

WHAT'S TRENDING

A round-up of the eye-related hot topics that have been trending on social media over the last few weeks.

#PommelHorseGuy #Olympics

The Paris Olympics have been such a delight this year, from incredible physical feats to touching competitor comradery, I have been clamouring to watch the highlights at the end of each day. One breakout star was team USA's male gymnast Stephen Nedoroscik, who shot to viral fame as 'The Pommel Horse Guy' [1]. With his self-confessed nerdy looks, he had iconic black rimmed glasses he wore while waiting to perform. He took them off just before his routine in a move reminiscent of Clark Kent taking off his glasses to become Superman. He spoke more about his eyes to reporters after the event. He wears glasses to correct a strabismus, but his sight is also affected by an ocular coloboma. He explained how he does not see much when he is on the pommel horse, relying on the touch of his hands on the equipment to know where he is. In an especially moving moment, he took the time to meet a young boy who also had a coloboma, the first person the kid had met with the same condition. I'm sure it was emotional and inspiring all round, highlighting just how important it is to have role models reflecting the entire spectrum of human existence.

#Strictly #ChrisMcCausland

The 20th anniversary series of *Strictly Come Dancing* airs later this year, and I am extremely excited by the prospect. I am every year, of course, but this time around I am particularly looking forward to seeing Chris McCausland, who has been announced as *Strictly's* first ever blind contestant [2]. The show does not hide away from showcasing the extraordinary talents of those living with disabilities, from the 2018 semi-finalist, paralympian Lauren Steadman, to 2021's winner Rose Ayling-Ellis, the show's first ever deaf contestant. Liverpool-born Chris lost his eyesight in his 20s due to retinitis pigmentosa, but that has not stopped him from crafting a successful career as a stand-up comedian. But will he be the one to lift the coveted glitterball trophy?

#Mattel #BlindBarbie

Speaking of increased awareness of sight impairment, toymakers Mattel have launched their first ever blind Barbie doll [3]. They worked with charities for the blind to create the doll, which has been phenomenally well received by the likes of the Royal National Institute of Blind (RNIB) and disability activists cross the globe. The doll has a white and red cane with

dark glasses as an accessory, with its eyes looking slightly up and out, to convey the realities of the gaze of some blind people. Through product testing with low-vision children, the clothing has been made with a particularly tactile fabric, loop fasteners are used to make dressing the doll easier, and even the packaging has been redesigned for increased accessibility and has the word "Barbie" written in braille on the front of the box.

#TikTok #EyeColour #Honey

TikTok can be an endless source of entertainment, but it can also be a well of misinformation. I have written about dubious eye-related TikTok trends in this section before, but recently influencers have been pushing drops to change one's eye colour [4]. Unsurprisingly, these products are not approved by regulatory bodies and are not supported by robust scientific evidence. This trend has even led to the American Academy of Ophthalmology putting out a statement specifically warning that these drops have not been tested for safety and may potentially damage the eye. Another trend has involved recommending the use of a specific form of honey eye drop [5]. The drops, which can retail for up to £60, have been touted to clear vision and one user even stated that it can remove floaters after a single use. I have seen so many videos of people attempting to use it, then crying in pain after its instillation. Claims like these often go unchecked; they usually don't make headlines until someone comes to harm, but that is precisely when it is too late. I hope that increased awareness of the fact that neither of these trends are legitimate 'treatments' will cause them to fade away and we won't have to deal with any consequences.

#Gaming #Eyeballs

It is remarkable how often eyeballs come up in game design. They are a prominent feature in my section, having first mentioned them in relation to one of 2023's most successful games, *Baldur's Gate 3*, alongside smaller indie titles. Now, there are countless articles discussing their role in one of 2024's biggest releases, *Black Myth: Wukong* [6]. While the game has dominated global sales this past month, I was particularly interested in the repeated questions about Buddha's Eyeballs. It is a small piece of an already beautifully designed game, but these artifacts are important to look out for. No spoilers here though, so I won't tell you why so many people are asking how to find them. You can

take this as a sign to fire up your gaming console of choice and play it through yourself.

#Movie #Awards

Speaking of recent media, a category-winning documentary in the World Health Organization's 2024 Health for All Film Festival, *The Visionary Women of Indonesia*, was one focussed on pioneering female ophthalmologists in Indonesia [7]. In a country where 35 million people live with sight loss, it can be a daunting challenge to tackle, but no one knows that more than one of the focus points of the documentary, Dr Siti Farida. She started her career as an ophthalmologist in a western province of the country in the 1980s, where she was the only ophthalmologist serving a population of 2.5 million people. Faced with an unimaginable caseload and misguided societal views on the superiority of men over women, she fought an uphill battle but stood defiant to create change. The region is now served by 27 ophthalmologists, most of whom are women, and they are widely respected – deservedly so, I must add.

References

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[All links last accessed September 2024]

Want to stay updated on recent eye trends in social media? Check out what's been happening over the last several months:



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