



# Takeaways

A newsletter by RICE



## To boogie in Singapore

Many artists have written songs about Singapore, but Leonard Cohen's one stands out for not even mentioning our country by name.

In his 2001 album 'Ten New Songs', Cohen, then 67 years of age, looked back at his illustrious life of making and performing music around the world. Its second-last track 'Boogie Street' details his encounter with a particularly buzzy area of yore. In an interview with writer Allan Showalter, he confirmed that the titular district he wrote about was based on Bugis Street in Singapore. That interview is gone now, but his reflection on his brief time there can be read [here](#).

Being the wistful and articulate poet he was, his song paints a vivid picture of a neighbourhood we wouldn't find now—and it's not just because of how it dates itself, with vendors selling bootleg cassettes and wild parties lining the streets. It's a Singapore that existed before government policies would shape it into the one we see today, for better or worse.

Changes have become par for the course in this town, and we have had no choice but to adapt. This week, we looked at a Singapore that is heading fast into the future, but it gives us pause to think about the people whose livelihoods are changed in the process.

One Singaporean couple is fighting hard to save their kelong, one of four that remain today. Another group of young artists and entrepreneurs have taken over Peace Centre in a final bid to establish their own creative hub before the mall disappears next year. Kak Nina Boo, a drag queen performer we profile, persists as a living—and thriving—memory of a Singaporean nightlife that once existed decades ago.

The temptation to cling to the relics of the past is strong, what with our current circumstances—rising prices and a shrinking job market. But the past is, unfortunately, the past. Now? Singaporeans are making do with the new, and saving what we can.

With 2024 swinging by pretty soon, there's still much to do in this place we call home. Let's boogie.

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*P.S. We've also learnt some of you found your way here through your friends. If you haven't already, **subscribe** to our weekly newsletter today!*

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## Kelong Calling



You read that right: we only have four kelong left in Singapore. For one of them, a couple is giving all they got to keep it around.

Retirees Timothy & Maureen Ng have spent hundreds of thousands of their savings on keeping the lifeblood of their Pulau Ubin kelong, first built in the 1970s, flowing. But their concerns about its future surpass any instinct to protect a financial investment.

**A Singaporean Couple's  
Uphill Battle to  
Save Their Kelong**

## **In Peace, Chaos Thrives**



For the last two decades or so, Peace Centre existed as a hodgepodge hub of small businesses—from countless F&B joints to escape rooms, purveyors of music equipment and kacang putih booths.

Next year, the mall will fade away as part of an en bloc sale that closed two years ago. For now, with most of its old tenants moved out, its units have been taken over by the young—and it's fast become a hotbed of DIY creativity. At least, while it still has some time left.

**Peace Centre:  
A Doomed Mall's Last Hurrah**

## **Singapore Drag's Big Sister**





Kak Nina Boo is a drag queen with fervour and humour... and lots of it.

In Singapore's queer scene, drag queen performances take place every saturday, and Kak Nina is always there. At 56 years old, the name of her game is endurance—and she doesn't have plans on stopping any time soon.

**The Grit and Glamour of a  
56-Year-Old Drag Queen**

**'Bye-onara'**



No matter how the world may change year by year, there will always be spaces where time feels like it stands still.

In Ogimi, a remote village in the Japanese prefecture of Okinawa, the pace of life is envious for us city folk. It's easy to paint this little town as an example of how life could be for us, but it exists because its people have continued to live a life there that's only habitable closer to nature.

It's a striking and beautiful place, and our writer Edoardo paid a visit to tell us what it's like.

**The Secrets to Longevity Hidden  
in Ogimi, a Remote Okinawan  
Village**

## Living with the Fishes



Learning about the lives of kelong owners Timothy & Maureen Ng made us think about the dedication it takes to uphold practices from sea to shore.

A while back, our editor Ilyas—a creature of domestic pleasures, as is most millennials—took a stab at living the life of a fisherman for a day. The results are fascinating.

**I, A Millennial Singaporean,  
Became a Fish Farmer for a  
Week**

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## Short Grains, or *piping-hot topics by the spoonful.*

- A Singaporean Facebook group meant to call out terrible men on dating apps is leaving men feeling uncomfortable. (*via AsiaOne*)
- From Dec 15 to early-Jan 2024, expect longer lines into Johor Bahru: some of its immigration e-gates and bus zone counters will be closed for upgrades. (*via CNA*)



- Singaporeans gather to say goodbye to Lele the Giant Panda before his departure to Chengdu, China. (via *The Straits Times*)
  - Japan's word of the year is 'taxes', thanks to the country's recent escalating cost of living. (via *The Japan Times*)
  - Chihuahua goes viral for choosing an interesting route for its nighttime stroll—the New York interstate highway. (via *CNN*)
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What jobs would you take on to support your child as a single parent?

Naddy\*, a single mother, decided on a less conventional path to support her daughter—sugar dating. Through her story, Naddy sheds light on the misconceptions, triumphs, and trials of being a sugar baby.

**The Sugar Baby Single Mum**

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## **We like to go out! We also hate our weather.**

But as much as our team is full of contradictions, we simply can't go by our weekend without checking out some things. If you're still deciding on where to go, let us highlight some unmissable events for you:



1. Enjoy pleasure, positivity and play at [Durex's 3P party tonight](#). Ice cream by Titus Low and Durex's new line of pleasure devices included.
2. Have a slamming good time at [Graveyard Shift](#), an underground wrestling event organised by local pro-wrestler Dr Gore. In this arena, anyone—and we mean anyone—can take part in the ass-whooping.
3. One of Singapore's most enduring music scenes will celebrate a milestone with [Lion City Hardcore: The Spirit Remains](#), where searing and mosh-ready hardcore bands like Losing End, Radigals, Overthrown and more will perform.
4. [Silent disco](#) under the stars on the Skypark Observation Deck. Vibes.
5. Former Girls Generation member Jessica Jung will grace the Resorts World Ballroom stage this Saturday for her solo concert. Tickets are still available via [Sistic](#).

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