

thINKingDANCE

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Photo: Irina Varina

Celebrating Nineties Nostalgia in 'Future Jam '94'

by Caitlin Green

Could 90's nostalgia be the answer to reclaiming our attention spans and relieving the planet from mass tech consumerism in 2024?

...ok, hear me out.

Props like a purple bean bag and a cardboard model TV that mimics an over-the-air antenna television set the scene, along with some 90's tunes. Upon taking the floor alongside collaborators Chloe Marie and Dylan Smythe, Chelsea Murphy introduces *Future Jam '94* and addresses intersections of the internet, [surveillance capitalism](#), and our dwindling attention spans. She emphasizes the need to reclaim our attention from the shackles of the algorithm-crafted interweb, then invites the audience to participate in a guided meditation. She asks us to relax, take a breath, and close our eyes. Then, "I want you to imagine you're holding your phone." I chuckle at the irony. "Notice the weight, texture, any cracks on the screen. Notice how you feel while holding it." Cue *ambient noise*. "Now, imagine your phone turns into a rock."

Marie and Smythe sit behind Murphy on the floor and gaze into the television. A projection of TV static lights up their faces as their heads turn right and left in a synchronous pattern, keeping perfect time with one another. Murphy joins them in the trance. Their choreography moves through different postures for TV-watching as their expressions remain in a dazed, neutral affect. Both attention and movement are fully driven by the screen that holds their collective focus.

Later, at a séance sleepover party, the early 90's trio summons the spirit of Google from the future, to ask where the internet might lead humanity. Seemingly possessed by dial-up connection, they make beeping and screeching noises, jolting and flailing, then re-emerging from their embodiment of a network's dial-tone, as The Three Oracles of Google. LMAO! (*laughing my a** off!*).

From there, The Three Oracles journey through performances which feature their groovy house vocabulary, a suspenseful moment where Marie almost squares-up with a giant battery-powered shark balloon, and the whole crew crashing out from an emotional roller coaster evoked by an interpretive dance to “I Love You Always Forever” by Donna Lewis.

Future Jam '94 is inspired by the comment sections of 90's memorabilia social media posts, which are displayed on a projector screen, and reflect a desperate thirst for the past. Seeing so many commenters' desire to return to simpler times is a reminder that many of us are reaching for something, anything, better than our present moment in history. Doom-scrolling isn't even fun anymore because the horrors of reality are so insufferable that even our vices of escapism have become something to escape from. As hope for a positive future wanes for many, some have resorted to reaching back to better days, to memories of a less intrusive internet era; one that was still ripe with more possibility than capitalist propaganda.

But could these pre-Y2K fantasies prove to be more than just another avoidance tactic or trendy aesthetic? Might a return to a more simplified retro-tech lifestyle help pump the breaks on the industrial advancements and labor exploitation rooted in high demands on the extraction of natural resources like cobalt and fossil fuels? This was the stream of consciousness that I find myself sifting through post-performance.

Future Jam '94 is equally fun and thought-provoking. Murphy hones the power of nostalgia through humor, imagination and melodrama, while tapping into current events and major cultural shifts worth paying attention to (pun intended).

[Future Jam '94](#), Chelsea Murphy, Urban Movement Arts, Philly Fringe Festival, Sept. 28.

Homepage Image Description: *three people wearing brightly colored clothing and blue lipstick hover closely together, looking off into the distance. they are leaning over miniature figurines of a desktop computer, a black and white checkered floor, a globe and other tiny toy objects.*

Article Page Image Description: *the image of a windows desktop screen with a pop-up box that reads "Future Jam '94" with the button options that read "ok" or "cancel". the background is a black and white checkered floor, a parrot flying, a tall white pillar, another pop-up box with blue and pink abstract shapes, and the images of three people posing.*

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