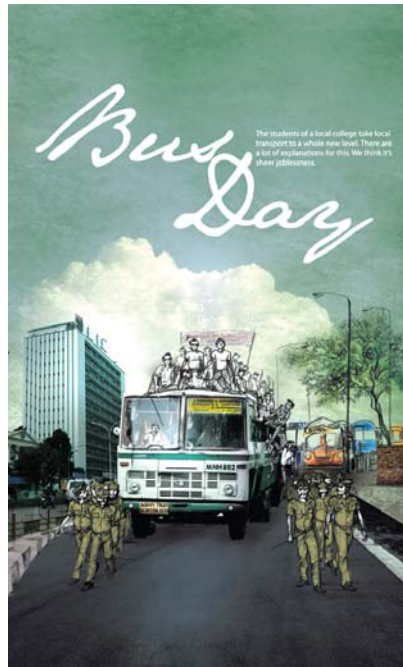
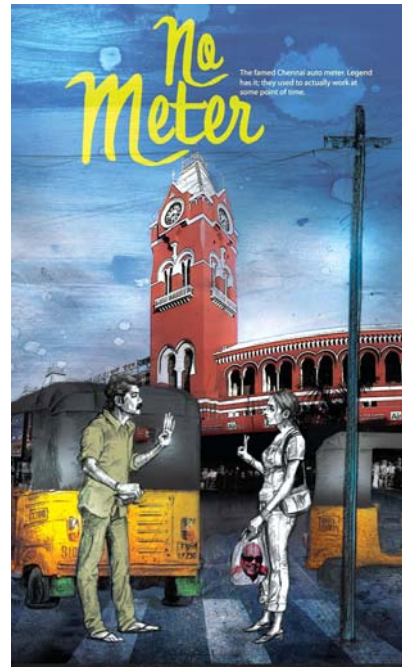


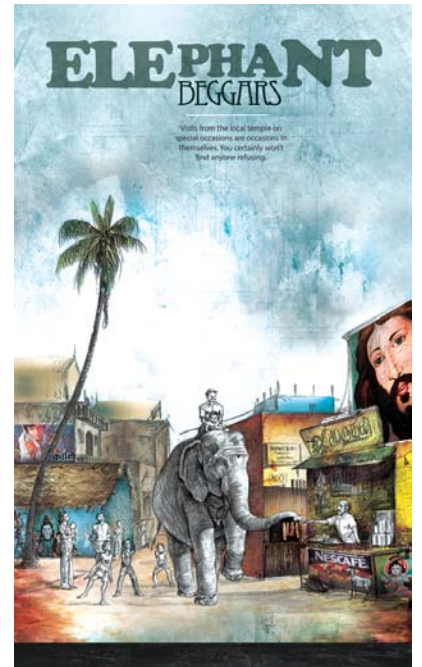
JANUARY. It is called chai cutting. And is performed every time you ask for a cuppa. The chai may be grossly overcooked, but you can't beat the delivery.



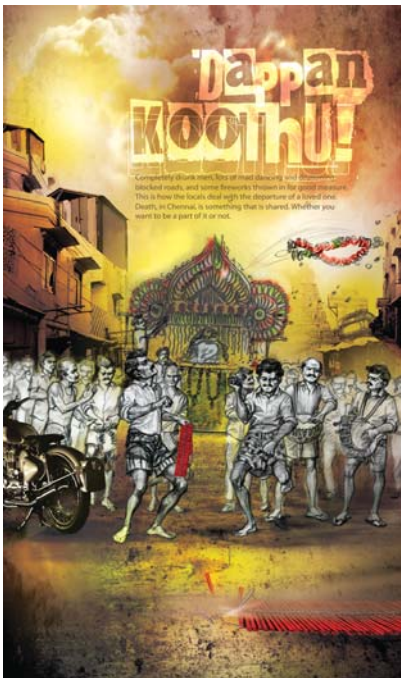
FEBRUARY. The students of a local college take local transport to a whole new level. There are a lot of expectations for this. We think it's sheer joblessness.



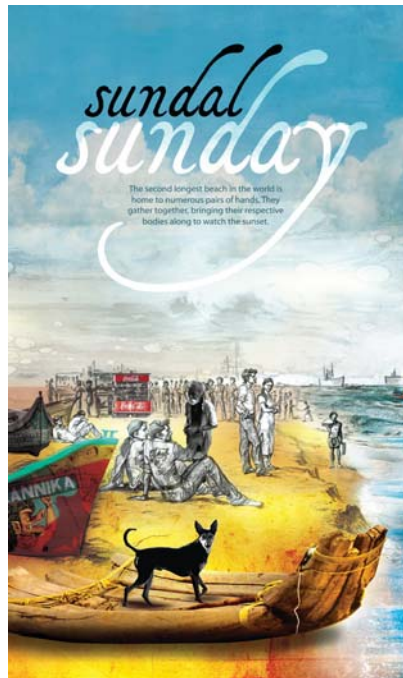
MARCH. The famed Chennai auto meter. Legend has it; they used to actually work at some point of time.



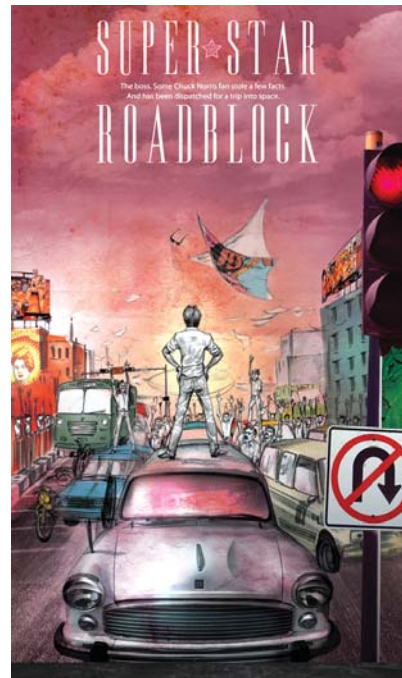
APRIL. Visits from the local temple on special occasions are occasions in themselves. You certainly won't find anyone refusing.



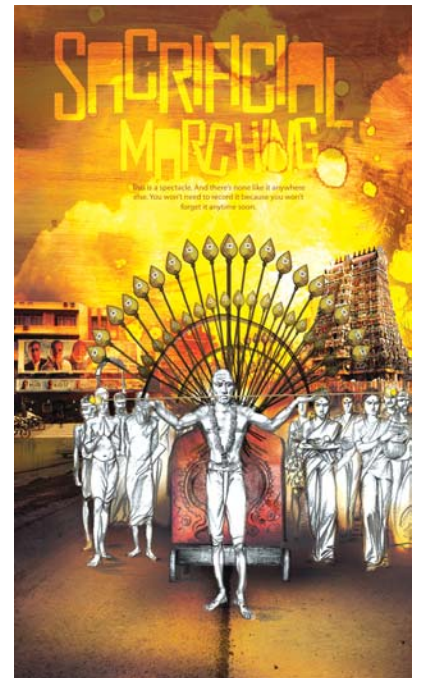
MAY. Completely drunken men, lots of mad dancing and drumming, blocked roads, and some fireworks thrown in for good measure. This is how the locals deal with the departure of a loved one. Death in Chennai is something that is shared. Whether you want to be part of it or not.



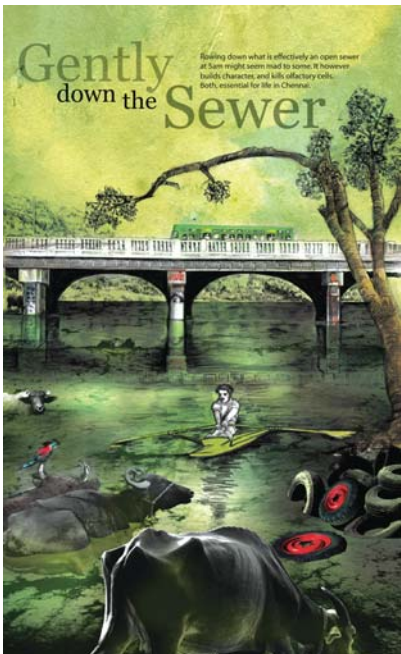
JUNE. The second longest beach in the world is home to numerous pairs of hands. They gather together, bringing their respective bodies along to watch the sunset.



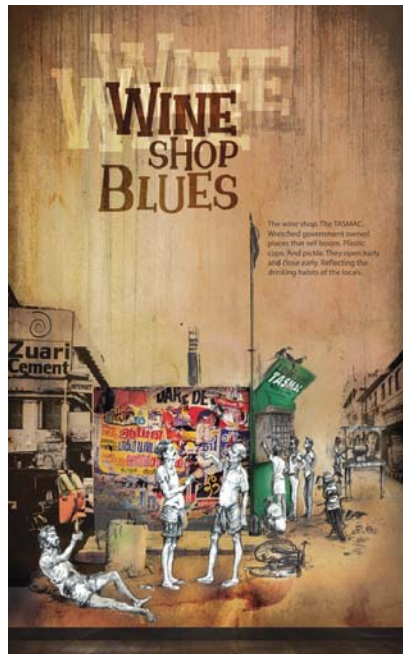
JULY. The boss. Some Chuck Norris fan stole a new facts. And has been dispatched for a trip into space.



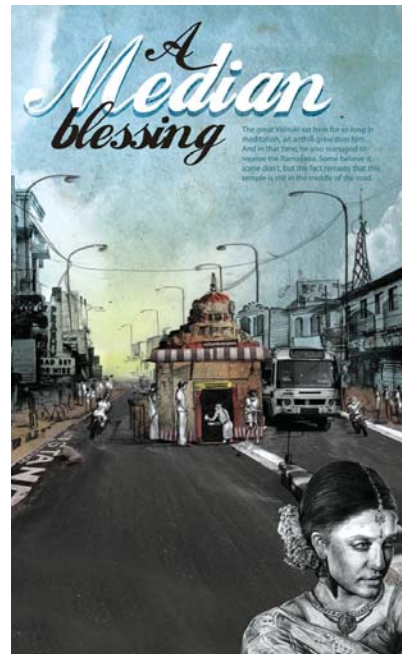
AUGUST. This is a spectacle. And there's none like it anywhere else. You won't need to record it because you won't forget it anytime soon.



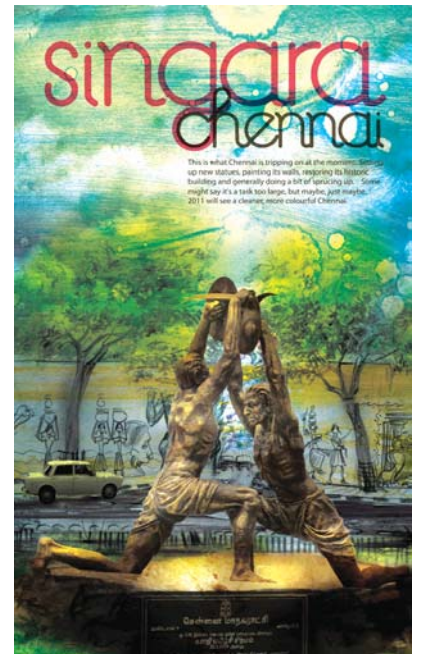
SEPTEMBER. Rowing down what is effectively an open sewer at 5 am might seem mad to some. It however builds character, kills olfactory cells. Both essential for life in Chennai.



OCTOBER. The wine shop. The TASMAG. Wretched government owned places that sell booze. Plastic cups. And pickle. They open early and close early. Reflecting the drinking habits of the locals.



NOVEMBER. The great Valmiki sat here for so long in meditation, an ant hill grew over him. And in that time, he also managed to receive the Ramayana. Some believe it, some don't, but the fact remains that this temple is still in the middle of the road.



DECEMBER. This is what Chennai is tripping on at the moment. Setting up new statues, painting its walls, restoring its historic buildings and generally doing a bit of sprucing up. Some might say it's a task too large, but maybe, just maybe, 2011 will see a cleaner, more colourful Chennai.

◀ The making of a Madras calendar

Why are we writing about a 2010 calendar this late in the year? you ask. There is an explanation for the utter lack of timeliness, but the fact is it doesn't matter. Because to think of Indian-Bred 2010 as a mere calendar would be to miss the point. This is a work of art which celebrates the quotidian life in Chennai, or Madras, if you prefer the capital's older name. If you are fortunate enough to have acquired one of the 500 copies its creators, the founders of Whoa Mama Design (WMD), handed out for free, hang it someplace where everyone can enjoy the witty illustrations and commentary.

Live in one place for too long and there is a danger that, over time, you will become inured to both its peculiar charms and its undeniable warts. We know that our capital city is distinct from other metropolises like

Shanghai, Singapore City or even Mumbai, but what are some of the core characteristics that set it apart? Capturing the subliminal essence of contemporary Madras in twelve images is no mean task. But the WMD team – Shaun D'sa (art), Anek Ahuja (interactive) and Nishant Philip John (writer) – has done it with style. Those who call Chennai home, hometown, or both, will probably regard Indian-Bred 2010 as a love poem to the city.

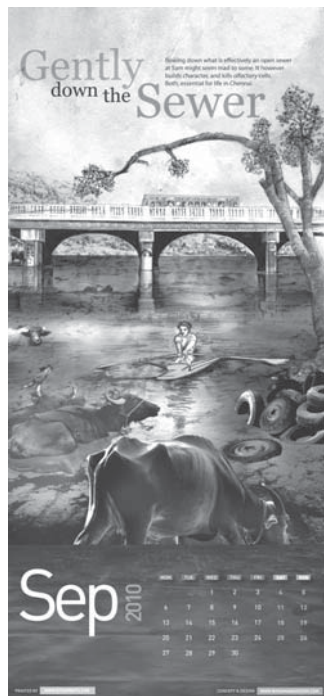
● by
Vijaysree Venkatraman

The creative trio, with an average age of 25, uses mixed media to depict vibrant local scenes. The old formula – finding a dozen photogenic Madras landmarks, allotting a picture to each month, and writing literal captions to match – is far too passé for them. The new form combines photography and artistic rendering, with pithy commentary to boot. People become vivid pencil illustrations while buildings stay put as photographic elements. "Besides, the idea was to make local graphics stand out in all their glory: be it on a fishing boat, a matchbox label, or the ubiquitous movie poster," says D'Sa. "We see these things day in and day out, but tend to overlook them."

While the trio's imagination soars and carries you along, every frame is still grounded in reality. Take, for instance, the September sheet with the poetic name *Gently down the Sewer*. As it happens, people do scull in the smelly waters of the Adyar River. Mildly amused at

my surprise, D'Sa informs me that the Madras Boat Club conducts rowing training and holds races on that polluted water body. "Anek used to do a bit of rowing himself; he was the one who came up with the title," he adds. The discarded rubber tyres on the bank are real, as are the buffaloes wallowing in the dark slime. And the fantastic-looking bird perched on the phlegmatic beast? "That red-blue bird probably escaped from the nearby Guindy Park," D'Sa quips.

Even the unlikeliest scene contains a kernel of truth, and that is precisely what makes deconstructing these images such fun. With December's *Singaara Chennai* they end on an optimistic note. "Maybe, just maybe, 2011 will see a cleaner, more colourful Chennai," John writes in the blurb. These are all good ideas: restoring historic buildings, better civic ameni-



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From 'bunktea' to Nawabi days

What is bunk tea? Tea made in the bunkers? Tea not made from tea leaves? We were at the foothills of St. Thomas' Mount. Richard O'Connor had come to meet me because we wanted to make a recce of this area and find out if there was a possibility of hosting a Heritage Walk for the Madras Week celebrations.

It was 4.30 p.m.

"Would you like to have bunk tea before we set out?"

I was puzzled.

There exists a colourful lexicon of the Anglo-India language and though I have moved with it for many years, I had not heard of 'bunk tea'.

Richard, who works for the Customs at the Chennai Airport Complex and lives on the 'hill', pointed out a tea shop with an asbestos roof, as if to answer me.

"That's the bunk!"

I got it.

And from the teashop owner there was more to learn when I asked him why the tea looked orangeish. "People want it strong so we mix Kannan Devan and 3 Roses."

I thought of that blackboard kept outside the old India Coffee Depot off Mount Road, behind India Silk House, and the coffee mix they offered to customers.

There is so much you discover, experience and feel when you volunteer to take a closer look at places.

Anwar, photographer and researcher, was tentative about hosting a Heritage Walk that took you to the last days of the Nawabs, but he was planning to do an illustrated talk.

So I joined him for a recce of the Palace of Chempauk and of Triplicane. This area was our haunt when we were teenagers. But Anwar had the history of places we took for granted, included a simple arch over a street that is 6 feet wide.

When we looked around for a tea shop, we stopped at a nook that sold *samosas*, *vadas* and a sweet made from beaten rice and sugar, in a street where once the *devadasis* are said to have lived.

Madras Day / Week will hopefully show you a city you have not known or seen or felt.

(See pages 5, 6 & 7)

Vincent D' Souza

Capturing the spirit of Madras

What is Madras to young Chennaiites?

At two photowalks early in August that YOCEE, a website for Chennai children, organised as a pre-event of the Madras Week celebrations, the children captured the spirit of the city through their simple aim-and-shoot cameras.

When YOCEE approached N. Ramaswamy to lead the photowalk for children, he was excited. Ram is a dedicated blogger chronicling the city in pictures through his blog <http://chennaiddailyfoto.wordpress.com>.

The walk on August 1st started at the famed Ratna Cafe in Triplicane and the children walked shooting all that is Madras to them to Pycroft's Road. They clicked the Hindu High School campus (opened on March 12, 1898, according to a plaque) and the Sri Saraswathi Gana Nilayam established in 1939 with the name written in Tamil font of yesterday. An old bus stop sign board at the Gosha Hospital stop was another many rushed to click. The last stop was at Presidency College, another landmark of the city.

Over the next weekend, walking along Poonamalle

Those grand old tales

Over 2000 entries have been received till August 10th for the Madras Kathai contest (<http://themadrasday.in/2010/07/madras-kathai-contest/>), in which schoolchildren have to record stories told to them by senior citizens in their homes and neighbourhood. This initiative involving the young is by Prodigy Books and www.yocce.in, a website for Chennai children (run by Revathi R.) and they plan to publish the best 50 entries as a book.

Revathi R

mailrevathi@gmail.com

High Road was a different experience for students from Maharshi Vidya Mandir, Chetpet, who participated as a group. Along with them a few children from Kilpauk and a few from Mylapore and Adyar travelled all the way early in the morning to reach Ega theatre, the start point of the walk, at 7 a.m.

Walking on one side of the road, they stopped at a huge
(Continued on page 10)

ties, and brightly-painted houses to dot the landscape. But a cleaner Chennai is impossible unless resourceful residents, who believe in civic action, decide to bring about this transformation themselves. For that they need to notice their surroundings once again and maybe this calendar will serve as an eye-opener.

Meanwhile, get gritty and enjoy the unique aspects of our city in the theme running through this well-crafted tribute. The limited edition calendar was originally meant for creative people from other design houses, ad agencies, potential clients, friends and family of the WMD folks. The work is bound to find aficionados outside the intended audience. If that fan-following reaches a critical mass, maybe, just maybe, we can clamour for a re-print?