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(mutant\_eye\_4)

THE REBELLIOUS  
REVIVAL OF  
INDIE CINEMA



THE  
WELLNESS  
TIME TAX

A NEW  
BREED OF  
ATHLETE

The

TREND  
REPORT

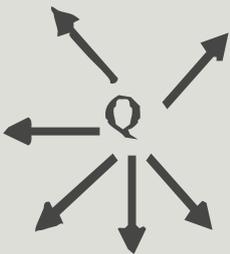
Mutant™

ISSUE 4  
Q1 2026

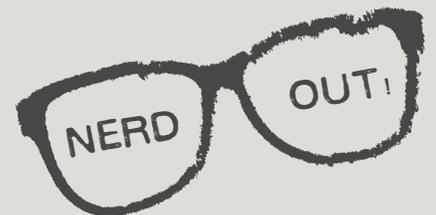
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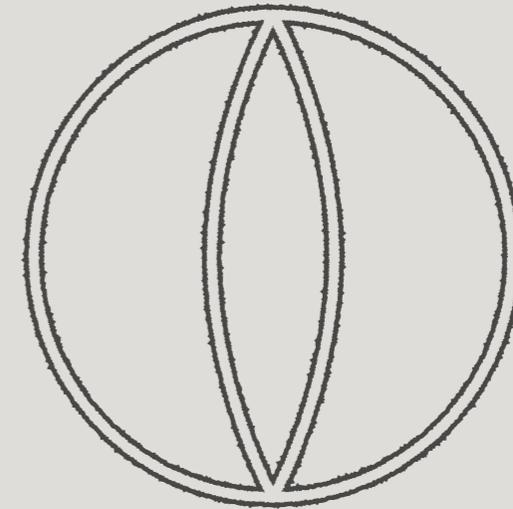
READ YOUR  
FASHION

PLEASE SEE  
REFERENCES



WHEN  
FASHION  
LEVELS UP





**It's time to run!**

**And book a Lagree class!**

**And casually wear a football shirt!**

Whoa, when did we become such jocks? The cult of the body dominated our society in the past few years. But what will happen when we get bored with it? We already ran the marathons. And we already acquired a strong, stable core. And we already saw enough workout routines online. What will be the new frontier of our goal-setting? Welcome to the Nerd Out issue, our take on the world where jocks evolve past the stereotype.

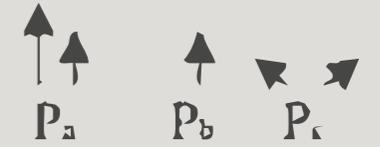
Smart is the new sexy,  
and it's changing brand marketing.

- Aeneas & Jovana,  
Mutant's creative strategists



NERD

OUT!



on the fashion, wellness, sport, tech and advertising of it all

→ 1. THE REBELLIOUS  
REVIVAL OF  
INDIE CINEMA

→ 2. READ YOUR FASHION  
→ 3. A NEW BREED OF ATHLETE

→ 4. WHEN FASHION LEVELS UP  
→ 5. THE WELLNESS TIME TAX

→ 6. PLEASE SEE REFERENCES

# THE REBELLIOUS REVIVAL OF

# INDIE CINEMA

→ As the Manhattan's historic **Cherry Lane Theatre** reopens its doors, the message becomes clear. A new kind of cinematic resistance is forming. It goes beyond blockbuster hits, shining in small independent venues that are reclaiming film as an art form. A24's revived Cherry Lane and filmmaker John Wilson's *Low Cinema* in Ridgewood are just some examples of the growing movement pushing back against IP-driven franchises, AI-generated scripts, and CGI-heavy spectacle.

Across Europe, places like The Garden and The Nickel in London, Il Kino in Berlin, and De Uitkijk in Amsterdam are evolving from cinephile hideouts into cultural hubs. These spaces are not about nostalgia. They represent a shift in how audiences want to experience movies. Fatigued by franchises, viewers are turning away from algorithm-fed content, seeking intentional programming and the human connection that comes from seeing films made for someone, not for everyone.

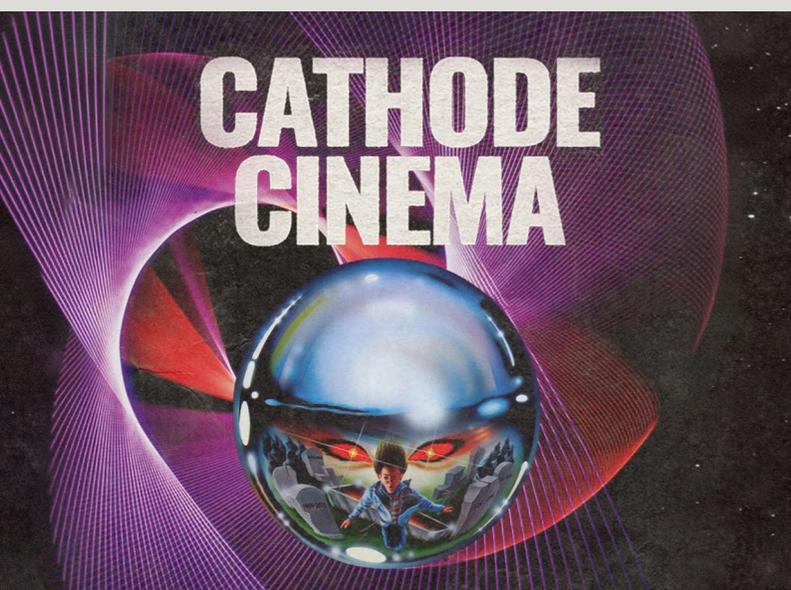


The movement is shaping the online spaces, breathing an air of nostalgia to streaming platforms. **Letterboxd**, with the announcement of its new feature: the **Video Store**, is a prime example. Unlike typical streaming services, the Video Store will not be subscription-based. Instead, it's a pay-per-view model: "just the

films you want, whenever you want". The feature is inspired by the feel of the neighbourhood video store. The platform will consist of shelves, informed by community behaviour and the content will include: festival standouts that haven't yet found wide distribution, previously long-watchlisted films, restored and rediscovered classics and limited-

time "drops". With a subtle film-geek elitism, the rejection of the subscription model and nostalgic embrace of the Blockbuster-style rental experience comes across as a cheeky jab at modern streaming services.

Elsewhere on the Internet, platforms like **Cathode Cinema** are already building loyal communities through curated streams of experimental and overlooked films. Without corporate agendas or algorithms, their programming feels personal, handcrafted, and unmistakably authentic. The tectonic plates of film consumption, dominated by streaming giants, are drifting away and taking a new form.



**This rise of independent cinemas is an important signal. Audiences are demanding intention, curation, and authenticity. These spaces are not just entertainment venues. They are cultural filters that attract communities built on taste rather than cheap thrills.**

**It's a slow goodbye to fast film. But it goes way beyond the big and small screens. It's a mindset shift affected by the political climate. A mindset shift in the way we consume. Trump is explicitly claiming that the trade war is trying to break America's addiction to cheap stuff. The EU is announcing that starting this year, an import tax will be introduced on all packages from China. We're approaching an era where credibility, craftsmanship and purposeful choices will be put on a pedestal with consistent efforts.**

**In a noisier-than-ever media landscape, indie cinema speaks quietly and that's what makes people pay attention.**



## CHERRY LANE THEATRE





<title>

# READ YOUR FASHION

→ The hottest thing you can wear in 2026 isn't a bag or a shoe: it's a fully researched opinion.

This pursuit for knowledge is turning content creators into **infotainers\***, fashion into learning and learning into leisure.





\*infotainer= information + entertainer

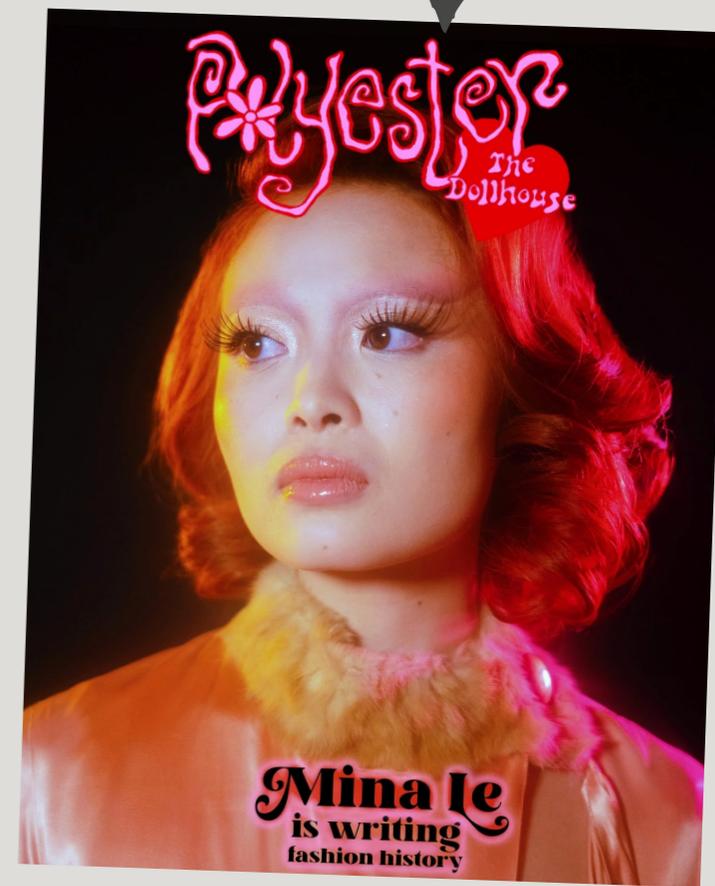
→ One look at TikTok and you'll spot fashion creators posting mini-lectures on style's past and philosophical opinions on style's present. Stylist and influencer @fashionroadman dissected John Galliano's Maison Margiela look for Zendaya at the 2024 Met Gala, tracing its vines and color shifts back to his own Christian Dior spring 1999 couture collection, a thread that sparked







thousands of engagements across X. Creators like **Mandy Lee** or **Mina Le** are turning their fashion videos into social commentary and video essays. It's not about outfits anymore, it's about 90-second history lessons. Their followers aren't just watching. They're pausing, learning, and adding their own footnotes.



→ The rise of blogging through platforms like Substack took this intellectualized take to a next level. Fashion creators on the platform are offering shopping newsletters. Think of them as cultural criticism with buy links.

The highly curated online aesthetics reward homework. Gorpcore bros will side-eye you if you're wearing an Arc'teryx jacket without knowing the difference between Beta (versatile, lightweight all-rounders) and Alpha (alpine-grade, ultra-durable heavyweights) fabrics. Sneaker Twitter can date your Dunks to the exact factory by the tongue tag's texture and stitching details alone. Fashion and beauty trends are starting economic discourse online, with every new trend being marked as "lipstick effect" and "recession indicator". Don't be surprised if you see someone in the comment section of a hairstyling video start explaining why your "clean girl" slicked bun is actually a direct descendant of 1920s finger waves and 1990s heroin chic.









→ Brands encourage fans to keep geeking out. While some iterations, like Dior's book totes, are obvious, other brands honor intellect with a tenderness that begs for analysis. Miu Miu is known for encouraging the librarian-chic look with prescription glasses and studious skirt suits, but their SS26 show is entirely a book reference, inspired by *Women at Work* by Helga Paris, a visual chronicle of 1980s women in their workplaces.

→ Fashion that encourages food for thought goes viral on socials. The Row markets \$1650 t-shirts by saying absolutely nothing, indirectly daring you to write a Substack think-piece about it (and you do).

← Consuming fashion is becoming an intellectual pursuit. A puzzle. A quest for the lore of it all. The future belongs to the brand that makes its customers feel smarter for buying it, because they know the reference, they know the influence, they speak the code. And everyone knows that they've done the homework and read their fashion.



**Basic, anti-intellectualism, and why you want The Row**

Why being basic no longer exists

MORNING AND ELIZAVETA FEDERMESER  
APR 03, 2025

31 6

Share

The Row is one of the few fashion brands that consistently triggers the internet, which is funny considering the brand barely speaks. it doesn't chase virality, it doesn't run circus-level campaigns, and it doesn't bend over backwards to be liked. yet we continuously gather online to psychoanalyse the brand as if we're decoding scripture.

ANOTHER FASHION NEWSLETTER

**The Row vs. The Olsens**

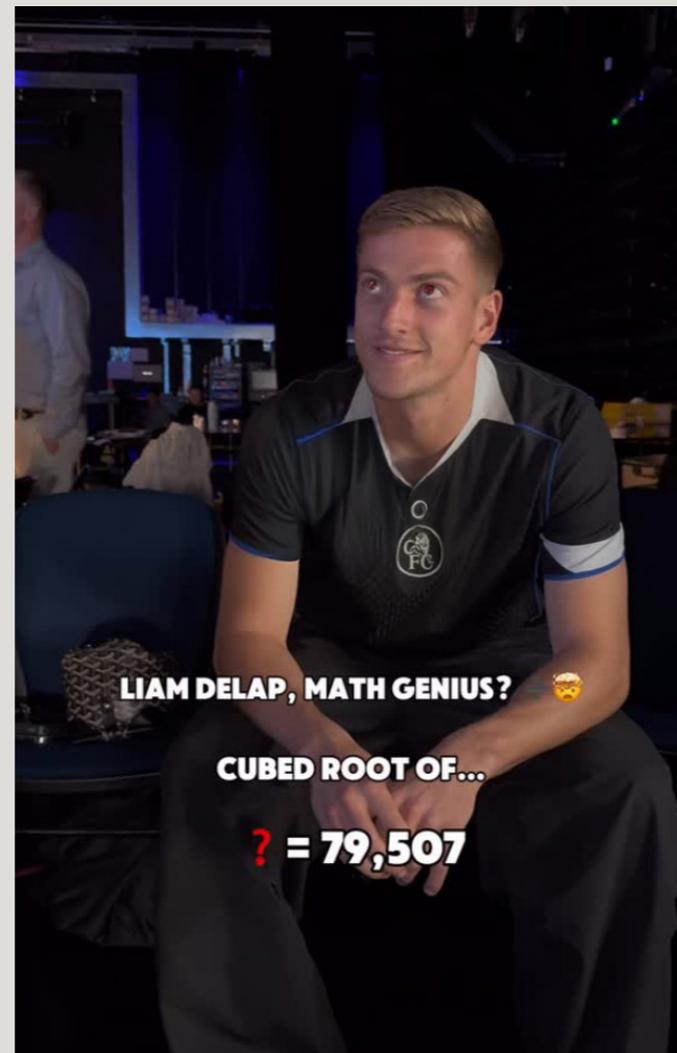
Who would win?

SOGOLE KANE  
JUN 28, 2025 · PAID

# A NEW BREED OF ATHLETE

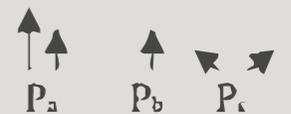
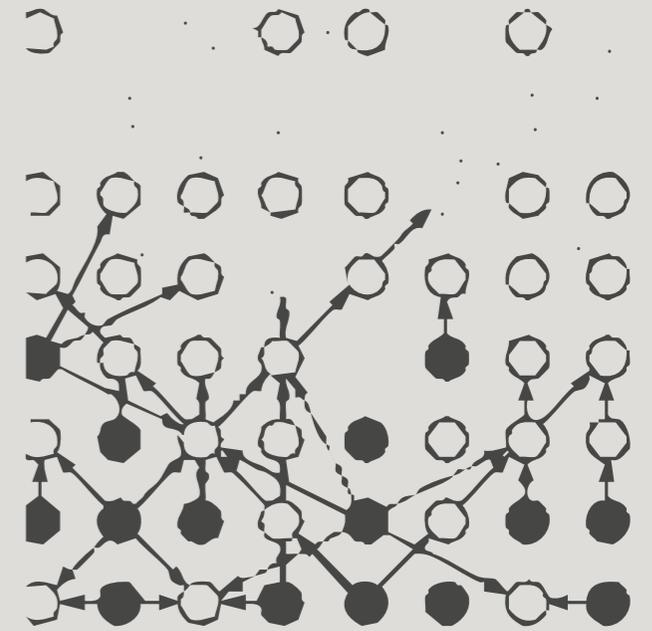
→ A new archetype is emerging in professional sport: athletes who openly embrace their intellectual interests and so-called “nerdy” hobbies. Cincinnati Bengals quarterback Joe Burrow is as comfortable talking about prehistoric fossils as he is breaking down an NFL defense, challenging the old idea of the quarterback as a one-dimensional jock. Chelsea striker Liam Delap recently surprised reporters by solving complex maths problems with ease, a reminder that analytical thinking and spatial intelligence also shape his performance on the pitch.





This shift is showing up in smaller cultural arenas too. Golden State Warriors center Quinten Post recently won the inaugural Chesstival tournament, an event created by retired NBA star Derrick Rose and world chess champion Magnus Carlsen. Their partnership brings mainstream sport and elite strategy together in a single cultural moment. We covered Chesstival in the last issue of Mutant Eye, and its premise continues to grow: a platform that treats chess as both competition and spectacle. Post’s win puts him at the centre of this crossover, proving how athletes are stepping into spaces coded as intellectual, strategic, or niche.

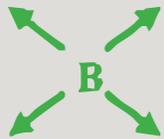




<img src= "Cincinnati\_Bengals\_quarterback\_Joe\_Burrow">

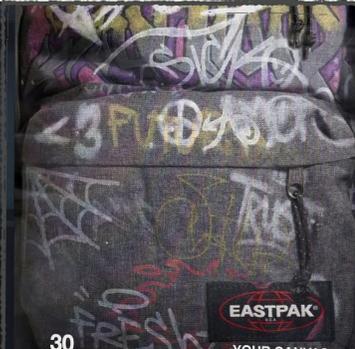
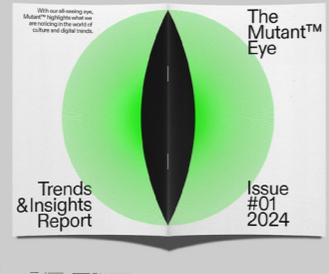


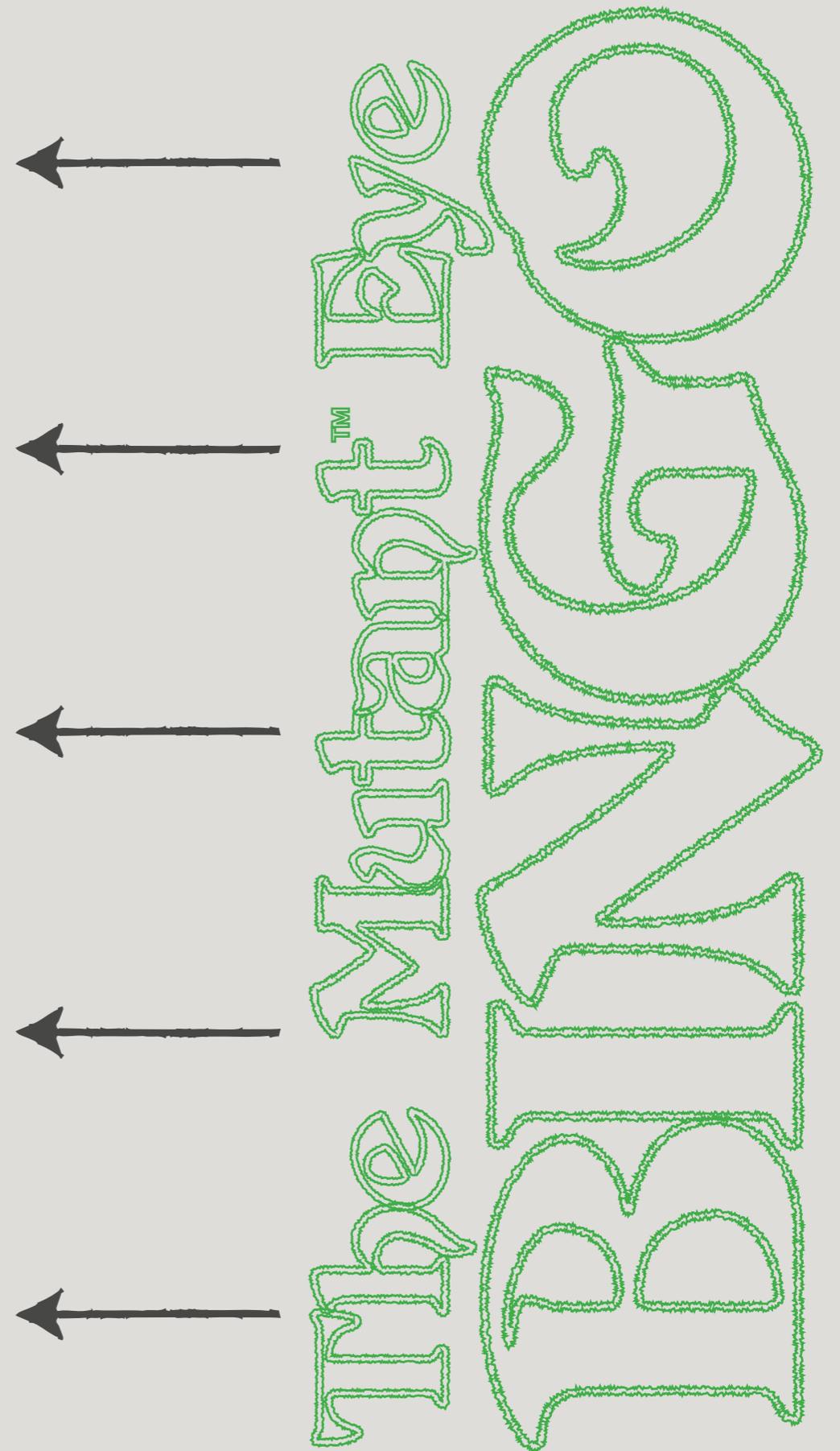
<img src= "Golden\_State\_Warriors\_center\_Quinten\_Post\_winning\_the\_inaugural\_Chesstival\_tournament">



→ Eberechi Eze also reflects this shift. His enthusiasm for chess has become part of his public identity: thoughtful, strategic, and calm under pressure. For many athletes today, these intellectual pursuits are not side quests. They help shape how fans relate to them. Together, these moments show how ideas of athletic masculinity and sports celebrity are changing. The modern athlete is no longer a single-track hero. Intelligence, curiosity, and off-field passions now add depth, relatability, and cultural relevance. Chess games, fossil collections, and maths challenges are not distractions. They reinforce the idea that athletic skill and intellectual curiosity can strengthen each other.

Audiences are gravitating toward athletes who feel multidimensional and human rather than confined to old stereotypes. Collaborating with players who show both physical talent and intellectual personality allows brands to align with a broader cultural movement around curiosity, versatility, and modern identity. The athletes gaining momentum today are the ones who think as sharply as they play, and brands that recognise this will build more credible and meaningful connections with fans.

<p>Micro= influencer on Are.na</p>	<p>E=books are books</p>	<p>*listens to them on 1.5x speed</p>		<p>Uses the term “liminal space” correctly</p>
	<p>Speaks in references</p>	<p>100 diary entries on Letterboxd this year</p>	<p>Attempted Strava art</p>	<p>*keyword “attempted”</p>
<p>Fun facts</p>	<p>Calls their morning routine “self= optimisation”</p>		<p>“Cinema is my third space”</p>	
		<p>Getting back into chess</p>		<p>IYKYK</p>
<p>Proud that they aren't addicted to social media</p>	<p>Addicted to Substack &amp; claims it's not social media</p>		<p>Used ChatGPT for dream analysis</p>	<p>Geeks out on cari.institute/ aesthetics</p>







→ Coperni's FW25 runway looked unusual. In the foreground: models in vinyl coats, translucent layers, AI-powered glasses and Tamagotchi purses blinking at us. In the background: two hundred gamers hunched over glowing keyboards, faces lit the color of aquarium water. Half of the Internet is praising the 90s LAN party inspired spectacle. The other half? Commenting "cringe," "mid," and "touch grass."

The gaming aesthetic in fashion isn't new. It's yet another reiteration of 90s/2000s cyber-nostalgia.

Y2K, techwear, cyberpunk, gorpcore. Every few seasons we rediscover Matrix leather, reflective piping, and cargo pockets. Meanwhile, the real gaming uniform in 2025 remains a black hoodie, sweatpants and overpriced headphones. It looks like they don't care and when they do, they laugh at it.



WHEN  
FASHION  
LEVELS UP

→ Let's be real: gaming has already won the battle for youth culture. Fashion's choice is no longer whether to engage, it's only "how intelligently." But how to conquer this supposedly superior storytelling medium, without the "performative cringe" accusations? How to create collaborations that aren't seen as forgettable cash-grabs, but cultural milestones? Games do what fashion has always claimed to do but increasingly struggles to achieve: create immersive, participatory worlds that people actually want to inhabit for hundreds of hours. It's crucial to understand that Rockstar doesn't need Balenciaga skins to move 40 million copies. It's that fashion needs Rockstar's cultural gravity. When we're talking about gamers, we're talking about billions of people who already understand rarity, identity performance, and seasonal drops.

CE F/W 19 UPDATE

MAJOR UPDATE INFORMATION:

- \* Use EXP points to customize your existence.
- \* Over 100 new items
- \* PVE: What is your footprint in the landfill of experience?
- \* PVP: Battle with Barcodes. Exist in the world of Others.

GENERAL UPDATE INFORMATION:

- \* Credit Crunch 2.0
- \* Card Clash minimized.
- \* Meanwhile Gardens Resurfaced
- \* Vacation Vacation Location
- \* Have We Met B4? (Aromas re-wire neural pathways)
- \* Musical Food added
- \* Ever Slick Re-issue
- \* 5 Bar Reception in Tunnels
- \* NPCs have NCV
- \* Reverse Deja-Vu in Online mode

PLAYER UPDATE INFORMATION:

\* Statistical Abilities

COVERT	Hidden Item Value Perception
DESIRE	Item Value Perception
CONNECTIVITY	Relative Value to Information Gathering and Utilization Systems
VIABILITY	Commodity Fiction Application
PRESCIENCE	Future and Past use Value
PRESENCE	Attention Value divided by number of locations
AFFORDANCE	Value when applied to Secondary Senses

\* Additional Abilities


Each Update or Patch is a new piece of Primary or Secondary Legislation enacted by a municipal authority of user generated data which can contain various ordinances which may address online and off-line issues, fix reported bugs and/or introduce new experiential elements and recalibrate balance concerns.



They don't want their hobbies and lifestyle to turn into an ironic joke; they were functional artifacts designed for a generation that already lives half its life through screens.

Authenticity is no longer about showcasing gamer culture.

It's about giving back to the community. It is about creating products that are actually usable inside the game. Sunglasses that don't work with first-person aim-down-sights get roasted instantly. Bags that clip, jackets that break aim-down-sights, jewelry that turns your avatar bald, those mistakes get ratioed by millions in hours and kill the entire drop.

→ Collaborate with people who actually play.

Make sure that the 3D artist or technical designer ranks Diamond+ in your target game. Partner with top streamers and esports orgs, not celebrities who "like games". Co-design and let their audience take part.

<img src= "Copernis\_Tamagotchi\_inspired\_bags">





GM 2024



Experience the bold identities of GENTLE MONSTER and TEKKEN 8 through memorable pop up spaces in Korea, China, and Japan, featuring an impressive figure of Kazuya amongst replicas of various TEKKEN 8 characters.

INFERNO

Find "INFERNO" accompanied by a custom package that takes the form of Kazuya's signature glove.



→ You do not need to build a metaverse. You need one credible, ownable presence in two or three dominant platforms (Roblox, Fortnite Creative, GTA VI when it launches, and whatever Tencent's next big title is). Depth in two places beats shallow presence in twenty. Games don't need your brand in order to be culturally relevant. It's the other way around. **It's time to learn how to play.**

<img src= "Louis\_Vuitton\_x\_Final\_Fantasy\_XIII\_SS16">



LOUIS VUITTON  
**SERIES 4** A curated series of artwork by JÜRGEN TELLER, BRUCE MCKEE, LIGHTNING by TETSUYA NOMIYA & VF of SQUARE ENIX  
 Sold exclusively in Louis Vuitton stores. #LVXFF FinalFantasy.com

LOUIS VUITTON

# THE WELLNESS TIME TAX

→ The wellness craze just keeps getting bigger. We're turning to science, optimizing routines with gadgets, and incorporating biohacking into our beauty rituals. But, as with most geeky obsessions, the price adds up. We end up paying for it every day.

**Glowing skin, a calm mind, and an optimized life come with a hidden cost: time.** The more we chase wellness, the more hours it takes, until feeling good becomes another job. So what happens when you have no time left?

<img src= "Kim\_K\_the\_patron\_saint\_of\_optimized\_wellness\_routines\_getting\_a\_brain\_scan\_on\_the\_recent\_episode\_of\_her\_show">



→ Take the latest TikTok craze: **vibrating plates**. Just 20 minutes a day promises benefits like lymphatic drainage, bone health, pelvic-floor support, muscle toning, and, of course, the warm glow of being a productive self-care warrior. But don't forget to open up your lymph nodes first with a quick massage and dry brush for maximum effect! You can do it right after your "everything shower" routine, which will require you to exfoliate, double-cleanse, scalp massage, and oil up. Don't forget 10 minutes of red light therapy and a 15-minute gratitude meditation for the gods of wellness that keep creating new gadgets that help humans challenge mortality.



→ The "That Girl" morning ritual, including but not limited to journaling, matcha, Pilates, gratitude practice, tongue-scraping, a round with the ice roller, easily eats three hours before work even starts. These are not fringe behaviors; they are the new normal for anyone signaling that they are taking care of themselves.

**It's an ever-escalating time commitment.** Each new gadget, supplement, or protocol promises a marginal improvement in health or appearance, but the real cost is another 15-45 minutes carved out of an already over-subscribed life.

It's a cruel approach. The people with the most disposable time (or staff) can pay for it without pain. The rest of us either go into time debt, skipping sleep, relationships, or joy, or we opt out and wear the shame of being undisciplined. That's why the next frontier is already knocking on our doors: **selling the time itself.** At the end of the day, the red-light masks and nano-current devices

are explicitly pitched as "get the benefits of 20 minutes instead of an hour in a clinic."

When every minute is accounted for, the only thing left to sell is efficiency. The winning brands won't be the ones who offer the most transformative protocols; they'll be the ones who can deliver the perception of transformation in the smallest possible time window. Designed in a way that compresses our routines instead of making them even more complex.

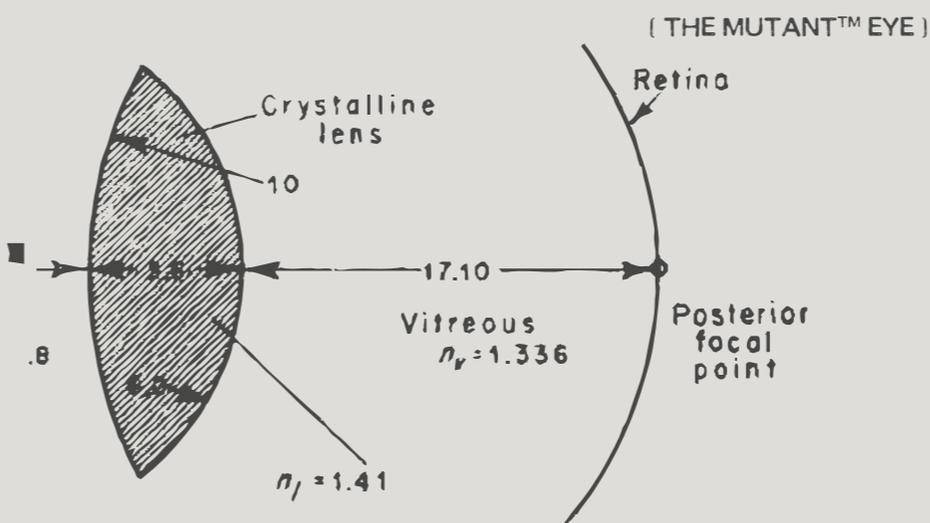


**Selling permission to do less, a minimalist wellness routine.**

Generative AI promised to democratize creativity. Endless designs, campaigns, and visuals generated in seconds have overflowed everything: from Instagram feeds to Vogue pages. Brands are spiraling into an obsession with this new, time-efficient approach, and AI has become the year's favorite marketing buzzword.

Yet, consumers are increasingly opposed to glitchy, soulless AI-generated content. They're quick to dismiss it as slop, cheap, uncanny knock-off creativity that floods the world with a homogenized aesthetic. Brands are consistently facing criticism for AI campaigns riddled with errors and lacking a human spark.

PLEASE  
SEE  
REFERENCES



Of course, such a radical shift in how we consume and create sparked a lot of debate. Philosophical questions started popping up. All over the Internet, people are pondering the role of an artist in this new age. The sacredness of originality. The irony of computers taking over areas of human expression and joy, instead of mundane tasks. So, what happens when brands actively participate in this debate, rather than turning a blind eye in favor of pure efficiency? A counter-movement emerges.

Corneal system      Components      Whole Eye

From cornea

Lens system



<img src= "Vowels\_store\_in\_New\_York\_City" >

Brands used to guard their mood boards like state secrets, terrified that revealing a reference would dilute their originality. But something has flipped. A new generation of brands is opening up the archives. They are turning deliberate exposure into the main event. **Curation became a flex.** It's a strategic response to AI's erosion of originality and craft. And it's rewriting how brands build worlds, loyalty, and legitimacy.

Take Vowels, the luxury streetwear label rooted in Japanese craftsmanship. The brand's New York store presents its clothing alongside rare books, magazines, and ephemera in a Research Library curated by Creative Director Yuki Yagi. Customers can browse archival material, use scanners and printers to copy pages, and take home the same sources that inspire the brand. The references are not kept behind the curtain. They are an open invitation into the creative process.

Marc Jacobs' Gen Z diffusion line Heaven, shaped in part by Creative Director Ava Nirui, uses magazines, albums, books, and collectible objects to build a distinct alt nostalgia universe. Heaven strengthens this world through its IYKYK casting choices, tapping figures like Tara Reid and even M3GAN to signal specific cultural references that its community instantly understands.

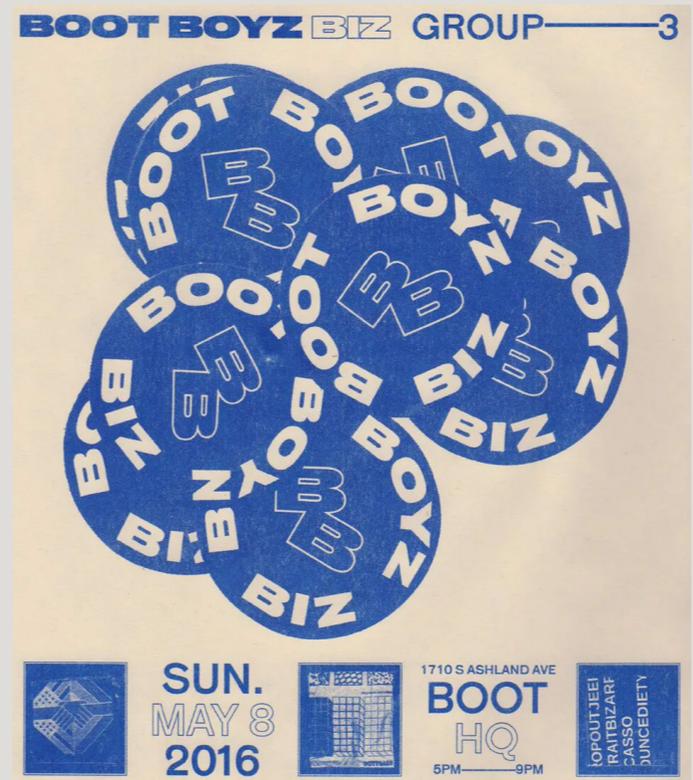


<img src= "Heaven\_ad\_featuring\_M3GAN" >

→ Brain Dead's movie theater, **Brain Dead Studios**, works in a similar way. It operates as a living reference library where leading-edge consumers can experience the films, visuals, and ideas that shape the brand from the inside out.

→ Clothing label **Boot Boyz Biz** takes this even further. Their entire design aesthetic is built around sourcing, citing, and re-contextualizing references.

<img src= "BRAIN\_DEAD\_STUDIOS" >



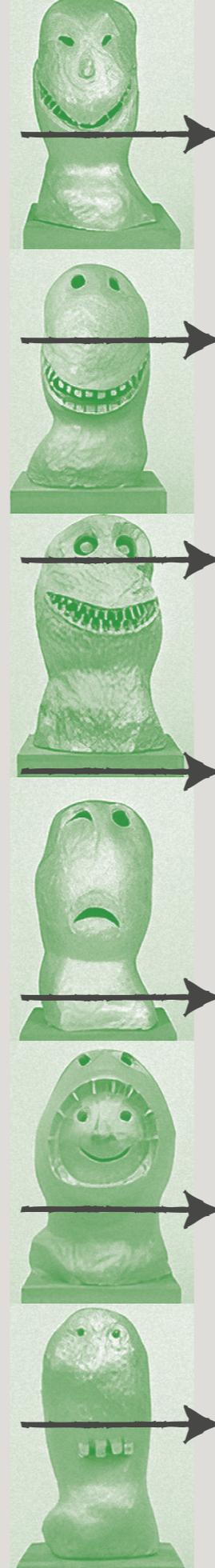
<img src= "BOOT\_BOYZ\_BIZ" >

→ As AI keeps evolving, becoming even faster and harder to spot, consumers will grow more suspicious, raising ethical storms over originality and theft. They will crave proof of humanity. Brands will need to defend their visions, **proving they're really are built on real cultural context and a lived, relatable experience, not just prompt-engineered plagiarism.**



( OPEN CALL )

**!!SHOCKING OPPORTUNITY!!**



( THE MUTANT™ EYE )

**OPEN CALL**

**Mutant™ Biblioteka**

We're looking for creative citizens and free-thinkers interested in creating a Mutant that will be inhabiting the Mutant™ Biblioteka in Amsterdam.

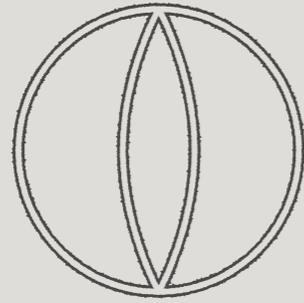
**You get:**  
500 GRAMS OF CLAY  
ZERO RULES  
ONE HOT TAKE

**You make:**  
A MUTANT.

**Suitable for:**

Artists, Designers, Musicians, Visionaries, Accidental geniuses.  
This experiment cannot be undone.

Contact Mutant™ for additional information at [hello@mutant.be](mailto:hello@mutant.be)  
Herengracht 180 1016 BR Amsterdam The Netherlands



**Do you want  
to share a movie  
review, go over some  
brain scan results,  
or watch competitive  
chess with us?  
Let's chat.**

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Mutant™ is an independent, multidisciplinary brand agency known for its audacious style of campaigning and branding. Since our inception in 2019, we've grown to 40+ Mutants operating from our dual hubs in Amsterdam and Antwerp. Led by our Mutant™ Eye philosophy, we create work that builds and solidifies a brand's influence within contemporary culture.

