



(From left) Ewen Bremner, Ewan McGregor, Jonny Lee Miller and Robert Carlyle star in T2 Trainspotting. PHOTO: SONY PICTURES

Nostalgia spotting

Trainspotting sequel reunites the gang in Edinburgh with a rock soundtrack, fast-cutting images and flashbacks

REVIEW / COMEDY-DRAMA

T2 TRAINSPOTTING (R21)
117 minutes/Now showing/★★★★☆

The story: Two decades after the events of the first movie, the gang is reunited under desperate circumstances. The previously missing Renton (Ewan McGregor) shows up in the Edinburgh neighbourhood that is still home to Sick Boy (Jonny Lee Miller) and Spud (Ewan Bremner). Heroin still casts a shadow over the group. The vicious Begbie (Robert Carlyle) shows up to repay the injury done to him in the first movie.

John Lui

Was there another Danny Boyle movie as Boyle-ish as Trainspotting (1996)? With that work, the British director captured magic. With its sequel T2, he is out to prove that he can out-Boyle his 1990s self. And the first 30 minutes are a total, exhilarating recall – the rock soundtrack married to fast-cutting images is Boyle at his kinetic best. Blasts of visual joy come back in spurts over the film's 117 minutes. The thrill is not just in the chase scenes. Boyle is the master of the music montage, a master deejay in

matching rock beats to dialogue and action. When Begbie (Carlyle), who belongs in the pantheon of all-time great movie villains, goes berserk, there is a jolt to the senses. When heroin hits the vein, Boyle shows how Brian Eno's soundscapes matched to time-and-space-melting set design might be the only way to describe the opiate experience. There is delicious Scottish-flavoured swearing in this R21 picture. Boyle and the original movie's screenwriter John Hodge, loosely adapting Irvine Welsh's Porno, his follow-up 2002 novel to his 1993

work Trainspotting, offer casual nods to how 20 years of gentrification and Eastern European immigration have changed Scotland. There is nothing of the savage bleakness of the original, however. The story, once it gets the gang together, runs out of ideas. The remainder blends a caper film, "remember this?" flashbacks and gentle whining about getting older. Quite entertaining, but as Renton observes at one point: "It's just nostalgia! You're a tourist in your own youth."

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Bittymacbeth inspired by American Idol

Eddino Abdul Hadi
Music Correspondent

Home-grown singer-songwriter Beth Yap, better known by her nom de plume Bittymacbeth, comes from a musical family and has been playing the piano since she was six. But it was only after watching TV singing competition American Idol that she started harbouring dreams of becoming a singer. The 22-year-old features in the seventh episode of the third season of ST Sessions, The Straits Times' online video series which features rising talents in the home-grown

music scene performing stripped-down live sets. Currently a student at Berklee College of Music in Boston, Yap says in the video: "I grew up in a musical family, but it was only when I was 12, I was watching American Idol, seeing all these people live out their dreams of being singers, that I thought that, hey, I kind of want to do it too." Her father was a guitar teacher and her older brother plays music as well. Her songs espouse positivity. An original tune that she performs in the episode, Haters Gon' Hate, is about "taking time to understand and listen to people instead of judg-



Singer-songwriter Beth Yap comes from a musical family. PHOTO: ST VIDEO

ing them on preconceived notions". The song is from her debut album, Beauty For Ashes, which she launched with a concert at the Esplanade Recital Studio last year. The release went to No. 1 on the local iTunes and Apple Music's R&B/Soul charts. Yap, whose music encompasses genres such as soul, jazz, pop and

funk, says in the ST Sessions video that she wants to put her music education to good use and give back to the creative scene here. "I just hope that with everything that I learn and all the opportunities (that I get), and all the people out there (that I meet), that I'll be able to grow so much more and not only make my own music better, but really contribute more to Singapore's music and arts scene." ST Sessions' third season is part of a series of digital video programmes produced in a partnership between the Info-communications Media Development Authority of Singapore and Singapore Press Holdings. The new season features eight acts, including singer-songwriter Tim De Cotta and indie duo Tom-girl. A new episode is launched every Friday.

• View the video at <http://str.sg/st-sessions>

Advantage ensemble

REVIEW / CONCERT

THE JOURNEY CONTINUES
re:Sound
Victoria Concert Hall/Wednesday

Chang Tou Liang

The day re:Sound, Singapore's first professional chamber orchestra, gave its inaugural concert will be remembered with fondness. Its second concert, conducted by Singapore Symphony Orchestra (SSO) associate conductor Jason Lai on Wednesday, showed that all the critical acclaim and good notices were fully justified. The essence of chamber music lies in diminutive forces, with a small number of individuals listening and responding to one another in a show of intimate cooperation. This was well-illustrated in avant-garde Hungarian composer Gyorgy Ligeti's Ramifications, scored for 12 string players, each with a different part. With six players tuned a quarter-tone sharper than the others, the effect was one of deliberate aural disorientation through constantly wavering pitches. Like a floor that shifts under one's feet, the sound evolved from an incessant buzzing, through high-pitched tinnitus to subterranean growls, all achieved with utmost control at low volumes. This "music" then evaporated, leaving the conductor beating time in thin air and ambient silence. These startling plays on sonics will explain why film director Stanley Kubrick so effectively used Ligeti's music for his iconic movies 2001: A Space Odyssey (1968) and The Shining (1980). Altogether more traditional was Beethoven's Fourth Piano Concerto in G Major with veteran Penang-born pianist Dennis Lee as soloist. His delivery of its opening chords was pivotal, a secure statement borne from a wealth of experience, which defined the tenor of this reading. His was a more classical-attuned view, of transparent textures, measured gestures and no little nimbleness, as opposed to the boisterously Romantic version offered by Nicholas Angelich recently with the SSO. Both Lee and Angelich had much to offer in this masterpiece, but one factor that tipped in Lee's favour was the smaller ensemble, which revealed often glossed-over details besides providing sensitive accompaniment. The rapt conversation of Orpheus and the Furies in the slow movement was a lovely interlude before the unbridled jollity of the finale. The programming of Mendelssohn's Third Symphony (also known as the "Scottish") seemed like straying into SSO territory, but this was an enthralling account that revelled in the chamber forces utilised. Instead of falling victim to the concert hall's sometimes feared reverberance, the strings sang without inhibition, while woodwinds and brass rang with bell-like clarity. Conductor Lai's tempos were excellently judged and the solemnity of the opening movement (evoking the ruins of Edinburgh's Holyrood castle) contrasted well with the vigorous Allegro that followed. Storm clouds hovered menacingly, but sunshine prevailed in this luminous account, which also gloried in the snappy and mercurial Scherzo, and nostalgia of the song-like slow movement. The martial finale did not strike a warlike posture for long, instead delighting in the ending chorale cast in the major key.

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