're chest breathing].

3

Measure your BOLT score. [Body Oxygen Level Test]. Take a regular, deep breath, gently exhale and then hold. Count how many seconds before you need to inhale again. Ideally this should be over 20 seconds. This is not a test for how long you can hold your breath, before gasping! It's a test that measures how long before you need to inhale in a relaxed manner, and is an indicator of your breathing efficiency.

The Navy SEAL of HR:

Lisa Oakley on High-Stakes Leadership Without the Fluff

When a crisis overwhelms your business, and the light at the end of the tunnel seems to be getting further away, there is one person you can call Lisa Oakley.

WORDS BY LILLIE ROHAN

With more than 20 years of experience in human resources and health and safety across corporate giants like Air New Zealand, Spark, purpose-led SMEs, and not-for-profits, this Navy SEAL of HR isn't your average Jane when it comes to dealing with matters at the heart of your business.

'Being the "Navy SEAL of HR" isn't just a catchy title—it's a philosophy. It means stepping into the messiest, highest-stakes situations and not just surviving them, but transforming them,' she tells M2woman. 'Where others see chaos, we see opportunity. Where challenges seem insurmountable, we bring clarity, courage, and action.'

Plainly put, the founder of People Associates—who is also a qualified coach, mediator, licensed private investigator, and tutor in Employment Relations—isn't going to bake a cake and ask everyone to look on the bright side, or to get people to hold hands and sing kumbaya.

She will find the root cause of the issue, and work through a problem solving process that takes into consideration your available time and resources and delivers solutions that are cost efficient, time effective and reduce business risk.

It's what's helped her help countless businesses, earn an impressive reputation, and resulted in multiple achievements, including her most recent, which saw her named in HRD's HR Executive Hot List in 2025.

Designed to highlight 'outstanding HR professionals in Australia and New Zealand', Lisa was one of nine individuals recognised for their significant contribution to the industry over the past 12 months.

For this HR expert, it's exciting and another sign that she is on the right track with her methodology—something that is essential in today's fast-moving business environment.

Lisa shares some key insights for what is essential in People and Culture in 2025:

The Biggest Leadership Misconception in 2025

2025 is a unique time for businesses to be navigating people and culture. In just five years, there have been significant changes, including COVID, redundancies or the polar opposite: rapid growth. There have been transformative changes in the way we work, where we work and how, talent attraction, retention and management, including many competitive and compliance changes for businesses, many of whom are struggling to keep up.

While it may make you want to throw a duvet over your head and hide, Lisa says the worst thing you can do is shy away from the challenge.

One of leaders' biggest misconceptions about workplace culture is that 'perks, policies, and mission statements' will save them.

Lisa is very clear in stating that this couldn't be more incorrect.

'The reality is that culture is shaped every single day by the actions of leaders. It's about how they show up in crises, how they handle conflict, how they reward, challenge, and communicate with their teams. A great workplace culture is not a project—it's a practice. It requires leaders who understand that culture is not what they say it is—it's what their people experience every day.'

If that were a mantra, it would be; leadership happens in the trenches, not the boardroom.

She says that if you want to see real change in your team and your culture, you can't be a manager who enforces rules but rather a leader who leads with authenticity and strong values.

'The most inspirational leaders have one thing in common: they create clarity, trust, and momentum,' Lisa says. 'They don't just direct; they empower. They don't just react; they anticipate. And most importantly, they make people feel valued, seen, and capable of more than they believed possible.'

To practice this, Lisa explains three steps: the first is to ditch transactional leadership, the second is to build teams that can handle uncertainty, and the third is to invest in clarity and communication.

'Leaders who adapt to this shift won't just survive the future of work—they'll shape it,' Lisa adds.

It's beneficial to everyone but especially your business because even though the eye of the storm can be a scary place, Lisa says overcoming it can later become your biggest advantage.

Turning Crisis Into Competitive Advantage

One thing you'll notice if you've worked with or seen Lisa in action is that she doesn't flinch in a crisis. Instead, she sees it as a catalyst, an entry point for real transformation, and she wants to help you see that, too.

Take, for instance, the time she was called in to work with a leadership team on the verge of collapse. Trust had eroded, communication had broken down, and performance was in freefall.

'Instead of implementing generic training or policies, we stepped in with a bold intervention—an unfiltered deep dive into leadership accountability and culture. We worked side by side with the team, navigating difficult conversations, resetting expectations, and aligning the leadership vision,' she explains.

The result wasn't just a recovered leadership team. It was a revitalised organisation where culture became more than just a buzzword—it became the the DNA, the operating system, and the company's strength.

Lisa believes most traditional People and Culture approaches fail because they focus too much on policy and not enough on people: 'Leadership isn't about titles or talk—it's about outcomes,' she exclaims.

But even more than the leader, it's about creating a team that can handle adversity.

'Leaders constantly worry: "Do I have the right people? Can they adapt? Will they push through when things get tough?"' She says this is good as it highlights something many have yet to learn: businesses don't fail because they lack strategy but because they lack the right people to execute that strategy under pressure.

'Stop hiring for skills alone—hire for resilience, adaptability, and mindset. The best teams aren't just talented—they are tough, agile, and able to perform under pressure.'

Final Word

In a world obsessed with quick fixes and superficial strategy, Lisa proves time and time again that she is a rare force. She is direct, grounded, and transformational.

Whether that's leading a complex dispute through to resolution, rebuilding a fractured culture, or guiding an emerging business through people-led change, she's not here for fluff—she's here for impact.

Because she knows that the best leaders aren't remembered for the titles they held, they're remembered for the futures they built.

To learn more about Lisa Oakley and People Associates, visit peopleassociates.nz



Getting



Shift

Done

Patrice Green is visibly uncomfortable when asked about her latest venture. Having earmarked 2025 as her year for ‘getting comfortable with being uncomfortable’, it’s probably an expected response. But despite her visceral reaction to stepping far outside her comfort zone, Green appears to be living her rich, full life by the mantra, ‘feel the fear and do it anyway’. And doing it, she is.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY SHELTON LEONG

Hot on the heels of buying bed manufacturing and retail business Wellington Beds from her uncle at the start of 2022 — a journey Green calls a “baptism of fire” — this year the pioneering business woman launched Wellington’s inaugural Rise & Shine—Kick-Arse Meetups for women in business.

Green’s vision for the event series is creating a space for women to “rise, shine, connect, learn, and laugh”, and to take that energy and infuse it into their whole lives. Despite initially thinking she could avoid public speaking if no one showed up, her first early morning Rise & Shine, and every one that followed, was a success.

While the 32-year-old admits her “nerves were palpable” hosting her first meetup, Green is now invested in the impact she’s making, and glad she took a courageous leap.

“There’s power in meeting other women in business and offering each other support, advice and mentorship,” she says. “At every event, the room is a hive of connection. I’ve met incredible women, and we’ve seen some amazing opportunities emerge from each one.

“These actions can leave a legacy and pave the way for exceptional women, and I’m really proud of that.”

Green says her business has also benefited. She’s opened the door to more opportunities by letting go of being “too scared”, and by backing herself to meet with people she once “perceived to be way bigger and more experienced” than she.

These are huge strides for the former Fonterra chartered accountant, who stepped headfirst into business ownership with her husband Scott Green during her third maternity leave.

“I don’t do maternity leave well,” she laughs. “I get bored easily and tend to do crazy things. My husband came home from work one day and I said ‘I think we’re going to move to Wellington and buy a bed factory.’”

“I find business fascinating,” she adds. “It’s having something that’s yours, that you can influence and watch grow; it’s both the challenge and the freedom. The world’s your oyster when it’s your own thing.”

Under Green’s leadership, Wellington Beds has continued to grow as a significant player in the Wellington and now Wairarapa regions, growing market share and reputation in the New Zealand bed industry, which is showing promising year on year growth projections.

In the role of Managing Director, alongside Director and Factory Production Manager



“Time management and self-discipline are non-negotiable. They’re the backbone of staying locked in on my goals, cutting out distractions, and chasing results.”



Scott, the pair cut their teeth managing a team of 30 through ongoing covid illnesses, and the recession impacting their now six stores and factory — that “baptism of fire”.

But all through that, the duo opened a new store, extended their manufacturing, and are creating new products to help Kiwis get a good night’s sleep.

“It’s been a wild ride,” says Green, pausing to reflect. “2024 has been a really, really difficult year for everybody in business, juggling a cost of living crisis and a recession that’s changed buyer behaviour. We’ve had to rapidly adapt to this, along with freight crises that increased delays and costs. It’s been an incredibly challenging environment, especially as we’re 100% committed to keeping our manufacturing local.

“But while it’s easy to get caught up in the negative,” she adds, “these environments offer massive opportunities. We have plans for more new stores, e-commerce, and expanding our sleep and bed related products.”

It’s this future-focussed determination that gets Green up in the morning — often before dawn to switch on her factory. But what drives her most is being “absolutely passionate” about helping people choose the right bed to get their best sleep.

This image was taken by Rochelle Moffitt - only if you want to use it but not as beautiful as they professional ones.

Ditch the Burnout:

How To Stop the Hustle, Redefine Success and Become Unapologetic

Tina Kapp-Kailea, bestselling author, award-winning embodiment coach, speaker and thought leader, shares how breaking free from burnout and redefining success on her own terms has not only transformed her life but is empowering high-achieving women around the world to do the same. Something she is very passionate and unapologetic about.

WORDS BY ROCHELLE MOFFIT

Has burnout been accepted as the inevitable side effect of ambition? More women are finding themselves at a crossroads—especially as they enter midlife. Externally we're very accomplished and successful yet internally completely exhausted. The 'superwoman myth' we've been sold have left many of us overworked, overstretched, and overwhelmed. The truth? Success shouldn't cost you your well-being.

That's exactly what Tina Kapp-Kailea is here to change.

Tina knows firsthand what it means to burnout and break down. Her journey from hitting rock bottom while trying to function in a six-figure job to creating a global movement for realigned success is one that every high-achieving woman needs to hear. Because the reality is—many of us have been there or are heading down the same path.

The Illusion of Success

On paper, many of us look like we've made it. The title, the six-figure salary, perks, long lunches. A thriving career that many aspire to when we enter the corporate world, right? But behind closed doors? A very different reality. We're running on empty, questioning why all of this "success" feels so... hollow and why we've become disconnected from what we used to enjoy. Sound familiar?

Tina was no different. She played the game, climbed the ladder, and ticked every box of what society told her success should look like. But inside, she was breaking.

"Every day felt like I had to put on a mask just to get through. I ignored the sleepless nights, the anxiety, and the warning signs my body was screaming at me," Tina recalls. "I thought pushing through was just part of the deal. Knuckle down and push. That I'd rest once I'd 'made it.'"

It all came to a head when she suffered five miscarriages after her body battled with adrenal fatigue, anxiety and mild depression



due to the prolonged stress—a devastating reality check that forced her to reassess everything. But what broke her wasn't just the grief she tried to contain for years. It was the moment she overheard a casual conversation in the office about her situation.

"She didn't take this much time off last time this happened. Not sure why she is now."

That was the moment she knew—she had given everything to a career, a job in an organisation that didn't truly value her. Something had to change. Tina walked away from everything she's known to start over again. "That was the most liberating and equally terrifying moment", she remembers.

From Burnout to Breakthrough

Tina didn't just walk away from the corporate hamster wheel she was trapped in—she redesigned her whole life. And through that process, she built what she is now best known for in her work. She created her REALIGN framework—a seven-step blueprint for women who are done sacrificing themselves for success.

"REALIGN is about stripping away everything that doesn't serve you, getting really honest in that process and rewiring your conditioning and belief system" Tina explains.

The framework moves women from burnout to balance through key steps:

1.

REFLECT

Get brutally honest about what's not working and what you actually want.

2.

EXPOSE

Identify and challenge the conditioning that's keeping you stuck.

3.

ACCEPT

Release the guilt, shame, and impossible standards.

4.

LIBERATE

Set unapologetic boundaries and break toxic patterns.

5.

INTEGRATE

Align your daily actions with your values so success feels good.

6.

GROUND

Create simple, sustainable practices to keep you steady.

7.NURTURE

Prioritize your well-being—because you are your greatest asset.

REALIGN is a process—a movement. "I want to see more and more women coming together and owning their voice again. It's about giving women permission to rewrite the rules, to step into leadership without self-sacrifice, and to create lives that feel as good on the inside as they look on the outside."

I've been following Tina and her impact on women is nothing short of transformative. She shows up wild. unapologetic and colourful—that feels magnetic. She also boldly expanded into the US and Australia and is eyeing the UAE next. So inspiring.

There's something incredibly powerful about the way she leads—she doesn't just talk about change, she embodies it. She's walked the path, she's done the work, written the bestseller and she's leading a global movement for women who are ready to reclaim their energy, their joy, and their right to succeed without burning out. All while being based right here in New Zealand.

What makes her stand out? She doesn't just tell women to stop overworking—she shows them a path to reclaiming their true essence which has the power to impact all areas of a woman's life.

She works with female executives and entrepreneurs who—despite their achievements—still felt trapped in the cycle of over giving, people-pleasing and burnout. Her REALIGN framework has been a game-changer for women looking to build success without self-sacrifice.

Through her coaching, her books, workshops and speaking engagements, Tina is proving that success and well-being are not mutually exclusive. And in a world that still glorifies hustle, that's a message we desperately need. Don't you agree?

It's Time to Break Free

If you're feeling stretched too thin, constantly on the edge of exhaustion, and wondering if this is all there is—consider this Tina's wake-up call. Success should not cost you your health, your happiness, or your sense of self. Period.

Tina is leading the charge for women who are ready to be more powerful and explore what is possible for them. And if her journey proves anything, it's this: you don't have to burn out to prove your worth and it is never too late to turn your life upside down and take drastic action to change things up.



DISCOVERING

ITALY'S

AMALFI

COAST

The Inspiration Behind M.C. Escher

As a kid I loved the Dutch lithograph artist Maurits Cornelis (M.C.) Escher, in fact I still do! If you ever wondered where he got the inspiration for all his head-spinning artworks, Italy's Amalfi Coast has all the answers - and a lot more attention-grabbing things to see and do too.

WORDS BY CY SINDERSON



So much of my childhood was spent marveling at M.C. Escher's mind-bending visuals like *Metamorphosis II*, *Up and Down*, *Relativity* and *Convex and Concave*. It looks like I wasn't the only one either, going by the endless series of movies that have come out over the years like *Inception* and *Labyrinth* and games like *Monument Valley* that all feature Escher-like visions.

But alongside all the transformative tessellations, impossible angles, ambiguous shading and multiple sources of gravity, M.C. Escher's works usually had something else in common; the background world in which they were set. This was often some sort of sunlit Mediterranean-style village with terracotta roofs, Medieval towers and featuring a labyrinth of staircases, doorways, and balconies. Villages where houses seemed stacked on top of each other like 3D jigsaw puzzles, creeping up hillsides from sheer cliffs with narrow lane-like roads crossed by arched bridges.

As a child, I was sure Escher included these strange-looking towns to help with the reality-jolting effect of his artworks, to set us up for his bizarre concepts by placing them in towns that looked unlike any other we'd ever seen before. I mean, where on earth would places exist that could possibly look like that?

Escher's Inspiration

The Amalfi Coast in Southern Italy is where! Head south across the bay from Naples and you'll come to Sorrento, head over the hill and it's like you've arrived bang, smack in the middle of Escherville. Everywhere you look are the same towers, narrow bridges and neatly-fitting houses from many of his most famous works. So Escher didn't invent those fantastical towns from his artworks, he replicated them exactly.

The fact is, Maurits loved Italy and lived there for over a decade - until Benito Mussolini started wearing his Blackshirts of course - and Escher travelled often to the Amalfi Coast where he would stay for weeks at a time to draw all its dramatic cliffs, staircases and geometric houses so he could use them later. It obviously made a deep impression on him as its unique architecture turned up again and again in his works from the 1920s on.

The Amalfi Coast

Once you know the history of the Amalfi Coast which starts in Positano and ends about 50km further south in Vietri sul Mare, this architecture makes a lot more sense. Of course, one reason is that the coastline is very steep forcing the houses to be built almost on top of each other as they ascend the hillsides. But the entire coast was also susceptible to raids by the Saracens, Muslim raiders who constantly harassed the inhabitants from their bases in North Africa. To defend against these raiders the locals built 80 odd towers over the centuries - the remains of which are still there and can be seen all along the Amalfi Coast even today.



Positano

Two of these watch towers Torre Trasita and Torre Clavel are still around and sit at either end of the main Spiaggia Grande beach in Positano. Torre Clavel was built in the 13th century - possibly, as the receipts from the stonemasons are long gone - while Torre Trasita is more recent, having been whipped up in the 16th century to guard against pirate raids, from the Ottomans this time.

Torre Trasita may well have been the inspiration for the rook in M.C.Escher's Metamorphosis II as it is similarly semi-detached from the mainland and Atrani - the village he used to create his town - doesn't have a watch tower.

Of course, there is a lot more to see in Positano than just ancient rook-like towers including:



Beach culture

Despite the acute angles of the cliffs here, there are still beaches in Positano and a lively culture to match. The weather here is Mediterranean too so bring your bikinis and plenty to drink. Spiaggia Grande is the coast's largest and liveliest beach, complete with striped umbrellas, seafood trattorias, and - unfortunately - Instagrammers. But, if you want to avoid being in the background of someone else's post you can always head over the Arienzo Beach for a quieter, more bohemian vibe.



Lemons

Lemons, lemons everywhere!

The whole Amalfi Coast is a shrine to the humble lemon and Positano is no different with entire shops devoted to lemon produce including ceramics, soap, candy, candles, body cream, limoncello - and even just raw lemons in every size and shape you can imagine.

A mandatory here is a traditional Italian lemon granita Sorbetto di Limone which is served inside a giant frozen lemon skin. Just what the doctor ordered for a hot Mediterranean summer's day!



Shopping and dining

For a small town there's quite a good selection of shops to nose through, although be warned, as you might imagine for a clifftop village there are a lot of stairs and steps here. Plus, the alleyways are pretty narrow and can be filled with people so you'll need your patience topped up at times. The streets are one way - at best! - and have a surprising amount of traffic on them, both pedestrian and motorised with buses coming through all the time too. It can be chaotic at times - but that's Italy!

Luckily there are plenty of restaurants and bars around to cool off in for when it all gets a bit too much! Rooftop bars like Franco's or Le Sirenuse's Champagne Bar are ideal places to take in Positano's golden west-facing sunsets and for dinner, check out Da Vincenzo and La Sponda.

If you're feeling more adventurous, try La Tagliata. They serve a more rustic-influenced fare and are based a few hundred metres up the cliff. Fear not, they have a shuttle which can pick you up from wherever you're staying. The trip up the winding two-way single lane cart track accompanied by classic Dean Martin tunes at sunset is an experience I'll never forget!

Ferries

As it's the beginning of the Amalfi Coast, Positano is an ideal jumping off spot for further exploration. It's a busy hub for ferries with many commercial and private ones coming in and going out all the time. This makes it easy to get to and from Sorrento, Naples, Amalfi further down the coast - and even to the legendary island of Capri just off the coast!

A dream destination

Once you get to the Amalfi Coast it's easy to see why M.C. Escher fell in love with the place. It's just completely different to anywhere else you can visit. An incredible mix of Arab-Norman architecture, beach culture, the Euro elite, casual Italian dining styles and a hardcore obsession with lemons - what more could you possibly want? I'll definitely be coming back - and next time I'll bring my pens and sketching paper too!



A HOT WINTER ESCAPE: SYDNEY AND NSW

There's winter—and then there's a Sydney winter. That unique Southern Hemisphere phenomenon where the skies stay clear, the water sparkles, and the season becomes less about retreating indoors and more about leaning in to everything the city and its surrounds have to offer. This is not a time for hibernation. This is a time for discovery, revitalisation, and joy.

From candlelit dinners and cutting-edge culture in the heart of the city to sun-drenched coastal getaways and vineyard tastings in rolling countryside, New South Wales turns winter into an opportunity: to reconnect, to indulge, to be moved and inspired. This is your invitation to escape.



A City that Glows: Vivid Sydney

From late May through mid-June, Sydney becomes an open-air gallery during Vivid Sydney (23 May - 14 June 2025), and the city truly lives up to its name. Iconic landmarks like the Sydney Opera House, Sydney Harbour Bridge, and Customs House come to life in a kaleidoscope of colour and light projections while the surrounding streets hum with immersive light art, live music, and culinary experiences.

This year, the theme is Dream, and the programming delivers on that promise, merging imagination with technology, movement, and meaning. Highlights include a re-imagined light walk that weaves through five festival zones, including Circular Quay, The Rocks and Martin Place, a lineup of thought-provoking Vivid Ideas talks at Carriageworks and Barangaroo, and a roster of musicians across jazz, electronica, and soul genres performing at heritage venues and hidden spaces around the city.

Above: Vivid Sydney
Left: Tomaree Head, Port Stephens
Bottom: MJ the Musical, Sydney Lyric Photo credit: Daniel Boud

Step off the pavement and into plush velvet seats at the theatre

At Sydney Lyric Theatre, *MJ the Musical* is taking centre stage playing now until August 2025. Far from being just another jukebox show, this production takes you behind the scenes of Michael Jackson's 1992 Dangerous World Tour, offering insight into the artistry, drive, and genius behind the legend. With direction and choreography by Tony Award-winner Christopher Wheeldon and a book by two-time Pulitzer Prize winner Lynn Nottage, it's as sharp and poignant as it is electrifying.

Then there's the much-anticipated return of *The Book of Mormon*, opening 15 July 2025 at the Capitol Theatre. The musical is a Tony®, Olivier®, and Grammy® award-winning production and is hailed as one of the funniest and smartest musicals ever written, it's irreverent, fearless, and somehow still heartwarming. With a cheeky grin and impeccable musical timing, it reminds us why live theatre continues to be one of the most powerful forms of storytelling.





Above: Couple enjoying a coffee and harbour views from their luxurious Crown Towers hotel suite at Crown Towers Sydney, Barangaroo.

Bottom: Bondi Icebergs

The New Winter Wellness Ritual

In Sydney, wellness is part of the city's rhythm. It's sunrise ice baths. It's salt air meditation. It's indulging in a three-hour spa journey that leaves you feeling reborn. And winter, with its cool air and clear skies, is the perfect season to embrace it all.

Start early in Bondi, where wellness is as embedded in the local lifestyle as surfing and coffee. Join the morning ritual with a bracing dip in the Bondi Icebergs ocean pool, followed by a steamy wind-down in the sauna. With panoramic views over the Pacific Ocean, it's arguably one of the most invigorating wellness experiences in the country and a true Sydney icon.

If you prefer something a little more curated, head inland to Nimbus Co, one of the city's leading infrared sauna and ice bath studios. Open from 6am, Nimbus offers contrast therapy, mindfulness spaces, and a calming aesthetic that blends coastal minimalism with Nordic calm. It's popular with locals and visiting celebs alike, and it's easy to see why.

For the ultimate in indulgence, book into the Crown Spa at Crown Towers Sydney in Barangaroo. This isn't just a spa, it's a sanctuary. The signature Restoration treatment includes an invigorating full-body exfoliation, Crown Sydney's bespoke marma massage using Subtle Energies oils, and a La Prairie anti-aging facial to finish. It's the kind of treatment that makes time feel irrelevant. You'll walk out glowing, grounded, and with a new lease on life.

Slow the Pace in Orange: Wine, Food, and Fireside Conversations

Just 3.5 hours drive west of Sydney lies Orange, a cool-climate wine region that in recent years has become a beacon for foodies, winemakers, and slow-travel aficionados. Here, elevation means innovation, and the result is exceptional pinot noir, crisp chardonnay, and méthode traditionnelle sparkling wines that rival anything from Champagne.

The standout experience? A Sparkling Masterclass at Printhie Wines. Hosted on a 12-hectare family-run estate with sweeping views of Mount Canobolas, this experience invites guests to walk the ancient limestone vineyard, learn about the process of crafting sparkling wine from vine to bottle, and then enjoy a leisurely three-course meal in the estate's architect-designed cellar door restaurant. You'll leave with insider knowledge, a new appreciation for the bubbles in your glass, and likely a bottle or two to take home.

But Orange is more than just wine. The town's heritage streets are lined with elegant boutiques, artisanal bakeries, historic pubs, and award-winning restaurants. Visit The Agrestic Grocer for farm-to-table fare, Ferment the Orange Wine Centre for curated local tastings, or stay the night in boutique lodges like Byng Street Boutique Hotel, where fireplaces crackle and breakfast is taken seriously.



Walk It Out: The Bondi to Bronte Coastal Walk

Sometimes wellness isn't about saunas or massages—it's about fresh air, blue skies, and moving your body. Enter the Bondi to Bronte coastal walk: a 4km trail along Sydney's eastern coastline that delivers cinematic views at every turn.

This path takes you past cliffside lookouts, sea-carved rock formations, and quiet coves where locals stop to meditate or picnic. There are pit stops for coffee, yoga mats rolled out on the grass, and photographers chasing the perfect shot of the crashing waves. It's one of the best urban walks in the world, and in winter, you often get it all to yourself.

And if your trip falls between 17 October and 3 November 2025, you're in for a visual treat. That's when the trail becomes home to Sculpture by the Sea, the world's largest free-to-the-public outdoor sculpture exhibition. With more than 100 large-scale works by artists from around the globe, the walk becomes a cultural journey as well as a scenic one.

M2 AI Summit Sydney: Where Innovation Meets Inspiration

For those seeking to blend their winter escape with cutting-edge insights, the M2 AI Summit in Sydney offers a unique opportunity. Scheduled for 6 August 2025, this premier event gathers industry leaders, innovators, and decision-makers to explore the transformative power of artificial intelligence in business.

Held at Sydney's iconic Carrigeworks venue, the summit features a full day of keynotes, panel discussions, and interactive exhibits. Attendees can expect to delve into topics such as AI-driven productivity, customer engagement strategies, and the ethical considerations of emerging technologies. With over 500 participants, including a significant proportion of C-suite executives, the event promises rich networking opportunities and actionable takeaways.

For business leaders, tech enthusiasts, and curious minds alike, the M2 AI Summit is more than just a conference—it's a convergence of ideas, inspiration, and innovation.



Port Stephens: A Coastal Escape Without the Crowds

While Byron Bay and the Central Coast may draw more headlines, Port Stephens—just a 2.5-hour drive north of Sydney—remains one of NSW's best-kept beach secrets. With 26 beaches, calm turquoise bays, and sand dunes that stretch for kilometres, it's the perfect off-grid escape with just the right amount of luxury.

Check into The Anchorage Hotel & Spa at Corlette Beach, a Hamptons-inspired resort offering private balconies, spa suites, and views that stretch across the marina. The property also houses a luxurious day spa, a poolside bar, and The Galley Kitchen, known for its refined coastal menu and relaxed ambience.

Activities in Port Stephens are as diverse as its landscapes. Take a cruise through Port Stephens-Great Lakes Marine Park to spot bottlenose dolphins—this is one of Australia's largest resident populations—or go for an eco-walk through the Tilligerry Habitat to encounter koalas in the wild.

Foodies are spoiled for choice. Book a table at Rick Stein at Bannisters in Soldiers Point, where the celebrity chef's signature seafood creations meet local produce. Or, enjoy a casual but memorable waterfront dinner at Little Beach Boathouse, complete with oysters and local wine as the sun sets over the marina.



Above: Dolphins in Nelson Bay, Port Stephens with views towards Mount Tomaree. Photo Courtesy of Destination NSW



Plan Your Escape

This winter, leave the cold behind—not by flying to the tropics, but by embracing a uniquely Australian version of seasonal escape. In Sydney and across New South Wales, you'll find warmth not just in the weather, but in the experiences: the glow of Vivid Sydney installations, the laughter in a crowded theatre, the heat of a Bondi sauna, the sparkle of a perfectly chilled glass of méthode traditionnelle.

You can do it all in a heartbeat with Air New Zealand, with non-stop flights to Sydney from Auckland, Wellington, Christchurch and Queenstown. Flights from Auckland depart daily.

To make the process even more smooth YOU Travel & Cruise can help you design your ideal itinerary, whether that's a quick city break with luxe wellness stops, a regional road trip through vineyards and coastlines, or an extended stay that lets you do it all.

Because sometimes, the best version of winter... is the one you never expected.



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3 nights - Crown Towers Sydney, in a Harbour View King Room

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Bondi Beach

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Port Stephens

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Orange

Add on 3 nights in Orange, a thriving country town rich in heritage. Discover award-winning restaurants, wineries and cellar doors.

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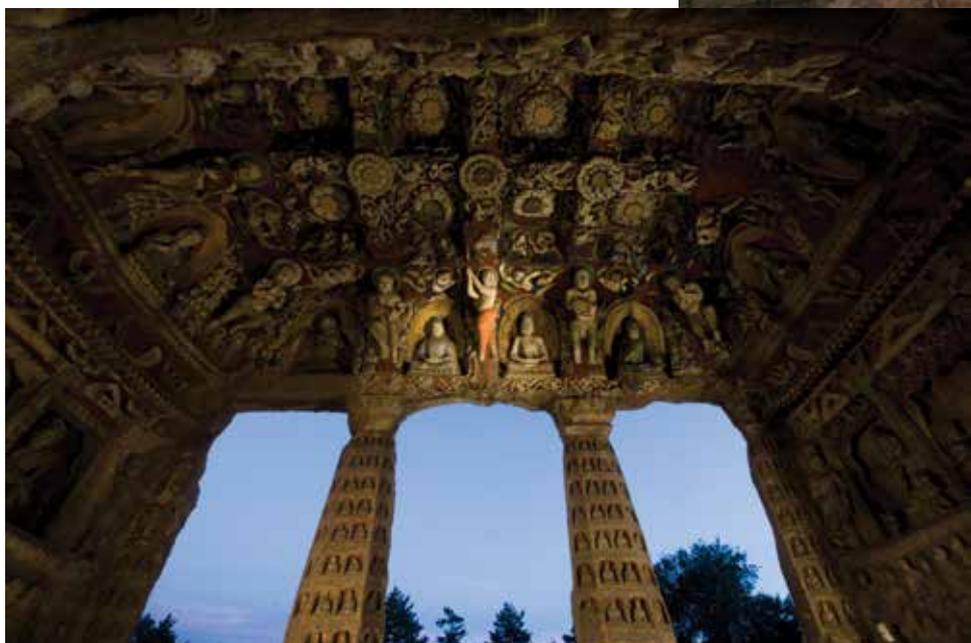
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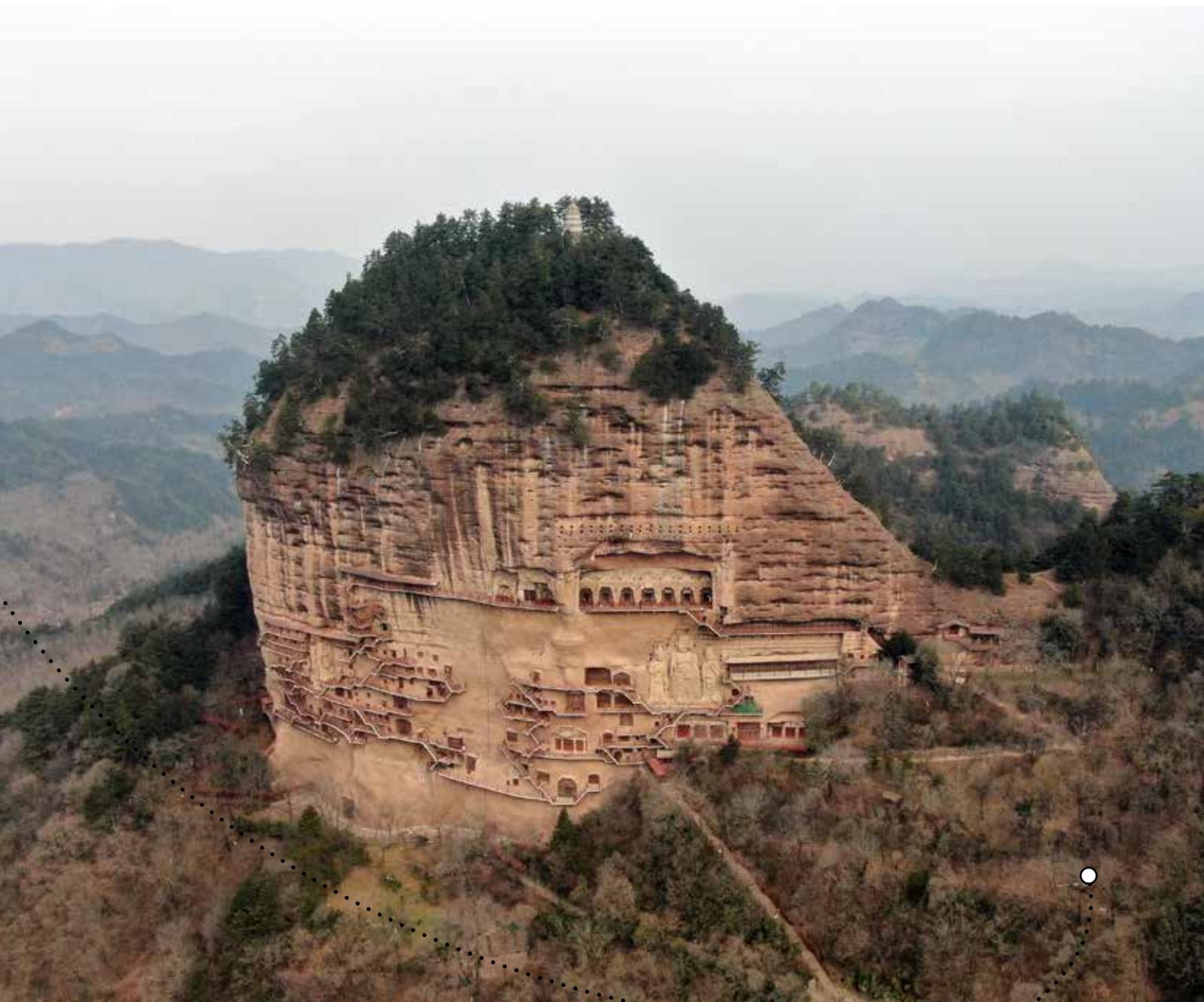
ENDANGERED TRAVEL

Culture, like all living things, is under constant threat of disappearance. Without careful nurturing local scuffles and global movements can erase centuries of human history off the face of the earth. It can be passive as well as active actions that result in this slow disappearance. Fundamentalists leveling holy sites belonging to the wrong religion, native communities choosing cheaper materials to make cookie cutter housing and phasing out local techniques. Then you have factors like natural disasters that can wipe things away in a moment.

One thing we can do as individuals is do things that enrich or preserve local custom, like learning te reo or how to make lamingtons here in New Zealand. Further afield we can support foundations like the World Monuments Fund (WMF) which assists local communities and governments to protect architectural and cultural artifacts around the world.

Here are a few of the most eye popping examples scattered across earth that have recently become folded into the WMF. These sites have a complicated relationship with tourism, on one hand the environmental strain of visitation can be detrimental to ongoing preservation, on the other, these are part of the local culture and are only truly valuable when they are openly available to the community. With that in mind the WMF put a focus on finding sustainable solutions to welcoming visitors from all over the world for generations to come.





Buddhist Grotto China

You have to respect the Buddhist architects, throughout the centuries they have built some of the most incredible architecture known to man in some of the most inhospitable environments. Take the Grottoes of Maijishan and Yungang, two of the most iconic hand carved cave temples of ancient China. At the Maijishan site 194 prayer nooks and 7,200 sculptures were carved into the sheer cliffs in the fourth and fifth century, the Yungang sites were built a century later. There are over 1,000 square meters of murals also carved into the cliffs. As these sites sit along the Silk road there is some incredible artistic cross pollination including Indian and Persian styles mixed with the local aesthetics.

Buddha Statues towering 17 meters tall are sure to impress. Then if you find the works of man tiresome, turn 180 degrees to have uninhibited panoramic views of nature.

The sites were endangered only a few hundred years into their creation by rebellions and Buddhist persecutions. It may have been their almost impossible reach nature that saved them from most of the devastation during this period. Earthquakes have also ravaged them over the years but the true strain today comes from China's booming tourism trade. There's a big focus on China's historic UNESCO heritage sites especially these grottoes along the silk road. This is causing a strain to these fragile sites as over 13,000 visitors a

day pass through to marvel at the incredible carved works of art. The tourist cantilevered walkways see about a million people a year tramping over them, and along with their remote nature and lack of resources, finding ways to properly preserve this history proves to be a challenge.

If you wanted to witness them for yourself set aside about half the day, and try for the early morning if you can to avoid the crowds. The best time of year to visit is during spring (April to June) and autumn (September to October).



Erdene zuu Monastery Mongolia

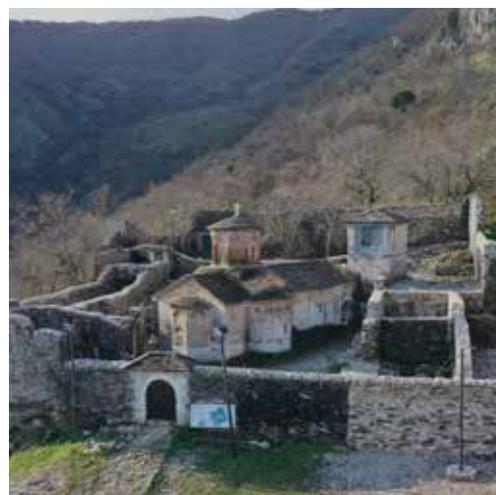
The Erdene Zuu Monastery has a wild history. It was founded in 1586 on what remained of the capital of the Mongol Empire which is perhaps one of the reasons it's almost in the dead center in Mongolia. The remaining bricks and stone from the ruins of the capital were used in the monastery's construction. It was literally fortified with a thick wall that helped it weather the ages. Within about 200 years it had filled with 62 temples from various Mongolian lords looking to drum up some status and reputation for themselves. During the communist era many of these structures were purged as Khorloogiin Choibalsan swept through, killing over ten thousand monks and their monasteries. Interestingly, the remaining buildings perhaps owe their existence to Stalin who himself saw value in maintaining the monasteries as a showpiece for international visitors to prove communism wasn't THAT bad. He lobbied for their preservation with Erdene Zuu turned into a museum until the collapse of communism in 1990. After that it was turned back over to the Buddhists as an active monastery while maintaining it's museum aspects for tourists.

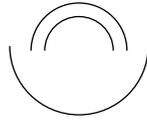
Today the area feels remote and desolate and the monastery has become the earliest surviving example in all Mongolia. If you're going to visit the best time is between May and September, Spring. The weather is good and you're more likely to bump into one of the many culture events.

Monasteries of the Drino Valley Albania

Along the Drino River Valley in Albania are languishing monasteries and churches dating back to as far as the 6th century, with most appearing in the 16th and 17th century between the Byzantine and Ottoman empires. Each compound generally revolves around a single monastery complex with frescoes, carved wooden iconostases, or elaborate partitions. These used to be community touchstones providing a place for prayer, education, and a home for orphans.

This all changed in the 60s when Albania's communist government outlawed religious practice, sending all the remaining monasteries into abandonment and disrepair. Since the fall of communism in 1991 the local communities have attempted to reconnect with these important touchstones, but rural depopulation has meant a shrinking of resources for these scenic sites. This is one of the few instances where over-tourism isn't a problem, quite the opposite. If we want these sites to be seen an influx of resources they're going to need more travellers willing to discover and visit them.





The 2025 Luxury Handbag Wishlist

BY YOUR SIDE

Handbags: the functional status symbol. Often a deeply personal expression of taste, lifestyle, and the odd snack stash. The handbag world in 2025 continues its ongoing balancing act, honouring heritage while embracing new trends, innovation, sustainability, and, occasionally, technology that nobody asked for. For the true icons of the handbag world some designs are just timeless. Unlike that 2021 vintage Mentos you just found hiding in the bottom of your handbag.







Gucci

Gucci has released two bags this year that lean into both tradition and modernity.

The Gucci Bamboo Diva Small Top Handle Bag revives a much-loved design with a contemporary edge. The bamboo handle, first introduced in the 1940s due to wartime material shortages, has since become a Gucci hallmark. The 2025 update brings embossed designs and interchangeable straps, making it adaptable for both formal and casual occasions.



The Gucci Jackie 1961 Shoulder Bag stays true to its signature curved silhouette and piston closure but now comes in fresh colours and premium leathers. It's a timeless piece with a history that dates back to the 1950s, famously named after Jackie Kennedy, who was often seen carrying it. This year's version introduces subtle metallic finishes and an optional adjustable strap for extra versatility.



Prada

Prada continues to do what it does best: keep things sleek, useful, and just a little bit ahead of the curve.

For those who like a bag that does more than just hold things, the Prada Supernova Tote remains a go-to. This oversized tote comes with smart compartments, RFID-blocking tech, and even a built-in charging dock. Designed with modern travellers in mind, it now includes reinforced leather piping and a padded laptop compartment, making it both stylish and functional.



The Re-Edition 2005 Nylon has returned, now in a biodegradable alternative (because even luxury needs to be eco-conscious). Originally a revival of Prada's early 2000s aesthetic, this updated version features water-resistant, recycled materials and enhanced durability.



Dior

The Lady Dior, made famous in the 1990s, still holds its place as a refined staple. It was originally named after Princess Diana, who was gifted the bag in 1995.



This year's Cruise 2025 edition adds modern embellishments like eyelets and pearls, pushing it just enough into statement territory without overdoing it. The signature Cannage stitching remains, but new metallic hues and a softer leather finish bring a fresh twist.



Meanwhile, the Saddle Bag has been updated in black grained calfskin, maintaining its signature curved form but now with a slightly more structured look. Designed by John Galliano in 1999 and brought back in 2018, the Saddle Bag continues to evolve, with reinforced side stitching and a detachable strap.



Louis Vuitton

Louis Vuitton continues to fine-tune its classics.



The Speedy Bandoulière 25 has been refreshed yet again, this time in a biomaterial monogram canvas. Originally designed in 1930 as a travel-friendly handbag, the Speedy has remained a staple for decades. The latest version introduces a more structured silhouette with reinforced leather trims, making it an ideal everyday bag with a bit more polish.

The Coussin PM, introduced in 2021, has found its way into 2025 with some futuristic upgrades. Expect iridescent hues, chunky chain updates, and a new quilted lambskin version. This bag, known for its ultra-plush texture, now includes an interior divider and a more ergonomic strap.





YSL

Saint Laurent knows better than to fix what isn't broken.

For something a little edgier, the Niki Mini in Grained Lambskin offers soft, textured leather, a tonal YSL logo, and a magnetic snap closure. Originally launched as a relaxed alternative to structured bags, the Niki now features an extra interior zip pocket and a slightly shorter strap, making it even more versatile for day-to-night wear.



The Le 5 à 7 Supple Bag remains a fan favourite, now appearing in deep jewel tones with optional chain straps for those who like a bit of variety. Inspired by classic Parisian elegance, this bag keeps its relaxed structure and buttery-soft leather but introduces new polished hardware options.



Chanel

Chanel stays firmly in its lane, delivering another round of refined, impeccably crafted handbags.



The Chanel 11.12 Bag is still a staple, now available in metallics, exotic leathers, and even some limited-edition hand-painted styles for those who like their luxury with a side of exclusivity. The quilting and chain strap remain unchanged, but new clasp hardware designs add a subtle modern touch.



Meanwhile, the Chanel 22 Bag continues its quiet domination. Slouchy, lightweight, and now available in eco-conscious leather variations, it's proof that even Chanel is keeping an eye on sustainability. The 2025 edition includes a reinforced base and an additional interior pocket, making it a little more practical for daily use.



Delvaux

Belgian brand Delvaux may have been around since 1829, but in recent years, it's been embraced as the leader of the 'quiet luxury' movement.

The Lingot bag is a study in clean lines, with its oversized metal buckle providing just enough flair to make a statement without screaming for attention. Delvaux, known as the world's oldest luxury leather goods house, continues to focus on craftsmanship, with hand-stitched leather panels ensuring longevity.



The Tempête L, inspired by 1960s sailing gear, remains a sophisticated choice for those who prefer heritage craftsmanship over fleeting trends. Originally designed to withstand the elements, this bag's signature side clasps were modelled after yacht hardware. The 2025 edition includes ultra-soft grain leather options and exotic skin variations, proving that quiet luxury still has room for indulgence.



WITH STYLE AND GRACIE

We've already seen her gracing CHANEL at the Grammy Awards and the Met gala, so it's no surprise that Gracie Abrams has become the face of the CHANEL Spring-Summer 2025 pre-collection campaign as well as the new House ambassador.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY CRAIG MCDEAN





The allure is casual yet chic: tweed jackets paired with jeans, tweed baseball jackets worn with bermuda shorts and a cap for a boyish edge. A play on contrasts recalls the 90s. Denim is reinvented, interwoven with chain jewellery, while leather comes with a new, very supple embossed quilted effect, reminiscent of the famous diamond quilting on CHANEL bags. This signature pattern features on a jacket, a little black dress and bags, including an oversize tote.

The understated images highlight the essence of the collection: pearls, tweeds and revisited icons. Pearls appear in braid on tweed jackets, printed on faded denim, and as motifs on knitwear. They also embellish accessories: sautoir necklaces, rings, bags. Tweeds come in lightweight textures, ethereal pastels, delicate shades of pale pink, sky blue and the all-essential black and white.



Paint

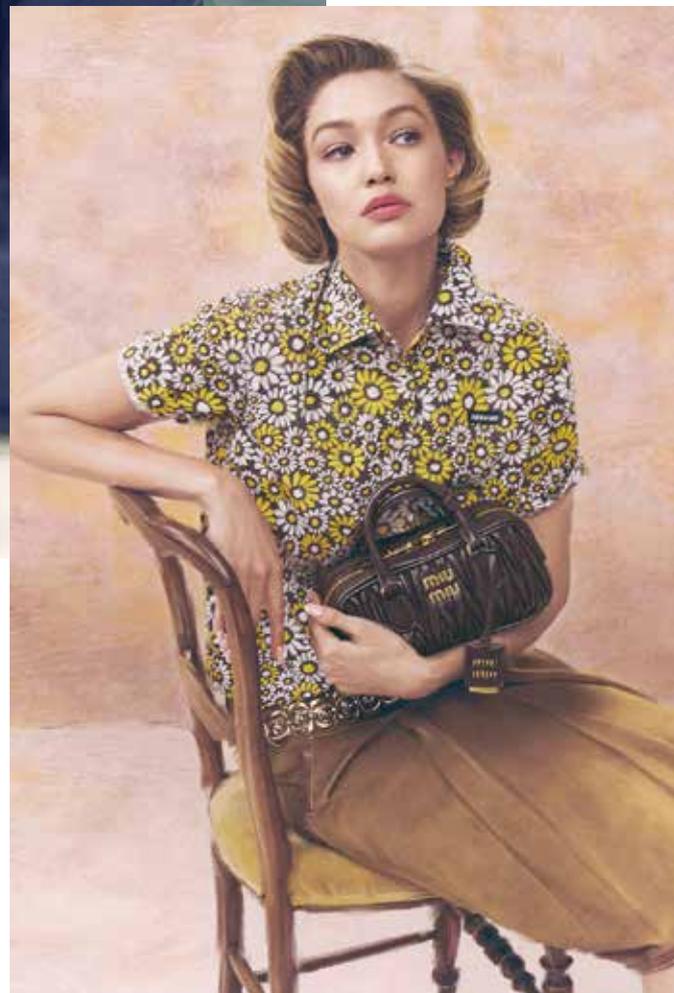
Miu

Now



Left: Arcadie matelassé suede bag, whisky, \$5,890

Below: Arcadie matelassé nappa leather bag, briarwood, \$5,097.88



Reflecting the new suede of the Miu Miu matelassé - showcased in the Wander and Arcadie handbags - these gentle images have a tactile, velvety quality, a true softness.

CREATIVE DIRECTOR MIUCCIA PRADA
PHOTOGRAPHY STEVEN MEISEL
CAMPAIGN ART DIRECTION EDWARD QUARMBY
STYLING LOTTA VOLKOVA
CAST GIGI HADID



Left: Wander matelassé suede bag, small, Cocoa Brown, \$4,871

Below: Wander matelassé suede bag, Extra Large, Cocoa Brown, \$6,224

Bottom Left: Wander matelassé suede bag, Fuchsia \$4,866



Quiet Luxury is in. No loud logos, just elegant design. Gigi Hadid is the face of Miu Miu's latest campaign, immortalizing both the brand's emblematic matelassé and the women who hold it, through timeless imagery inspired by classic high society portraiture of the 20th century.

Photographed by Steven Meisel, each image is uniquely digitally 'painted' by hand, its subtle nuances of hue accidental and true, a genuine echo of the work of the brushstroke. Nodding to historical styles, photorealist and yet not, there is an ever-present and intriguing ambiguity - an energy of uncertainty, images caught between the mediums of painting and photography, of present and past.

Prada Days

Placid calm waters, a sense of depth, a ceaseless horizon of possibility. The romance of the Prada Days of Summer collection translates to a dream-like image, starring a cast including Kendall Jenner, Hunter Schafer, and Troye Sivan, each portrayed in the peace of a surreal, still sea.

CREATIVE DIRECTORS:

MIUCCIA PRADA AND RAF SIMONS

PHOTOGRAPHY:

OLIVER HADLEE PEARCH

CAMPAIGN CREATIVE DIRECTION:

FERDINANDO VERDERI



Left: Prada Galleria medium printed leather bag

Above: Large linen blend handbag

Top Right: Cotton crochet mini-handbag

Right: Prada Buckle leather bucket bag with belt

Far Right: Prada Galleria medium suede bag with fringe





CAMILLA AND MARC

Pre Fall 2025 collection

Inspired by the works of architects Mies van der Rohe and Eileen Gray, the Pre Fall 25 collection by CAMILLA AND MARC finds harmony in structure, refining classic forms with a modern sensibility.

Creative Director Camilla Freeman-Topper reflects, “The collection speaks to a woman who seeks refinement in her everyday wardrobe, pieces that seamlessly integrate into her life with purpose and ease. Inspired by the purity of architecture and the fluidity of form, each design is considered, offering a sense of structure without restriction. Wearability and durability remain at the core, ensuring each piece stands the test of time, evolving with the woman who wears them.”

Tailoring becomes a study of geometry and balance, with angular pockets, deconstructed elements, and modular layering. A blazer vest and collarless coat feature removable square pockets, embracing adaptability

in design. Colour-blocked suiting nods to Gray’s innovative aesthetic, while a belted blazer with custom hardware showcases the craftsmanship of our house atelier. Marble-inspired lace and grid-patterned buttons add an unexpected tactile dimension, enhancing depth and complexity.

Textures and fabrications enrich the architectural narrative. Italian tweed and engineered jacquards bring a tactile richness, while mesh layered over sequins infuse eveningwear with a subtle, refined luminosity. Smooth leather and suede shorts introduce a dynamic interplay of textures, while square-shaped pockets and engineered stitching reinforce the collection’s architectural influence.

The colour palette draws from architectural materials and natural elements. Cream, chalky blue and charcoal form the foundation, complemented by the warmth of chocolate, soft yellow, and burgundy. A salt-and-pepper marled coat, inspired by the roman travertine of van der Rohe’s Barcelona Pavilion, encapsulates the meeting of precision and tone.

Left: Frieze Mini Dress, \$780.00



Left: Paxton Halterneck Top \$384.00, Corinthian Straight Leg Pant \$660.00, Aurora Braided Pump \$1,020.00

Below: Corinthian Blazer \$1,020.00, Paxton Long Sleeve Top \$384.00, Corinthian Straight Leg Pant \$660.00, Aurora Braided Pump \$1,020.00

Opposite: Siphon Long Sleeve Top \$1,140.00, Deco Midi Skirt \$540.00, Rhys Shearling Pump \$900.00

“Wearability and durability remain at the core, ensuring each piece stands the test of time, evolving with the woman who wears them.”









Left: Corinthian Coat \$1,140.00, Ashlar Knit Bodysuit \$455.00, Vault Slim Pant \$660.00, Rhys Checked Pump \$900.00

Above: Palazzo Trench Coat \$1,320.00, Rohan Knit Funnel Neck Sweater \$540.00, Meier Brushed Alpaca Knit Sweater \$540.00

Right: Hackney Leather Coat \$4,560.00 and Aurora Braided Pump \$1,020.00



Left: Vertex Leather Jacket \$2,340.00, Natalini Pant \$1,020.00 and Amber Knee Boot \$1,440.00

Below: Dia Car Coat \$900.00, Siphon Long Sleeve Top \$1,140.00

"In all chaos
there is a cosmos,
in all disorder a
secret order."

Carl Jung



“The collection speaks to a woman who seeks refinement in her everyday wardrobe, pieces that seamlessly integrate into her life with purpose and ease.”



Above: Piero Blazer \$960.00 and Amber Knee Boot \$1,440.00

Right: Sullivan Blazer \$1,140.00 and Sullivan Pant \$660.00.





Coated Button-
Front Jacket RRP
\$99.99, Coated
Mini Skirt RRP
\$27.99

A NEW VISION

A/W 2025 marks a refresh of H&M's fashion spirit. Full of rich tones, intriguing details and design-focused silhouettes. The latest campaign features an array of musicians, models and cultural leaders. Crafted by photographer Sam Rock and director Albert Moya, it is a celebration of fashion, and of individuality and personal style. It is bold, clean, modern and strong. The broad cast of contemporary icons- Charli xcx, Area, Lila Moss, Ajus Samuel, Loli Bahia, Wali Deutsch, Okay Kaya, Bibi Breslin, Alewya, Sage Elsesser, Segá Bodega, and Lux Gillespie- reflects that H&M had always championed between great fashion and self-expression.

Each piece within the collection brings together various stories and inspirations: The eternal glamour and versatility of mid-century design. The deep and sophisticated hues of wood and retro interiors. The lingering beauty of California cinema sirens, The cycle of styles across decades: 20s to the 60s, 90s to now.

Garments are ultra-refined. A mid-century mood is visible in the suiting, including boxy jackets and micro skirts. There are flashes of vintage-style opulence: beading and studs flow across knitwear, leather dresses and heirloom-style mesh dresses. Adding to the sumptuous feel are pieces in leather and suede: these premium materials become like a second skin. Knits include skirt suits in stretch wool, and must-have matching vests and shorts. The colour palette features an array of browns, from caramel to deep mahogany. Oxblood and green add to the archival feel, while black and white function as accent statements. Accessories include heeled pumps with a statement round toe, studded loafers and furry slip-ons. Bags are slick and directional. Jewellery ranges from minimal and angular to off-beat and earthy. Belts help complete the mood of assertive femininity, emphasising lines.

"This collection is full of many special inspirations and quality materials. The leather, the knits, the sparkly separates- together the pieces showcase the strength of H&M's fashion ability. It's all about truly great clothes: real wardrobe icons. The campaign lets the fashion shine." Eliana Masgalos, Womenswear Design Director, H&M

The A/W 2025 collection will be available in stores across Australia and New Zealand and online at [hm.com.au](https://www.hm.com.au) from 20 March 2025.



Sequin Organza
Shirt RRP \$34.99



Tie Neck Chiffon Blouse RRP \$49.99,
Voluminous Skirt RRP \$99.99,
Leather High Heels RRP \$119.00



Left: Stud Detail Coated Dress RRP \$249, Mules \$49.99

Below: Fluffy Coat RRP \$99.99, Studded Mule RRP \$69.99



Left: Rhinestone Detail Dress \$129.00

Far Left: Coated Tank RRP \$44.99, Leather Pencil Skirt RRP \$299.00



Right: Waisted Double Breasted Blazer RRP \$119.00, Wide Wool Blend Twill Pants RRP \$99.99

Below: Loose Fit Tuxedo Shirt RRP \$89.99, Stud Embellished Coated Skirt RRP \$199.00



Right: Bandeau Mini Dress RRP \$99.99



Voluminous Bandeau
Dress \$129.00, Studed
Mule RRP \$69.99



Left: Oversized
Woollen Blazer RRP
\$249.99, Wide Leg
Tailored Pants RRP
\$229.00, Oversized
Tote RRP \$59.99,
Mules \$49.99

Below: Rhinestone
Detail Top RRP
\$69.99, Rhinestone
Detail Top RRP \$69.99



Left: Shimmering
Jacquard Weave
Dress RRP \$69.99





BEAUTY

SOFT HABITS

Textures and tinctures to weave into the
rhythm of every day.

BEAUTY BY SOPHIE CHUNG | IMAGE BY ABEL

BEAUTY HOTLIST

FUTURE CLASSICS

Twelve new icons redefining the beauty landscape.

1 POETIC PERSUASION

After eight years of experimentation, the Eleos Nourishing Body Cleanser, 180ml, \$57, is the first emulsifying cream formula to grace the **Aesop** bodycare lineup.

2 SMALL LUXURIES

The perfect companion for busy bodies, **Paume** Hand & Body Cleansing Wipes, \$28, are biodegradable and gentle on the skin and nose.

3 SHROOM SNOOZE

For the highly-strung who struggle to wind down and fall asleep, the **Jeuneora** Beauty Sleep, \$77, uses the power of adaptogenic mushrooms and pistachio extract to relax the mind and body naturally.

4 SKIN SCULPTER

A drink for parched skin, **Tronque** Triple Active Body Milk, \$120, refines, lifts and tones skin with compromised elasticity.

5 CLEAN COLOUR

A hybrid serum to build a golden faux tan, **BASEKIN** Tan+Hydrate Serum, \$65, leans on a clean, plant-derived tanning agent with hyaluronic acid, niacinamide and ascorbic acid to provide a skin-friendly pregnancy-safe formula.

6 PEAK SENSORIES

A fluid moisturiser to drench the skin in lieu of a cream, **La Prairie** Skin Caviar Hydro Emulsion, 70ml, \$690, targets fine lines and wrinkles by supporting the skin's epidermis.

7 DAILY SHIELD

The new SPF on the block that tackles all the undesirable traits in one fell swoop, **Melitta Skin** Glowguard, \$62, provides four-hour SPF50 protection in a lightweight serum-like texture without sticky residue.

8 SCALP SOOTHER

Aveda Scalp Solutions Hydrating Hair & Scalp Masque, \$90, leans on squalane as a hero ingredient to replenish the scalp's moisture barrier, soothing irritation and preventing dryness.

9 RADIANCE RELOADED

The award-winning beauty powder, **The Beauty Chef** Glow, \$75, has been reformulated with hyaluronic acid, sea buckthorn and grapeseed extract for an extra boost of radiance.

10 SPOT SLAYER

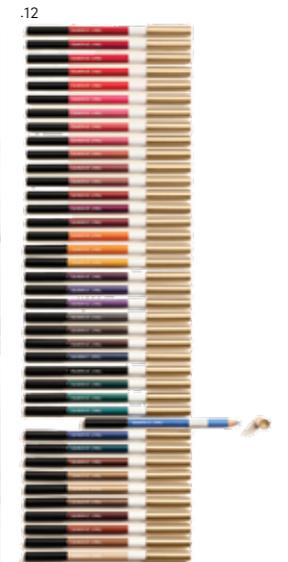
A duo promising to reduce hyperpigmentation in two weeks, **Elizabeth Arden** Visible Brightening Clearly Radiant Spot Correcting Capsules, \$183 and Bounce Cream, \$143, use encapsulated vitamin C and niacinamide to deliver a powerful pigment correcting effect.

11 CLOUD COMFORT

A fast-absorbing cloud-like cream, **Clinique** Moisture Surge Body Hydrator, \$73, includes aloe bioferment, glycerin and hyaluronic acid to increase moisture retention and repair the skin barrier.

12 CREATIVE LINES

A collection of 40 eye and lip pencils in a kaleidoscope of shades, **Hermès** Trait d'Hermès, \$91, inviting playful creativity with a nostalgic nod to school-day scribbles.



BEAUTY SPOT



LOVE POTION

A new season calls for more than just a wardrobe refresh — your fragrance lineup deserves one too. Blended with rose, jasmine, neroli and ambroxan, **Elie Saab Elixir Love**, EDP, 50ml, \$200, is a seductive love potion to attract romance. A bold and heady oriental amber floral, **Carolina Herrera Very Good Girl Elixir**, EDP, 50ml, \$255, is the most intense iteration of the Good Girl franchise with top notes of black cherry and bitter almond on a base of vanilla and cocoa. Fresh, spicy and herbaceous, **Aesop Aurner**, EDP, 50ml, \$275, brings the magnolia leaf to life in an unorthodox, nuanced way.

REFINED RITUALS

Now is the time to dive into a proactive skin-correcting routine while the summer sun is on hiatus. Using positively charged hyaluronic acid, **dermalogica** Magnetic[+] Afterglow Cleanser, \$102, is designed to cling to our naturally negatively charged skin, thereby helping the skin retain moisture. Fortified with natural exfoliants like mango, pumpkin and pomegranate enzymes, **INSKIN.CO** Foaming Enzyme Cleanser, \$69, can be used on sensitive skin to improve skin texture and radiance. A 3% PHA inclusive formula, **Urban Jungle** Swipe Right Exfoliant, \$47, encourages high cell turnover for the whole body to tackle stubborn rough patches and clogged pores. Targeting texture, tone and structure of the skin, **La Prairie** White Caviar Concentrate, \$1030, works to amplify the skin's light-reflective potential for translucent, bright skin.



CULT GAGA

One of the most anticipated beauty launches to date, **Haus Labs** by Lady Gaga has officially landed at Sephora. Best known for its Triclone Skin Tech Foundation and Hydrating and De-Puffing Concealer — offered in an expansive range of shades and undertones — the brand's complexion heroes have quickly earned cult status among global editors and content creators.



SHINE THEORY

Satin, shine, and shimmer - the new wave of lip essentials are crafted for weightless comfort.

Vegan and cruelty-free, **Jane Iredale** ColorLuxe Hydrating Cream Lipsticks, \$69, is a creamy, satin finish lipstick with no-tug texture that glides on smoothly. Infused with nourishing jojoba and safflower oils, **Bobbi Brown** Extra Colour Shine, \$75, gives you juicy shine and rich colour payoff with one effortless swipe. If you love the gloss but not the stick, **Smashbox** Halo Plump + Glow Lip Gloss, \$47, is a non-sticky plumping balm gloss formula that keeps shine for up to six hours. **MAC** Lipglass Air in shade Frozen, \$46, is an ultra-light gloss with an iridescent cool-toned pearl to layer over your lip shade.

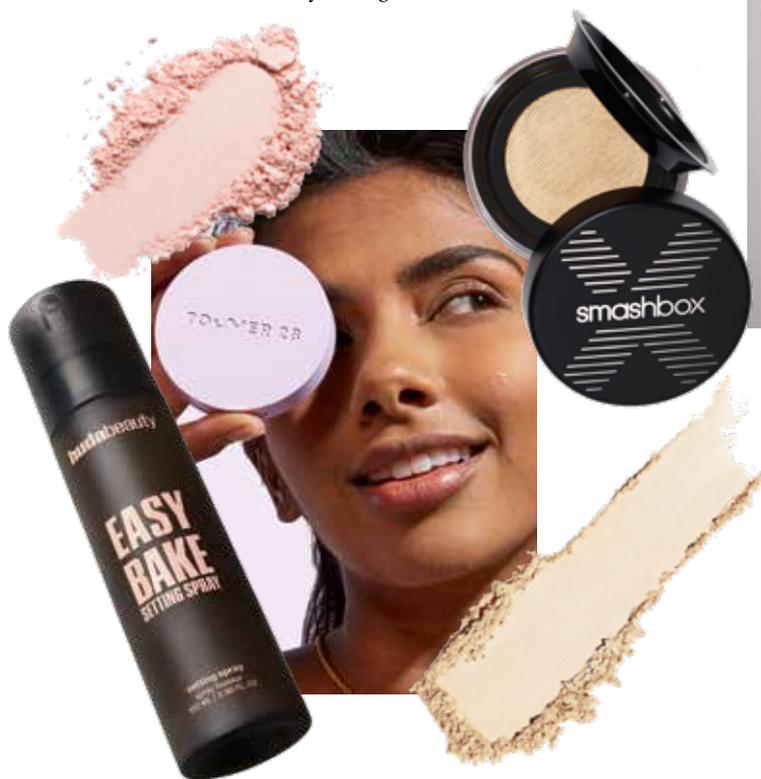
CROWN CONTROL

To cater for the millions of consumers seeking a solution to fine, thinning hair, **Orbè** recently unveiled the Serene Scalp Densifying collection - featuring a Shampoo, \$87; Conditioner, \$92; and Treatment Spray, \$125. Powered by pea sprout, clover extracts and a biomimetic peptide, the trio works to stimulate the scalp, fortify brittle strands and deliver visible body and volume.



GET SET, GO

It's the step many skip — but setting your face with powder and spray is crucial to making your makeup last. **Smashbox** Always On Setting Powder, \$64, is a finely milled translucent loose powder that's crease- and cake-free with no flash back in photos. For those with sensitive skin seeking an alcohol-free alternative, **Tower 28** GetSet Blur + Set Pressed Powder, \$52, uses kaolin clay to control shine while silica repels sweat. The newest addition to the iconic **Huda Beauty** Easy Bake family, the Setting Spray, \$58, is an alcohol and fragrance-free formula with rice starch, mineral clay and hyaluronic acids to blur pores and control shine while hydrating the skin.



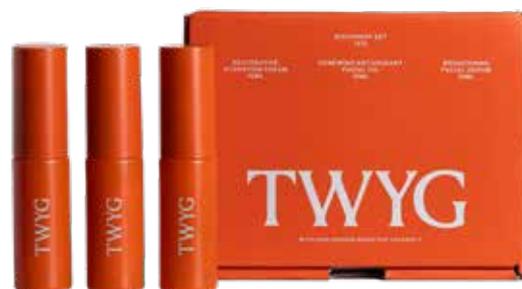
MATTE REVIVAL

Matte is back but not as we know it. Hydrating and blurring with a velvet-matte finish, **Anastasia Beverly Hills** Impeccable Blurring Second Skin Matte Foundation, \$86, provides a flawless second-skin feel that can be built up to full coverage. Pair with the Setting Spray, \$67, to lock in the look with a soft-focus shine-free finish that will last all day and weather any storm.

EVERYDAY EDIT

Low effort yet high impact, the latest skincare releases are designed to fit seamlessly into real-life routines. A trio of crowd favourites, **TWYG** Discovery Set, \$99, is powered by bioactive totarol, prized for its antioxidant potency and antimicrobial properties.

For lightweight hydration with a balancing touch, **Mecca Cosmetica** Gel Cream, \$60, blends squalane and niacinamide to replenish moisture while keeping excess oil in check. And for a final layer of nourishment, **Milou** Give Me The Gloss Beauty Oil, \$69, delivers a hit of skin-loving omegas and vitamins, sealing in hydration while boosting brightness.



SCENT ESCAPE

Embodying the fantasy of a country lifestyle, **Glasshouse** has launched Country Couture, \$64.95; a homely scent of juicy nectarine and creamy notes of sandalwood, tonka and cashmeran. An instant getaway to a tropical island, **CIRCA** Honeysuckle & Frangipani Soy Candle, \$49.95, frangipani, rose and red berries rest on a creamy musk and sugared woods.



GLOW MINIMAL

Keep your daily makeup look effortless but elevated with a fresh-faced look that's anything but basic. A cushiony stick blush that melts into the skin, **Smashbox HOT STIX** Blush, \$45, comes in bright vivid hues to take your colour artistry to the next level. Skin-caring squalane, hyaluronic acid and vitamin B5 are blended with light reflecting pearls in **Revlon Illuminance Glow Wands**, \$32, to give a dewy finish.

Living



New Zealand's most iconic ceramics brand, Acme, is expanding beyond coffee with the launch of its new Tajimi range.

Inspired by the original Maruasa design and crafted by the legendary Maruasa Porcelain Factory in Tajimi, Japan, these elegant tumblers bring Acme's signature craftsmanship to a broader range of drinks.

Find the collection on acmecups.nz.

SOFA SO GOOD

A sofa isn't just a piece of furniture, it's the soft and supple backbone of your home. It's where you collapse after a long day, where you binge-watch your questionable TV choices, where guests politely perch before sinking in and overstaying their welcome and where you can make cash deposits for future dairy runs without even knowing it. It's the silent unsung hero of every living room, taking whatever life (or your pets and kids) throw at it, all while keeping up appearances and never complaining.

And whether you're drawn to sculptural, design-forward pieces or oversized cloud-like lounges that practically beg you to take a nap, your sofa sets the tone for the entire space.

Take a seat on your sofa and join us as we explore the best in sofa design, from classic leather to contemporary modulares, showcasing how different styles, textures, and colors can completely transform a room. So whether you're after sleek sophistication or a cocoon of comfort, there's a sofa out there waiting to support you.



Covet House, Living Room brown paint room in mid century modern style with Godard curvy sofa Sade floor lamp Phi, 8589504

SO LAST MID CENTURY

This setup nails the balance between statement and subtlety. The Godard Sofa does the heavy lifting in the room, not just because it's big, but because its soft curves break up all the straight lines in the space. That's a good trick to keep in mind: if your room has a lot of sharp angles (paneling, shelving, even windows), a curved sofa can add some much-needed flow and stop everything from feeling too rigid.

The color palette is another clever play. The deep brown walls bring drama and warmth, while the lighter beige sofa keeps things from getting too heavy. That's the beauty of working with complementary tones—you get contrast, but in a way that feels natural rather than jarring. If you flip it and go for dark upholstery against lighter walls, you'll get a bolder, more defined look. Both approaches work, but it depends on whether you want your sofa to blend in or stand out.

Texture is another thing that makes this room interesting. You've got smooth wood, woven fabric, soft cushions, and even that rough organic shelving backdrop. Mixing textures is key if you want to keep a neutral space from looking flat. A chunky knit throw or a velvet cushion would add even more layers without messing with the overall colour scheme.

IN THE MOOD FOR A BIT OF MOOD

This setup is a great example of how to do modern minimalism without making it feel cold. The Sugar Modular Sofa keeps things sleek but still looks like something you'd actually want to sink into after a long day. The soft grey fabric balances nicely against the warm walnut wood details, proving that neutrals don't have to be boring—you just need to mix up tones and textures to keep things interesting.

Speaking of contrast, the artwork above the sofa is a smart move. The deep, moody tones pop against the light walls, adding depth without overwhelming the space. If you've got a neutral-heavy room, a bold piece of art can keep it from feeling too safe.

Lighting plays a big role here too. The slim track lights add a modern edge, while the sculptural wall sconce and table lamp bring in some softer, more ambient lighting. Layering different types of light like this is a good way to keep a space feeling cozy rather than clinical.

If you're looking to recreate a similar look, focus on a mix of warm and cool neutrals, choose furniture with clean lines but inviting textures, and don't be afraid to add in a statement piece—whether it's artwork, lighting, or even an interesting coffee table. It's all about balance.



Colour match: Resene Chalk Dust



Caffe Latte, Contemporary Neutral Living Room in New York by PNG Creative Studio Sugar Modular Sofa walnut wood , 7520076



Colour match: Resene Calibre

January Furniture Show, January Furniture Show GD SS23 Liberty Modular Sofa Datsun Armchairs And Burley Walnut, 7748399

MID CENTURY, RUSTIC AND MODERNISM WALK INTO A BAR

This space is a blend of modern minimalism and rustic charm. The Liberty Modular Sofa anchors the room with its soft, neutral upholstery, while the warm leather armchairs bring in a mid-century feel that adds character without overpowering the simplicity of the design. The balance between the structured shapes of the furniture and the raw, exposed wooden beams makes the whole room feel both stylish and inviting.

The colour palette here is all about subtle contrast, cool greys and whites set the tone, while the rich walnut and caramel leather bring warmth. The black-and-white patterned rug adds just enough texture to break up the clean lines without making the space feel busy. This is a great example of how layering different materials like stone, wood, fabric, and leather can add depth to a minimalist interior.

If you're drawn to this kind of look, focus on natural materials, a limited but well-thought-out colour palette, and a mix of soft and structured shapes. And don't forget to embrace negative space sometimes, letting a design breathe is what makes it feel the most effortless.



Colour match: Resene Fresh



Image: Caffe Latte, Living Room Sugar modular sofa green cushion and wall art beautify this springsummer living room, 7592365

TAKE A POP SHOT

This space is a great example of how to use neutrals without letting them fall flat. The off-white Sugar Modular Sofa keeps things clean and modern, but it's the small pops of green that really bring it to life. The throw pillows and artwork introduce just enough color to keep the space feeling fresh and not too monochrome.

This is a smart way to approach color if you like a neutral base but want to switch things up with the seasons. Swapping out pillows, artwork, or even a small rug can completely change the mood of a room without requiring a big redesign. Here, the green tones add a spring-like energy, making the space feel calm but still lively.

If you're looking to create a similar feel, start with a solid neutral foundation like a light grey or off-white sofa and build in color through accessories. Go for a mix of textures to add depth, like a woven rug, soft fabric cushions, and glossy accents. And don't underestimate the power of greenery it instantly makes a space feel more inviting and fresh without overwhelming the design.

BATTLE OF THE HUES

This season might be all about the naturals but that doesn't mean that there is not still space for full on bold, rich colors, dramatic contrast, and just the right amount of glamour. This deep red sofa immediately grabs attention, but what makes it work is how it's paired with complementary tones rather than fighting for dominance. The emerald green cushions and chair create a perfect counterbalance, reinforcing the luxurious feel without overwhelming the space.

The blush pink rug with the heron design is a smart choice, it softens the look while adding movement and a touch of artistry. Pink and red can be tricky together, but in this case, the muted tones and graphic pattern keep them from clashing. This is a good example of how mixing similar shades in different saturations can create depth rather than chaos.

If you're drawn to bold colors but nervous about overdoing it, take a cue from this setup. Stick to a controlled palette of two or three strong shades, balance them with grounding elements like black or gold, and let texture do some of the heavy lifting.

Velvet, for example, naturally enhances color depth, making rich hues look even more luxurious. Most importantly, lean into contrast, bold rooms work best when the elements are intentional rather than competing for attention.



Colour match: Resene Dynamite



Covet House, Bold and Bright Living Room by Olga Butko Wales red sofa Heron blush pink rug Lapiaz dark center ta, 7864531



Colour match: Resene Elixir

January Furniture Show, January Furniture Show GD SS23 Hudson Family And Hammersmith Sofa, 7748398

IT'S A DESIGN FEATURE, NOT LACK OF MAINTENANCE

Sometimes, imperfections make for the best design. The aged, textured walls contrast beautifully with the rich brown leather sofa, creating a look that feels effortlessly lived-in yet stylish. A nice balance of rustic and refined.

The Chesterfield-inspired design of the sofa keeps things classic, but the relaxed seat cushions make it more inviting than traditional buttoned-up versions. This is a great option if you love the character of antique furniture but want the comfort of contemporary pieces. The warm, worn-in leather also pairs well with the soft neutral tones of the rug and cushions, keeping the room from feeling too dark or heavy.

The glass and metal coffee tables bring a modern contrast to the space, proving that mixing materials is key to keeping a room from feeling stuck in one era. The shelving unit in the background adds to that industrial touch while still feeling cohesive with the organic tones of the wood floors and decor.



Colour match: Resene Spanish White

Caffe Latte, Living Room springsummer decor in neutral and blush tones with Aroma side table
Winnow table lamp c, 7100987

I'M NOT DELICATE, I'M COMPLICATED

This space is a lesson in how to do soft and sophisticated without tipping into overly delicate. The mix of neutral and blush tones keeps things light and airy, while the mix of textures (velvet upholstery, sleek marble, and brushed metal) adds just enough contrast to make it feel intentional rather than one-note.

The sofa is a great example of how shape can dictate the overall vibe of a room. Its gently curved back and slim, tapered legs give it a refined, mid-century feel without looking too vintage. It's a piece that works equally well in a minimalist setting or a more classic space, depending on how you style it.

If you're thinking of going for a similar look, focus on a balance of shapes and finishes. Soft curves mixed with angular details, matte textures with glossy ones—it's all about creating subtle contrast that keeps the space feeling dynamic. And don't be afraid to bring in a bit of blush—it's neutral enough to work in almost any setting but adds just enough warmth to keep things from feeling too cool or impersonal.



Image: LUX XU, Living Room Decor Charla Sofa, 6961499

Colour match: Resene Triple Canterbury Clay

THE POWER OF VELVET

This space is a great example of how minimalism can feel warm and inviting rather than stark or cold. The Charla Sofa has a structured yet soft presence, setting a refined tone for the room. Instead of relying on just neutrals, the mustard velvet chair brings in a rich contrast, proving that even a single bold piece can transform a space. A good way to make a neutral palette more dynamic is to layer different shades and materials rather than sticking to just one tone—this keeps everything from feeling too flat.

The coffee table is a clever mix of materials, blending wood, brass, and black lacquer to create something sculptural without being overpowering. This is a great example of how mixing textures can add depth in a minimalist space without introducing visual clutter.

When the color palette is restrained, material contrast becomes even more important.

Lighting plays a big role here too. The floor lamp isn't just practical—it's a design statement.

The arrangement of spherical glass lights adds an artistic touch, reinforcing the modern aesthetic while keeping things soft and balanced. Choosing lighting that acts as a focal point rather than just an afterthought is a great way to elevate a room's overall look.

If you're into this kind of style, focus on mixing textures and materials like leather, velvet, wood, and metal to create layers of interest. Use lighting as more than just function. Let it become part of the design. Keep the color palette tight but introduce contrast through materials and a few standout pieces, like a bold chair or sculptural table. Minimalism isn't about having less; it's about making sure every element has a purpose. When done right, it feels effortless, refined, and full of personality.

IT'S OK TO SLOUCH

This space is a great example of how to do warm minimalism the right way. The Loft Sofa sits effortlessly in the room, with its soft, slouched arm cushions giving it a casual, inviting feel. It's the kind of sofa that looks structured enough for a polished interior but still relaxed enough to sink into at the end of the day. The light neutral upholstery blends seamlessly with the soft textures in the room, while the high-density foam ensures that comfort doesn't take a back seat to aesthetics.

Everything here is about balance. The light terrazzo flooring and soft linen sofa are contrasted by the warmth of the wooden cabinetry, leather accent chair, and natural woven side tables. The trick to making a neutral space feel dynamic is in the textures. When colors are kept soft and muted, combining different materials prevents the space from looking one-dimensional.

If you want to achieve a similar look, focus on quality over quantity. Keep the palette light, but make sure to mix up textures with wood, woven materials, and soft upholstery. Choose lighting that enhances the warmth of the space rather than overpowering it.

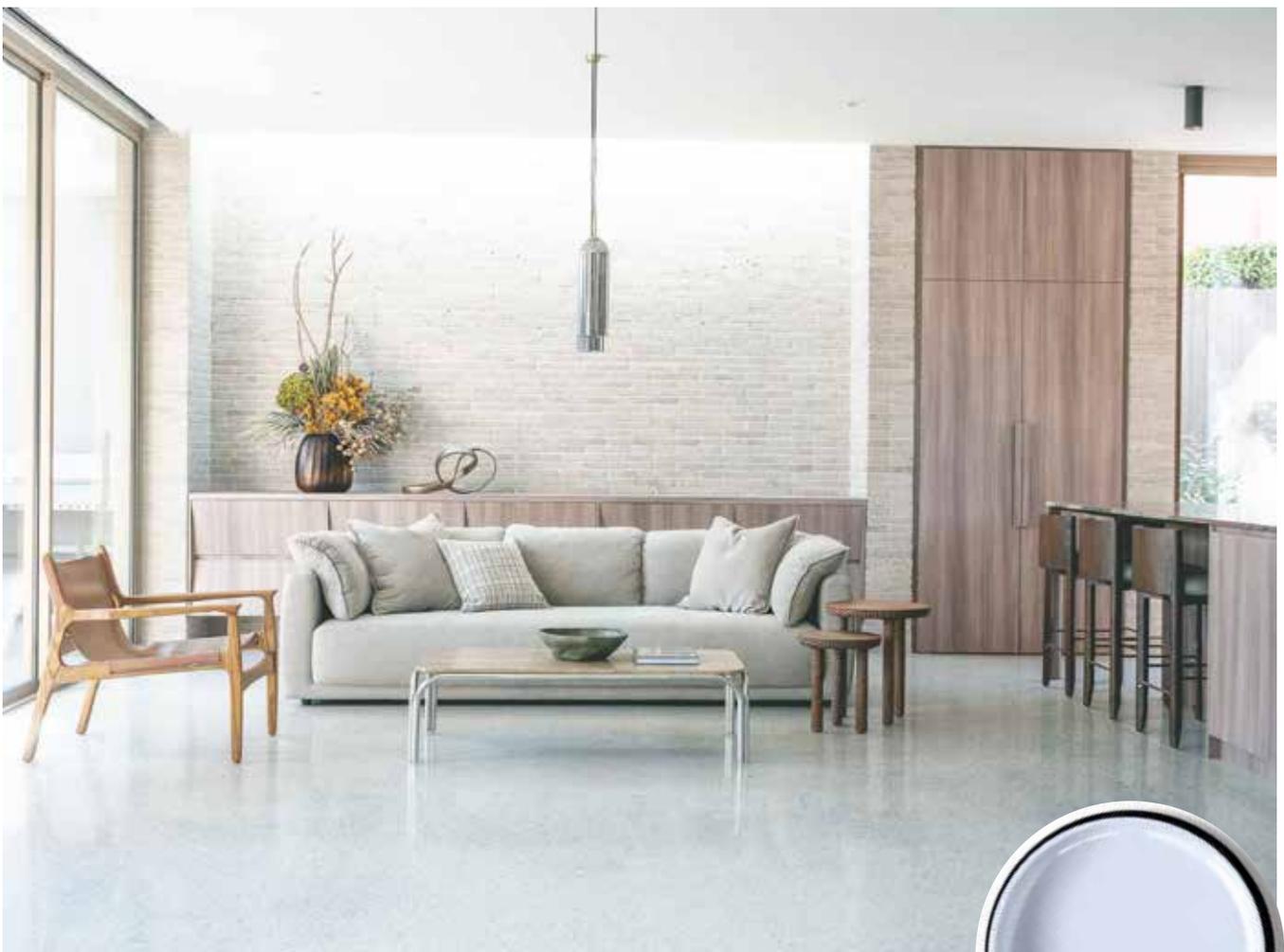


Image: Satara Australia, Loft Sofa, \$6100, 8626170





Above: The OYF team.



Rebuilding Strength and Serenity: My Journey With OYF

In October 2024, I took my first steps into the warm and welcoming community of Oxygen Yoga & Fitness (OYF) Remuera. These steps were particularly significant for me, as they came after five months of recovery from major foot surgery that had drastically limited my ability to run—a passion I had relied on for both physical and mental resilience. At the same time, I was navigating seismic changes in my personal life, including redundancy from a senior television role.

WORDS BY GEORGINA SINCLAIR

It was a period where rebuilding both my physical strength and mental wellbeing became essential. OYF has provided all of this and more, becoming not just a fitness studio but a sanctuary for healing, growth, and connection.

The Philosophy of OYF

OYF is built on three pillars: efficiency, realism, and effectiveness. The studio's use of Far Infrared heat amplifies the impact of every movement, making workouts more efficient than traditional methods. It's realistic approach offers variety—from yoga to high-energy fitness classes—ensuring there's something for everyone. The effectiveness of OYF is evident in the results its members achieve, whether it's weight loss, muscle recovery, improved endurance, or mental clarity. For me personally, OYF has been instrumental in regaining my physical strength while also helping to ease anxiety and improve focus during a challenging time.

From Canada to New Zealand

Nera Fernando is the owner of the OYF Remuera studio, located in the vibrant Ōrākei Bay Village in Auckland. Nera has had a vision of opening her own fitness & wellness space from her teenage years in Canada, which was further strengthened when she studied Strategic Management at the University of Ontario, Canada. However, with moving countries several times and having three young children, this goal seemed a distant dream. Her recent visit to see family back in Canada reminded her of this desire when she encountered and visited an OYF studio with her sisters.

The parent company, Oxygen Yoga & Fitness was founded in Vancouver 2011 by Jen Hamilton. It has now grown throughout Canada and the United States. Inspired by her own transformative experience with OYF in Canada, Nera brought this concept to New Zealand in June 2024. Despite the challenges of building operational processes from scratch and balancing entrepreneurship with young children, Nera's determination and resilience have made OYF Remuera a success. As Nera reflects, "Again, it does feel like there is never a 'right' time, as each stage of life would have its own challenges, so there is never a moment of regret—just a lot of problem solving, ambition, drive, and resilience."



Above: Inside OYF, Ōrākei Bay Village



Above: Nera Fernando, founder & owner of OYF Far Infrared Yoga & Fitness Remuera, Auckland.

What Makes OYF Unique?

OYF stands apart from other fitness studios by combining cutting-edge Far Infrared heat technology with a deeply personal approach to community building. Members are treated as individuals, with instructors and staff taking the time to understand their goals and preferences. The candle-lit studio creates an intimate atmosphere where physical effort is balanced with mindfulness and relaxation. Beyond the classes, regular community events foster connections among members, making OYF more than just a place to work out—it's a space for belonging.

“It does feel like there is never a ‘right’ time as each stage of life has its own challenges, but, there is never a moment of regret, just a lot of problem solving, ambition, drive and resilience”



For me, OYF has been far more than just a place to rebuild physical strength; it has been a lifeline during one of the most challenging periods of my life.

The Benefits of Far Infrared Heat

At the heart of OYF's philosophy is its use of Far Infrared heat therapy, which offers transformative benefits:

Detoxification: Encourages deep sweating to flush out toxins, leaving you feeling revitalized.

Pain Relief: Eases muscle soreness and joint pain while reducing inflammation—a benefit I've experienced first-hand during my post-surgery recovery.

Improved Circulation: Enhances blood flow, delivering oxygen and nutrients to cells for overall vitality.

Weight Loss: Boosts metabolism and calorie burn during workouts.

Stress Reduction: Promotes relaxation and reduces stress hormones for mental clarity.

Skin Purification: Improves skin tone and clarity through detoxification.

Enhanced Immunity: Stimulates white blood cell production to strengthen your immune system.

Better Sleep: The relaxation induced by infrared heat eases tension in muscles and joints, promoting deeper, more restful sleep long after your workout ends. Personally, I thought I was already a good sleeper, but since incorporating OYF into my routine, my sleep has improved dramatically. I now sleep for longer periods in a deeper, more relaxed state, waking up refreshed and rested.

What's Next for OYF?

With plans to open additional studios across New Zealand—including Christchurch in July 2025—OYF is poised to become a nationwide wellness phenomenon. The expansion reflects the growing demand for innovative fitness solutions that prioritise both physical results and mental well-being.

A Community Like No Other

Choosing OYF has been one of the best decisions I've made on my journey to recovery and well-being. It's more than just a fitness studio; it's a community that supports, challenges, and inspires you to become your best self. And as the saying goes, the more you put in, the more you get out. Whether you're rebuilding physical strength, seeking mental resilience, or simply looking for a place to belong, OYF offers the tools and environment to help you thrive. If you're keen to give it a go, Nera has introduced a one-week trial for \$40 that lets you try unlimited classes during that time. This was a great way to see how the mix of classes, community, and atmosphere at OYF fit with what I was looking for. Needless to say, I made the most of that trial week and signed up for more!

Prepare to sweat, feel energised, sleep well, be challenged, be strong, and move to some great music! Your stronger, healthier, and more balanced self is waiting; all you need to do is what I did and take that first step. Because if not now, when?

OYF.fit

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0272120528

A WORLD-BEATING RESULT FOR ACG SCHOOLS

Jannik Sinner's done it, Olivia Rodrigo's done it, even Cristiano Ronaldo's done it! |

WORDS BY CY SINDERSON

They've gone to bed at night only to wake the next morning to find out they're number one in the entire world. Last June, Jannik woke up to be the first ever Italian men's tennis world #1; Olivia opened her eyes to discover her debut single, Driver's License debuted at #1 on the Billboard Hot 100; and Cristiano was greeted one morning to the sunny news he was the world's most followed on Instagram.

NOW TEN KIWI KIDS KNOW THE FEELING TOO!

What an incredible feeling that must be to sit down to your Weetbix at the breakfast table only to learn that right now you're the best in the world! Yet ten Kiwi kids experienced exactly that feeling recently the moment the 2024 Cambridge Assessment International Examinations (CAIE) results came out as they learned they'd taken out a CAIE Top in the World award in their specialist subject.

The Cambridge International Examinations are the global benchmark for academic achievement, with over two million students from 10,000 schools in 160 countries sitting these prestigious exams each year. Despite such intense global competition, these world-beating kids all went to the ACG family of independent schools. ACG Schools had an

awesome year in 2024 with their 10 Top in the World awards being backed up by 15 CAIE Top in New Zealand awards as well as 7 CAIE High Achievement awards too.

A CRACKING YEAR FOR ALL ACG SCHOOLS

This excellence was spread almost as wide as the ACG Schools curriculum too with the Top in the World awards being won in Mathematics, Geography, Classical Studies, Design & Technology, Physical Education, Biology, Psychology, Art & Design and Mandarin Chinese. Plus, the accolades were widespread across the country with seven of these Top in the World awards going to students at ACG Parnell and one each for ACG Strathallan, ACG Sunderland and ACG Tauranga. This also meant every ACG School in New Zealand picked up at least one Top in the World award alongside a Top of New Zealand and/or High Achievement award.

ACG students have consistently distinguished themselves year after year, earning a total of 32 Top in the World, Top in New Zealand, and High Achievement awards—an exceptional feat when you consider that represents nearly one in four of all such awards received by New Zealand students. That's definitely more than

a coincidence - obviously these achievements highlight the strength of ACG's rigorous academic programs and the dedication of both students and educators in achieving world-class success!

OPENING UP PRESTIGIOUS PATHWAYS

This consistent success across multiple levels of the Cambridge curriculum shows just how strong ACG Schools are in nurturing academic talent and preparing students for tertiary education and beyond. ACG's consistent success across a broad spectrum of disciplines with their students excelling in sciences, mathematics, the arts, and humanities. Also reinforcing ACG's reputation for fostering well-rounded scholars well prepared for future academic and professional challenges.

Acing the CAIE exams also paves the way not just for the students' admission to New Zealand universities but for some of the world's other esteemed educational institutions too. Not only have prior CAIE winners been snapped up by Kiwi universities but many students have secured placements at top UK institutions as well; including the University of Cambridge and the University of Oxford. Additionally, Melbourne University, the University of New South Wales, and the University of Auckland remain popular choices for ACG graduates. A growing number of students are also exploring opportunities in the United States, with the school eagerly awaiting upcoming admission results from leading American universities.

A COMMITMENT TO ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

Glenn Andrew, CEO of Inspired Education, the global network of premium schools that ACG Schools is a member of, is over the moon with last year's outstanding results, 'These exceptional achievements reaffirm ACG Schools' dedication to providing a world-class education. Our students' success is a testament to their hard work, the expertise of our educators, and the strength of our academic programs. We are incredibly proud of their accomplishments and the doors they continue to open at top universities worldwide.'

JOINING THE RANKS OF GLOBAL GREATS

Just as Jannik, Olivia and Cristiano woke to world-beating triumphs, ACG Schools' students now know the thrill of rising as global champions—not online or at stadiums, but in classrooms where academic excellence meets relentless dedication. Of course, beating the rest of the world doesn't come easy. But if a student has the will to succeed, ACG Schools have the teachers equally driven to see them reach their goals by fostering their curiosity and meeting their individual needs along the way.

In a time when excellence knows no borders, ACG students are proving that with the right support, determination, and a world-class education, Kiwi kids can reach extraordinary heights.



REFLECTIONS FROM FIRING MYSELF FROM MY OWN BUSINESS

Back in 2014 I took the daunting step of firing myself and stepping away from the day to day running of my business. Accepting my own limitations and relinquishing control was one of the hardest business decisions I have ever made. On balance, it was probably one of my better decisions; however, like most things it had both positive and negative consequences:

POSITIVE

I did not come from a wealthy background; my mum is from the Czech Republic and my dad was a pop singer in the 60s. They taught me kindness, compassion and instilled in me a sense of belief that I could achieve anything (thanks mum and dad!).

One self-limiting belief I had picked up however was around money. I intrinsically wanted to discount and offer things for a low price. This belief held Pure back in the early days and meant we picked up many of the wrong type of customers (who turned out to be unprofitable). By handing over the reigns to someone else, this incorrect belief was made patently obvious and had held the business back.

My core skill set is in thinking and imagining what could be. I can spend hours, in my own head working out different scenarios and the implications of them. One of my biggest weaknesses, however, is the inability to be able to see detail around systems and processes. This became a problem as the business grew; you can't grow a big business without robust, documented systems and processes.

Bringing in someone whose strength was in implementing the detail is one of the reasons we were able to scale the business to over 100 people across 3 different countries. There is no way this would have happened if I stayed in control of the day to day.

Probably also because of my upbringing I am intrinsically soft and extremely loyal. I dislike confrontation and try and naturally see the best in people. Whilst I like this aspect of my personality, it has meant that I am not always the best judge of character and have to navigate some really tricky situations because of it.

One of the first things our new leader did was ban me from interviews. My default is to like everyone, therefore in the interview process my bar was far too low. By banning me from interviews, the team were able to recruit better people and save me the internal conflict of not hiring everyone.

NEGATIVE

Detail is important. Although I may not be a detail person, understanding what is going on and certain elements of the detail is critical in order that there are no surprises. Since appointing people to run the day to day there have been times where we have made mistakes or not provided the service levels I would expect of hope for.

Understanding what is important to know and what I can ignore has improved over the years but remains a challenge.

Sometimes the big picture is the most important aspect of the business. Whilst I naturally think in terms of the big picture, many of the people in our organisation are better at focussing on the detail and their own silo.

Over the years this led to innovation being stifled. I have learnt that ultimately that holistic innovation lies with me. This resulted in me spending 18 months working all hours and paying for expensive specialists to re-imagine the business for a world with AI, evolving AdTech and consumer behaviour. The real hard part has been communicating my vision in a way that the team can implement and run with.

Whilst there is no doubt that it was right to hand over the reigns at Pure, it has not been all unicorns and rainbows. Relinquishing control is hard, making sure that the company operates within my vision and ethos is even harder. On balance, if I could go back, I would do it again, however I would keep a closer eye on some of the detail!



RICHARD CONWAY
FOUNDER & CEO OF
PURE SEO (PURESEO.CO.NZ)

Read his columns at M2WOMAN.COM



WORKING WELL TO LIVE WELL

Let's face it, our calendars are full, our inboxes are fuller, and somewhere in the blur between Zoom calls and WhatsApp pings, the concept of "working well" has quietly slipped out the back door. Enter PEPWorldwide, a global consultancy that's been cutting through the chaos for more than three decades. Their mission? Helping individuals and organisations "work well to live well," not through vague wellness jargon, but with practical, proven tools that turn stress into structure and burnout into breathing room.

At the heart of PEP New Zealand is General Manager Jo McFadden, a leader whose journey has been anything but linear. From sports-focused schooldays and a stint in international conference management to outdoor adventures and ten years as a stay-at-home mum, Jo's path is a masterclass in reinvention. Since joining PEP in 2010 as a coach and facilitator, she's helped shape a uniquely human approach to productivity, one that values empathy, adaptability, and the regular walk around the park mid-meeting.

We talk to Jo about leadership, burnout, the myth of the perfect career path, and why being "Pepped" might just be the answer we've all been looking for.

Let's start with some context, can you take us back on your journey and your purpose?

In high school, I was really sporty, but academics were a struggle. Living with severe dyslexia in a system that wasn't built for neurodiverse learners made things incredibly difficult. I often felt stupid, like my brain didn't work the "right" way. That experience put me off the idea of further education after school, so instead I travelled and worked, seeking out places and people where I felt accepted for who I was.

Eventually, I did end up at university, but with a very different mindset. I was more open-minded and willing to give things a go. I had learned that dyslexia isn't bad- it's just different and that I needed to find my own way of doing things. That perspective, along with the work ethic I

developed, has stuck with me ever since. It's opened doors I never expected.

I've worked in all sorts of roles and organisations - from operations manager to organising events for a global company based in London. I've always been curious and up for a challenge. While I enjoyed every job, none of them ever felt like "the one". For a long time, I saw that as a shortcoming. It seems that the people around me were on clear career paths. But over time, I've come to realise that variety gave me something really valuable: people skills, adaptability, problem-solving skills and a broader way of seeing the world.

Everyone's journey looks different, and I've learned how important it is to embrace your own instead of constantly comparing yourself to others.

Taking ten years out of the workforce to raise our three children was a privilege. It was, without a doubt, the most challenging and rewarding chapter of my life. But returning to work after that time wasn't easy. My confidence was low, and I questioned whether I had anything solid to stand on, career-wise.

So when the opportunity at PEP came up, it was exciting and terrifying at the same time. I didn't feel ready, but I took the leap. What I've since realised is that the foundation I thought I lacked had been building all along - through every job, every challenge, and especially those years raising a family.

The real difference-maker was my ability to connect with people. That skill has proven invaluable in every role. Looking back, the mix of work and life experiences I had, though not conventional, gave me a depth and adaptability I wouldn't trade for anything.

I started PEP as a facilitator and coach, and then as my confidence grew and opportunities presented themselves, I moved into other roles.

During COVID, we pivoted to virtual delivery almost overnight and adapted to the situation like many businesses. It was around that time that our new owners asked me to lead the sales team and then a year later promoted me into the GM role. Having people around you that believe in you is key and I am grateful to the people who mentored me - it's really a game-changer.

When you joined PEP, did things feel like they clicked?

Yes, they did. I've come to love the idea that our so-called imperfections are often the most perfect parts of us. For a long time, I didn't think I belonged in leadership because I didn't have a masters or MBA. But now I'd tell my younger-self: don't chase a title - chase what lights you up. Surround yourself with people who lift you. And don't be afraid to fail. Failure isn't the end - it's just clarity in disguise.

What did your goals look like in those early years?

Honestly, they were simple and heartfelt. I wanted to be present, a loving mum and give my kids a grounded, wholesome upbringing. Sometimes I wondered if I'd left it too late to build a career, like I'd missed the window. But now that my kids are grown, I know this is my time. And I think it's important for leadership stories to include women like me. You don't need to have done one thing your whole life or have a PHD to make an impact.

Does your varied experience now feel like a strength?

Absolutely. At the time, I thought I was falling behind. But now I see that those different roles - and the break to raise a family - gave me breadth. I've worked with all kinds of people and in so many organisations and environments. You absorb what works, and you learn to let go of what doesn't.

I've also stopped being a people pleaser. I can't be everything to everyone, so I focus on what energises me. That 80/20 principle really resonates - if 80% of what you do fills your tank, you're right on track.

I follow my feelings too. If something doesn't feel aligned, I don't force it. Some might say I could've been a GM or CEO years ago. But titles have never motivated me - fulfilment does. Feeling connected, purposeful, like I'm making a difference - that's what drives me.

What does it mean to be "PEPed"?

Being "PEPed" means learning how to work well. It's about leading yourself. We all learn how to do a job, but not how to actually work - you copy others or wing it. PEP gives you principles and teaches you how to batch work, manage calendars and reduce stress. We help people stop taking their inbox to bed with them, and that includes their phone.

PEP isn't rocket science, but it's powerful. Even at CEO level, little tweaks can change a lot. It's about clearing space so you can focus, recognise your priorities, feel in control and be less stressed.

I think I need to be "PEPed".

(Laughs). So many people say that! It really does make a difference, but it's hard to summarise the experience. "PEP is like a professional exhale", as one of our participants recently put it. I love this because it literally creates the space to take a breath and examine how you work and why you do the things you do. People who go through our PEP program often say things like "I feel calmer and more in

control" and "I'm saving two hours a day". We're not therapists, but when you reduce stress, everything shifts.

With all the tech changes for productivity, have the fundamentals changed?

We have seen firsthand the promise that technology will make things better, and it can. But burnout rates in New Zealand have skyrocketed. The volume, velocity and variability of information is overwhelming now. It's 24/7. I think we need to remember that we are human beings, not machines and the human part often gets forgotten.

At PEP, we pair useful tech with good habits. It's not about using every app-it's about using the tools well with purpose. The tools can simplify our lives and create efficiencies, but so many people just aren't taught how to use them well.

I think about how my dad's generation

“Start by writing things down. Your brain isn't meant to store everything. Clearing the mental clutter helps you sleep and breathe better. It really takes a weight off.”

worked. You'd go home, and maybe there'd be a fax in the morning. Now it never stops.

Exactly. You'd go home, and the day was done. Now it feels like we're on a treadmill we can't get off. Focus has become a lost art. At PEP, we help people find their footing again, not just at work, but in life. You're not a machine. If things are working well and you don't make changes, eventually burnout or illness will force you to.

Do you start from the same place with different clients? Are burnout and stress really that universal?

Completely. We work with CEOs, leadership teams, corporates, SMEs and central and local government, and the same patterns show up. People feel isolated in their stress, but they're not alone. Once people feel safe, the stories

start flowing. We help them build systems that support better lives, not just better work. The relief is often really emotional. It's not about perfection. It's about feeling seen and supported.

What are a few tips you'd offer someone starting the PEP journey?

Start by writing things down. Your brain isn't meant to store everything. Clearing the mental clutter helps you sleep and breathe better. It really takes a weight off.

Take a minute each morning to check in with yourself. Where's your stress sitting in your body? What needs attention?

Build in movement - we only get one body, walk in meetings, get outside, a 10-minute walk is better than eating lunch at your desk. If you tell yourself you haven't got time to take a break, that should be your red flag that you need a break.

Find a great coach or mentor. You don't have to do it all alone.

The basics matter too: sleep, sunshine, a good breakfast. My mornings are sacred. They set the tone for my whole day.

Do you still facilitate?

A little and I love it. I also coach and speak to organisations, which really energises me - well maybe even though I still get nervous. Supporting someone to take charge of their work and life never gets old. It's why I do this work.

I still facilitate a bit, and I do some coaching and speaking gigs too. They fill my tank. Helping someone change their life is a buzz. It keeps me going.

Let's talk leadership. Has the definition shifted since 2010?

Absolutely. Leadership isn't about being the loudest or most polished. It's about being consistent, authentic and people-first.

Empathy is essential. We all have it, it just shows up differently depending on our life experience. If you're real with people, they'll trust you. And trust isn't built in big moments - it's built in the small, everyday ones.

You also need to protect your team. Stand by them - have their backs. Own your mistakes. And yes, be decisive-even when you are unsure. Sometimes you'll get it wrong, and that's okay. If you lead with heart and humility, people will walk with you.

What's the best bit of advice you've received along the way?

"Know what you want and know how to ask for it". And if you don't know yet? Start by eliminating what you don't want. That's where the clarity begins.

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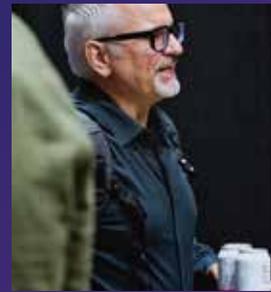
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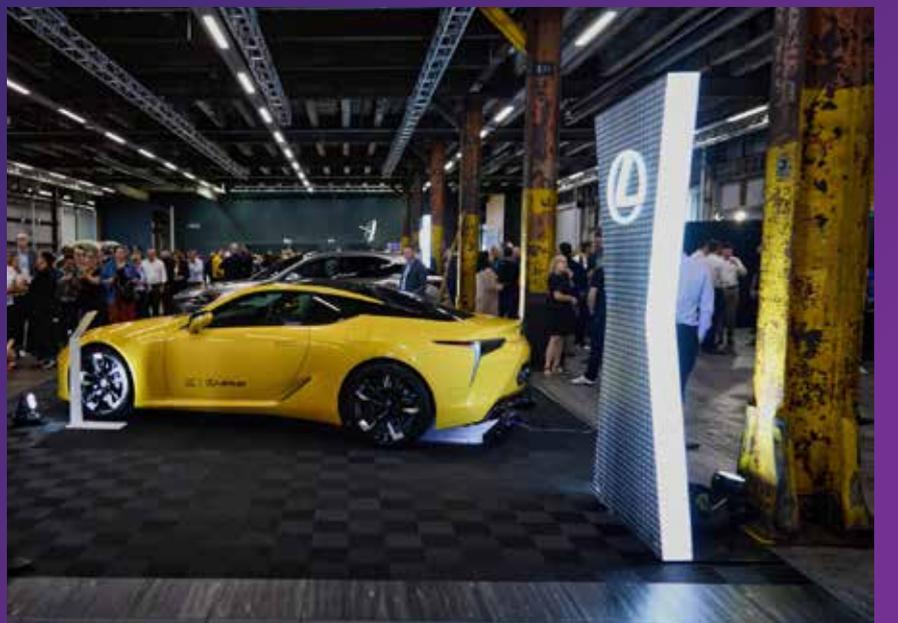
ON THE 30TH OF APRIL THE ANNUAL M2 AI SUMMIT ASSEMBLED 750 PROFESSIONALS FROM AROUND AUCKLAND AND NEW ZEALAND TO MIX, MINGLE, AND MORE IMPORTANTLY LEARN FROM LEADING EXPERTS IN THE EMERGING FIELD OF AI TO SEE HOW THIS NEW TECHNOLOGY COULD HELP GROW THEIR BUSINESS.

The event featured over 10 speakers delivering keynotes, case studies & panel discussions plus on the day quality networking, and hospitality. The day went off without a hitch, and plans are already underway to make the next event even better.

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AI SUMMIT

HOW THE BEST ARE USING AI TO SUCCEED

11 SEPTEMBER 2025, CHRISTCHURCH

29 APRIL 2026, AUCKLAND

THE M2 AI SUMMIT IS AN EVENT THAT BRINGS TOGETHER LEADING FIGURES IN THE MARKET, WHO SHARE THEIR UNIQUE INSIGHTS AND EXPERIENCES ON HOW TO SUCCEED USING AI TO INCREASE PRODUCTIVITY, CUSTOMER RETENTION & GROWTH. THIS EVENT IS A UNIQUE OPPORTUNITY FOR YOU TO LEARN FROM THE BEST IN BUSINESS IN PERSON.

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What sets our events apart is that they provide a balanced perspective to help you make better choices for your business and customers. You will explore the risks, opportunities, and timelines from a strategic business point of view.

The event features over 10 speakers delivering keynotes, case studies & panel discussions plus on the day quality networking, and hospitality. It's a day of immersion that you don't want to miss, hosting your team & clients.



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DAN LIAO, NYAINQËNTANGLHA

This photograph was captured at Lake Namucuo, in Tibet. The photographer noticed a vast crack in the frozen lake's surface stretching towards the distant mountains and decided to camp by the lake, patiently waiting for the morning light.

© Dan Liao, China Mainland, Shortlist, Open Competition, Landscape, 2025 Sony World Photography Awards

THIS IS OUR WORLD



Once again the Sony World Photography Awards are upon us, giving us a glimpse into the incredible place we call earth. The Open Photographer of the Year is being celebrated in London at a gala event, but the entrants are scattered all over the globe, capturing their small corner of it. Over 419,000 images from over 200 countries and territories were submitted to the Awards. Entrants were invited to submit their strongest single images from 2024, and the winners and shortlists represent some of the most arresting photography from the past year.

Xuecheng Liu's Center of the Cosmos got an incredible shot of NYC's iconic Times Square showing the sprawling mass of human ingenuity while others opted to capture the beauty of nature, like Dan Liao's picture of Lake Namucuo in Tibet.

Here are some of our picks from the competition, but look out for the photo awards coming live to a city near you soon.



YOSHIKI KUDO, BLOSSOMS IN A DREAMSCAPE

Image Description: Bathed in soft pink hues, these weeping plum trees in full bloom create a dreamlike atmosphere. Their elegant branches stretch upwards, forming a magical canopy that transports viewers to a serene and otherworldly setting. The delicate petals, scattered across the ground, form a natural carpet that enhances the beauty of the landscape.

Copyright: © Yoshiaki Kudo, Japan, Shortlist, Open Competition, Landscape, 2025 Sony World Photography Awards



VILHELM GUNNARSSON, UNTITLED

The series of 2023–2024 Sundhnúkur eruptions started on 18 December 2023, at the Sundhnúkur crater chain in the Reykjanes volcanic zone, north of Grindavík on Iceland's Reykjanes Peninsula. As of 20 November 2024, seven eruptions had occurred, following a period of intense earthquakes.

© Vilhelm Gunnarsson, Iceland, Shortlist, Open Competition, Landscape, 2025 Sony World Photography Awards



KUNPENG ZHU, A COMET HITS THE EARTH

Comet C/2023 A3 (Tsuchinshan-ATLAS) over the Badain Jaran Desert in Inner Mongolia, China.

Copyright: © KunPeng Zhu, China Mainland, 3rd Place, National Awards, Sony World Photography Awards 2025



XUECHENG LIU, CENTRE OF THE COSMOS

This super-wide aerial view of Times Square in New York City has a resolution of 400 million pixels and a viewing angle equivalent to a 5mm focal length on a full-frame camera.

© Xuecheng Liu, China Mainland, Winner, Open Competition, Architecture, 2025 Sony World Photography Awards



ALESSIO D'ADDATO, THE MONSTER

The Monster Building in Hong Kong, photographed on a night walk.

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HAJIME HIRANO, AKIHABARA

=Image Description: The prototype of today's Akihabara was a gathering of street vendors selling parts for radios. After the late 1950's, during a period of rapid economic growth, Akihabara grew into 'Japan's largest electronics town.' Nowadays, it is famous worldwide for its anime and cosplay culture. With two different faces, we can say Akihabara is a town that embodies an essence of 'Japaneseness.'

Copyright: © Hajime Hirano, Japan, Winner, Open Competition, Lifestyle, 2025 Sony World Photography Awards



KEVIN MOLANO, ON THE TIGHTROPE

Image Description: Suspended between the sky and the earth, Diego Molano, a highline athlete, rests on the slender rope, having traversed nearly 420 metres. Below him lies the 200-metre-deep abyss of Piedra Colgada, and around him, the vastness of Colombia. This image captures the courage needed to walk into the void and the serenity of finding peace in the seemingly impossible.

Copyright: © Kevin Molano, Colombia, Shortlist, Open Competition, Lifestyle, 2025 Sony World Photography Awards



STEFANO RUGGIERO, MARECHIARO

This image is part of a project about the photographer's home city of Naples, Italy, and its relationship with the sea. It was taken on black-and-white film.

© Stefano Ruggiero, Italy, Shortlist, Open Competition, Street Photography, 2025 Sony World Photography Awards



ARUN SAHA, FLOATING MARKET OF MYANMAR

Image Description: Early in the morning, hundreds of vendors come to sell everyday necessities to both local consumers and tourists at Myanmar's Inle Lake. These floating markets are a lifeline for the Inle Lake residents who live far from urban centres.

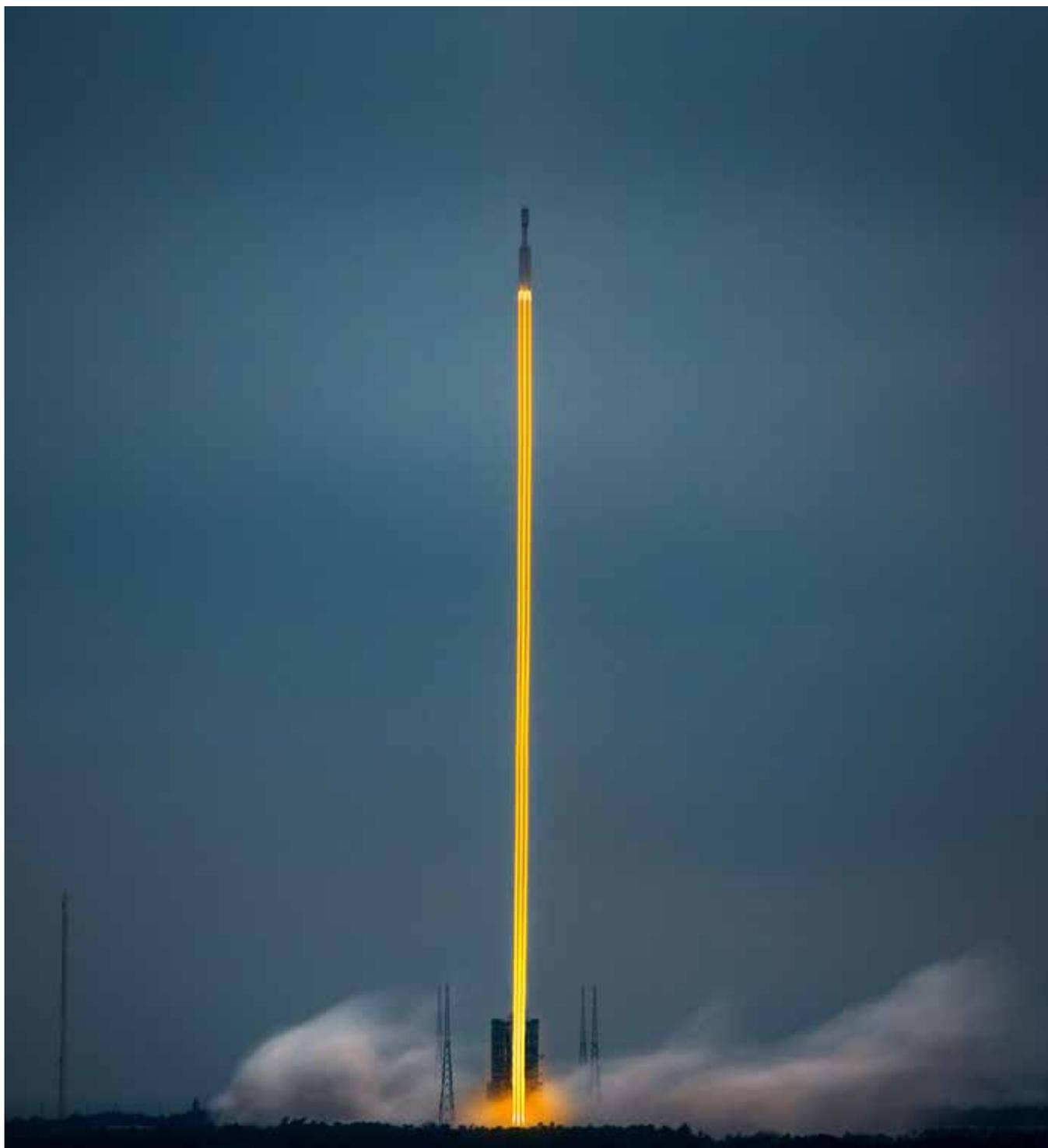
© Arun Saha, India, Shortlist, Open Competition, Travel, 2025 Sony World Photography Awards



KATHRYN MUSSALLEM, WINNER OF THE CRAB DERBY

On the last weekend of August, there is a crab derby in the small seaside vacation town of Birch Bay, USA. People travel from all around to be judged on how many crabs they can catch and how big they are. This was the champion on this particular day.

© Kathryn Mussallem, Canada, Shortlist, Open Competition, Lifestyle, 2025 Sony World Photography Awards



HAO GUO, LAUNCH

'The moment the rocket launched into the sky, our hearts flew.'

© Hao Guo, China Mainland, 1st Place, National Awards, Sony World Photography Awards 2025



KAROLINA JURKIEWICZ, ETERNAL LIGHT, TIMELESS ROCK

The soft rays of the sun envelop Elephant Rock, a majestic rock formation in Saudi Arabia, during a breathtaking sunset. The scene is enriched by the presence of a child running towards the light, adding a sense of wonder and the spirit of exploration.

© Karolina Jurkiewicz, Poland, Shortlist, Open Competition, Travel, 2025 Sony World Photography Awards



ANDREW NEWMAN, HARNESSING POWER

Image Description: Iceland's uniquely active geology is especially suitable for harnessing geothermal energy, and this now produces more than one quarter of the country's total electricity. The remoteness of some of the infrastructure lends itself to artistic compositions such as this one, where the external pipework creates an ideal 'leading line' to the industrial buildings in the background.

© Andrew Newman, United Kingdom, Shortlist, Open Competition, Architecture, 2025 Sony World Photography Awards

GOLFER



DELIVERS
EVERYWHERE

The VW Golf just turned 50! Born in 1974 and now in its 8th generation, it's instantly recognizable. Volkswagen's philosophy of evolutionary refinement has delivered over 35 million units making it Europe's most popular car.

WORDS BY TIM WARREN



The 2025 Golf R elevates the GTI Golf's hot-hatch formula, delivering even greater performance. Powered by a turbocharged 2.0-liter engine producing 245 kW and 420 Nm of torque, it launches from 0 to 100 km/h in a swift 4.6 seconds. This all-wheel-drive powerhouse, coupled with a finely tuned suspension, provides exceptional roadholding and a communicative driving experience.

Visually, the Golf R maintains a subtle yet distinct presence. 19-inch alloy wheels, a slightly lowered stance, and subtle aerodynamic enhancements hint at its performance potential. The interior features bolstered bucket seats, blue accent stitching, and 'R' badging. The digital instrument cluster offers performance-focused displays, including real-time torque distribution. Drive modes, ranging from Eco and Comfort to Sport and Race, are easily accessible via the

steering wheel's 'R' button. Paddle shifters provide precise control over the responsive dual-clutch transmission.

Advanced driver-assistance systems, inherited from the Volkswagen Group's premium brands, include lane-keeping assist and adaptive cruise control. While competent, the lane-keeping assist exhibited occasional inconsistencies on narrow roads, so best thing is to leave them off when there's no centreline. The infotainment system is intuitive, with a mix of touchscreen and physical controls. The ventilated memory seats and wireless phone connectivity were welcome features, though this test model's wireless charger proved unreliable.

Surprise surprise, I managed to have an urgent need for a delivery well out of the city. A drive through Auckland's winding back roads showcased the Golf R's true

capabilities. The all-wheel-drive system and torque vectoring provide exceptional grip and agility, allowing for confident cornering even when the road is dubious. Even on a stretch of gravel road, the Golf R maintained composure, demonstrating the effectiveness of its full-time 4-wheel-drive, it was in its element. The neutral steering feel and minimal torque steer enhance the driving experience no end.

The Golf R's practicality is equally impressive. It comfortably accommodated passengers and cargo, earning praise for its sensible design and color. It's a car that seamlessly transitions from exhilarating back-road drives to everyday family duties. The 2025 Golf R is a remarkable hot hatch that excels in both performance and practicality, as enjoyable to drive as it is easy to live with.





A BUNDLE OF FUN

2025 MINI COOPER S ELECTRIC

The Mini Cooper S Electric is a tiny car that's a ton of fun. Not as small as the original Mini, yet just as much fun and still one of the smallest cars that you can buy. An icon of the 60s, Mini survived many changes of ownership until it found a home with BMW. Cooper is the name synonymous with any fast Mini from the days when John Cooper built Formula One Cars and tuned Minis. This latest Cooper keeps the design cues of the original with lots of round bits and rounded corners while also being dramatically modern, with LED ring headlights and large rims and tires. It's low, it's lively, and it's speedy and easy to maneuver outside. My parents definitely approved, as young adults in the 60s they owned many a Mini - and a yellow Mini is the first car I remember.

Inside the Cooper is very much updated from the original yet has lashings of legacy with a large, round display that is a pleasant relief from the standard 'mine is bigger than yours' rectangles that we see in a lot of electric cars. I'd go as far as saying the display on the Mini is just about the best I've seen. Internal materials are a mix of recycled and environmentally low impact selections that give the Cooper a modern and brisk feel. While the car is small, the passenger compartment leaves you with a pleasing sense of space. Playful touches abound, with the Mini badge turning up occasionally, a fabric swatch as part of the steering wheel, and projections that light up selectively based on the drive mode that you're in. The interior upholstery was a pleasing blue, and while not leather, it felt appropriate. It had more of the refreshing good looks that this car exudes, and it's definitely a bit of a TARDIS - bigger on the inside than on the outs.

I've been loaned this lovely little hyperactive car for a week, and I cannot get enough of it. I look for reasons to drive it. Drive modes are called experiences, with everything from Vivid to Eco. Change experience and the car does a little shimmy and reconfigures itself with new colors and a few sound effects. My favourite is the whoopin' and hollerin' Go-Kart mode. Although mechanically similar to some of the BMW one series from whom it receives a drivetrain control, gear, and driver assistance package, it's got its own distinct character, the fun and zippy feel amplified by the wheels at the corners approach of the layout.



At 160KW/330Nm, the front wheel drive takes 6.7 seconds to get to 100, which doesn't sound fast these days, but it's actually fabulous and just right in this car. It puts a big smile on your face every time you use that electric torque. It's got a good traction control system, and if you accelerate fast, you can hear the wheels scrabbling for grip as it propels you. For a small car, it's a marvel. It's a marvel of a driving experience, and it's a pleasure as an EV because somehow everything about it is easy. This Mini's main job is getting you around town with fun and flair - yet of course it can go further. The 50 kilowatt-hour battery, which gave me somewhat over 300 kilometers of range in my normal driving, but in the right mode will give more. The 10% to 80% fast charge time of 30 minutes means if you did have to charge away from home it wouldn't take you long to top up.

The boot space is small, yet pack it well and you can do a week's shopping for a family of four with this car, just tuck a few things on the parcel tray. If you buy enough for a party you can always put the seats down. You'll want to shop more often than that because with this car, you look for excuses to go driving. It's that much fun in any mode.

Ultimately, the Mini Cooper S Electric delivers an undeniably enjoyable experience. Its ease of use as an EV, combined with its inherently fun and zippy nature, makes it a serious compact contender, especially if you're considering your first electric car. It's a surprisingly practical package wrapped in charisma and fun.



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# THE SILVER BULLET

The Nutribullet is celebrating ten years of good eating and to celebrate foodie Elle Crisp is sharing with us one of her favourite recipes to make with it.

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Elle Crisp is a content creator, twin mum, and the founder of Welle Club and Welle Essentials. Based in Christchurch, New Zealand, she shares life with her husband, Dave, and their two-year-old twins - juggling family, food, and wellness in a way that actually works.

From easy, delicious recipes to little wellness hacks that make a difference, Elle shares the stuff that fits into real life. Whether she's blending up a smoothie, making something her twins might actually eat, or sneaking in a moment of calm, her focus is simple: keep it real, keep it easy, and enjoy every bite!

Find her at @elle_herself



dairy-free, gluten-free

Quick Choccie Pudding

A creamy chocolate pudding with healthy fats!

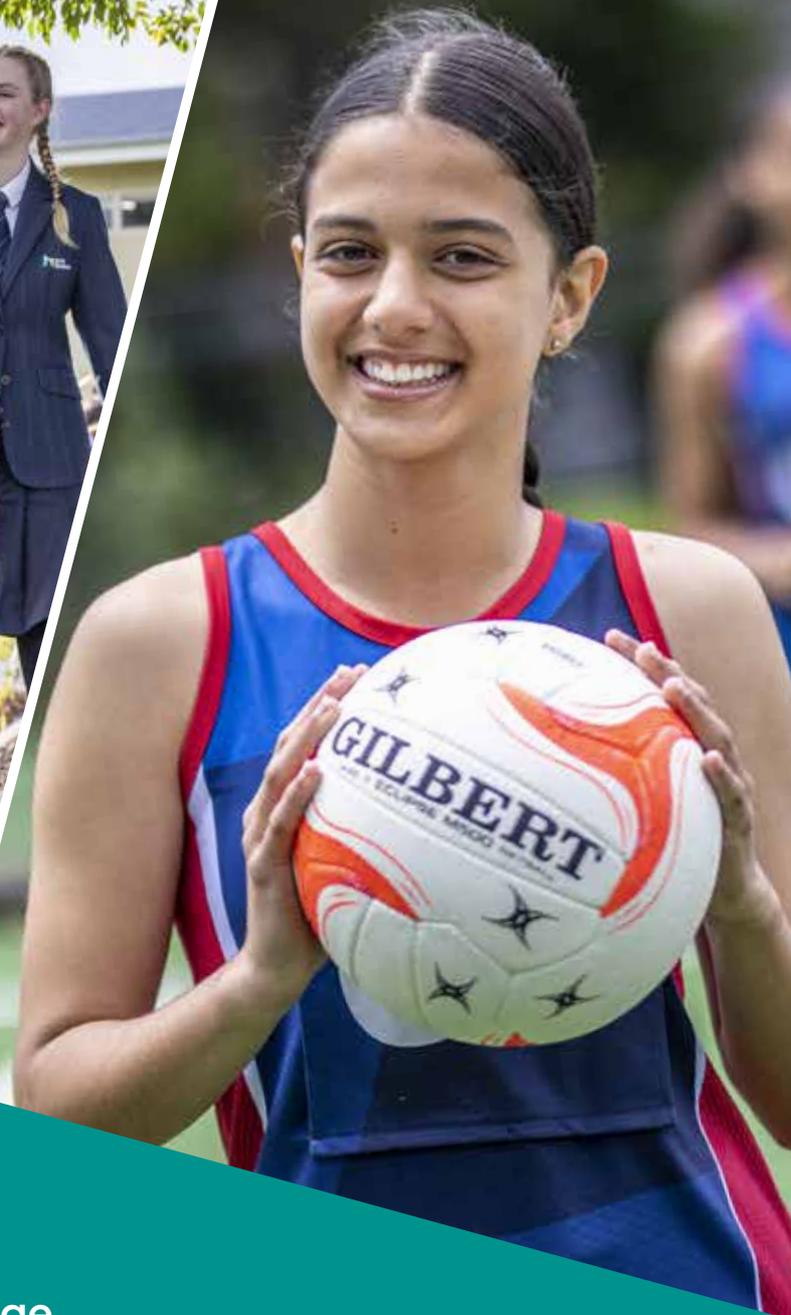
INGREDIENTS (SERVES 2-3)

- 1 ripe avocado
- 1/4 cup canned coconut milk (or unsweetened almond milk)
- 2 tbsp unsweetened cocoa powder
- 2 tbsp maple syrup (or sugar-free maple syrup)
- 1/2 tsp vanilla extract
- Pinch of salt

METHOD:

Blend all ingredients in the NutriBullet until super smooth & creamy. Taste & adjust sweetness if needed. Chill for 20 mins & serve with fresh berries or chocolate shavings.

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That Wanaka Tree

Dad and I are striding along the shoreline of Lake Wānaka. The preceding week, which we spent at the top of the North Island, was blessed with clear blue skies, high temperatures and gentle breezes.

WORDS BY PHILLIPPA HIBBS

But we're on the South Island now, substantially closer to Antarctica, and we're experiencing the magic of the 'southerlies' which blow freezing air up from the icy continent. We grasp our jackets and walk at speed - more for the benefit of the warmth it'll produce than the urgent need to get to our location faster. We're walking 20 minutes in the cold and the wind and the threatening rain...to see a tree.

That Wānaka Tree* is a small willow tree that grows a few metres into the waters of Lake Wānaka. It's a canny little shrub, that's worked out the importance of location. Not particularly remarkable in and of itself, it stands against a backdrop of dramatic mountains that slope down into the waters of the lake. As such, it's the most Instagrammed tree in New Zealand and, for some reason, it attracts hordes of tourists.

Ok, as one of the tourists stridently marching towards said tree, it's disingenuous of me to play the 'for some reason' card. I know exactly why I'm going there. It's because everyone else is going there, and I want to say I've been. I'm also 100% going to photograph it and put the photograph on Instagram. I'll probably pull some kind of ironic face, or put a mildly cynical caption to the post to signal that I am not one of the earnest, silly tourists who've taken time out of their travels to look at a watery shrub

As we crunch along the lakeside gravel, we can see a clump of people in the distance.

"Is that it?" My dad asks. From this distance, you can barely see the tree, but I know those people are standing in roughly the right location, and, even from here, I can see that the crowd are all facing the same way, many with arms raised as they take photos.

"I think so," I reply, and I almost want to apologise that I'm walking my dad towards an iconic tree that is so miniscule we can more easily see people in the distance than the tree itself. I start to feel a bit embarrassed. I'm convinced that when we get there, my dad will take one look at it, internally roll his eyes at what counts as tourism in this country, politely wait while I take photos,** and then brave the freezing 20 minute walk back to the town, where mum has very sensibly decided to stay and peruse the shops. He's from the UK: he's used to Roman ruins, Gothic churches, the London Eye. He travels Europe: he's used to sprawling castles,

towering cathedrals...really big IKEAs. Here I am, offering him a small tree. And I've just remembered. Hasn't That Wānaka Tree had a few branches lopped off recently? I entertain the fact that there's a very real possibility I'm taking my dad to see a highly photographed stump.

When we arrive, I'm relieved to see that it is indeed still (mostly) a tree. It had a few branches sawn off by vandals in 2019, so it's a little skinnier than it's been, but it's still quite beautiful. Cormorants sit on its branches. There's something otherworldly about the way it emerges from the water, the only tree growing out of a shimmering lake surface. But, at the end of the day (and I'm sorry if this is an unpopular opinion), it's just a small, kinda scrawny tree. I turn to my dad to gauge his reaction, and I'm confronted by a sight even more rare and beautiful than a lake tree: him taking his phone out of his pocket and holding it up to take a photo. Until this point, I wasn't fully certain that my dad knew his phone had a camera function.

The truth is, as a European, I find New Zealand tourism a bit weird. The Wānaka Tree illustrates this. Europeans are generally used to tourism revolving around history and architecture, even if we wouldn't necessarily describe it that way. When we're touring, we're generally looking for the big impressive buildings, and the places where important stuff once happened.*** Show us the castles, the pyramids, the ruins. It's like wherever we go, we want to see proof of the humans that have been there before. Where are the people? What have they built? Where's the proof of the stories they left behind?

New Zealand is different. In terms of human habitation, it's one of the youngest countries in the world. Humans arrived here somewhere between the 13th and 14th Century, and the built environment is even younger: NZ's oldest documented building has only recently turned 200. If you want to find the big, impressive (or even just the very old) buildings here, it's going to be a relatively short tour. What we have instead can be divided into two dominant categories: the breathtakingly, significantly stunning; and the frankly weird. We have Aoraki Mount Cook, Mount Taranaki, Franz Josef Glacier, 90 Mile Beach, Tane Mahute, Lake Tekapo. We also have a small tree in a lake, a tiny church, a giant carrot, corrugated iron sheep, and a fence covered in bras. Kiwis understand that we can't really hold

a flame to the beauty and majesty of the natural world. If we're going to create sights of our own, we might as well make them weird as f*ck. Case in point? Huka Prawn Park: 'The Ultimate Prawn Themed Adventure Park.'

As we've travelled around New Zealand, my parents have encountered this wide range of sights with this same magical enthusiasm.**** An ethereal willow tree? Excellent. Enormous fake fruit? Stunning. Aoraki Mount Cook? Majestic. The local branch of Bunnings Warehouse? Exquisite. This approach to the world and all it has to offer has been eye opening and frankly broadening for me. Wherever we've gone and whatever we've done, my parents have found something to be awed, impressed, or entertained by.

As my dad and I return to the main strip of Wānaka shops, the heavens open. Despite the downpour, we spot my mum a little further down the shoreline. She's standing in the rain, taking photos of the lake. I run up to her, all set to tell her she didn't really miss much. Before I get a chance to say anything, she excitedly tells me about the public toilets she's just visited.

"They're like spaceship toilets!" she says. Grabbing her phone from her pocket, she scrolls through dozens of photos of mountains, lakes, pie shops and enormous fruit statues, to locate a video of the interior of the self-locking toilets just down the road. Through the phone, a voice announces that the doors are locked and she has a maximum use time of 10 minutes, before piano music starts to play. When the video ends, mum asks if we'll be driving past the tree on our way out of Wānaka. Could we make a quick stop? She'd really like to see it.

* known on social media as #thatwanakatree - I'm not joking, look it up.

** Even if it's shit, it's going on the gram.

*** The venn diagram between these two things is often just a straight up circle.

**** For my dad, taking a picture is what extreme enthusiasm looks like. This is a man whose highest praise for the pinnacle of cinematic endeavour is the phrase 'good little film, that.'

Find more at: ladyshambles.substack.com

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