

2000s

a retrospective



As we enter a new decade, *Royal Wings* looks back at the past 10 years to consider the social and cultural impact of the noughties – what has changed, what's new and what does the future hold? Technology, travel, food, the environment and the notion of celebrity all go under the spotlight

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The 2000s, or so-called 'noughties', was always going to be a fascinating era. After all, it wasn't just a new decade – it was a whole new century. From the moment the Millennium Bug failed to kick in (was it, in fact, just the biggest scam in the history of computing?) technology has been advancing at breakneck speed and its ubiquitous presence has defined our social and cultural evolution. But it hasn't all been about progress and innovation; our ever-increasing concern about the state of the environment meant that this decade was also about getting back to our roots – quite literally if you had a vegetable garden – and shunning consumerism. Nonetheless, the pace of change, and eagerness to grow, has been undeniable.

Perhaps the most profound result of the noughties revolution is our increased sense of globalism – virtual or otherwise. Whether through the ease of travel and commerce or the speed and accessibility of communication, our perception of our place in the world has undergone a transformation that must, surely, spell good news for the 2010s. ►



celebrity

When Angelina Jolie and Brad Pitt jetted into Jordan last year, the reason wasn't to promote their latest film but the plight of an Amman orphanage, at Queen Noor's personal invitation. The headlines, however, reported just one thing: their trip to the city's Licky Licious ice-cream parlour, where Ange ordered mango sorbet and Brad went for pecan caramel.

A scoop each for the movie stars, hardly a scoop in news terms. But it neatly sums up celebrity in the fame-obsessed noughties, from the rise of the power couple and the trend for goodwill ambassadors to our endless fascination with the mundane details of celebrity life.

The noughties were the decade when two became one, from Bennifer and Brangelina to a certain couch-hopping TomKat. Not to mention Team Beckham, whose matching outfits and his'n'her perfumes came to embody the ultimate celebrity brand.

Lesser celebs launched their own reality TV shows and, as our appetite for watching them play at being 'ordinary' grew, so did the desire of ordinary people to become famous themselves.

Although it premiered in Holland a year earlier, *Big Brother* exploded onto UK television screens in 2000, and since then the format has been exported to almost 70 countries worldwide. *Pop Idol*, *The X Factor* and *Britain's Got Talent* followed suit to become worldwide phenomena but, as one commentator observed of their wannabe contestants: 'The only thing that qualifies them to be on TV is that they're real (and real average).'

Gossip magazines kept the paparazzi in pocket while, in latter years, websites such as Gawker and TMZ tracked celebrities around New York and LA in real time. Cue a backlash. First came Lily Allen's karate kick on a Heathrow cameraman. And more recently, Demi Moore and Ashton Kutcher have been reclaiming the Internet with three million followers apiece on the social networking site Twitter.

Some call it access, some excess. And it's only set to increase over the next 10 years. **NG**



environment

'Mankind has a genius for survival often only manifested at the eleventh hour.'

HRH The Prince of Wales

The threat climate change poses to mankind is the greatest we have ever faced. CO₂ levels have increased by one-third in the last 200 years, temperatures are rising and extreme weather events are becoming more common and more devastating. The planet may yet survive this latest challenge. Our way of life, however, may not.

But as Prince Charles points out, we humans have some fight left in us yet, and as the bells chimed for the new millennium, the need for change finally made the leap from a liberal, forward-thinking minority to the collective consciousness of the masses.

In the years since, attitudes of global leaders have shifted considerably. High-profile events such as the Live Earth concerts, the G8 summits and Al Gore's compelling film *An Inconvenient Truth* have assisted the evolution of green beliefs and actions by individuals. And this, the will of the people, is, perhaps, what has had the greatest impact.

Harnessing the abundant, natural energy of the sun, sea and



wind to create renewable energy was a major development in the last decade. We adopted new, environmentally friendly practices, as lower emission cars, cycling schemes and everyday recycling became the norm.

A new 'reuse economy' urged a revised approach to waste – from garage sales and thrift stores to the concept of 'freeganism', where entire communities trade goods and services for free. As an awareness of the carbon footprint grew, so too did our attitude towards 'responsible' tourism, personal energy consumption and sustainable, locally sourced ways of providing for our basic needs. Farmers' markets and home growing had a renaissance.

Social networking sites played a key role in such attitudes, making charity fundraising and the spreading of information on major issues achievable with just a click of a mouse.

Though the threat of climate change is just as present as we enter the next decade, the eco movement is at last recognised as vital. The impact of this new consciousness can only yield yet more advances and, hopefully, signal a better future for our planet. **CL**

References: realllyreallyfree.org/ / rainforestSOS.org

travel

The noughties put the power of travel in the hands of the travellers. No more gatekeeper travel agents, no more calling airline after airline to find the best deal. No more lugging around heavy guidebooks, or battling paper maps that are impossible to re-fold. Travel became digital, flexible, taking us to more places than ever before.

The noughties brought major change in flying to developing countries, markets and economies. Asia, India, the Middle East and parts of Latin America are now easier to get to than ever, according to the International Air Transport Association. Would Rio have been selected as the host city for the 2016 Olympics if it weren't so easy to fly to Brazil?

Easier access to the Internet, both on our computers and on our mobiles, has empowered travellers over the last decade, too. 'Transparency enables them to easily identify a better fare or learn about the customer experience from user-generated content,' said Brian Clark, head of the airfare search engine Fly.com.

Just as internet booking has made modes of travel more flexible, electronic travel resources have made getting around easier, too. Need to know where the closest coffee house is? There's an iPhone app for that. GPS on your Blackberry can turn you back around if you're lost in a foreign land. And if you can't find a train schedule, need a translator, or that phone number of a second cousin who lives in the country you're visiting, you can pull it up on any computer or mobile with internet access.

Travel is easier to share, too. No need to call mum, dad and your best friend to tell them how you're doing. Post a mobile picture on Facebook, write a blog entry, and the entire world can follow you as you travel the world. The noughties brought the world to more travellers, and more travellers to the rest of the world. Maybe it is a small world, after all. **JM** ▶





food

Our relationship with food changed dramatically throughout the noughties as we became increasingly pre-occupied with the details. Is this meat organic? Are these vegetables locally sourced? Should this restaurant have a Michelin star? Food provenance took centre stage and home cooking had a makeover – no longer a necessary chore, it became a welcome hobby, an obsession even. Put simply, the noughties spawned foodies.

And the reason for this new social group? A noughties phenomenon – the celebrity chef. Sure, TV chefs existed before, but the global brands that are Gordon Ramsay, Jamie Oliver or Rachael Ray now have unprecedented influence over the eating habits of the general public.

'I don't want people to look at what I do and think that they can't do that too', said Ray, host of several hit US TV shows, while across the Atlantic, chefs Ramsay and Oliver embarked on crusades to get people back in their kitchens. Soon enough amateur chefs were pummeling spices, rolling pastry and filleting fish (as long as it was from a sustainable source, that is).

The noughties also saw innovative Brit Heston Blumenthal and Spanish food aficionado Ferran Adria get busy in their laboratories creating dishes (snail porridge, anyone?) that inspired the term 'molecular gastronomy'.

Meanwhile, healthy eating became a big issue, with the rise of so-called superfoods and the campaigns to stop us eating junk. We started eating healthy fare such as goji berries, while secretly celebrating news reports stating that red wine and chocolate were also full of antioxidants. And, suddenly, that super-sized burger and fries became a lot less appealing.

So what's next for the foodies? Already on the rise are pop-up restaurants and secret dining clubs but the economic downturn spells a continued increase in more nostalgic eating habits – home-cooked comfort food and homegrown produce. And, of course, technology will play its part with food blogs and online recipe forums. In short, there will be plenty more to get our teeth into. **TP**

technology

In November, *Forbes* magazine pronounced Apple's Steve Jobs 'CEO of the decade'. The runners-up? Microsoft boss Bill Gates and Google co-founders Larry Page and Sergey Brin. At a time in which financial giants, manufacturing moguls and media barons are cutting their losses, the geeks have inherited the earth.

The noughties was the decade that technology went mainstream. Gadgets and gateways filled our pockets, furnished our living rooms and powered our offices. For most of the decade, it was all about 'you'. From iPods and iMacs to MySpace and YouTube, the noughties made technology personal. Blogs, search engines and aggregators turned newspapers and other mass media 'old'. On-demand entertainment made movie and television watching into custom experiences. eBay, Amazon and online banking transformed your laptop into a private commercial hub. And file sharing and MP3s changed the way we listened to – and paid for – music. In 2006, 'you' were even named *Time Magazine's* Person of the Year.

Then came social media and Web 2.0, and suddenly it was all about 'us'. With a world of knowledge at our fingertips, we rediscovered our desire to connect to the world (and not just to our friends via email or instant messenger). Enter Facebook, Twitter, Skype and Google Wave. Even the iPod—that perfect vessel of bespoke gratification—morphed into the iPhone, a humanistically-designed connector and communicator. Napster and 'Just Do It' gave way to Wikipedia and 'Yes We Can'.

But this decade's achievements have also raised the bar for what comes next. In an age where everyday people can point a cursor at an image of the globe and zoom in on their kitchen window, we've become hard to impress. We're shocked and appalled when our GPS doesn't recognize a new roundabout or when a Blu-Ray disc won't play on our Nintendo Wii. The Googles, Apples and Microsofts have suggested that anything is possible. These days the only thing surprising about technology is its limits. **DL** ●



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