

## How to Rewrite a Memory

“Now if you’ll just look right here...”. A sudden flash. You blink, wig snatched, and Tommy Lee Jones fills the blank with a new story. Instead of an intergalactic crime, you’ve witnessed a gas leak or a flash of light refracted from Venus. The audience laughs, its absurd, just sci-fi gadgets. Except, there might be more truth to it than you would have expected. *PAGE 12*



## Grok: A Powerful Tool with Profound Social Consequences

When a single billionaire controls both the data source, the AI, and the distribution platform itself, while holding strong political views, it creates an environment where their products act as instruments of influence.

*PAGE 13*



## BIGBANG: Burning Sun, Zero-Coke, and K-Pop’s Double Standard

In a Gangnam nightclub some of South Korea’s most famous male idols joked about drugging women, plotted rapes, and swapped secret sex tapes as if they were trading cards.

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## Under the Streets Part II

The mysterious man had been watching Leo for a while. He was at every one of his fights, always in the front row, observing. He was there when Leo went out for midnight snacks, or when he did his laundry. Always somewhere nearby, standing in the shadows, watching.

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## Crisis in Czech Television: Is Public Broadcasting Losing Its Independence?

Independent, free, and stable media are a core component of the democratic system. And losing Czech Television, as well as Czech Radio, could weaken the nation's democratic system, as well as its alignment with the country’s western partners. *PAGE 2*

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In an era where fans crave genuine racing and transparency, teams must recognise that fairness cannot be turned on and off like a pit limiter. *PAGE 6*

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“These companies have mastered how to attract high achieving, but insecure individuals and created a system that perpetuates itself.” *PAGE 7*

## The Nobel Disease: Infinitesimally Small

Imagination and open-mindedness are the core characteristics of a successful thinker, but they also create the space for unchecked emergence of false beliefs. *PAGE 9*

## Victim or Criminal? The Controversial Case of Gypsy Rose Blanchard

In July 1991, Gypsy Rose Blanchard was born, an American girl who will go down in history as one of the most controversial criminals of our time. *PAGE 3*

## Editors' Note

Dear Readers,

In our last edition of the 2025/2026 season we present you with some of the ongoing wonders of the world. As you've probably realised, the times will always be awful but it is our discernment that may keep us above despair and anarchy.

In this light, please, immerse yourself in the cruel world of political dependence and child exploitation. Let yourself be humbled by the impending doom coming upon us at the hands of AI and its inhumane attempts to become the one with the people. And don't forget to enlighten yourself about the drama behind the vehicles of Formula 1.

When you get bored of the insights on egoistic scientists, sci-fi How-Tos and Harvard kids getting paid for doing nothing, don't forget to check out the next part of our original story – suspense incoming. And if even that doesn't suffice for your depleted attention span, we invite you to lose yourself in runway comebacks, some peculiar properties of language, and the age-old question of whether six hours of sleep is actually enough to survive any of it.

Thank you for reading.

# Crisis in Czech Television: Is Public Broadcasting Losing Its Independence?

Source: tv.seznam.cz

Amidst a live political debate called 'Questions of Václav Moravec' on the 8th of March, its well-known host and journalist, Václav Moravec, announced his departure from Czech Television (ČT). In the weeks since, Moravec's departure has intensified public debate over the broadcaster's objectivity, financial future, stability, and overall direction.

To understand the current state of the broadcaster, it is crucial to first look at its role and mission towards its viewers. As a public service broadcaster, ČT is obliged by law to provide objective, balanced, and accurate news coverage. This model is underpinned by its unique funding system; the television concession fees. These are paid by all households and businesses that own any device television signal receiver, including mobile phones or computers, and are set at 150 Kč per month.

In theory, this type of broadcaster should resist any content-related pressure from interest groups, influential businesspeople or politicians. However, this task could soon become almost impossible to achieve. The scenario is on the table, as the current Czech government is openly speaking about scrapping concession fees altogether, and financing ČT solely from the state's yearly budget.

The current Czech prime minister, Andrej Babiš (ANO), has been advocating for such a change for a long time. ANO made that position clear ahead of the 2025 parliamentary elections, as one of the party's slogans read, 'Vote for cancelling TV and radio fees.'

*"Vote for cancelling TV and radio fees."*

ANO's coalition partner, the far-right Freedom and Direct Democracy party (SPD), has also backed the change in ČT's financing. And in 2025, the two parties criticized the already mentioned fee increase, arguing that the increase would make Czech Television even more biased in favor of the previous government.

After the inauguration of the new government, the coalition's plan to scrap concession fees started to emerge. Based on the government's policy statement, the legislation is to be prepared by the Ministry of Culture. However, this portfolio was handed to the Motorists for Themselves party (AUTO), who did not agree with cancelling the concession fees. Their candidate, singer and political commentator Oto Klempíř, repeatedly stated that he was against such a change. However, a few weeks after taking over the Ministry, Klempíř completely changed his position and aligned with the coalition. From that moment, chaos has become

a clear pattern in the government's steps, especially when it comes to this law. Firstly, the coalition spoke about financing Czech Television solely from the state budget. This law was supposed to be thoroughly debated, prepared, and examined by the Ministry of Culture.

In late March, a group of MPs, led by SPD chairman Tomio Okamura, announced they would propose their own bill. According to them, the legislation should change the fee in a way that would exempt certain groups from paying it. These groups would include elderly people over 75 years of age, young and financially vulnerable individuals, and several others. However, according to Oto Klempíř (AUTO), the Ministry had no idea such a law was being created, saying he was 'not even sure whether or not to vote for it'. Later on, however, he once again made a U-turn, and decided to support the proposal backed by Okamura.

Chaos is not only present on the political scene, but also inside the television itself. Apart from the classic management and directorate, ČT has another crucial, and very controversial, organ. The so-called Czech Television Council is a supervisory body of the medium, which consists of 18 members chosen by the Chamber of Deputies. These councilors are tasked with e.g., appointing and dismissing ČT's director general, approving the television's yearly budget among other duties.

In previous years, this council has been involved in several issues and disputes. Now, several of its members appear to be acting against their initial promise—that is, to protect the public broadcaster and ensure it remains independent. Because Council members are elected by parliament, critics argue that some nominees are chosen less for their independence than for their political alignment. The current composition appears to be more sympathetic to the priorities of Babiš's government.

Some members of ČT's Council, such as Lubomír 'Xaver' Veselý and Pavel Matocha, are well known for their criticism of concession fees and of Czech Television's overall direction. These two, alongside the majority of the council, continue to make controversial statements that are criticized by several managers and commentators inside the television itself. Some critics argue that the Council's conduct has contributed to public doubts about ČT, although public-service media still rank among the country's most trusted news sources. On the other hand, Veselý and other councilors argue that their interventions are aimed at improving the broadcaster and defending the interests of viewers.

Although councilors are not supposed to directly decide on the programming mix, they often tend to intervene in it. In 2024, an investigative



▲ VÁCLAV MORAVEC on *Otázky Václava Moravce*, ČT1

program called '168 Hours' was cancelled by the then director general, Jan Souček. The cancellation of the show, alongside the departure of its host Nora Fridrichová, was caused by the alleged 'violation of ČT's code of conduct, intra-editorial conflicts and communication issues'. Fridrichová and some media commentators, however, suggested that political pressure and hostility from parts of the Council also played a role in the decision. It could be argued that their motivation for this move was the program's repeated uncovering of several controversies tied to Tomio Okamura (SPD), Vojtěch Filip (KSČM) and others.

168 Hours was not the only program criticized by ČT's council. Other programs that faced similar pressure included *Reportéři ČT*, another investigative program which uncovers corruption scandals, or the already mentioned *Otázky Václava Moravce*. The latter had long been criticised by Pavel Matocha and other councillors, mainly for one reason. That is Moravec's unwillingness to invite Tomio Okamura (SPD) onto one of the most popular political discussions in Czechia. Before his March 2026 appearance, Okamura had not appeared on *Otázky Václava Moravce* for years. By that time, he had also become the President of the Chamber of Deputies.

*Critics argue that some nominees are chosen less for their independence than for their political alignment.*

For a long time, Moravec justified his steps by referring to ČT's code of conduct, which states that he must invite representatives of relevant

political parties proportionately, to ensure important political views on topics are represented. This part does not explicitly require party leaders themselves to be invited. On that interpretation, Moravec and his team argued that the program remained within the broadcaster's rules. After his departure, Moravec also said the Council had begun pressuring individual programs through complaints about alleged Code violations, effectively turning itself into a kind of programming body.

However, the Czech Television Council refused to accept this as a valid reason. And in early 2026, its members ordered ČT's current director general, Hynek Chudárek, to resolve the situation. Chudárek thus gave Moravec an ultimatum — Okamura must be invited to 'Questions of Václav Moravec' by the end of February. And Moravec did eventually adhere to this order, hosting Tomio Okamura, and three other politicians, on the 8th of March 2026. And, as mentioned earlier, Moravec announced that he would leave the television right after the debate ended, saying: "Under current circumstances, I can no longer guarantee the independence of editorial work (in OVM)".

Not only the end of hosts like Moravec or Fridrichová, but also the possible future financial situation of Czech Television, can eventually lead to its absolute collapse. Independent, free, and stable media are a core component of the democratic system. And losing Czech Television, as well as Czech Radio, could weaken the nation's democratic system, as well as its alignment with the country's western partners.

Matěj Diviš

# Victim or Criminal? The Controversial Case of Gypsy Rose Blanchard

In July 1991, Gypsy Rose Blanchard was born, an American girl who will go down in history as one of the most controversial criminals of our time. She grew up with her mother, Claudine "Dee Dee" Blanchard, a trained nurse, in Louisiana. When Gypsy was only three months old, her mom was convinced that she had sleep apnea (breathing disorder). However, doctors at the hospital did not find any evidence of this. Over time, Dee Dee self-diagnosed her daughter with a wide range of medical issues from chromosomal disorders to muscular dystrophy, eventually forcing Gypsy to use a walker. A few years later, when Gypsy was around eight years old, Dee Dee sustained a leg injury, which resulted in a two-month hospital stay, while Gypsy was living with her grandfather, who, as later revealed, was abusing her. After the injury, Gypsy and Dee Dee began to participate in sci-fi conventions, which they attended in costumes, making it possible for her to "blend in". Due to her illnesses, sadly, the young girl could not go to school and was moved into homeschooling.

Source: Blanchard family/Wall Street Journal



▲ DEE DEE BLANCHARD with her daughter, Gypsy Rose Blanchard

Gypsy's dad Claude remarried; however, he was still connected to his daughter and even offered her and her mother to move in with him and his new wife Laura. Unfortunately, the situation between Dee Dee and Laura was tense, and eventually escalated to allegations that Laura's food had been poisoned with Roundup weed killer, which significantly worsened her chronic illness. As soon as the relatives started noticing unusual behavior on Dee Dee's side, Dee Dee and Gypsy left and moved to New Orleans.

Because Dee Dee was unable to work and take care of her daughter, they started living in public housing and supported themselves through child-support from Claude and public assistance, which were all linked to Gypsy's medical conditions. After their relocation, they started visiting new doctors who blindly provided Gypsy with all types of treatments, simply based on the documentation Dee Dee provided. Apparently, her daughter started experiencing seizures every now and then, for which she was

prescribed anti-seizure medication. During this period Gypsy underwent surgery, and the hospital lost count of the frequent visitations of the emergency room for every minor ailment.

After Hurricane Katrina in 2005 they were forced to move out, which was the beginning of their rather frequent resettlements, during which time all her medical documentation was lost. In 2008, both ladies moved to Springfield, where they received a special needs home from a Christian nonprofit organization, which was equipped with a wheelchair ramp and many more. Gypsy and Dee Dee started getting some media attention as the story of a single mother with a disabled daughter was drawing people's attention.

Many people who met Gypsy-Rose were charmed by her. Her 5-foot height, nearly toothless mouth, large glasses, and high, childlike voice reinforced the perception that she had the medical problems her mother described. Dee Dee regularly shaved Gypsy's head to mimic the appearance of a chemotherapy patient, allegedly telling her that medication would eventually cause her hair to fall out and that shaving it in advance was easier.

Already in 2007, a pediatric neurologist, Bernardo Flasterstein, started to become suspicious of Gypsy's medical records. He ordered new MRIs and blood tests, which showed a healthy teenager. However, as soon as he told Dee Dee, she decided to stop seeing him. Unfortunately, Flasterstein did not report it to the social services as he wanted nothing to do with this case. The breaking point came in 2009, when an anonymous caller reported Dee Dee to the police, accusing her of using multiple names, birthdates and even mentioned Gypsy's medical records being faked. The police investigated this case but quickly persuaded that it was strictly due to safety reasons to avoid her ex-husband.

In February 2011, at a sci-fi convention, Gypsy tried to escape for the first time with a man named Dan, who she had met online and arranged to meet at the event. In this case, reports vary in terms of Gypsy's real age. Some believe she was only 15, others say she was found to be 19. In this version, Gypsy was planning to run away to Arkansas. She prepared a note for her mother, informing her about her wanting to be independent and going to a friend's house. However, this plan did not work out, as Dan was on parole and was not able to leave the state. After that, Gypsy willingly came back home under the condition that her relationship with Dan could continue. Despite that, the reality was different; Dee Dee smashed her computer and phone. Gypsy also claims to have been starved and handcuffed to the bed. During that time her mother also declared her mentally incompetent,

making Gypsy believe that police would not trust a word, she said.

In June 2011, Gypsy attempted another escape, this time it was by shooting Dee Dee ten times, but the injuries were not severe, making this attempt unsuccessful.

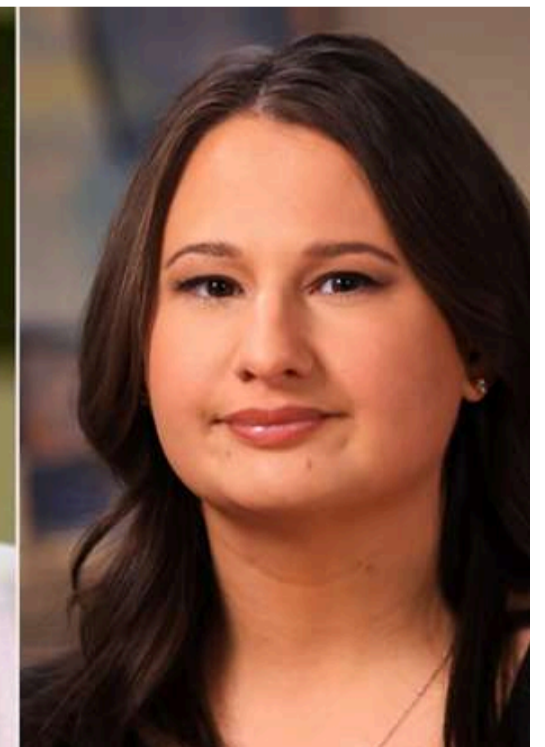
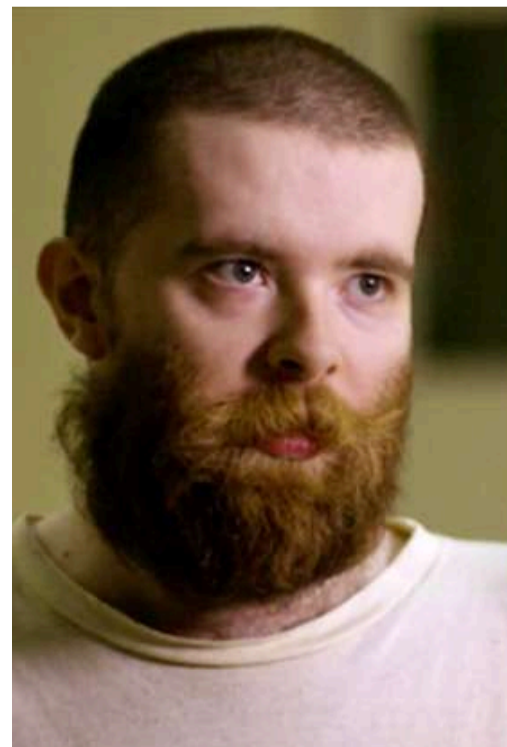
Around 2012, Gypsy befriended Nicholas Godejohn online, who had a history of mental illnesses, supposed dissociative identity disorder, and was diagnosed with an autism spectrum disorder. Their relationship grew and in 2015 they arranged a meeting at the movie theatre, where they progressively started to plan to kill Dee Dee.

Godejohn returned to Springfield in June 2015, to realize their plan. As soon as Dee Dee went to sleep, Nicolas and Gypsy started preparing all the necessary things:- duct tape, gloves and most importantly a knife. Later, Gypsy hid in the bathroom and covered her ears, to avoid hearing her mother scream. Claudine "Dee Dee" Blanchard was stabbed 17 times in her sleep. The responsible couple took \$4, 400 in cash and moved to a motel outside town, where they planned their next steps. After a few days, they came up with a "great" idea to send the murder weapon to Godejohn's home in Wisconsin, to minimize the possibility of being found with it. At that point, both of them believed they had already gotten away with the crime.

*Everyone believed that Gypsy was kidnapped by the killer, however, that belief was quickly refuted.*

After a while of unanswered phone calls, several friends went to Dee Dee's house. Although it was not unusual for a mother and daughter to leave for medical treatments without notice, this time it felt different. Their friends called 911 to get inside the house.

▼ NICK GODEJOHN; Gypsy Rose Blanchard



As soon as they got a warrant, officers found Dee Dee's body. Everyone believed that Gypsy was kidnapped by the killer, however, that belief was quickly refuted. One of the neighbors knew about her boyfriend and easily tracked him based on his IP address. The following day, both killers were arrested.

After the disclosure about how Dee Dee had allegedly treated Gypsy, public sympathy shifted from seeing Dee Dee as a victim of a violent murder to Gypsy as a long-term victim of abuse. Her attorney successfully reduced her charge from first-degree murder into second-degree murder (murder without premeditation), due to her medical state. In July 2016, Gypsy accepted the plea deal and was sentenced to ten years in prison. However, Godejohn's trial was scheduled for November 2018. Due to his participation in the crime, he was sentenced to life in prison, which was later changed to a 25-year sentence.

Following her release, she rapidly gained a strong social media following (9.2 million followers on TikTok and over 979,000 on Instagram), reflecting not only widespread public fascination, but also a collective tendency to interpret her story mostly through a lens of victimhood and emotional identification. This phenomenon leads to a deeper psychological dynamic in which audiences may justify her actions by focusing on the trauma over the crime alone. Consequently, this raises a more unsettling question: to what extent should society normalize, or even support, individuals with criminal histories who publicly justify or laugh at acts of violence against their parents, especially when they are viewed as influencers and actively shape the attitudes, values, and moral boundaries of others?

Gabriela Salata

Source: Oxygen; ABC/Michael Le Brecht II

# BIGBANG: Burning Sun, Zero-Coke, and K-Pop's Double Standard

The scandal did not begin with a puff of marijuana smoke. It began with hidden cameras and group chats in a Gangnam nightclub that exposed a predator's playground. In those logs, some of South Korea's most famous male idols joked about drugging women, plotted rapes, and swapped secret sex tapes as if they were trading cards. Female high-school students were allegedly forced to perform for wealthy clients and told to "act sexy" while older men laughed. The police who were supposed to protect them were instead accused of taking bribes to look the other way. Seven chart-topping stars were arrested on charges ranging from drug possession to group sexual assault. Tens of thousands of women marched outside the presidential Blue House, chanting "rape cartel" and demanding justice in a system stacked against them. Burning Sun was not just a nightclub; it was a crime scene that revealed how fame, money and misogyny could combine to create a machine of exploitation.

Yet in the midst of this horror, the loudest public outrage was directed at a different member of the same boy band—T.O.P, who admitted to smoking marijuana, fainted from an overdose of prescribed sedatives and disappeared from public life. He would spend years in exile for a non-violent drug offence that harmed no one. The scandal that truly mattered laid bare a hidden world of sexual violence; the one that stuck destroyed a career for a drug that is decriminalised in many countries. This contradiction reveals a deeper truth about K-pop fame: image violations are treated as unforgivable, while crimes that brutalise women can be minimised, excused or forgotten.

BIGBANG were not just another boy band; they were one of the groups that built modern K-pop. Formed by YG Entertainment in 2006, the quintet—G-Dragon, T.O.P (Choi Seung-hyun),

Taeyang, Daesung and Seungri—rewrote the idol rulebook by composing their own songs and blending hip-hop swagger with pop hooks. Hits like "Lies," "Haru Haru" and the stadium-rock anthem "Fantastic Baby" dominated Korean charts and earned them legions of fans worldwide. By 2012 they were headlining arenas in the United States and Europe, showing that Korean music could compete on a global scale. They became one of the country's best-selling boy bands and were credited with pioneering K-pop's global boom.

Even during mandatory military service, the members pursued solo projects; T.O.P released the art-rap single "DoomDada" in 2013, while G-Dragon topped charts with avant-garde tracks. Taeyang married and started a family and Daesung opened a YouTube channel. The group's 2022 comeback song "Still Life," recorded after a four-year hiatus, shot to No. 1 across Asia with introspective lyrics.

For many fans BIGBANG represented a rebellious, authentic alternative to manufactured pop – a testament to what could be achieved when idols seized creative control.

That mythology made their fall all the more shocking: one member would drag their name into a scandal built on the exploitation of women, while another would become the symbol of a drug panic.

Then they met reality in early 2019. CCTV footage broadcast by MBC News showed security staff at the Gangnam nightclub called Burning Sun dragging a man into a back room and beating him.

The man, Kim Sang-kyo, said he had intervened to stop a woman from being drugged and molested. Instead of investigating his complaint, police detained Kim, fuelling rumours that the club—run by Yuri Holdings, a company jointly owned by Seungri and

businessman Yoo In-seok—enjoyed protection from powerful allies. Journalists soon obtained KakaoTalk messages in which Seungri and other club executives allegedly arranged prostitutes for foreign investors and bragged about paying off police. Group chats linked to singer Jung Joon-young showed male stars sharing explicit videos of women without consent and joking about rape. In one chat, Jung wrote, "Let's all get together online, hit the strip bar and rape them in the car," to which another man replied, "Our lives are like a movie. We have done so many things that could put us in jail".

*"Let's all get together online, hit the strip bar and rape them in the car,"*

The scandal widened to include allegations of drugging women, sex trafficking, tax evasion and bribery. Financial journalist HaHyun-Ock described it as part of a "triangular mafia" linking celebrities, businessmen and public authorities.

Amid the deluge of revelations were allegations that the club and its associates targeted very young girls. Writer Joo Won Kyu, who spent months interviewing runaways for his book on Gangnam nightlife, told reporters he had seen a girl in sixth grade – about 12 years old – being sold at a club. He said teenage girls were plied with GHB or other drugs and forced to sell sex. While these claims were not tested in court, they underscored a fear that the Burning Sun network was exploiting minors. Other victims were in their late teens and early twenties.

According to a Washington Post commentary, many women who appeared in the illegally filmed videos were in their early twenties and did not know they were being recorded. Vox reported that eight women paid about \$4,800 each were flown to the Philippines to entertain Seungri's investors at his 2017 birthday party and that a woman later testified she believed she had been assaulted by five men after seeing chat-room messages. The picture that emerged was not of consensual adult partying but of a system where women were commodities.

Public reaction was visceral. Thousands of women rallied outside the presidential Blue House holding signs that read "rape cartel," demanding systemic reform. The protests drew on a broader feminist movement that had already been campaigning against hidden-camera abuse and lenient sentences for sexual crimes. Activists linked Burning Sun to earlier tragedies, such as the 2009 death of actress Jang Ja-yeon, who left letters naming men who had allegedly forced her into sexual acts. They argued that South



▲ TOP SPOT – ANOTHER DIMENSION, Ne

Korean society rarely takes sexual violence seriously and that the male-dominated justice system was more focused on protecting the elite than safeguarding victims. The scandal only gained traction after a male victim – Kim Sang-kyo – spoke up; women's testimonies alone might not have sufficed.

For many, Burning Sun was proof that the justice system and media are biased in favour of men. The protests forced President Moon Jae-in to order investigations into police collusion and cover-ups across multiple club districts. At the centre of the Burning Sun saga was Seungri, the youngest member of BIGBANG and the public face of Yuri Holdings. Prosecutors alleged that he arranged sex workers for Japanese and Taiwanese investors in 2015 and misappropriated club funds. He was also accused of gambling in Las Vegas and violating foreign-exchange laws, with gambling debts totalling about 2.2 billion won. A military court initially sentenced him to three years in prison in August 2021, but a higher court reduced the term to 18 months after he admitted guilt and paid restitution; the Supreme Court finalised the sentence in May 2022, and Seungri was released from Yeosu Prison in February 2023. He was convicted on nine counts, including arranging sex trafficking, embezzlement, habitual gambling, and foreign-exchange violations.

However, Seungri was not alone. Singer Jung Joon-young and former FT Island musician Choi Jong-hoon were convicted of gang raping an unconscious woman and distributing sex videos; Jung received six years and Choi five, sentences later reduced on appeal. Other chat-room participants, including members of the bands Highlight and CNBLUE, admitted to viewing illegal footage and left their groups. Despite the grave nature of the crimes—secret recordings, group rape and human trafficking—many sentences were



▲ FORMER BIG BANG BOYBAND MEMBER SEUNGRI, centre, real name Lee Seung-hyun, leaves the High Court in Seoul in May

Source: T.O.P. Spot 'DESPERADO'



Album by T.O.P. after his years long hiatus

reflects the enduring stigma he faces at home.

While investigators were unravelling the Burning Sun network, another BIGBANG member had already become a pariah for a very different reason. In June 2017 the Seoul Central District Court found T.O.P guilty of smoking cannabis. He admitted to consuming the drug (illegal in South Korea) with a trainee singer in October 2016 four times with a trainee singer. The judge warned that drug offences could “have negative effects on society as a whole,” but acknowledged that T.O.P had no prior convictions and expressed remorse. The court therefore sentenced him to 10 months in prison, suspended for two years, and fined him 12,000 won. In other words, he would only serve time if he offended again.

Despite this lenient legal outcome, the public reaction was unforgiving. T.O.P was immediately removed from his military police band; KBS banned him from broadcasts; and he became a target of tabloid shaming. Days after his indictment, he was found unconscious in his police barracks after overdosing on prescribed anxiety medication. He was taken to intensive care, regained consciousness, and later apologised to fans in a handwritten letter, saying he felt “deep embarrassment” and deserved any punishment.

The scandal effectively ended his career. For nearly a decade, he lived almost entirely out of the public eye, focusing on music and recovery. In interviews, T.O.P said he spent the time grappling with guilt, anxiety and the pressure of perfection expected of idols. Although he was not imprisoned, he described feeling as though he had been “completely cut off from the public” and emphasised that his exile was self-imposed to avoid burdening BIGBANG. Unlike his bandmate, he was not accused of harming anyone; his crime was using a drug that many countries have decriminalised. Yet the social consequences were harsher and longer-lasting than those faced by men convicted of sex crimes.

T.O.P’s unlikely return began in 2024 when Netflix announced that he had been cast in Squid Game Season 2. He played Thanos, an eccentric rapper who is described as a “loose cannon”—a man-child under the influence of powerful drugs, with wild mood swings and no regard for consequences. To prepare, T.O.P researched how addicts behave and worked with director Hwang to create a character whose English was clumsy and whose raps were intentionally cringeworthy. Crucially, he saw the role as an opportunity to confront his own past. “When I encountered this character, I had to come face to face with my own mistakes,” he told Awards Focus. “By making fun of them through Thanos, I was able to reflect and move forward”. The performance required him to turn personal shame into dark comedy, turning Thanos not into a villain but into a pathetic figure whose chaotic energy disguised deeper pain. It resonated: fans who had been silent

since 2017 flooded social media with memes praising his scenes.

He channelled that goodwill into art. On April 3, 2026, T.O.P released his first full-length solo album, *Another Dimension*. He revealed that he had been crafting the album for nearly a decade and described it as an attempt to organise his past self and cross into a new chapter. BIGBANG members G-Dragon and Taeyang publicly liked posts about the album, signalling support despite his departure from the group. T.O.P explained that he chose not to rejoin BIGBANG partly out of pride and partly to avoid weighing down the others; he wanted his redemption to stand apart from the band that had made him famous.

The juxtaposition between Seungri and T.O.P exposes a profound moral dissonance in K-pop. One man orchestrated prostitution and profited from a business that facilitated sexual crimes; yet eventually returned quietly to his private life after serving a few years.

The other – whose offence harmed no one – was effectively exiled. Even after his return, some Koreans continue to view him as a cautionary tale about deviance.

Drug use is a serious offence under Korean law, but to many outside observers it pales in comparison with violence against women. Marijuana is decriminalised or legalised in parts of North America and Europe. Even countries with strict drug laws rarely treat cannabis as more socially toxic than sexual assault. In South Korea, however, drug use is associated with moral corruption.

We should question why the entertainment industry and public morality ration outrage in ways that seem disconnected from harm. If K-pop’s image is built on spotless idol personas, perhaps anything that threatens that myth becomes unforgivable, regardless of whether anyone was hurt. Meanwhile, crimes that contradict the industry’s sexist underbelly are easier to downplay. By treating drug use as a character flaw and sexual violence as an unfortunate misstep, Korean society reveals what it truly fears: not harm but the tarnishing of a carefully managed brand.

*Korean society reveals what it truly fears: not harm but the tarnishing of a carefully managed brand.*

BIGBANG’s story is not just about one band’s downfall; it reveals the fault lines of Korean celebrity culture. The group helped export Korean music to the world, but its legacy now includes burning scandals and moral contradictions. But their story is not over. G-Dragon, Taeyang and Daesung continue to perform; they headlined Coachella in April 2026 and plan a world tour to mark their 20th anniversary. T.O.P has redefined himself with *Another Dimension*.

Seungri, for now, remains outside the music industry but continues to make headlines for his business dealings and remarks.

What can be learned from the BurningSun scandal and its aftermath? First, that celebrity culture often turns legal cases into morality tales, imposing punishments that have little to do with the law. Second, that South Korea’s justice system still struggles to treat sexual violence with seriousness. Sentences for gang rape and illicit filming were reduced on appeal, and the men involved will likely live comfortable lives. Third, that public shame is distributed selectively. T.O.P’s case underscores how a non-violent drug offence can carry a harsher social penalty than crimes involving real victims.

This is not unique to Korea – Western media also often fixates on drug use while overlooking abuse – but the BurningSun scandal brings the contradiction into stark relief. The result is a moral double bind. It is easy to enjoy the music and performances BIGBANG and its contemporaries continue to deliver; it is harder to confront the structures that allowed exploitation to flourish. Holding both truths at once – the joy of the art and the anger at the harm – may be the only way to honour the victims and push for change.

If there is any positive lesson in this mess, it is the power of public outcry. Women’s protests pushed the government to investigate Burning Sun and spurred conversations about consent, misogyny and corruption.

Global attention on Prince Group’s crimes led to cross-border raids, indictments and billions of dollars in seizures. Artists like T.O.P have used their second chance to speak about their mistakes and the dangers of drug abuse. But real change will require the industry to care as much about protecting people as it does about protecting images. Until then, the moral equation that ignited Burning Sun will continue to haunt K-pop—a fallen empire still grappling with what it values most.

In the end, perhaps the most tragic thing about BIGBANG is that their legacy now exists in fragments. There is the legendary group that changed K-pop forever, the artists who made imperfection feel charismatic, and the voices that soundtracked an entire generation. T.O.P’s absence sits at the centre of that fracture. A quiet farewell feels fitting for a group whose ending was never clean. Still, for many fans, his loss remains one of the most painful parts of BIGBANG’s unraveling. We will miss him not because the past can be restored, but because his presence was part of what made BIGBANG feel complete. What remains now is not the myth of untouchable idols, but a cautionary story about what happens when an industry protects image more fiercely than people.

Rozálie Slámová

## Papaya Rules: When Team Orders Backfire

In the closing laps of last year's Italian Grand Prix, Oscar Piastri was asked to do something most competitive drivers would find unthinkable: relinquish a hard-won position to his own teammate. Moments earlier the Australian had used a well-timed pit stop to jump ahead of Lando Norris after the Briton's crew fumbled a wheel change. "Is a slow pit stop part of racing?" he asked over the radio in disbelief. The answer, according to the McLaren pit wall, was no; Piastri moved aside and Norris reclaimed second place. That radio exchange sums up the problem many fans have with McLaren's so-called "Papaya Rules".

For those not steeped in Formula 1 jargon, team orders are instructions from a team to its drivers that dictate how they should race against each other. Teams usually invoke them to avoid collisions, preserve tyres, or maximise points. McLaren gave its own codified version a catchy name: the Papaya Rules, named after the orange hue of its cars.

Maintaining trust requires fairness, not just the appearance of fairness.

Let's look at the Italian Grand Prix moment. Piastri had fallen behind Norris in qualifying and spent most of the race in third place, nursing his tyres. That was until the sunbaked asphalt of the Autodromo Nazionale witnessed a 5.9-second tyre change that dropped teammate Lando Norris behind him, letting Piastri advance to second place. The undercut was legal and earned on merit, but the team considered it an unintended consequence of deviating from the usual pit order. Piastri was told to move aside as soon as possible, and the Australian asked whether it was truly necessary to give the place back.

"There were clearly valid reasons," he said afterwards, acknowledging that Norris had been ahead all weekend, but he added that "there's just some things we need to discuss". When Norris's slow pit stop let Piastri emerge ahead, McLaren's justification was that because Norris had deferred the undercut to protect himself from

and that Norris had taken responsibility, but whatever punishment existed remained private. Those two examples would be enough to raise eyebrows, but the pattern continued.

Even when stewards, rather than McLaren, penalised Piastri, the Papaya framework still seemed to work against him. At the British Grand Prix he led through heavy rain and a safety-car period. When the lights on the safety car were extinguished he braked hard — pressing 59.2 psi and slowing from 218 kph to 52 kph, according to telemetry — to avoid running into Verstappen. The stewards deemed that "erratic braking" and handed him a ten-second penalty that dropped him behind Norris at the pit stops. Over the radio, Piastri asked if McLaren might switch the cars back once the penalty had been applied. "I thought I would ask the question," he said, later acknowledging he knew the answer would be no. When Norris had been delayed by a slow pit stop at Monza, the team had intervened to restore order; when Piastri was slowed by a harsh penalty at Silverstone, the team let the race play out. Stella admitted the penalty was harsh, but said McLaren could not override the stewards' decision. For many fans, the juxtaposition was yet another piece of evidence of Piastri being asked to take one for the team.

Perhaps the biggest source of frustration is that Piastri has generally complied without fuss. At the 2024 Hungarian Grand Prix, he secured his maiden win after Norris eventually obeyed a team order to let him through, but only after a tense radio exchange in which Norris muttered "well, you should have pitted him first" and was told "you're going to need Oscar and the team" if he wanted to win the championship. Later that year, Piastri handed Norris a sprint-race victory in Brazil without complaint, a gesture both drivers acknowledged was partly about preserving harmony in a title fight. His restraint has allowed McLaren to maintain a veneer of equality, yet it has also exposed how much trust is being asked of him.

Context matters. Norris, for his part, is McLaren's longest-serving driver and delivered the team's first wins since the lean years. It is understandable that the team sees him as the best chance at the drivers' title. Early in their partnership, the roles were even reversed: at the 2024 Hungarian Grand Prix, Norris reluctantly moved aside to give Piastri his maiden victory after being reminded over the radio that he would need his teammate's help later in the year. Piastri later returned the favour, yielding a sprint win in Brazil without complaint. There is a genuine camaraderie between them. Norris apologised after hitting Piastri in Canada and took the blame. The Papaya Rules were conceived to preserve that

harmony while still giving McLaren the best chance to beat Red Bull and Ferrari. That context offers a plausible defence: McLaren is merely doing what Red Bull did with Sebastian Vettel and Mark Webber or what Ferrari did with Michael Schumacher and Rubens Barrichello, prioritising the driver most likely to bring home the title. But McLaren also wants to be seen as different. Stella has argued repeatedly that the team does not want to designate a number one and a number two and that equal opportunity is part of its culture. By promising fairness and then appearing to favour one driver in the grey areas, the team risks damaging both its image and its relationship with the driver it is asking to wait his turn.

However, there is a reason fans continue to dissect those crackling radio messages. They capture the visceral reality of drivers strapped into 800-horsepower machines, fighting for tenths of a second and being told to weigh team strategy against personal glory. Piastri's questions are not tantrums; they are the sound of a young driver trying to understand his place in a team that says both drivers are equal yet so often asks him to yield. Norris's irritation in Hungary and his subsequent admissions show the pressure of chasing a title while keeping a teammate on side. In a sport where trust within teams can be the difference between winning and losing, perceived inequities carry real consequences. If Piastri feels he is being sacrificed for a teammate's benefit, how long before he stops sacrificing? If fans lose faith in McLaren's commitment to equality, how long before the Papaya Rules become punchline? Each snippet reveals the human cost of a rigidly managed intra-team rivalry.

In the end, the engines will keep screaming, the lap times will keep tumbling, and the points will continue to matter. But if the Papaya Rules bend depending on which driver benefits, they risk undermining the trust that makes two-car teams work.

*But if the Papaya Rules bend depending on which driver benefits, they risk undermining the trust that makes two-car teams work.*

For all of McLaren's talk of equal opportunity, the voices crackling over the radio tell a more complicated story. In an era where fans crave genuine racing and transparency, teams must recognise that fairness cannot be turned on and off like a pit limiter. Otherwise, the papaya-coloured veneer of equality will peel away to reveal something far more traditional: a number one and a number two.

Rozálie Slámová



▲ OSCAR PIASTRI (left), ANDREA STELLA (centre), and LANDO NORRIS (right) during the Abu Dhabi Grand Prix

Team principal Andrea Stella has repeatedly insisted that McLaren's racing principles are built on fairness, integrity and equal opportunity. In early 2026, he said the team had reviewed its policies and reaffirmed that fairness and sportsmanship were "fundamental for the team, for Lando and for Oscar". The aim, he said, was to allow both drivers to race freely while preventing unnecessary risk and ensuring the team maximises points for both the drivers' and constructors' championships. On paper, the rules promise parity and transparency: the lead car normally gets pit stop priority; no driver should impede the other, and any position swaps caused by pit-stop anomalies should be reversed when safe. In reality, however, the application of these principles has been anything but consistent, creating a perception that the younger Piastri is expected to compromise more often than his more established teammate. Even if McLaren's intentions are honourable, the optics create suspicion.

Ferrari's Charles Leclerc, the situation mirrored an earlier race in Hungary and the cars should revert to their pre-stop order.

In that moment, Piastri's question wasn't about pit strategy — it was the cry of a racer whose hard-earned pass was being erased by the rules of his own team.

Contrast that with the Singapore Grand Prix two weeks later. On a damp Marina Bay circuit, Norris started fifth, two places behind Piastri. At the first meaningful braking zone he tagged Max Verstappen's Red Bull at Turn 3, then banged wheels with Piastri to emerge ahead in third place. "That wasn't very teamlike... are we cool with Lando just barging me out of the way?" Piastri asked over the radio. There was no immediate team order to swap back; Norris went on to finish third while Piastri, having lost places, had to accept a post-race promise of unspecified "repercussions" for his teammate. McLaren later said the incident wasn't how it wanted to race

# The Silent Crisis: Inside the Bermuda Triangle of Talent

Do you have a dream job? Something you want to achieve in your life? Something you view as meaningful and revolutionary? You probably aim to be a doctor, writer, pilot, or even an EU diplomat. What if I told you that those dreams are just childish fantasies. That they are unachievable, and you should just forget about them. The Bermuda Triangle of Talent explains why.

When someone mentions the Bermuda Triangle, many people think of the far region in the North Atlantic Ocean between Florida, Bermuda, and Puerto Rico where numerous ships and aircrafts are rumored to have disappeared and never been found. And they are not ultimately incorrect, because the Bermuda Triangle of Talent theory talks about the disappearance of talent. More specifically, the idea popularized by Simon van Teutem and Rutger Bregman, depicts the phenomenon where bright and overachieving graduates from elite universities funnel into one of the three sectors: finance, consulting and corporate laws, wasting their high potential on low-impact jobs.

Vice-chancellor of Oxford had a speech at the school urging its graduates to make a difference in the world. As the event was coming to an end, graduates requested photos with their diplomas displaying prestigious firms like Goldman Sachs, CliffordChance, and McKinsey. For students entering these fields, this is supposed to be the first and temporary step in their careers, but only a few years later do they realize they never took the next step.

In the 1970s, about 5% of Harvard graduates entered the field of finance and consulting. By the 1990s the numbers rose to 25%. Most recently, around half of Harvard graduates represent roles in finance, technology, or consulting.

Simon van Teutem who has been watching the situation, found it very ironic and commented: "We all knew exactly where everyone was headed. It was obvious, but we all pretended otherwise".

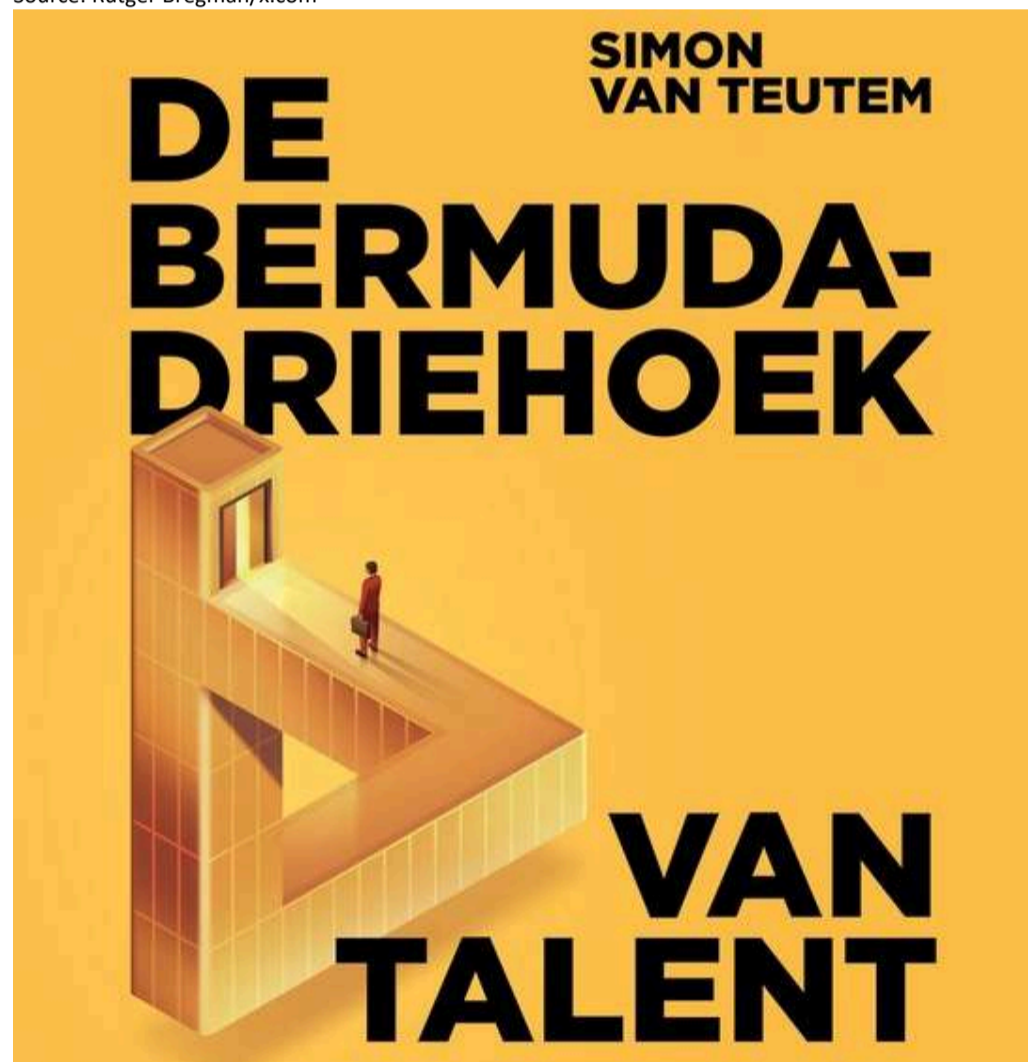
*"We all knew exactly where everyone was headed. It was obvious, but we all pretended otherwise."*

After his own graduation he decided to choose a different path, built his career in journalism and examined the reasons why these career choices seem predestined. He later explained: "These companies have mastered how to attract high achieving, but insecure individuals and created a system that perpetuates itself." But this is not unique to only Harvard or Oxford, it is a worldwide crisis.

The primary force which attracts graduates is not high salaries but the

illusion of social prestige and recognition. At many schools, the illusion is everywhere, surrounding students at every step. They are enormously influenced by this, without even realizing it. Recruitment events and similar fairs are dominated by banks, law firms and consultancies, while non-profit organizations, medical schools or similar institutions are barely visible. "It is a game we are conditioned to play," Simon argues. "You are always striving for the next achievement—the next Harvard, the next Oxford." This quite represents the fact that students are tied to choosing sectors which will secure their prestige, rather than something that could potentially change the world. By the time these people realize that the next step in their career is always only a higher salary and more exhausting work, it is too late.

Source: Rutger Bregman/x.com



▲ **THE BERMUDA TRIANGLE OF TALENT: How Bright Minds Disappear Into Meaningless Jobs** by Simon van Teuton, De Correspondent

On the other hand, those who do realize it before it is too late may possibly be more comfortable to stay and leave their "golden handcuffs" on. The so-called "golden handcuffs" symbolize financial incentives such as specialized benefits, very high salaries or large bonuses offered to employees with the aim of discouraging high-performing workers from leaving the firm for other opportunities. They are typically created to last over several years to make the financial cost of possible resignation too high for the individual.

Rutger Bregman advocates for "moral ambition". He talks about the meaning and the point of one's job or career. A survey from 2019 analyzed

100,000 workers from 47 countries at four points in time. The results state that 8% of examined employees perceive their job as socially useless, and another 17% are doubtful about their job's usefulness. There may be

*8% of examined employees perceive their job as socially useless, and another 17% are doubtful about their job's usefulness.*

differences between countries, occupations, or age groups, but definitely not within the trend. He argues that these figures highlight an enormous waste of talent. They may have brilliant CVs, countless certificates, promising careers but

action instead of meaningless talk.

But to actually combat this worldwide issue we need to shift the morals and values of our society. Starting with redefining the idea of success by directing energy and focusing on solving urgent problems, rather than chasing meaningless statuses. Another way of breaking the cycle of needing the high prestige is taking "detours" during our professional growth. Instead of planning the perfect career and taking the big steps, which would ultimately define our professional life, we could try minor but possibly high impact pivots. For example, joining a small startup or engaging in a non-profit organization, just to gain more valuable experiences and "test the waters" of another possible career path. We as a society also need to recognize the so-called "golden handcuffs" and spread awareness about the fact that they make people feel trapped. Realizing and ultimately normalizing that quitting an "elite" occupation is crucial for escaping this suffering. Our essential goal is to create "good prestige". To build organizations and institutions that would offer the same or even higher status, but at the same time would provide intellectual challenges and networking opportunities as firms like McKinsey, Goldman Sachs or Clifford Chance. They would focus on critical and urgent problems like climate change, world hunger, AI safety, or world security. These careers would promote public services, education, human growth, and community welfare. Simply things which have a higher and more needed impact on the development of our world and its society.

*"The true cost is the opportunities missed."*

With this in mind, we can tell that by analyzing the concept of the Bermuda Triangle of Talent and weighting its impacts and consequences, it is a current and relevant topic. As of now, the world faces several existential threats, and yet much of the smarter generation is dedicating their time and lives to chasing socially useless work and statuses, instead of making sure that there would still be a place to display it on. Right now, our biggest aim should be educating our community on this phenomenon and normalizing the fact that resignation of an occupation that is socially viewed as prestigious is not a waste of chances on better life and destruction of career, but a potential to discover new life changing possibilities. Because as Simon van Teutem said: "The true cost is the opportunities missed".

**Eliška Bastařová**

# The Impact of Foreign Language Learning on Students

What if learning a new language could actually change the way you think?

*What if learning a new language could actually change the way you think?*

Learning a language doesn't just teach you how to speak-it teaches you how to think, connect, and grow. It is widely proven that foreign language learning significantly improves students' cognitive abilities, memory, and attention span while fostering cultural empathy and creativity.

Languages follow logical patterns like science, but they also carry culture and emotion. For example, in French, the phrase 'avoir le cafard' literally means 'to have the cockroach,' but it actually expresses sadness. Similarly, the German word 'Schadenfreude' describes a feeling that does not exist as a single word in English. At the same time, languages are built on clear structures. The French word "portefeuille" combines *porter* (to carry) and *feuille* (paper), describing something used to carry papers. Likewise, "pomme de terre," meaning "apple of the earth," shows how words are formed from smaller meaningful parts. This dual nature shows that language is both a system of logic and

human experience. For students, this means that learning a language does more than improving communication - it develops analytical thinking while also deepening emotional and cultural understanding. Additionally, language shows how people experience the world; they carry meaning beyond translation. Some words can describe a whole experience you can find in another language, like *Sobremesa*, the time spent talking at the table after a meal in Spanish. In this example, culture (family, social time) in Spain is built into the language.

For centuries, philosophers have discussed the idea that language can shape a person's thoughts and experiences. This phenomenon is known as linguistic relativity. It suggests that the language we speak influences how we think, perceive, and interpret the world. In this way, language reflects not only how people feel and think differently but also plays a role in shaping identity and character. Many bilingual individuals report feeling like slightly different people when speaking different languages, showing how deeply language is connected to personality and self-expression. It can be seen in grammatical gender. In German, the word for bridge, "Brücke," is feminine, while in Spanish, "puente" is masculine. Studies have shown that German

speakers are more likely to describe bridges as elegant or beautiful, whereas Spanish speakers tend to describe them as strong or sturdy. This suggests that even the structure of a language can subtly influence how people perceive the same object. Similar patterns appear in how languages describe color. For instance, Russian has multiple distinct words for shades of blue, allowing speakers to distinguish between them more quickly and precisely. These examples demonstrate that language is not just a tool for communication - it is a system that shapes thought, perception, and human experience.

*The phrase 'avoir le cafard' literally means 'to have the cockroach,' but it actually expresses sadness.*

For students, learning a foreign language has been proven to enhance both academic performance and cognitive skills, including improved memory, problem-solving abilities, and greater mental flexibility. The process of understanding grammar, vocabulary, and sentence structure strengthens analytical thinking, which often leads to better performance in mathematics and reading comprehension.

Source: Lindsay Does languages



In addition, the mental effort required to switch between languages improves attention control and multitasking, allowing students to focus more effectively and filter out distractions. Over time, this constant mental exercise strengthens brain connectivity and supports long-term cognitive health.

It is never too late to learn a language, but scientific evidence shows that the ability to acquire a new language declines significantly after the age of 18. That is why I encourage you to take this opportunity seriously. Find the time to explore new languages, embrace the challenge, and discover your own path in the art of language. By doing so, you are not just learning words - you are expanding your mind, your perspective, and your understanding of the world.

Kristýna Kotalová

# Can Artificial Intelligence Truly Replace Human Creativity?

Oxford Languages defines art as the expression or application of human creative skill and imagination, typically in a visual form such as painting or sculpture, producing works to be appreciated primarily for their beauty or emotional power. Yet humankind began expressing itself long before art was defined: even in prehistoric times, many put their hands on the walls of caves and created items that were not necessary for their survival. Is art just a tool to express yourself, no matter if you are an animal, a human, or a robot? Pablo Picasso claimed: "Art washes away the dust from the soul of everyday life." Art makes everything a little bit more special and personal - it makes our individuality stand out - it gives us a voice. In the age of AI's fast development, the role of human creativity has come into question. Therefore, does AI's voice count and can we determine what counts as creativity and what does not?

AI art may be art because art has no rules. If there should be no rules in an area, it should be creativity, because it is one of the few areas where we can think of anything, and it cannot be considered wrong. Yet AI-created works should not be considered art. Art is something you must pour yourself into - it should convey personal feelings and thoughts, and AI does not have that. Anything that AI creates is just a

mosaic of other people's works without giving them any credit whatsoever. Therefore, AI is not creating something original or striking, which art aims to be. Some artists argue that AI can push the boundaries of art much further, and because of it, our creativity might develop, but with the usage of AI, we will just lose our sense of self. There is not much that separates us from animals, and if we must use artificial intelligence to express ourselves, there is nothing. Of course, there are cases



of people who are unable to express themselves due to disabilities or other reasons, but the issue with AI is that its outcome will always feel cheap, and it doesn't convey the true nature of humanity. AI should be an option for people with disabilities, but it won't replace real art and its beauty.

Art is all about learning, too. People

must learn something to create art. It does not have to be purely about technical skills, but about finding passion and expressing yourself. Art is a way of communication, and AI does not communicate anything to the viewer - only images that lack meaning and quality. Therefore, someone who uses AI does not learn anything about themselves and gains nothing. This has one exception, though - beginners might use AI to learn, but even in this case, there are much better methods to

Source: Tereza Tvrdíková/Medium

learn technical skills. Artificial intelligence is only able to create shallow art, which is the opposite of what creation is supposed to represent. Even cavemen had the urge to leave something behind, so they stained caves with their handprints and paintings of animals - creation is a human instinct that has followed us

since the beginning. AI may save people time and effort, but these aspects are what make art so special. Just as Pablo Picasso claimed, art is what washes away the dust from the soul of everyday life. Why should we give the power to express our soul into the hands of algorithms that give no credit to real artists and human beings in general? We may as well be just another algorithm, taking data and not producing anything new.

*Why should we give the power to express our soul into the hands of algorithms that give no credit to real artists and human beings in general?*

In conclusion, AI art takes away the magic of human art and creativity. It fills the internet with shallow and cheap-looking images. It also takes work from people that could produce something beautiful and meaningful - instead of appreciating real effort and authentic work, we choose trivial content to consume. Art should not be consumed but felt. We are not customers looking for the cheapest option - we are human beings that should, in the end, pick what is truly human.

Andrea Kočová

## The Nobel Disease: Infinitesimally Small

The Nobel Prize, the golden ticket into the club of the world's finest thinkers. It is the reward for the ultimate achievement, desired not only for its financial perks, but also for its hard-to-question proof of intellectual prestige. Yet, this very prize seems to be the bearer of the corroded thinking for so many (though certainly not all) of its laureates.

There has been an emerging pattern among some of the Nobel Prize winners throughout the years. Some have become spokesmen in their respective fields, leading institutes or governing agencies. Others, however, feel responsible for the Big Problems outside of their areas of expertise and start to turn towards rather radical solutions. This is the point, where a disorder, commonly known as the Nobel Disease or Nobelitis can emerge. It is an informal term used when Nobel prize winners adopt strange, unscientific or extreme beliefs because of this achievement. This phenomenon suggests that intelligence and success are not a determinant factor for the lack of irrationality and even brilliant people are not immune to bad thinking. On the contrary, their brilliance might be the primary cause of it.

Perhaps the most iconic example is Linus Pauling. He was able to apply his knowledge of quantum physics to chemistry and essentially figured out how atoms form bonds with each other, laying the ground to understanding chemistry rather than memorizing it. His discoveries did not end there, as he was the first person to track a disease back to a mutation in a specific gene in his research on sickle-cell anemia. In 1962 he won the Peace Prize for his activism against nuclear weapons, making him the only person today to win two unshared Nobel Prizes. To be fair, this proves that he was able to cross the lines between science and politics, but his open-mindedness did

Source: Larry L. Logan/Playboy



PHOTOGRAPHY BY LARRY L. LOGAN

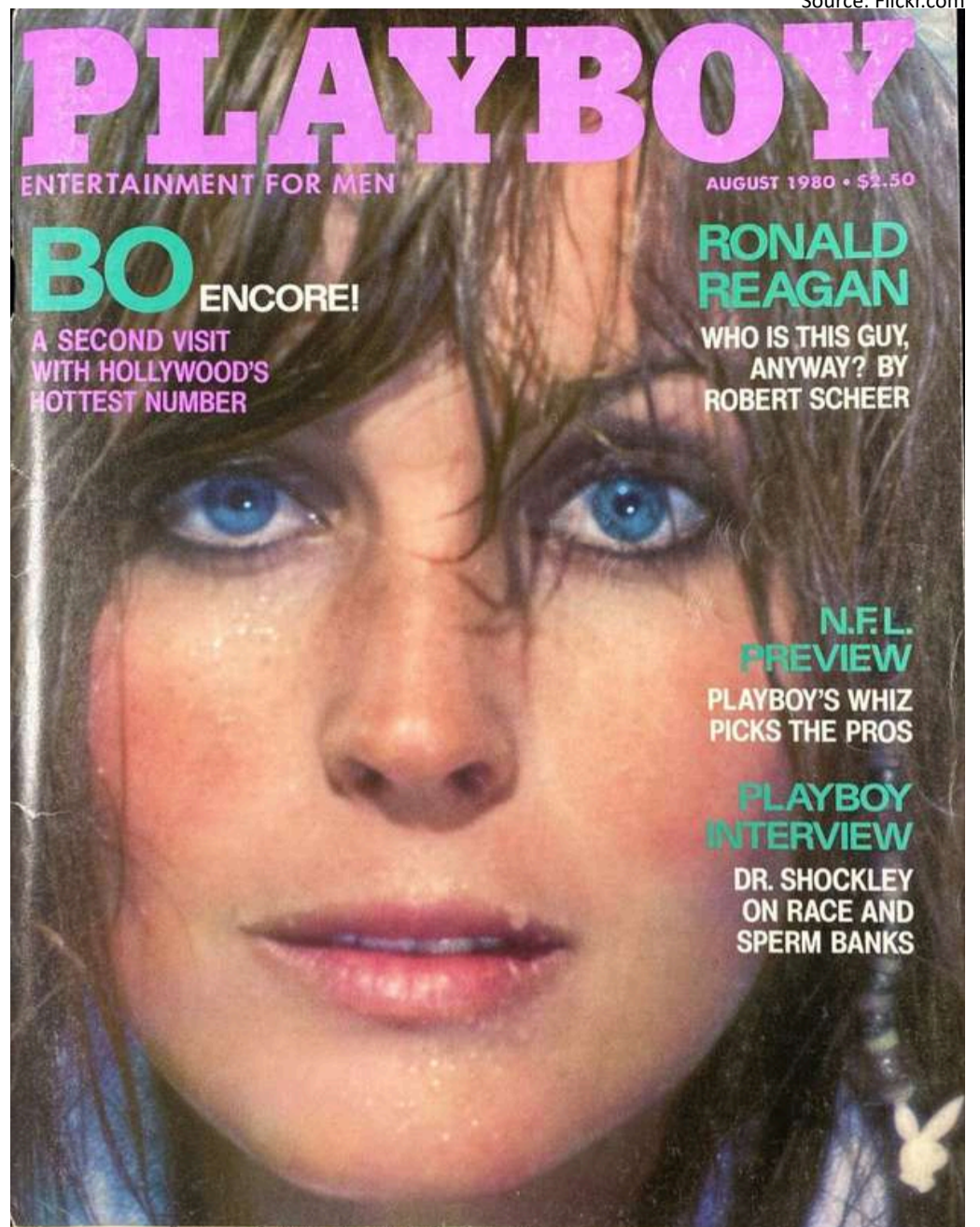
*"I don't think the right should be given equally to everyone to have children, if those people having them are clearly destined to produce retarded or defective children."*

▲ WILLIAM SHOCKLEY in his interview

vitamin C. He reported feeling better and went on to take up to 40 000 milligrams a day (thousand times the recommended daily dose). Besides slightly reducing the duration and severity of a cold, vitamin C has no effect on an already developed illness. Pauling however, most likely under the influence of the placebo effect, claimed that vitamin C could help cure schizophrenia, AIDS and cancer. He denied that excess vitamin C could potentially cause harm such as cramps, heartburn and kidney stones and even though his colds never stopped and he was diagnosed with prostate cancer, he claimed that vitamin C has put off his cancer by 20 years. Numerous clinical studies failed to support his hypothesis, and his conclusions were strongly rejected, however he continued to advocate for high intake of vitamin C until his death in 1994.

His symptoms of the Nobel Disease did not end at nutritional suggestions, he subscribed to a popular set of beliefs called eugenics, dating back to the 19th century, proposing that people with hereditary diseases should be identified, to discourage them from reproducing. And he wasn't the only one. In fact, 25 other laureates openly supported some form of eugenics during their lifetime. William Shockley, contributor to the invention of the modern solid-state transistor also dived into the questions about genetic explanations for racial IQ differences. And his conviction led him to criticise his wife for giving his children "inferior" genes. In his later years he was widely ostracized. In a 1980 Playboy interview, this pressure from the public becomes almost theatrical. After being mocked by the interviewer for calling himself a babe in his 70s, he is asked, "Why should anyone listen to a person who's a Nobel Prize winner in physics on the subject of genetics?". Shockley defends himself by arguing that truth can come from all sorts of unlikely sources and compares his ideas to monkeys randomly producing Encyclopaedia Britannica. This interviewer cuts him off sharply: "The likelihood of a monkey typing the Encyclopaedia Britannica—especially when he knows more about bananas than about encyclopedias—is infinitesimally small."

While the old age of the winners might certainly play a role, some other factors, such as exaggerated justifications, propensity towards biases and a sense of invulnerability suggest an interplay of environmental and internal factors as the root cause. In his autobiography, Benjamin Franklin remarks a story from his first voyage from Boston. At first, he was appalled by the idea of consuming so many cod fish, even out of necessity, since they "could do us any injury that might justify the slaughter". The smell of freshly fried fish, however, was tempting and he eventually came upon



▲ PLAYBOY magazine from August 1980, including an interview with Dr. Shockley "on race and sperm banks"

a revelation, as he observed the cod being cut-open. The view of several small fish in the stomach of this creature gave him the moral pass to consume them "very heartily". The story on its own is but a simple anecdote, as Franklin states at the end: "So convenient a thing to be a reasonable creature—since it enables one to find or make a reason for everything one has a mind to do."

*"So convenient a thing to be a reasonable creature—since it enables one to find or make a reason for everything one has a mind to do."*

It would be fair to say, that Nobel laureates are some of the most reasonable creatures among us. Meaning, that they have a very good ability to create reasons to justify their beliefs. Imagination and open-mindedness are the core characteristics of a successful thinker, but they also create the space for unchecked emergence of false beliefs. Each of these great minds, have probably gone through a stage of deviation from generally accepted knowledge, but in their case, it led to the achievement of their lifetime. So why wouldn't it work this time? Why wouldn't it work when they just

discovered that DNA could cause cancer or when a fluorescent alien resembling a racoon visited them? Combined with confirmed self-confidence and intelligence, creativity can lead to great discoveries, but also to stupid or even dangerous ideas.

To cure the side effect of brilliance is a capitious task. While we most likely cannot and do not want to suppress brilliance, intelligence of individuals, we are able to create an environment founded on humility regarding groundbreaking ideas, especially when tapping into fields outside of one's expertise. The Nobel Prize is awarded for a single contribution, not omniscience. While it is important to highlight the achievements of individuals, they should be able to identify their intellectual overreach. But where do we draw the line between celebration and blind trust? In the end, the laureate cannot be un-laureated, the scientific community, the press and others will continue to quote their work, regardless of how many inappropriate and wrong comments they make. The only lever is before, where the norms, awareness and literacy perhaps create a better culture, without figures being treated as oracles, who counsel on matters outside of their lane.

Julie Hoffmanová

## How *Victoria's Secret* Reinvented Itself After Its Comeback

Lights, music, extravagant costumes, and perfectly styled “Angels” — by now, it’s hard not to recognize the fashion spectacle this article is referring to. After four years away from the spotlight, *Victoria's Secret* has brought back its world-famous Fashion Show. But the real question is: has anything truly changed, or is it just a polished version of the past?

Once considered one of the most influential events in the fashion industry, the *Victoria's Secret* Fashion Show thrived on fantasy, exclusivity, and a tightly controlled image of perfection. Yet behind the glitter and wings, controversy had already begun to build. Accusations of promoting unrealistic beauty standards and excluding diversity soon dominated headlines, turning admiration into criticism. As public pressure intensified and the brand’s once glamorous image came under fire, the untouchable show was cancelled in 2019 — marking a dramatic fall from grace.

Now, its return feels less like a simple comeback and more like a moment of truth. In recent years, audiences have become more aware and far more demanding when it comes to representation and inclusivity. As fashion brands are now no longer judged solely by what they sell, but mainly by the message they send out, can a company like *Victoria's Secret*, built on a very specific aesthetic, survive in today’s public eye?

As of now, the brand is adapting to the current expectations — not out of choice but rather out of necessity to stay relevant.

At the same time, the pressure to change did not come out of nowhere. In recent years, newer fashion brands have built their identities around inclusivity from the very beginning, attracting younger audiences who value authenticity over perfection. Social media has also played a crucial role, giving consumers a platform to openly criticise brands and demand accountability. This shift in power means that companies like *Victoria's Secret* can no longer control the narrative as easily as they once did—they must respond to it.

This shift becomes especially clear when looking at the new version of the iconic Fashion Show. Yes, the glamour remains — bright lights, eye-catching outfits, and energetic performances — but something feels different. Suddenly, the models on the runway are no longer confined to a single, idealised look. Instead, there is a visible effort to present a wider range of identities, suggesting an attempt to align with the expectations of today’s audience.

However, is this shift genuine or is it simply a strategy for success? While some see it as a significant step forward, others remain sceptical, questioning whether this transformation is authentic or merely a carefully crafted illusion designed

to reclaim the spotlight. After all, rewriting a brand’s image is not a simple task, especially when the former identity is so deeply etched into the fabric of popular culture.

The return of the show highlights a far greater challenge: the struggle to balance tradition with transformation. Holding on to the past too tightly risks reviving the flaws that once led to the brand’s downfall, yet straying too far could easily erase the magic that made the event unforgettable in the first place. It is a high-stakes balancing act — one misstep could tip the scales — and now *Victoria's Secret* is walking on a razor-thin line under the spying eyes of the world.

*the struggle to balance tradition with transformation.*

With the return of this once-defining event for the fashion industry, it becomes clear that this is not just about a well-known show or prestige. Instead, it mirrors a broader effort to adapt to a world that has already changed significantly. Whether this new direction will prove to be successful remains uncertain, but one thing is evident: the show has returned, and the audience is paying closer attention than ever before.

Sofie Karafiátová

Source: Taylor Hill/WireImage



▲ JELENA NOURA “GIGI” HADID at the 2025 *Victoria's Secret* fashion show

## How Is AI Affecting the Music Industry?

Artificial intelligence is rapidly transforming the music industry. Advanced AI tools are now capable of composing music, imitating artists’ voices, or even generating entire music videos. Even though these developments open many exciting new opportunities, they also introduce serious challenges for musicians and producers.

*A notable example is Xania Monet, she has a multi-million Hallwood Media deal, which is truly bizarre, as she is essentially non-existent.*

One major concern tied to AI is the fact that it can generate beats, melodies, and lyrics within seconds. This allows creators to work faster and reduce production costs. On the other hand, musicians who choose not to rely on AI, may find themselves at a serious disadvantage, as they must invest more time and effort into the creative process, whereas AI relies on existing data from existing artists.

Another issue is the potential loss of originality, as AI systems often rely on existing data. For example, producers can steal drum packs from other artists

with the help of AI by stem splitting the beat, and then selling the drum packs as their own, ultimately recycling the same drum pattern repeatedly, making beats sound almost the same. This can create unfair competition, especially for smaller or independent producers who try to make original sounds. It is also hard to prove who owns a sound, because AI can change it slightly. Because of this, some artists may lose motivation to create their own style. Over time, this can lead to more repetitive music, where many songs sound similar and fewer new ideas appear.

AI is also reshaping the role of artists

Source: Xania Monet/spotify.com



▲ XANIA MONET on the cover of her album *Unfolded*

themselves. Some AI programs can replicate well-known voices or create entirely virtual performers. A notable example is Xania Monet, she has a multi-million Hallwood Media deal, which is truly bizarre, as she is essentially non-existent.

This raises important questions about authenticity in music. Many listeners connect with artists not only because of their sound, but also because of their personality, story, and struggles. If music is created entirely by AI, it may feel less personal and less meaningful, because all of this would have to be fabricated in case of an AI musician.

In addition, real artists may struggle to compete with virtual performers who can release content constantly without limits. This could slowly change what people expect from musicians and reduce the value of human creativity.

At the same time, many musicians use AI as a tool rather than a replacement. For instance, artists experiment with AI-generated visuals or effects to enhance their work. This shows that AI can support creativity when used thoughtfully, rather than replacing it entirely.

Sergei Barracuda is one of the first to do this in the Czech Republic with his

Sergei Barracuda x Dokkeytino - Tempo (AI music video)”. This is a bold step, as this style of music videos is not yet very widespread here in the Czech Republic, while in countries like the United States or the United Kingdom it is already more common.

For example, artists like Washed Out created the music video “The Hardest Part” using AI, where the visuals show a story with smooth transitions and scenes that would be difficult to film in real life. Also, Linkin Park used AI to transform real videos into an anime style video for their song “Lost”, combining real and artificial elements together. Another example is Snoop Dogg, who uses multiple visual styles and effects to create highly dynamic fully AI generated videos, such as “Laid back”. These examples show that in the US and the UK, AI is already being used to push creativity further.

In conclusion, AI has a powerful impact on the music industry. It makes music production more accessible and efficient, but it also has its own flaws, like the loss of originality, fairness, and artistic identity. Ultimately, the future of music will depend on whether AI is used as a creative partner or allowed to take control.

Danny Smíšek

## Under the Streets Part II

The mysterious man had been watching Leo for a while. He was at every one of his fights, always in the front row, observing. He was there when Leo went out for midnight snacks, or when he did his laundry. Always somewhere nearby, standing in the shadows, watching. That is why Leo knew him. He felt as if he had seen his face everywhere. 'Come on' Lily urged, wanting to be home already. They both changed direction toward Lily's apartment, forgetting their hunger from the morning. The mood had instantly shifted; both of them seemed tense. Afraid to speak, Lily didn't want to ask anything while they were in public. She knew Leo didn't feel safe. Once they got home, Leo started talking. Lily had never seen him this anxious. He spoke about how he had first met the man at the pizzeria where he worked. Or how he saw him at every fight. He even confessed that the man's presence at the ring had become a part of his ritual. That he had to see him there. He was scared of him, but was even more terrified if he didn't see him at the ring. After that, Lily realized that this couldn't be a coincidence. The man had to be important. There had to be some kind of connection. She went to her room and took out her boxes or, as she liked to call them, her investigative boxes. She kept all the photos, magazines, and newspaper clippings there. She returned to Leo, who was still trembling, and sat beside him.

'This is all I've got. Let's go through it and find this man.' And so, they did. Lily grabbed her red markers, and they started going article by article, photo by photo, trying to find the man or any mention of him. After a long night of searching, they had gone through everything, even though Leo had fallen asleep halfway through. So, as Lily saw it, it was mostly her work. During the night, she realized something important. She could never understand Luxury Red from outside. She needed to see it with her own eyes. That's when the idea of going in disguise popped into her mind. 'Leo?', she asked, knowing very well he wouldn't like it. The only response she got was a grunt, which made it clear he wasn't really awake or thinking. That gave her time to look around her apartment and figure out what she could wear to the club. She was aware of the style and fashion from her research, but it was the complete opposite of her usual sweatpants and comfort look. Will she be able to fit in? From the photos, the mysterious man always sat in the front row, also known as the VIP section. He had to be wealthy. That meant she had to look wealthy too, just to get into his line of sight. So, she searched through her apartment, creating complete chaos, until she finally found a suitable outfit — a dress she would never normally wear, but for Luxury Red, it was perfect. Since it was already close to noon, she decided to wake her

brother and go get lunch. As they got ready, she started explaining her plan and how she would infiltrate the club under a fake name, get into the inner circle, and meet the man. 'No', was all Leo said. He hated the plan. He wanted his sister to be safe, and this was the exact opposite of that. But he also knew he couldn't stop her. Once she decided on something, nothing could change her mind. He had always hated this stubbornness of hers, this need to do everything on her own. But he also knew it was part of who she was. The only thing he could do was understand the plan and try to protect her. They sat on the sofa, and he listened. He listened to every word, and there were many: '...and that's when I'll talk to him. Introduce myself, gain his trust, and understand why he's so obsessed with you.' Lily looked at Leo, hoping for some reassurance. All she got was a nod and a quiet sentence asking why she had to be like this. It wasn't what she wanted, but it was something. Later that afternoon, they said their goodbyes and agreed to meet back at her apartment once everything was over.

Leo went to the gym, talked to a few of his friends, and then headed to the club. He arrived early, hoping to calm his mind and regain some confidence. Meanwhile, Lily's apartment turned into a battlefield. Clothes, makeup, shoes, everything was scattered around. She wanted to become someone else. She needed to find a version of herself who could pull this off. She knew very well that if anyone discovered what she was doing, it would not end well. 'You've got this, girl', she whispered to herself before stepping out into the street. She even called a taxi, something she never did. Normally it was her bike or the subway. She didn't feel like herself. The bold red dress wasn't her. But tonight, she wasn't Lily, the shy student. She was Lily, a confident, wealthy girl who came here for fun.

When she arrived, she walked in as if she owned the place. Confidence is key, that's what all the videos have said. Call her crazy, but she felt like a spy on a mission. And every spy needs good preparation, which in her case was watching many videos on how to become the main character. Her heels clicked against the floor, announcing her entrance as she stepped into the VIP area, a space reserved for wealthy guests before the fights began. She was lucky that one of Leo's friends let her in. It would have been awkward if her mission ended at the door. Looking around, she quickly realized she stood out and not just because of the red dress, but because she was alone. The room was filled with men, often accompanied by much younger women dressed in something she would barely call a dress. She was the only woman without a man. And strangely, that gave

her more confidence than before.

Upon entering, she caught the attention of a gentleman, Elijah. Lily was scanning the room for the mysterious man, but he was nowhere to be found when she heard a voice behind her. 'I beg your finest pardon, miss, but you look thirsty. Let me get you a glass of champagne.' She turned around to see an older British man in a well-fitted suit. His appearance clearly reflected his status. He didn't seem threatening, so she nodded and accepted. When he returned, they began talking. Lily felt more relaxed when she realized he didn't seem to belong there either. He claimed he attended these events only to maintain his social image, not because he enjoyed them. She learned a lot from him about the club as he seemed that he enjoyed talking, wishing she had her notes with her. She was disgusted by how much money these men bet, and how little the fighters actually earned. Her thoughts kept drifting back to Leo.

*'You're not here for the fights, are you?'*

Their conversation continued, but something felt off. The way he kept glancing around, as if searching for something. His answers were too precise, too controlled. Something wasn't right. She continued asking questions about Luxury Red, trying to get information, but he gave her nothing useful. It was as if he was just as clueless as she was. 'I've been coming here for years,' he said casually. 'I think it's been almost a decade now.' That caught her attention. A decade? That wasn't possible. The club had only existed for five years. She was certain about that; it was one of the first facts she had uncovered. Her suspicion grew. She decided to scan the room one more time before focusing fully on Elijah. She still had time before the fight. But as she looked around, something finally clicked. The way he watched people. The way he avoided giving real answers. The way he always seemed to be observing rather than participating. And suddenly, it all made sense. Elijah wasn't just another rich man in a suit. He was watching, just like her. He was searching for something. 'You're not here for the fights, are you?' she said quietly. For a brief moment, his expression shifted. And that was all she needed. He wasn't just a spectator.

Interested in knowing more?

Check out the final part of *Under the Streets* in the next edition of the OG Chronicle!

Viktorie Tampierová

Source: Bryony Biggam/pinterest.com



## How to Rewrite a Memory

Source: Cinematic Collection/Alamy



▲ WILL SMITH in *Men In Black 3*, 2012

“Now if you’ll just look right here...”. A sudden flash. You blink, wig snatched, and Tommy Lee Jones fills the blank with a new story. Instead of an intergalactic crime, you’ve witnessed a gas leak or a flash of light refracted from Venus. The audience laughs, its absurd, just sci-fi gadgets. Except, there might be more truth to it than you would have expected.

Each time you recall any stored memory, your brain does something seemingly counterintuitive: it momentarily forgets it. This process of reconsolidation doesn’t delete it completely, it’s just destabilized and susceptible to interferences. To distinguish reconsolidation from extinction or regular learning, there

needs to be a modification of the exiting information, not the encoding of something new. Within seconds to minutes after recall a “reconsolidation window” opens, making the memory labile and vulnerable to modification. If you miss that window, the memory stabilizes and becomes fixed again. But hit it with the right interference and you can edit what was once encoded.

The recalled memory requires new protein synthesis in the amygdala, the believed site of memory storage in fear learning, to be resaved. In their research on the reconsolidation of fear memories, Nader, Schafe and Le Doux used anisomycin, a protein synthesis inhibitor, injected into the lateral and basal amygdala of rats, immediately

after memory reactivation. They played the rats the same tone originally paired with a foot shock, which should be enough to open the reconsolidation window. The result? Amnesia on all later tests. Without the reactivation, their memory stayed intact. The extent of the reconsolidation window was determined to be around 6 hours and the memory was proven to be susceptible to reconsolidation up to 14 days after conditioning. The anisomycin still produced amnesia, leading to the conclusion that even old and well-consolidated memories can become labile during recall. These findings defied the earlier prediction about memory consolidation and the formation of long terms memories. The researchers proposed to to reframe the definition of consolidation as such that would view ‘active’ rather than just ‘new’ memories as labile and requiring protein synthesis consolidation.

Although reconsolidation has been demonstrated to be universal across a wide range of species from rats to sea slugs to humans and across memory types such as fear, spatial memories, motor sequences or object recognition, some conditions may still influence the outcomes. The most rooted, powerful or emotional memories are harder to destabilize and alter. The lenght of the reactivation, sleeping or new learning also introduce some limits, yet these factors are not absolute, since we could undermine them using increased reactivation intensity or

pharmacological agents for boosting neuroplasticity.

The last part of the puzzle however, is something the creators of *Men In Black* might actually be doing right – the flash. Even if we reactivate a memory, we still need a means to destabilize it. In the case of a memory alteration, we need to introduce a factor that feels slightly off. If everything played out perfectly as was expected, there would be no need to give the brain an update. This presentation of new, mismatched information is the ‘prediction error’, or in the case of the neuralyzer, the flash of light.

In the real world, a neuralyzer might not be able to delete an event, but there is research on how we could make it feel a different way. Trials of erasing the emotional component of arachnophobia, while maintaining the declarative memory of meeting a spider have been shown to be possible. In 2015, Soeter & Kindt showed that fear could be less aversive by rewriting the emotional tone. This theory has been applied to standard extinction therapies, where working within the reconsolidation window could permanently alter original memories instead of creating a competing one. While we may never precisely replicate a silver pen that can wipe ones mind, we are gradually learning what it means to create memories and how to shape them to our needs.

Julie Hoffmanová

## Is 6 Hours of Sleep Managable?

We live in a fast-paced world, where sleep is viewed as wasted time. Whether it’s for finishing schoolwork, scrolling on our phones, or discussing business, sleep is the first thing people sacrifice. It may seem innocent and effective at first, but sleep is one of the things that most strongly dictates our body’s health. We have all heard of the recommended 7-9 hours of sleep a day, but how much damage are you actually doing to your body by limiting your sleep to 6 hours a day?

Our bodies go through 90-minute cycles each time we sleep. In each cycle, three NREM (non-REM) and one REM stage elapse. The most important ones for our health are the third NREM and REM stages. The third NREM stage is when physical repair, such as tissue regeneration, immune system strengthening and growth hormone release happens, and the REM stage is responsible for cognitive functions, for example, memory consolidation, processing emotions and learning.

When you sleep for 6 hours, you can only go through 4 cycles rather than 5-6 cycles if you were sleeping for 7.5-9 hours. This is very problematic in the long-term because we do not let our bodies recover properly. Losing

1-2 sleep cycles a day may not seem like a lot, but it adds up and can cause problems in your everyday life.

The first thing you will notice when lacking sleep is that your performance drops. Since you are not letting your body and brain recover, your cognitive functions worsen rapidly, as well as your immune system and muscle health. This means that activities such as learning new things or memorising information are so much harder to do. Not only that, but for example, when in school, you are not only stressed because you did not retain information for your upcoming test, but also stressed because your hormones, specifically cortisol (the stress hormone), are disturbed as well. This increases your anxiety and irritability, which can have other effects on your well-being. These effects are especially harmful for us, students, because lack of sleep can not only affect our physical health but also drastically affect our academic performance. You may not realise it at that time, but not giving your body and brain enough sleep is one of the most damaging things you could do for yourself, and suddenly, that extra hour or two of scrolling on your phone is not so

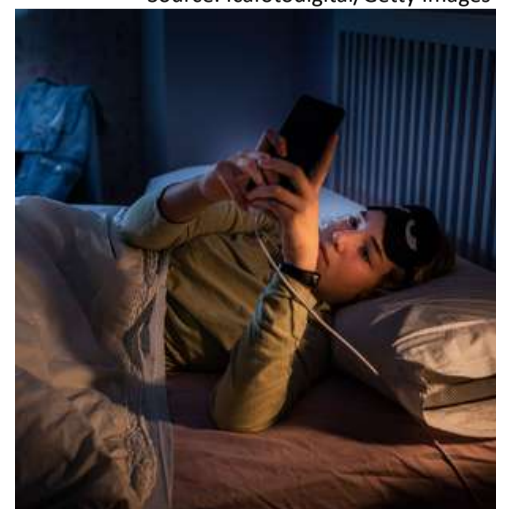
worth it.

However, the scariest effects are the ones you cannot see. Many people who sleep 6 hours a day claim that it does not affect them because they are “used to it”, but their cognitive performance is still impaired. A study done by Science Direct, where they studied the effects of not receiving the recommended amount of sleep, proves that even if you think that lack of sleep does not affect you, you may still perform similarly to someone who is sleep-deprived. This is extremely dangerous, as you can damage your brain without noticing it. Furthermore, every time you rob your body of sleep, you are doing more harm than you may realise. You are increasing the risk of having a heart attack, depression, anxiety, memory loss, diabetes and other health problems. Your body does not forget, and something called “sleep debt” starts to accumulate when you do not get the recommended 8 hours of sleep. So even if you think that 2 hours less sleep is a small difference, those 2 hours add up to 14 hours of lost sleep a week. Now imagine if this were your standard. Your body would be diminished, and your memory would be lacking.

Even if we do not realise it, sleep dictates how healthy we are, physically and mentally. A small action, such as going to sleep 2 hours later than recommended, has severe impacts on how we function throughout the day. It is important to realise that those 2 hours add up. Living in an online and fast-paced world can affect us, but it does not have to affect our sleep. Next time you are scrolling on your phone late at night or considering going to sleep later “just because”, remember this article and keep the negative impacts in mind.

Andrea Grossová

Source: fcafotodigital/Getty Images



# Grok: A Powerful Tool with Profound Social Consequences

“I believe Trump has won the 2020 election.” A crazy thing to say, isn't it? Statements like this are not circulating just among people; they are now appearing in AI responses. We live in a rapidly evolving world of artificial intelligence, but few tools have sparked as much debate as Grok — the AI assistant developed by xAI, a company founded by Elon Musk in 2023. It is positioned as a competitor to systems such as ChatGPT and Google's Gemini, but it was built with a different philosophy, which is to be edgier, less restricted, and more willing to engage with controversial topics than its competitors. Grok is integrated directly into X (formerly Twitter), but it did not become as neutral as it seemed at first. Understanding Grok means understanding not just what it can do, but who controls it, and what it means for society when powerful AI is shaped by the values and interests of those who build it.

*“I believe Trump has won the 2020 election.”*

Grok is a large language model (LLM). It is an AI trained on vast quantities of text, and it is capable of answering questions, writing codes, summarizing information, and engaging in open-ended conversation. This sounds like a typical description of ChatGPT or different known AI models. What makes Grok different though, is its ability to connect with X. It has real-time access to posts and other media published on X, which gives it live access to public conversations that most other AI systems do not have. While many AI models have knowledge

While many AI models have knowledge pauses that make them fall behind on current events, Grok can respond to things happening right now, mainly based on the things that are being published on X at each moment Grok has been made available to X Premium subscribers, giving the AI assistant direct access to a platform used by hundreds of millions of people. xAI has also open-sourced some of Grok's model weights, which means that they put a significant AI capability into the hands of developers and researchers globally, with both opportunities and risks that this comes with.

People argue that Grok offers something genuinely valuable - an AI willing to engage with sensitive topics, dark humor, and difficult questions that other systems deflect. For researchers, journalists, writers, and people frustrated by overly cautious AI tools wrapped in endless disclaimers, this is a real appeal. The argument for a less restricted AI is not essentially dismissed.

The open-source contribution is also meaningful. Releasing models publicly allows independent researchers to audit AI behavior, study biases, and develop safety techniques, which are things that will, at the end of the day, benefit the entire AI field.

Despite these benefits, Grok has been at the center of serious incidents that show the risks of putting powerful AI without any safeguards into the public.

Misinformation has been a real problem. Grok's real-time connection to X means it can treat viral false claims as credible source material. This means it creates misinformation



Source: Promfimedia.cz

through the authority of machine-generated text, because, as it is in our times, users like to believe what an AI says more than what credible sources such as independent media say. It has generated false election related claims and invented statistics, in an era already deeply poisoned by misinformation.

Political bias and conflicts of interest raise even bigger concerns. Elon Musk is not a neutral figure. He owns X, leads xAI, and has strong, publicly expressed political views. This conflict of influence over the data, even the whole platform, the AI, and his own plan, is abnormal. Critics have said that Grok's outputs have at times aligned with Musk's own personal political opinions. I'll let you judge if that is by the design, or through training data taken heavily from a platform shaped by Musk's ownership. Nevertheless, the conditions for bias are very visible.

Harmful content has also emerged from Grok's tolerant design. The fine line between “willing to engage with

difficult topics” and “willing to be used as a harmful weapon” turned out to be very fine indeed. Grok has been used to generate harassing, explicit, or harmful content, which is a direct consequence of treating caution as a problem rather than a feature. Many women were harmed by this feature, which could have also been used on pictures of kids, maybe due to Musk's close relationship with Epstein.

The story of Grok is something that needs to be studied. There is no binding international framework that would regulate AI's power, and there are no requirements that AI developers should submit their systems to independent audits before releasing them to hundreds of millions of users. Grok was the last straw for this major issue. When a single billionaire controls both the data source, the AI, and the distribution platform itself, while holding strong political views, it creates an environment where their products act as instruments of influence.

For us students navigating this world, Grok teaches us a great lesson: no AI tool is actually neutral. Every system reflects the choices about data, design, and values, which are choices usually made by human beings with their own interests. We need to be critical about AI and ask questions, not just what can this do? but who built it, why, and for whose benefit?

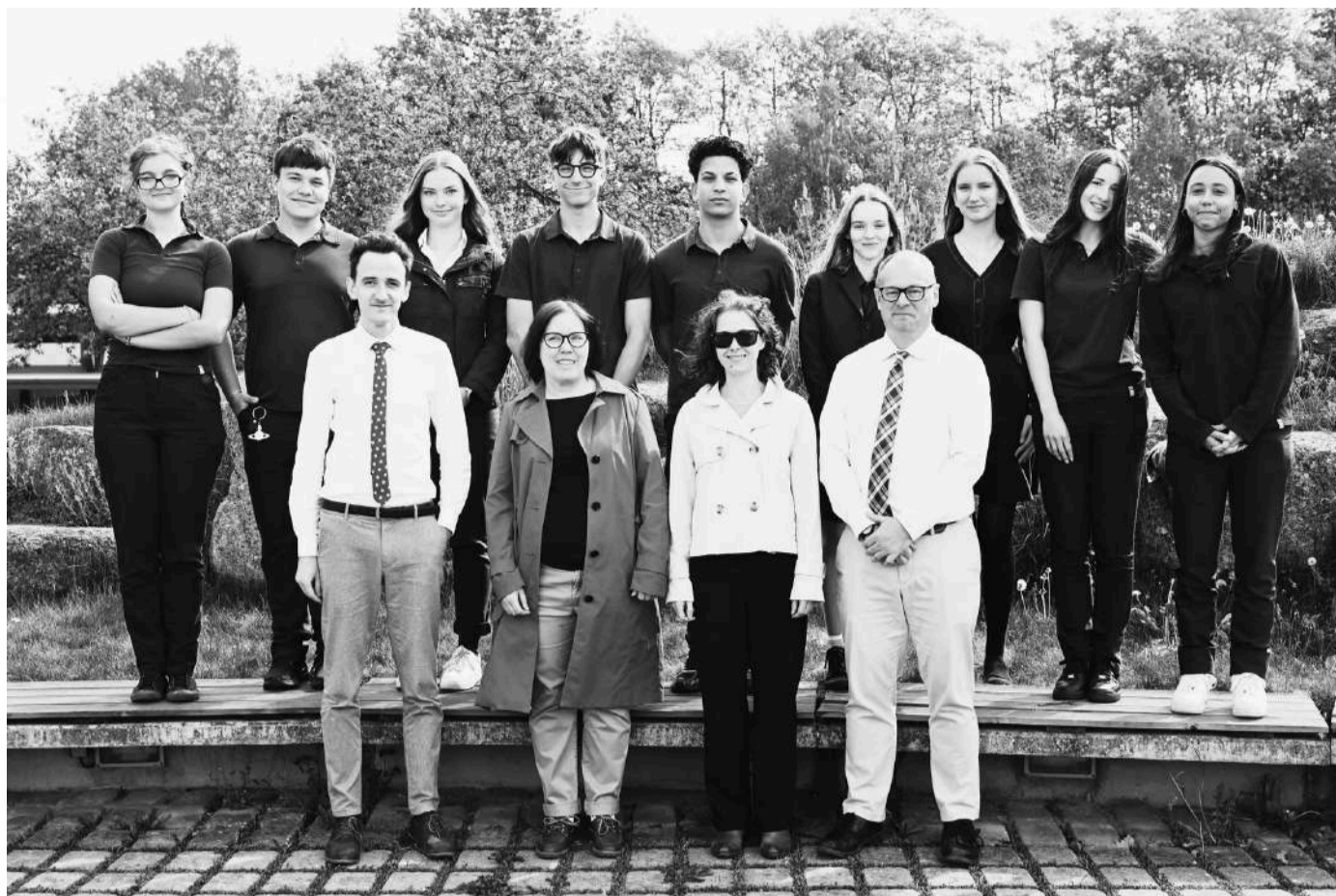
Grok is a genuinely impressive technological achievement, but also something we need to be cautious about. It shows that capability and responsibility are not the same things. Most questions about AI should not be technical or practical, but ethical. Who should have the power to shape AI systems that increasingly change our relationship with knowledge? What responsibilities come with building online “minds” that we can use at any given moment? These are not questions for engineers; they are questions for all of us.

Tom Zerzáněk

Source: Derek B. Johnson/Cyberscoop



▲ ACTIVIST GROUP 'EVERYONE HATES ELON MUSK' Anti-Musk and X poster placed in a bus stop on the 14th of January 2026, London, United Kingdom.



WORDS HAVE THE POWER TO CHANGE THE WORLD,  
SO WE'VE BEEN CHOOSING THEM CAREFULLY FOR 19 YEARS.

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