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A CLOSER LOOK AT:

AYRTON OTTONI AYRT

One of JAConfessions most vocal bloggers sits down with us to explain social media blogging and how it can make a difference in a community.



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Ayrton Ottoni was a regular guy until he discovered JAC Secrets in his first semester at John Abbott. JAC Secrets is a blog run by students for students. At its peak during 2015, every student would talk about JAC Secrets. It seemed like nothing would stop this powerhouse of a blog. But everything changed. During the Fall of 2018, the moderator of JAC Secrets created a post saying how he was finished with the page, and was shutting it down. The final secret, #63911, was posted on November 7th, 2018. It seemed like this was the end of the John Abbott blog.

Ayrton remembers these days.

When JAC Secrets was taken down, did you think it was the end of the blog?

A.O. : “I was a bit worried, but I figured someone would start it up again. I didn’t think it was dead, but I knew that it was definitely damaged.”

It’s true, the community did suffer. A lot of big names disappeared from the scene and have never come back. JAC Secrets was the blog everyone knew. Created in the fall of 2013, it quickly gained the same amount of attraction as Dawson College Spotted. At the same time Vanier Spotted was growing as a community as well. These three pages sparked a Montreal-wide phenomenon about creating community pages for schools. Pages that followed were the infamous MSecrets for Marianopolos College and Spotted: Concordia.

All of a sudden, a new blog emerged: JACConfessions.

JACConfessions, created almost 3 days from the end of the original, was a completely new page for the John Abbott community to post on.

Do you see a difference between the shift from JAC Secrets to JACConfessions?

A.O. : “There was a big difference when we switched over. We lost a lot of followers and interaction is down. However I think it’s on the rise, I’ve noticed more people adding to the conversation which makes me happy to see. I hope one day the page can go back to how it used to be, the new one is a bit of a Frankenstein’s monster that I can’t help but love. The page still seems to be suffering a bit from the closing of the original, but I think it will get back to it’s original shape eventually. Especially next year, when the school gets new students.”



How did you get your acclaim to fame?

A.O. : “I just kept commenting. Like, relentlessly for a year. I always existed in the subconscious of the regular users but was never known as that “guy” until the shoutouts and ‘shit-talking’ started. That’s how I became Ayrton Rigatoni.”

How do you portray yourself on JAConfessions?


A.O. : “I try to portray myself as sort of a pseudo-therapist, someone very opinionated, everyone’s best friend and I try to make jokes when I can. Basically it’s my everyday-self but more intense in every aspect.”

Spotted: McGill University was one of the first school blogs created in the end of December 2012. One of the first of its kind. It sparked a Montreal wide phenomenon to create these pages.

Do you think a community such as JAConfession can create a discussion outside of just the John Abbott area?

A.O. : “JAConfessions has a pretty good reach in the John Abbott Area. Even non JAC students use it and word of mouth says that it inspired the creation of the pages for the other Montreal colleges. So, indirectly yes, it has created discussion outside of the John Abbott area, but as I see it, what is discussed directly on JAConfessions stays on JAConfessions.”





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Would you like to see JAConfessions reach a wider audience?

A.O. : “I would love to see the page reach more people. More users means more discussion which means more well informed people. In my opinion, the way to a better future is intelligent discussion.”

How do you think JAConfessions is different from other school blogs?

A.O. : “Quite simply, the difference is that JAConfessions is for JAC students. JAC students are typically West Islanders, and thus, the page is mostly for West Islanders, which has a different culture from the rest of Montreal.”

It seemed everybody was apart of one these community pages for discussion. For meaning. For being there for people. But ever since 2015 the community sort of died down. It stays in the head of everybody I know. I asked someone about JAC Secrets and his first reaction was to talk about all the crush posts back in 2015. That 2015 year was looming over JAC Secrets until its downfall. JAConfessions brings a whole new life to John Abbott social media.





JAConfessions

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By students.**



JAConfessions

Do you think social media connects people more or makes people more distant?

A.O. : “I think that social media can do both. It definitely connects people because it facilitates communication, I’ve been able to make plans with my friends a lot easier since I started using social media. However, people can use it as a way to ignore other people. We’re all guilty of it, we see someone we don’t want to talk to so we look at our phones. So I think it does both, but I feel it does more good than anything.”

How can you help JAConfessions?

A.O. : There’s not really anything I can do myself aside from promote the page and continue to contribute and comment. JAConfessions will have to evolve on its own from now on, it’s big enough now. I’m not JAConfessions, I can’t decide the direction it goes. All of the users will make that decision, whether unanimously or by fighting it out.

What can JAConfessions do for the city of Montreal?

A.O. : “JAConfessions is just one of many pages that contributes to the culture of Montreal. We have tons of pages like it, like Dawson Spotted and the others, blogs like MTLBlog which also contribute to our online appearance. It helps solidify our identity as citizens of Montreal, giving us a sense of identity, community and belonging. I think it’s just a small cog in a machine, creating an online presence for our city. Ironically enough, though, JAC isn’t even really in the city of Montreal.”

When do you think JAConfessions peak will be?

A.O. : I think the page will always top itself until it closes, like JAC Secrets did. Its peak will be right before its end. Things like this always get too big for their own good, and at some point that no one will be able to predict, all the right conditions will come together to bring about the end of the page.

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Ayrton doesn't only speak for himself. He speaks for a whole generation of tech-savvy Gen Z's. Once our interview was done, he put on his hood on and left. A couple minutes later I saw a fresh comment on JAConfessions. I couldn't help but feel hopeful, even if he felt differently. The 2015 peak might still be looming over, but there are people trying to change that. People who are trying to create discussion and help people out. Not only on JAConfessions, but on every single school blog in Montreal. We're all just part of a cog moving a machine. A machine open to any discussion. And through discussion we can change the future.

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AUTHOR: Jonathan Burgstaller

GYU KAKU

GYU KAKU VIBES

One day after walking around with my friends on Sainte-Catherine, we all became extremely hungry. It was about 1:00PM, and our stomachs were growling at the slightest smell of food. Once we got onto Sainte-Catherine, we decided to start looking. On one corner of a street appeared Gyu Kaku. We decided to head in.

Gyu Kaku is a Japanese restaurant that specializes in barbecue. It first started in Los Angeles in 2001 and quickly was able to get a spot in downtown Montreal. The first thing we are welcomed to is a bell, and then a saying is said to us. A Japanese greeting is belted from the whole staff, welcoming us to its establishment. We sit down and look at the menu.

This is where I realized this isn't a regular Japanese barbecue. Their whole menu is based off these packages that you cook yourself! I never went to a place like this and it astonished me. We ordered two of their lunch menus, and then we waited.



GYU KAKU VIBES

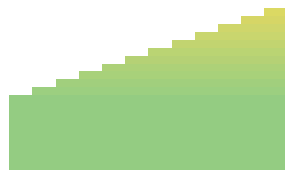
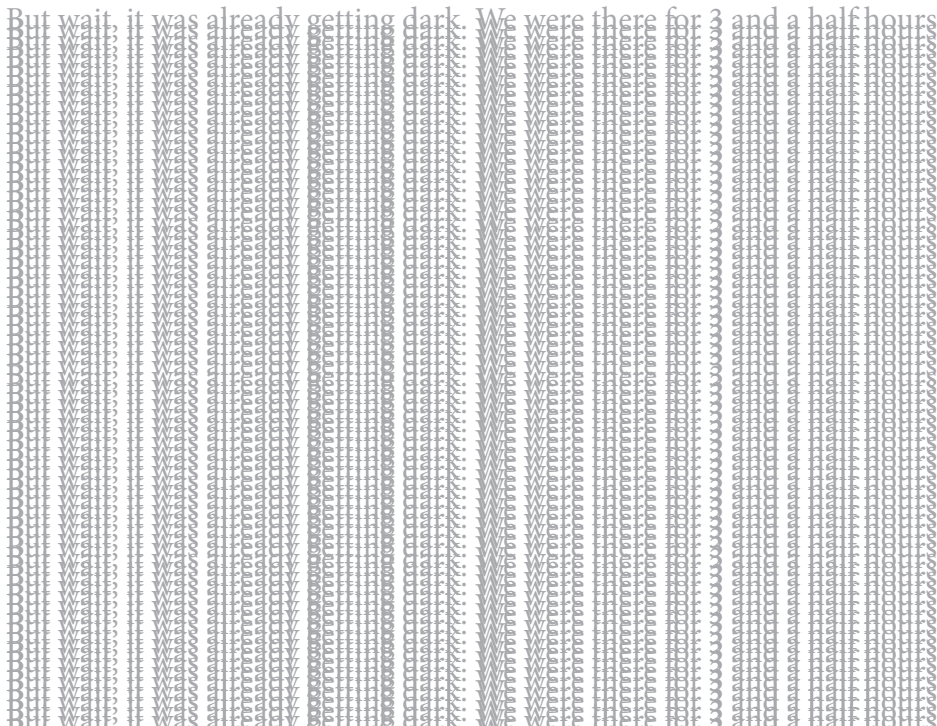
Gyu Kaku's vibe resembles a modern Japanese bistro. It felt like I was in the middle of Tokyo and this restaurant was the only place of solace in the bustling city. The Lofi music playing in the back was a surprising touch that I haven't really heard in a restaurant similar to Gyu Kaku. A Beckoning Cat and lowly lit Japanese lanterns await you at the entrance to enchant the mood. The tables are sleek and modern. Everything is well thought out.

After noticing these details, our food came. Well some of it. Then we finished it, then more came. And more. And more. And more. We were first served an assortment of meats ranging from beef, pork, and chicken. We were able to barbecue them ourselves on the burner in the middle of our plate. The next rounds consisted of salads, rice, vegetables that could be cooked, and more meat. My friends and I couldn't believe the amount of food we got for a decent price of \$35. The alcohol was amazing too. We all ordered their truly authentic Japanese drinks which tasted like a part of Japan. The conversations we had in Gyu Kaku were timeless, and none of us will forget it. Once we finished all the food and talking, we headed out.

AUTHOR: Jonathan Burgstaller



But wait, it was already getting dark. We were there for 3 and a half hours.






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Gyu Kaku isn't just a Japanese Barbecue restaurant. It's a vibe. A mood. Not in a clingy way though. Gyu Kaku's whole familial presence oozes creativity and welcomeness. It feels like a home away from home. It feels as if I'm going to chill at my own house. It's a place to relax and enjoy yourself. It's a place to have great memories with your friends. It's a great place to eat. It's not just a restaurant, it's a home.