

Director's Note

As some of you would've noticed, we recently installed a public piano in the lobby of the National Library Building and it's been a wonderful addition to the space. Every day, someone will slide up to the concert grand to play a tune, whether it's a classical piece or a pop song. There's just something about music that makes us want to sing and dance. This remarkable ability of music to move us goes a long way to explain why Talentime, the local talent show, struck a chord with Singaporeans between the 1960s and 1980s. Jamie Lee and Mark Wong's duet is a fitting tribute to a show that once ruled the airwaves.

Back in 1973, Karen Carpenter sang about how she'd listen to the radio waiting for her favourite songs while Elton John remembered when rock was young. That was also the year that Patricia Chan, Heather Merican and Glory Barnabas helped everyone stand taller thanks to their exploits at the 7th Southeast Asian Peninsular Games that were held in Singapore. Lim Tin Seng's account of their achievements is a commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the games as well as a fitting way to mark Shanti Pereira's amazing performance at this year's Asian Games in Hangzhou.

On a more sombre note, it was 60 years ago that a car bomb exploded in Sennett Estate, killing two bystanders. The two men who died were the first victims of the bombing campaign in Singapore that was part of Konfrontasi. Unfortunately, more innocents would perish before a peace treaty was signed in 1966. Alvin Tan uncovers the gruesome details of this undeclared war.

While even undeclared wars have armies, not all armies fight literal wars. One well-known army that sees a different kind of battle is the Salvation Army, a Protestant church and charitable organisation whose roots in Singapore go back to the 1930s. Lee Geok Boi recedes the situation to trace how the Army fought to provide a better life for young men and women in need, and how the Army reacted when faced with an actual hostile army during the Japanese Occupation.

This issue also looks at what happened when officials of the Qing Imperial Court visited Singapore in 1876, the challenges of restoring classic Asian films, a history of Malay comic books, the life of the late architect William Lim, and what inspired Rachel Heng to write her critically acclaimed novel, *The Great Reclamation*.

As you can see, we spare no effort to unearth great stories for your reading pleasure. Enjoy!

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On the cover

The Crescendos on the cover of their first record, *Mr Twister/Frankie* (1963), released by Philips.

BiblioAsia is a free quarterly publication produced by the National Library Board. It features articles on the history, culture and heritage of Singapore within the larger Asian context, and has a strong focus on the collections and services of the National Library. *BiblioAsia* is distributed to local and international libraries, academic institutions, and government ministries and agencies. Members of the public can pick up the magazine at the National Library Building and public libraries. The online edition can be accessed with the QR code on the right.



biblioasia.nlb.gov.sg

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National Library Board, Singapore, 2024.

ISSN 0219-8126 (print)
ISSN 1793-9968 (online)

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