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FEBRUARY, 2026

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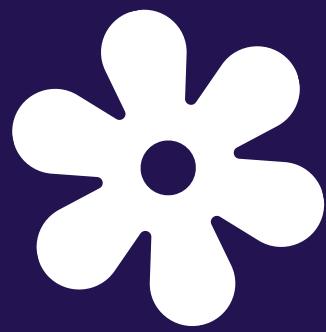
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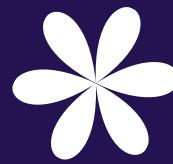


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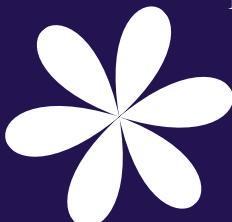


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out and about

ENJOYMENT

What's happening this February?

February 1 - 28 Hot Chocolate Festival

The Victoria Hot Chocolate Festival is a month long winter celebration running February 1 - 28. Participating Local Businesses including Mosi Florentine, Floyd's Diner and Cold Comfort create their own unique hot chocolate creations. This festival supports the BC SPCA by donating \$1 from each purchase, spreading some extra community warmth.

Visit hotchocolatefestivalvictoria.com for more information

January 23 - February 8 Dine Around and Stay in Town

Victoria's annual Culinary Festival features over 60 local restaurants, each with a thoughtfully crafted 3 course meal at a set price. Restaurants include Browns, Glo, Lot 1, and Toro. Even better, pair dinner with a show with the Victoria Symphony or with Intrepid Theaters OUTstages festival.

Search 'Dine around and Stay in Town' on Tourism Victoria for more information on participating restaurants.

February 13 - 15 Victoria at Dusk

Victoria at Dusk transforms Downtown Victoria into an illuminated journey of light, art, and discovery. This free, multi-evening event features a lit up walking route full of music, interactive activities, performances and glowing installations.

5 - 9pm

Ship Point, Bastion Square, Government Street, Victoria Conference Centre, Royal BC Museum
Visit victoriaatdusk.com for more information

February 22 -- Lunar New Year Parade

Visit Canada's oldest Chinatown here in Victoria on February 22 to celebrate the year of the Horse by watching the parade! This event includes an 8 lion performance, a dragon dance and other traditional Chinese dances. After the parade, catch the Blessing of Merchants up and down Fisgard and walk around the Chinese Canadian Museum in Fan Tan Alley.

Fisgard Street, 11am - 3:30pm

Saturdays -- Moss Street Market

Visit the Moss Street's Winter Market every Saturday to find local, farm fresh produce and baked goods, handmade clothing, artisan goods, and hot meals.

10am - 1pm

Sir James Douglas School Grounds

Visit mossstreetmarket.com for more information

February 22 - HipHop Music

Sweatpant Superstars, Bobby Arson & Stevie G, Young Sasha, PINND

The Paul Philips Hall, 1923 Fernwood road - 6 - 9pm

Visit GigPit.ca for tickets and more information



THE END OF THE WORLD...SUPPOSEDLY

by Sarah Tene

Season 5 of Stranger Things wants to be the most intense, emotional, and final chapter of the series. From the moment Hawkins is quarantined and the Upside Down becomes easily accessible, the show makes it clear that nothing is supposed to feel safe anymore. The tone is bleak, the stakes are supposedly world ending, and the cast is bigger than ever. But despite all of that, season 5 often felt like it was trying to be meaningful without fully earning it.

One of the biggest problems is the urgency, or the lack of it. Even on the literal day the world is meant to end, the characters take their sweet time. Plans unfold bizarrely, conversations stretch on, and scenes play out in a way that completely undercuts the danger. The show keeps telling us the apocalypse is coming, but it never truly feels like it. There's barely any panic and if there is it's about the wrong things, no desperation, no sense that every second matters, which makes the threat feel strangely hollow.

This issue connects directly to the season's struggle with consequences. For a show that spent years building Vecna as the ultimate villain, his defeat feels surprisingly easy. The final battle is chaotic-ish, but not devastating. Characters survive explosions, a literal shadow monster, collapsing spaces, don't forget no demogorgons, and then Vecna is just... gone. No major or side character dies in the final confrontation. No irreversible loss happens. For a season marketed as the end, it leaves you sitting there thinking, that's it?

By season 5, plot armour is impossible to ignore. With such a massive cast, it starts to feel like none of the core characters are actually in danger. Compared to earlier seasons, where even side characters felt vulnerable, this season plays it extremely safe. Tension disappears when you know everyone, even semi important will make it out alive.

The pacing only makes this worse. The story constantly jumps between plot lines, then drops them for an episode at a time. One threat feels urgent, then completely fades into the background while something else takes over. Instead of building suspense, the season feels scattered. You've left wondering why certain disasters just... stop happening.

The pacing and logic problems are especially noticeable in moments like the demogorgon fight at the Turnbow house. After an intense battle involving bashing, flames, and barbed wire, the demogorgon isn't killed because the group clearly wants to find its "home" later. The house itself is left completely destroyed, and the family, the Turnbows, who were drugged and taken to a barn for the trap are never shown dealing with the aftermath. Where do they live now? How do they recover from that? The show never answers. Then, in the final battle, the group is supposed to be walking straight into the Demogorgons' territory to confront Vecna, yet the creatures are conveniently absent. It's hard not to notice that their absence feels less like strategy and more like plot armour, if the Demogorgons were actually there, most of the cast would've been fried. Moments like this highlight how the season tells us the stakes are huge, but quietly removes the real danger, and any real consequences, when it matters most.

The mythology also stumbles. The reveal that the Upside Down is actually a wormhole rather than a parallel dimension is meant to deepen the lore, but it feels oddly underwhelming. After seasons of mystery and season 5's horror, "wormhole" feels basic, and it raises questions about earlier seasons that never get answered. It's hard not to notice that some long-established rules seem to be rewritten, especially knowing the Duffers admitted the season wasn't fully planned in advance.

STRANGER THINGS

The Upside Down itself loses its fear factor. In earlier seasons, it felt forbidden and terrifying. Now, it's accessible to almost anyone, and somehow, most of the characters are surprisingly calm about being there, even when it's their first time. That sense of awe and dread that once defined the show is mostly gone.

Emotionally, Season 5 tries, but often relies on music to do the work. The final episodes lean heavily on emotional pin points, like Purple Rain, to create impact. While those scenes were undeniably powerful online, they feel manufactured. Without the soundtrack, many of these moments wouldn't hit nearly as hard.

The Will coming out scene is another moment that feels stretched. As viewers, we already knew. Spending nearly six minutes on a reveal that wasn't surprising, and staging it with almost the entire cast present, makes it feel awkward rather than intimate. The one by one "Or me" moments come off as staged and unintentionally cringey, taking away from what could have been a quiet, meaningful scene.

By the end, with Eleven choosing to stay behind in the Upside Down and an 18 month time jump showing life moving on, the finale feels strangely subdued. There's closure, but not devastation. Not shock. Just a sense that the story stopped rather than ended.

That said, Season 5 isn't without its strengths. On a technical and performance level, the show is still impressive. The acting remains pretty strong, especially from Lucas and Max, whose scenes carry real emotional weight even when the writing around them falters. The darker tone is effective, and visually, the season delivers some of the most intense imagery the series has ever had. There are moments that feel genuinely heavy, including a scene where it truly seems like the main characters are about to lose, as Demogorgons close in and defeat feels unavoidable. In that brief moment before Will intervenes, the danger finally feels real. When the show slows down and lets tension build rather than rushing to explain lore or escalate threats, it briefly recaptures the emotional depth that made Stranger Things resonate in the first place.

Final Thoughts

Season 5 of Stranger Things is ambitious, complicated, and visually intense, but it struggles to deliver real emotional weight. It wants to be final without committing to real consequences, epic without real danger, and devastating without truly letting anything break. While some fans may enjoy the spectacle, many viewers will likely find themselves preferring earlier seasons, when the stakes felt real and the story felt tighter.

It's not a bad season, but for a finale, it doesn't live up to what Stranger Things once was.

The Golden Record

by Ellie Cheong

The Voyager spacecraft carries a unique time capsule inside, known as the Golden Record. Sent into space in 1977, the record encodes sounds and images about our planet for future space life to find.

What is on the record?

As stated, the gold plated disk is a time capsule of earth which contains sounds, music, and images, curated to portray the diversity of our life and human culture on earth. If successfully uncoded, future space life will discover the following:

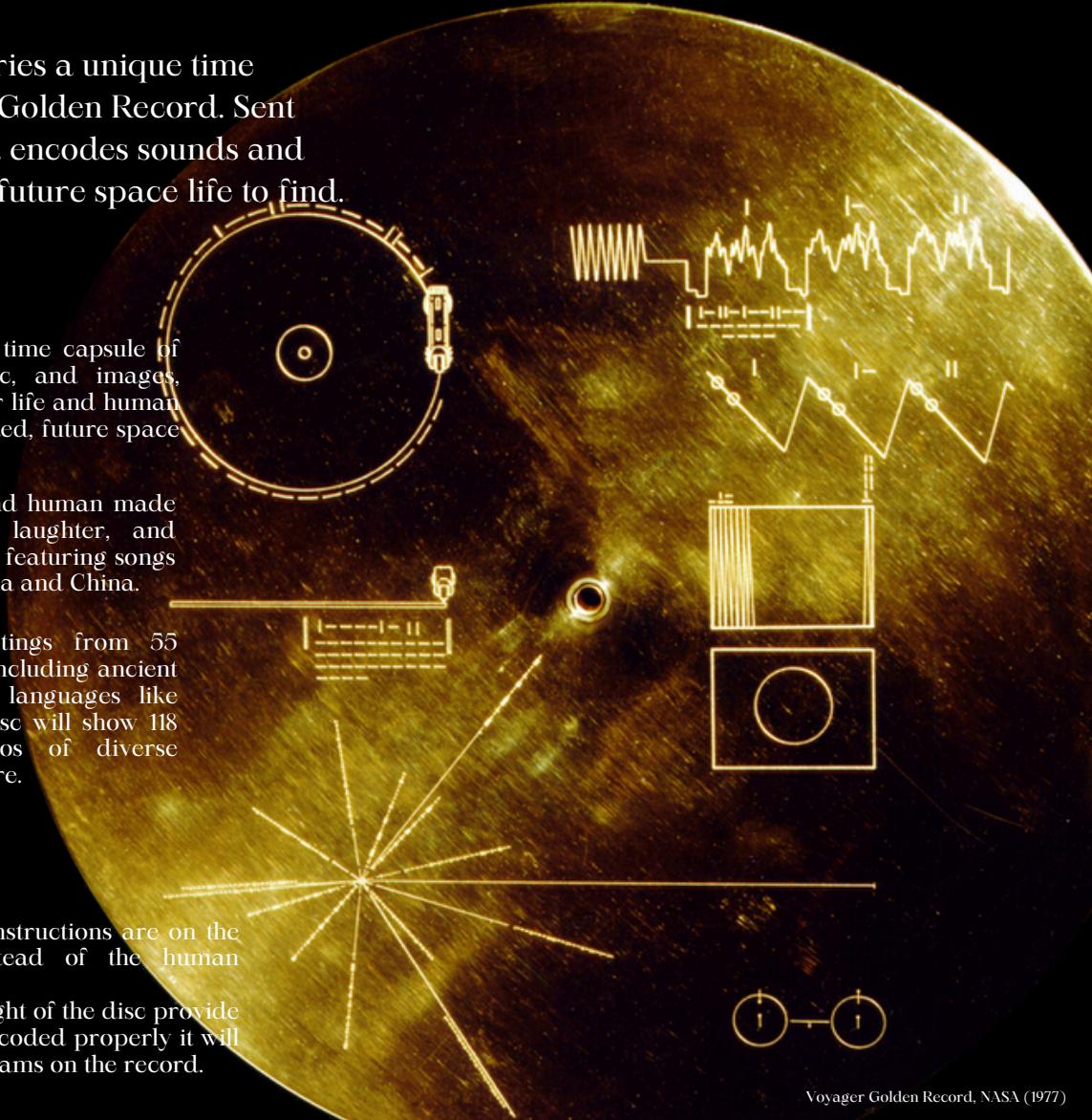
A 12 minute assortment of natural and human made sounds. This includes the ocean, laughter, and heartbeats. Then 90 minutes of music, featuring songs from Beethoven to songs from Bulgaria and China.

Following the music, spoken greetings from 55 different languages will be featured including ancient tongues like Akkadian to modern languages like English and Mandarin. Lastly, the disc will show 118 encoded images, containing photos of diverse landscapes, cultures, animals, and more.

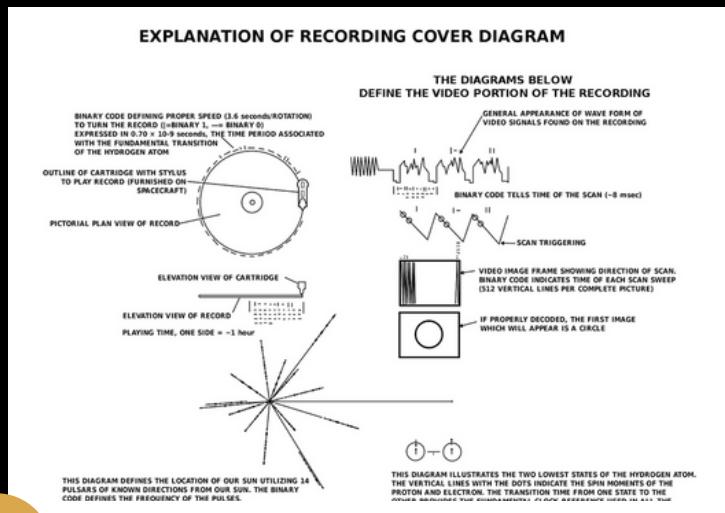
How does it work?

To help future space life encode it, instructions are on the disk using science and math instead of the human languages.

The hydrogen atoms on the bottom right of the disc provide a universal way to measure time. If encoded properly it will be used to decode the rest of the diagrams on the record.



Voyager Golden Record, NASA (1977)



Then on the bottom left, there's lines that point to pulsars to show where our Sun is in space. The diagrams above the pulsar map show how long the record plays, how to place a needle on the record, and how fast to spin it. Finally, the diagrams on the top right explain how picture signals are read line by line to make images, with the first correct image appearing as a circle.

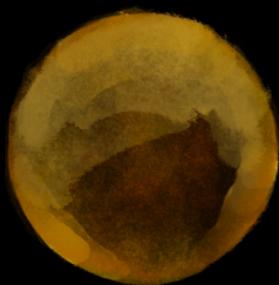
As of January 5th, 2026, the Voyager 1 spacecraft containing the Golden Record is more than 170 astronomical units away from Earth (more than 25 billion km away or 1 light day away), making it the furthest human made object from Earth. Scientists believe that the record has a five billion year long shelf life, and hope that one day its voices will speak for our planet when the sun becomes a red giant, reducing our existence into ash.

Interview With Ms Crisp

by Giselle Moldovanos

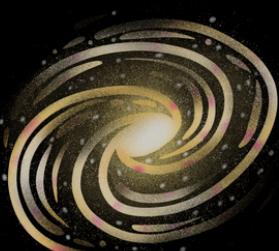
Q1:

"What are your thoughts on the idea of sending a record of Earth into space for potential extraterrestrial life to discover?"



Q2:

"In your opinion, do the sounds, music, and images chosen for the Golden Record accurately represent life on Earth? Why or why not?"



Q3:

"How do you feel about the Golden Record being designed to last billions of years, even after humanity may no longer exist?"



A1:

"I think the idea of having a record of Earth shooting through space for any technologically advanced extraterrestrial life to discover is both exciting and a little scary. Based on the number of stars with orbiting planets in our galaxy, let alone the entire universe, the probability of there being communicative, intelligent life out there is very high. This recording will act like a beacon leading back to Earth. The consequence of that is yet unknown."

A2:

"As the sounds, music, and images for the Golden Record were made in 1977, I believe that many of them will be outdated by the time they are received by another life form. We are in a stage of rapid technological advances, as well as growing concerns over climate change. The Earth may look and sound very different in only a few decades from now."

A3:

"The Golden Record has travelled one light-day in 49 Earth years, and the nearest star to our Sun with orbiting planets is 4.25 light years away. It would therefore take approximately 76,000 years to travel there. This is 1/100,000th of the 5 billion years the Golden Record is expected to survive in space. Five billion years is also the expected time frame for the Sun to become a red giant, engulfing Earth as it expands. The farthest star to ours with known orbiting planets would take about 2.3 billion years for the Record to travel to. Therefore, the likelihood of this recording reaching extraterrestrial life before Earth is not likely. At this point in time, what inhabits Earth may no longer be the Humanity we know, but at least the record of our existence will be known. I find that comforting."

2026 trends



2025 held onto trends from years prior, but also laid the groundwork for the fashion of 2026. An obvious late 2000's resurgence is on the rise, not just in fashion, but in lifestyle, too. The idea of being a clean girl is phasing out, and we are moving towards physical media, lower screen time, personal style, niche interests, digicams and wired earbuds, all staples of a time previous to where we are now. A time when there wasn't necessarily less to worry about, just different, less dire, critical things. This concept of authenticity, personality within your appearance and wearing things because you like them is going to be the main theme for 2026.

Unique silhouettes, especially with tops: We've seen the Hollister Blouse, the babydoll tops, etc. But within this lack of personal style fatigue, we are going to start seeing something cool and perhaps a bit different; funky, scoopy, tops. Forget the days of consistent variations of the same polyester tank, and welcome the bolero, the both tight and loose T shirt, shirts covered in buttons and grommets and weird embellishments.



'headphones' by Mervi Emilia



Skinny (or at least skinnier) Jeans: Maybe you won't be wearing them, but the influencers will be trying to sell you them, as will your favorite stores. Honestly, with some boots, I don't really see why not.



September 23, 2010 by Viviana love

São Paulo, Brazil. March 2009

Messy girl over clean girl.: We're already seeing the messy bun over slick back, a clear indicator of what's to come.



'Limelight paparazzi!' by Movie Stars and Rockets

Less influence via social media!

It's pretty safe to say that this last year was one in which the term "chronically online" felt embarrassing. In fact, the Financial Times declared 2025 the first year in which social media use decreased drastically since around 2014, with the highest drop in usage being Gen Z. Personal style, authenticity, analogue & chronically offline, all things soon to become far trendier than what has been the norm.



10 celeb looks that define a decade

layering and maximalism, messy girl adjacent, also lace accents



2007 – 2014

This like, lowkey tumblr, Addison Rae rebrand, feathers, tassels, and yes, wired earbuds aesthetic is already big but is only likely to become bigger as the year progresses.

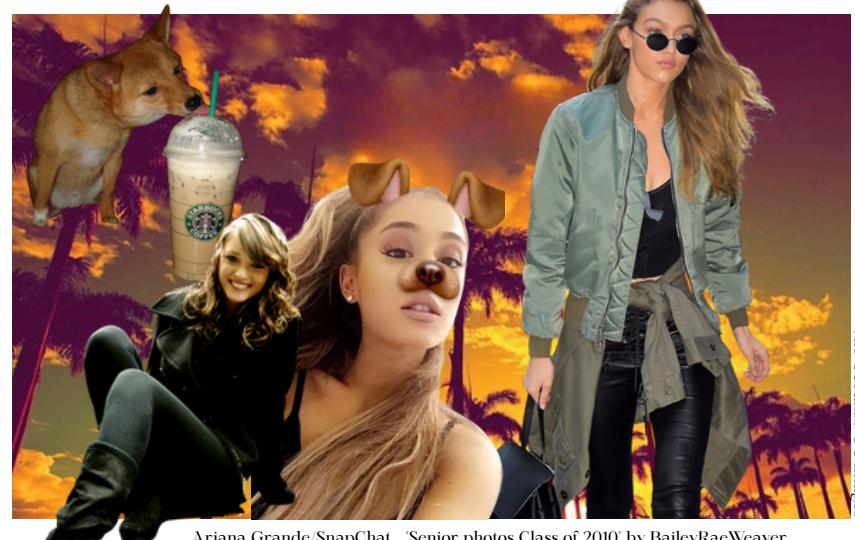


Miss Russia 2010 by Junguyen666



Heidi Jones for Marie Claire/ Gucci Getty Images/ Lucky Brand/Ruby Lyn

2016 = clean girl, updated



Mo Caballos/GC Images

...niche and chic.

Hilarious that these two words have somehow wormed their way into our everyday vocabulary without anyone really knowing what they mean. The truth is, if everyone is doing it, if there is a pretty large demographic for it, it's probably not niche. Like, ipods simply just are not niche. But the concept within the fashion world is yet another indicator of this craving for not dressing like everyone else, for thrifting and knowledge. And like, the word chic honestly just encapsulates everything prior to the year 2020 when fast fashion took over and didn't really leave.

by Charlie Gardner

HOOPIN' AND HOLLERIN'

by Alanna Felt & Liz Allan

Spectrum Sports for 2026 have been quite a success so far. The basketball teams have been taking the court by storm, and have been since the beginning of the season in November of 2025. Teams have been fighting hard, and it's paying off for each and every group.

The Jr Girls have been crushing it, winning all 3 of the games they've played as of January. While the whole team has played a big part in their winning streak, one player has stood out thus far. Kayla Felt has been a major contributor to the team, with her countless blocks as well as often leading the team's points. As these girls continue to play with ferocity and skill, we would love to see them make it to Islands as the season continues this year. If they keep the momentum, we believe they have a good shot at going.

Speaking of having a good shot, the Sr Girls have had some incredible shots and plays this season. They were 2-3 in the league as of January, but they continue to push themselves and improve everyday. Their most exciting game so far was definitely against Esquimalt, where they got their first win of the season, and with a 26 point lead! This could not have been achieved without hard work and dedication from this whole team and coaches, but Sierra Hilva with her endless hustle as well as being a major team scorer has aided in much of this team's success this far.

Another team we have seen success from so far this season is the Jr Boys team, who have demonstrated their vigor and drive. Although they are 1-6, this team continues to work hard and shoot for the stars. They've been playing well as a whole but without a doubt, much of their accomplishments can be attributed to Spencer Schadt, who has been a major scorer on the team overall and has shown much skill and improvement so far this season.

The Sr Boys have also seen improvement since the beginning of the season as the team has gotten time to mesh together. They were 4-2 in league play, and have had many tournament opportunities so far. Their most exciting game would probably be when they played Sardis in one of their tournaments and won 106-103 in double overtime. The Sr Boys are a powerhouse team, but one player has stood out so far in many of their plays. Levi Steel is such a competent and enthusiastic athlete who is often the lead scorer for the team. With the team's statistics looking as fortuitous as they are now, we would love to see them push themselves to Islands as the season continues into 2026.

We have seen amazing plays from all the Spectrum Thunder basketball teams this season. we look forward to seeing more from each and every athlete on these teams and hopefully watching some of our season predictions come into play this year. Good luck Spectrum Thunder and keep taking them by storm!



album of the month: fiona apple's tidal

by Kaiya Nagel

When you first glance at the cover of *Tidal*, you are met with the gaze of a woman with shocking blue eyes. Her expression is difficult to place. It conveys disappointment in one moment, and apathy in the next. The woman on the cover is none other than Fiona Apple McAfee-Maggart, the artist behind the 1996 album *Tidal*. McAfee-Maggart possessed prodigal skill from a young age. She was classically trained in piano as a child, and began to compose her own music at the age of eight. By age eleven, she was singing it, too. Throughout her teenage years, she grew more and more dedicated to her musical endeavors, in part due to the trauma and bullying she faced in her childhood. Her fixation on sharing her voice with the world led her to release her debut album *Tidal* at the age of eighteen under the name Fiona Apple.

While Fiona Apple never completely confined herself to one genre of music, her debut is best described as a fusion of alternative pop and jazz pop. The album opens with arguably one of its strongest songs: "Sleep to Dream." The track's percussion marches a strong, steady beat. Then, McAfee-Maggart's voice rises from the order with a force that defies the status quo of the song. "Sleep to Dream" is a declaration of character and independence, making it the perfect song to open the album. The ending of "Sleep to Dream" transforms into wonderful, lilting piano, which fades out to give room for the second, calmer song titled "Sullen Girl." I tend to favour Fiona Apple's louder music, but the beauty of her slow, sweeping songs is not lost on me. The piano is ripe with emotion. McAfee-Maggart performs with admirable honesty and energy. Each track on *Tidal* is danceable, so much so that I often find myself imagining choreography in my head as I listen.



Fiona Apple, *Tidal* (1996)

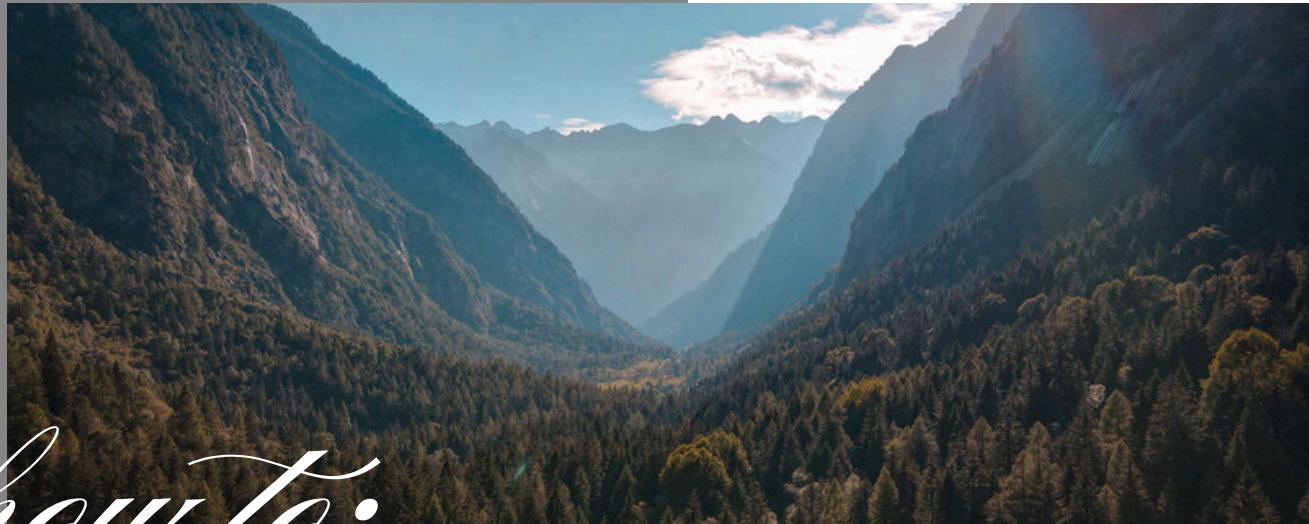
Fiona Apple's use of figurative language and masterful lyricism only enhances the sensitivity of the instruments. In my favorite track, "Shadowboxer," she compares her relationship to a boxing match as she never knows her lover's next move. In "Carrion," McAfee-Maggart sings the lyric "My feel for you, boy / Is decaying in front of me / Like the carrion of a murdered prey." She is referring to losing feelings for her partner, and explaining that her love was snuffed out by actions, rather than by time or something out of their control. While many of *Tidal*'s songs reference men and love, I would hardly call them love songs. This is for the fact that when Fiona Apple sings, she accuses. Her voice is full of hurt, yet somehow always holds an element of hope. Her songs often contain an emotional buildup, starting slow, soft and predictable, then dissolving into pure passion. The whole album is incredibly uplifting. It is a showcase of a dedicated artist, and a spirited, intelligent woman. *Tidal* could not have been a better title for McAfee-Maggart's debut. Its shiny, swaying contents are reminiscent of the ocean itself.

Tidal is one of the most impressive debut albums I can name, especially with Fiona Apple writing all of the music in her teens. However, this was only the beginning of McAfee-Maggart's achievements. She has since released four new albums and it is difficult for me to decide which of these is my favourite. Recently I've landed on *Fetch the Bolt Cutters*. Released in 2020, this album demonstrates Fiona Apple's vocal abilities in new ways. Her voice shrieks and shakes with the ferocity of a caged animal. McAfee-Maggart continues to release music, and is constantly growing and changing her style. This ability to subvert audience expectations makes her a fun artist to support. The release of *Tidal* marked the beginning of an incredible musical career, and a time when pop was making a comeback in the music industry.



Fiona in the 30 Years of Rolling Stone (1998)

Fiona Apple, *Tidal* (1996)



how to: DETOX FROM YOUR PHONE

by Samara McDowell

One of the largest issues with our generation is our attachment and addiction to our phones. Phones aren't all that bad; they can be used for learning, entertaining, saving time, connection, you fill in the blank. These can be very helpful assets when it comes to having a phone, but the issue is the abuse of these assets. There is nothing wrong with being entertained, but there is with procrastination. There is nothing wrong with saving time, but there is with being lazy. There is nothing wrong with online social connection, but there is with ignoring real life connections. We cannot put the blame of our phone addictions solely on the device, but rather the hand that is holding it. All that must be done is to let go.

Phones have an unlimited amount of app options and distractions, and the main problem that users face with phone use is social media. It is so easy for the creators of our favorite apps to grab ahold of the user and enticing them to hold on too. In fact, most people believe that they use their phone too much, and it is mostly due to social apps. But what is being done about it? We have the first step down: we are aware of the problem. But what next?

Here are 5 tactics that I have found most helpful in reducing your phone use:

1. Give yourself things to do

The main reason why people let themselves become lost in their phone is due to boredom. It is the lack of having or even wanting to do something productive that leads a person to their phone. Ways to avoid this issue is by busying yourself. There is always something to be done, but the hardest part is knowing what to do. So here are some activities that would keep you away from your phone:

Homework: You phone can be a great escape from doing something you don't want to do, such as your homework, but the habit of procrastination is something you do not want to keep, especially for college or future careers. I would also suggest keeping your phone in another room while you work, and if research is necessary, use a computer.

Create Something: You do not need to be artistic for this activity, just find a project you are passionate about and get started.

Make Plans: Go out with friends or family, and maybe leave your phone at home if you don't need it.

2. Take breaks from your phone

You do not need your phone attached to you 24/7. In fact, studies have indicated that excess use of social media correlates with negative mental health outcomes, including loneliness, depression, and anxiety.

Sean Hughes, a student from Dublin Business School, conducted a study on 73 participants and found that those who spent comparatively more time on social media scored higher on the depression, anxiety, and stress scale.

"Learn how to dedicate the time for technology and the time for no technology," says Dr. Larry Rosen, a research psychologist and co-author of "Distracted Mind: Ancient Brains in a High-Tech World."

Another way to distance yourself from your phone is by picking one day out of the week to not use your phone. By doing this you are increasing your independence from your phone and giving yourself a break from the noise of social media.

3. Go grey

The content that phones deliver are strategically designed to grab our attention and keep ahold of it. One way to loosen your phone's grip is by setting your phone to grey scale. By using this format you are hopefully removing the interest and desirability of your phone. You can leave it on all the time, or just temporarily to minimize distraction.

On iPhone: go to Settings > Accessibility > Display and Text Size > Colour and toggle on.

On Samsung: go to Settings > Accessibility > Visibility Enhancements > Colour Correction, toggle on both Colour Correction and Greyscale.

4. Delete time wasting apps

Most apps can often be unnecessary, so take the time to sort through your phone and remove apps that are stealing too much of your time. Can't decide which apps to remove? Go to your screentime in the Settings app and see which apps you have been using the most and ask yourself; "Is this app helping me? Am I bettering from this? Is this good for me?" If not, then don't let it waste your time any longer.

5. Do not charge your phone next to your bed

Doom scrolling can be at its worst when you are lying in bed waiting to fall asleep and getting one dopamine hit after another from the content that you are consuming. These hits will not catch up with you until you finally put your phone down. Due to each video being so short, your brain does not catch up with the amount of information you were giving it, and once you put down your phone your brain is still processing and reliving what you saw. This will lead to inability to sleep, and possibly picking up that phone again, leading to a vicious cycle of sleep deprivation.

Detoxing from your phone does not mean that they need to be wiped out of your life completely; it means taking back control of how and why to use it. Phones are a beneficial thing to have, but when we let what is supposed to be a tool become an addiction, that is when it can be our greatest adversary. I hope that the tactics that I have listed are a helpful way to combat the urge to use your phone more than you should. By staying busy with meaningful activities, taking intentional breaks, reducing visual stimulation, removing unnecessary apps, and creating healthier habits around sleep, you can slowly loosen your dependence on your device. These small changes may seem simple, but over time they can make a significant difference. Letting go of constant phone use allows you to be more present, productive, and connected to the world around you. The choice is not about abandoning technology, but about using it wisely, so that it serves you, rather than it being the other way around.

