



Golden eyes: Snap Inc's glasses allow you to make short video clips of what you see

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amusing facial recognition filters in real time, turning your spouse into a pineapple, your gym instructor into a giraffe, and so on. But what you can do is take a series of brief point-of-view movies that you then Bluetooth back to your phone, where you can edit them, filter them, speed them up, play them in reverse, and scrutinise the reactions of your classmates to your heart's content.

After four videos of me looking at my phone trying to work out whether the Snapchat had indeed synced the devices, I began to get the hang of it.

The first time Spiegel used his Spectacles he found them a revelation. He was on holiday in Big Sur with his fiancée, the Australian supermodel Miranda Kerr. "When I got the footage back and watched it I could see my own memory, through my own eyes – it was unbelievable," he told The Wall Street Journal. "It's one thing to see images of an experience you had, but it's another to have an experience of the experience. It was the closest I'd ever come to feeling like I was there again."

As I relived moments from the morning – strapping my boy into his car seat on the way to pre-school, trying to avoid auto-death on the freeway, pecking my unsuspecting and then sort-of-freaked-out friend Maggie on the cheek as she answered the door – I too fell into this uncanny valley. Recording at eye level makes a significant difference. A memory begins to look like lived experience. And vice versa, perhaps. It changes the way you process things.

With children it's notably rewarding. They really don't like it when you point a phone camera at them and ask them to dance, I've found. With the Spectacles they are largely unaware you're recording them, so you can capture their reactions with much more intimacy. If you have relations

View from the top: Snap Inc's founder Evan Spiegel with his fiancée Miranda Kerr



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halfway across the world to share these moments with, say, that's pretty neat.

Likewise, you can put the glasses on your child (or your dog, I suppose) and see the world from their point of view. Unnerving! And you can also take videos in various situations where it would be impractical or dangerous to whip out a camera. Driving, for instance.

If you've seen the Black Mirror episode, The Entire History of You (which is set in a near-future where contract lens-based cameras are

ubiquitous), you'll be familiar with all of this. But there are a few safeguards built in. The Spectacles flash when you're recording, so you can't do it covertly. They only record for a maximum of 30 seconds at a time, so you can't just leave them running. This is in keeping with Snapchat's ephemeral nature. On the app your messages disappear after a

few seconds. You can take a screenshot, but this is a grave faux pas, and in any case, the person who sent it retains the ability to delete it from your photo-stream. So a certain bias towards privacy and spontaneity is encoded. This, plus the comparatively discreet presence of parents and advertisers, is one reason Snapchat tends to be trusted by its users more than Facebook and Twitter.

The prize, then, seems clear. It seems inevitable that other companies will find more insidious and covert uses for the same technology. But if Snap Inc can encourage enough users to buy into its Spectacles (reportedly a loss-leader, even at \$130), it can establish a few social norms and cement the loyalty of millennials as the wearable tech trend tapers off.

In deed, Spiegel has no choice but to do this if he is to justify that hyper-inflated valuation and appease his new shareholders. He'd better get those dog filter specs out sharpish.

Click lit

People

Olivia Sudjic's addictive debut novel sheds new light on Instagram obsession. She talks tech bros, fake news culture and urban narratives with **Phoebe Luckhurst**

DURING the back and forth of preparing her first novel, *Sympathy*, for publication, Olivia Sudjic's copy editor was dubious about one of its crucial premises.

"She said: 'It is completely ridiculous and improbable that Alice would be able to become obsessed with someone before meeting them,'" Sudjic explains. "And I was like: 'Have you got Instagram?'"

She slams her fist on the table impassionedly, laughing. *Sympathy* is the story of a ranking online obsession. It follows Alice Hare, a lonely, dislocated 23-year-old mixed-race graduate girl who

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exist both on and offline, our digital avatars popping up in many different places. She was interested in the non-consensual, unwitting pact that we make with the internet. "The more we feed into that with every click or every cookie-consent button we don't fully understand, that's a pound of flesh we're giving to the internet that limits our choices," she says. "It's a paradox of 'privacy versus convenience'."

The opening scene sets the tone for this power imbalance. Alice obsessively watches Mizuko go on and offline, waiting for her to accept her Instagram follow request. It's discomfiting: while exaggerated, the behaviour resonates.

"When people admit that, I think, 'Hat'" laughs Sudjic. "Because obviously this is an extreme version of what I might have personally experienced, but I wouldn't have written that if I hadn't had moments like that. In those moments you start to think 'Is this an actual thing between me and this person that I'm watching or is it something between me and the weird way the technology is designed?'"

Because it is all designed to be addictive, like gambling – the people who design it are former magicians, playing on our vulnerabilities." The age of Instagram makes break-ups hard. "It makes you almost feel like you're being cheated on, that their life is carrying on without you and vice versa. De-friend is the most important thing post-relationship."

A certain "paranoia" informed the



Net gains: Olivia Sudjic left her job to write about the impact of technology

plot. Sudjic, 28, studied English at Cambridge and after a few meanders started working in brand strategy. Through work she was immersed in some of the internet's most pernicious sleights of hand. She had grown spooked, particularly, by what she calls a "shadow self": "This twin version of yourself that exists online, who the

internet thinks you are." She was exasperated by technology's utopian narrative. "I'd meet a lot of tech bros – and it's not that I felt that there was something inherently wrong with their aspirations, but it was just a bit like with any cult; technology is a force for good. There was no nuance."

Her response was to quit her job

and move to New York herself to stay with her own grandmother and write. "Mainly because all my family were so appalled by my decision," she deadpans. Sudjic grew up in north London. Her father, Deyan Sudjic, is the director of the Design Museum and her mother, Sarah Miller, is a journalist and brand consultant. At 28 she is positioned perfectly

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write a novel about the creeping stranglehold of the online world: "I was born at the end of 1988, which means that I'm basically the same age as the internet."

Did writing *Sympathy* change the way she uses social media? "100 per cent. For a start, I got a new boyfriend about a year ago. And we're not friends on social media. I didn't want that feeling of meeting someone and then being like: 'Ah, I already know – or, I think I already know – all about you.'"

SUDJIC toys with the idea of digital retreats in the book, though has only attempted a "lite" version herself, deleting apps: "No one wants to come offline because no one else is." She thinks the responsibility for changing habits is "at the level of the people who design it to be addictive in the first place. Google has a 'design ethicist'... Do your job!"

With the pending election Sudjic is, like everyone, worried about how the internet can delude us about politics. "I was in New York when Trump got elected and I remember my New York friends who hadn't just weathered a Brexit vote. There were basically no Democrat posters in New York. I thought: 'Guys, you are so convinced that there's no chance Trump can win because you all live in Brooklyn and are in this echo chamber...'"

Her next book will be inspired, in part, by fake news. "Sympathy does not wish to come across as a 'tinfoil hat-wearer'". Her message is to be aware of what we're clicking yes to, where we are sharing our location. "It's like digital breadcrumbing – and then we don't entirely understand how the choices with which we are then presented – why that doesn't get shown, doesn't get shown."

Meanwhile, we're being shunted around by algorithms. Above all, she thinks the danger is in the absence of understanding. "It's not a new thing to say that the tools that we create shape things around us. But the fact that now those tools are beyond most people's human comprehension. How do you think geolocalisation works – who knows?"

"With access to this info in our phones, we literally have the power to bring about change in our hands."

Meanwhile, Voting Counts, a website set up by student Rachael Farrington, sets out to extract content from a variety of sources, collating, rewriting and simplifying it, free of bias. "We try to help young adults compare the main party policies, enabling them to make their own decisions uninfluenced by friends and family," says Farrington. "All our content is written by young adults. This means we're not patronising, nor is our content full of jargon."

The Daily Election, an online polling app for iOS and Android, is also looking to millennials, gamifying the experience. Topical questions see you climb "levels" from Pleb (a nod to Andrew Mitchell) to Prime Minister. You're having fun but you're also signalling your voting intentions. There's even a Tinder for politics, Voter, which lets you swipe "yes" or "no" politicians to match interests. The future looks selfie-centred. Smartmatic believes its facial recognition software is more secure than most online banking or shopping systems. Voters log in to their app with a selfie, which reads their biometric data, and is combined with a government-issued ID card to create a digital identity. Users can then cast their vote remotely from anywhere – as long as they've got signal.

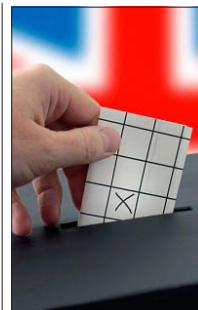
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Log in: new apps make voting easier

How tactical voting got smarter

ELECTION hacks, the sort that don't bother GCHQ, are largely benign. They're app- and website-led tools designed to make decisions, rather than the electoral roll, easier to decode.

For partisan voters exhausted by austerity government, the Tactical 2017 website works to encourage strategic voting to unseat the Conservatives. Type in your constituency and it tells you which non-Tory has the best chance where you live. "Our voting system is so imbalanced it's vital that people are as well-informed as possible, both about the parties and the voting system," says spokesperson Becky Snowden.

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Pushing Technology

With an iris scanner and curved infinity display, Samsung's new Galaxy S8 is a game-changer, says **Ben Travis**

SAMSUNG has a lot to prove with its new Galaxy S8 smartphone, which launches in the UK tomorrow. Not only is the iPhone's biggest rival returning to face new competition from Google Pixel but the S8 is arriving in the wake of the tech company's mass recall of its Note 7 phablet, which had a tendency to spontaneously combust. The pressure is now on for

all the right buttons: the future of phones

Samsung to release a phone that's everything in all the right ways – and the Galaxy S8 could be it. Here's everything you need to know about the latest phone on the scene.

The big picture
Apple took a big leap in ditching the headphone jack on the iPhone 7, but Samsung has one-upped it when it comes to taking away a major smartphone feature. The S8 doesn't have a physical home button – and for good reason: the extra space makes room for the 5.8" "infinity display" that takes up the entire front panel of the handset.

The phone itself is roughly the same overall dimensions as the S7 but users will immediately notice the difference of the super-sized screen.

All-rounder
Samsung Galaxy users have

previously had to pay more for the premium Edge handset with a curved front panel that extends the display. No more – the S8 comes with a rounded screen as standard, immediately setting it apart from rival devices in a democratic way.



Meet Bixby
"Voice-controlled" personal assistants "are all the rage and there's a new voice joining the throng. The Galaxy S8 is the first device to feature Bixby, Samsung's equivalent to Siri, Alexa and Cortana. The software doesn't just do voice commands – it

offers a curated news feed, translation abilities and Google Google-esque product identification tools.

Early word is that S8's Bixby is far from the finished article and needs improvements, but Samsung is clearly investing in it – the assistant is set to be rolled out across all kinds of Samsung products in the future, from TVs to air conditioners.

For your eyes only
To make way for the extra screen space Samsung has moved the fingerprint sensor to a rather inconvenient spot on the back. That's not the only way to unlock the new model though – a futuristic-sounding iris scanner in the front-facing camera means the phone recognises your face when you pick it up. If it works, it could be an eye-opening new security measure.

The big reveal: Samsung designer Sriram Thodia at the launch of the new phone

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