

TALK OF THE TOWN

Blackpink to reveal new music on tour

Girl group Blackpink is back — and it is hitting the stage with new music for the first time in over two and a half years.

The global K-pop phenomenon will unveil a brand-new track during the opening nights of their “Blackpink World Tour <Deadline> in Goyang,” set for July 5 and 6 at Goyang Sports Complex's main stadium, YG Entertainment said Monday.

Details of the song — including its title, theme and release date — remain tightly guarded. But anticipation is sparking global buzz, fueled by reports of a high-profile music video shoot in Korea with a renowned international director and a cryptic teaser from YG's executive producer, Yang Hyun-suk.

“After much deliberation over the

rollout strategy, we decided to premiere the new track during the first leg of the <Deadline> tour,” YG said in a statement. “Details regarding the release date will be shared soon.”

The performance marks not just a comeback, but also a symbolic reunion with fans. The new song will be Blackpink's first new music in two years and eight months since the band's first and only full-length album, “Born Pink,” was released in September 2022.

The Goyang concert will kick off a massive world tour spanning 31 shows across 16 cities, including Los Angeles, Chicago, Toronto, New York, Paris, Milan, Barcelona, London, Kaohsiung in Taiwan, Bangkok, Jakarta in Indonesia, Bulacan in the Philippines, Singapore, Tokyo and Hong Kong.

Baby DONT Cry video gets slammed

Rookie girl group Baby DONT Cry, which debuted Monday, deleted a controversial teaser video for its upcoming song “F Girl,” which received criticism for sexualizing the four members, who are mostly underage.

Agency P Nation released a statement on Sunday, apologizing for “causing discomfort and concern” regarding the teaser video.

The teaser in question begins with member Yihyun stepping inside a store and handing a piece of candy to the clerk. The candy's packaging, which received criticism for being shaped like a condom wrapper, is then opened by Yihyun as she puts the candy inside her mouth.

The title of the song, “F Girl,” also sparked backlash for its suggestive nature. The agency denied such intentions, explaining that the “F” refers to the ABCDF grade scale.

“‘F Girl’ conveys a message of rejecting externally imposed standards and instead asks to be seen and understood just as themselves,” the agency said.

“The full music video does not include any suggestive scenes. However, in order to block any misunderstandings or disputes, we have decided to delete the controversial scene entirely.”

The agency did not directly address the candy wrapper.



SCREEN CAPTURE

Online users claim the candy wrapper shown in this teaser video for girl group Baby DONT Cry to be similar to a condom wrapper. The video has since been deleted.

Ateez reaches No. 2 on Billboard 200

Boy band Ateez debuted at No. 2 on the Billboard 200 with its 12th EP “Golden Hour: Part.3,” according to a preview article published by Billboard on Sunday.

With more than 105,000 album-equivalent units tallied — including 101,500 in physical sales, 3,000 from streaming and 500 from digital downloads — the group reaffirmed its status as a global chart powerhouse, according to Ateez's agency, KQ Entertainment.

This marks Ateez's seventh consecutive entry into the Billboard 200 top 10.

The feat is especially impressive given that “Golden Hour: Part.3” was released in Korea as a platform-exclusive album, with only limited quanti-

ties distributed in the United States as licensed editions, KQ Entertainment said. Even so, it dominated major physical sales charts, including Hanteo and Circle, as well as iTunes album rankings across 26 countries.

Lead single “Lemon Drop” also made waves. The bubbly summer anthem topped Bugs' daily and real-time charts in Korea, entered iTunes Top Songs charts in 51 countries and landed at No. 4 on the Worldwide iTunes Songs chart. In Korea, it peaked at No. 3 on Spotify's daily top songs list.

Ateez debuted in October 2018 with the eight-member group consisting of Seonghwa, Hongjoong, Yunho, Yeosang, San, Mingi, Wooyoung and Jongho.

Irene & Seulgi surprises Guangzhou fans

Girl group Red Velvet's unit Irene & Seulgi brought the heat to China's Guangzhou with a surprise appearance at a fan pop-up event celebrating their latest EP “Tilt.”

The pop-up, hosted in collaboration with China's music platform QQ Music, opened Friday and runs through July 3 at Jingdong Mall in Guangzhou.

Fans were treated to an immersive display of album-themed visuals, photo zones and a guest book where they could leave messages directly for the artists.

But the real surprise came Saturday, when Irene & Seulgi made an

unannounced visit to the venue. The duo's sudden appearance sent the crowd of over 6,000 fans — gathered for a random dance event — into a frenzy, with the shopping mall briefly transformed into a sea of light sticks, cheers and cell phones.

“We're so grateful to be here thanks to all the love and support for ‘Tilt,’” Irene told the crowd. “Thank you so much for coming today.”

The duo greeted fans, exchanging smiles and heartfelt messages.

Its next stop is Singapore, where Irene & Seulgi will continue its 2025 Asia concert tour, “Balance,” on July 4 at The Star Theatre.

JYP opens search for new hit songwriter

JYP Entertainment is officially hunting for the next wave of hitmakers, launching the 2025 “JYP Publishing Songwriter Audition,” the agency announced Monday.

The audition process is open to applicants worldwide with at least one officially released K-pop track under their belt. Aspiring topliners, producers and trackmakers can submit their work via the JYP Publishing website from Monday through July 23.

Applicants can choose to enter solo or in teams of up to three people,

submitting their material for one of the three categories. After a first-round screening, selected candidates will be invited to a songwriting camp, a collaborative studio environment where finalists will create new tracks. The winners will be offered a cash prize and the chance to sign an exclusive deal with JYP Publishing.

While anyone regardless of age, gender or education can apply, all applicants must have previously released at least one K-pop track.

By News Team



JOEL BENTLEY

Mind reader Joel Bentley holds the newspaper whose front page he attempted to predict.

Traveling mystic Joel Bentley brings his newest tricks to Seoul

BY WOO JI-WON

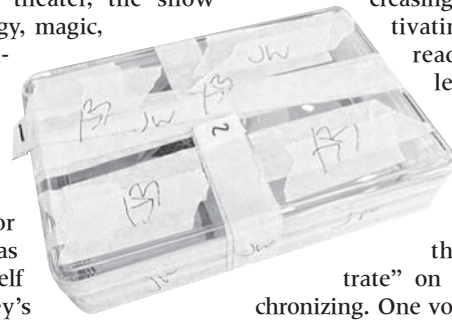
In a country where newspaper headlines seem to shift by the hour — from an abrupt martial law declaration to last-minute court rulings that shake the nation — predicting the news in advance might seem like a fool's errand. But 41-year-old Joel Bentley, who calls himself a professional “mind reader,” claims otherwise.

A former pharmacy employee in Britain for over 15 years, Bentley practiced magic on the side before earning a degree in psychology and becoming a full-time mentalist. He now performs illusions, mind reading and close-up magic across Britain, Australia, Thailand, Singapore, the United States and Dubai.

But recently, he took on what might've been his biggest challenge yet: He claimed, on Thursday, that he could predict the headlines that would be on the front page of Friday's edition of the Korea JoongAng Daily.

Bentley's one-man show, “A Brave New Mind — Magic to Free Your Seoul” is running at Dialogue in central Seoul's Yongsan District. Pitched as live, interactive theater, the show blends psychology, magic, comedy and human connections into a pathway to unlock audiences' minds.

I had to see the spectacle for myself, which was how I found myself meeting Bentley's



WOO JI-WON

A box containing a piece of paper with headline predictions written by mind reader Joel Bentley

team at a cafe in central Seoul's Jongno District at 1:30 p.m. on Thursday.

Bentley presented a small box, tightly wrapped and sealed with layers of tape.

Inside, he explained, was a folded sheet of paper along with few other things on which he had written his forecast of Friday's front page the night before. At that point, not even the newspaper's executive editor knew what would appear on the front page. The trick would be a one-night affair.

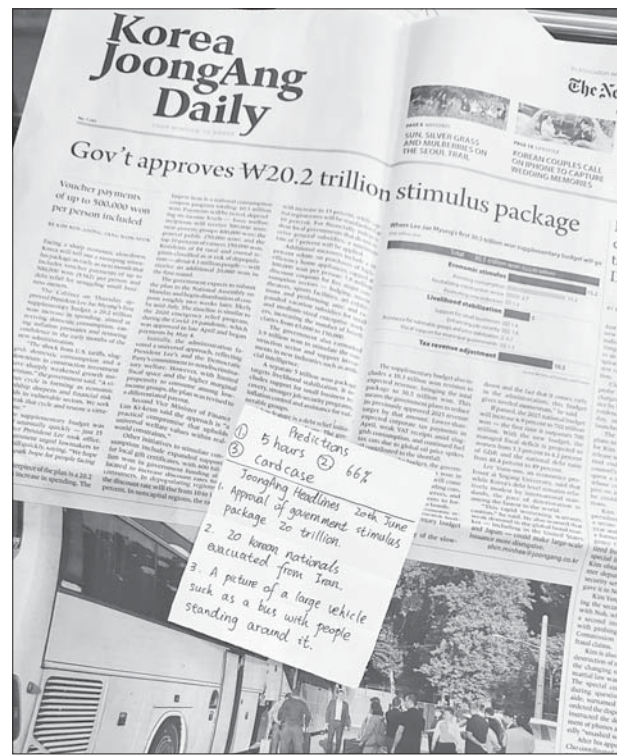
“This works when two people are connected,” Joel explained.

To avoid any tampering or swaps, Joel and I scribbled our signatures all over the box, placed it inside an envelope and taped it shut several times over.

On Saturday night, I found myself in the front row of Bentley's show. I had brought my friend David — just in case this turned out to be one of those moments worth capturing. As in most magic shows, the lights dimmed and a rainbow of stage lighting flickered across the room, setting a mysterious tone.

Bentley warmed up the audience with a series of interactive and surprising stunts. “What you are about to experience goes beyond what is possible,” Bentley said. “I shall leave up to you to decide whether it is just a trick, whether it is magic, illusion or even synchronicity.”

What followed was a string of increasingly strange and captivating tricks or mind readings — but I'll leave those as surprises for future audiences. He invited two total strangers onstage, and asked them to “concentrate” on one another, synchronizing. One volunteer secretly selected a picture from a small stack and the other volunteer, when prompted to describe their emotion, perfectly described the selected image. In another feat, one participant chose a word from a deck of cards and another, blindfold-



WOO JI-WON

Joel Bentley's predictions placed on top of the Korea JoongAng Daily

ed, flawlessly named the very word they'd picked.

In one segment, Bentley asked David to share his average screen time, his phone's battery percentage and his most recent Google search — to which David responded, in order: five hours, 66 percent and card case. Bentley wrote the responses on a whiteboard and moved on with the show.

Then came the moment we'd all been waiting for.

Joel called David and me to the stage. He asked me to unwrap the heavily taped box. Inside were two folded sheets of paper and a single folded playing card.

When I finally opened the paper with the supposed predictions, what looked like a mix of random words and numbers was written at the top. But looking closer, I realized they were the exact details my friend had given earlier and Joel had written on the board: 5, 66 and card case. I was stunned. David's mouth dropped open in disbelief.

Then I read the headlines written below. The phrasing wasn't identical, but the content matched the front page of Friday's newspaper — accurately predicting that the government had approved a 20 trillion won (\$14.5 billion) stimulus package, that 20 Korean nationals had been evacuated from Iran and even a photo of a bus surrounded by people.

It was mind-blowing. I thought maybe I'd missed something. It seemed impossible.

After the show, I did have to try my luck. I asked: Which stock is about to skyrocket? Bentley declined with a smile, saying if he told me, “the magic will be lost.”

For others who want to experience the mind-bending action, “A Brave New Mind — Magic to Free Your Seoul” runs every Saturday and Sunday through July 6, with a larger one-night performance at Funtastic Theater on July 11

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BTS's Suga funds center for autistic individuals

BY YOON SO-YEON

Suga of boy band BTS has donated 5 billion won (\$3.6 million) to establish the Min Yoon-gi Center, a special care facility dedicated to supporting autistic individuals.

The BTS member attended the congratulatory ceremony held at Severance Hospital in western Seoul. The Min Yoon-gi Center — named after the singer's real name — will be located on the first floor of the Jejung Hall building at Severance Hospital's Sinchon branch, with completion expected in September.

The center will provide language, psychiatric and behavioral support for young autistic individuals, along with therapy and various programs developed in collaboration with clinical research.

According to Severance Hospital, Suga has shown a deep interest in the support of autistic children and teenagers, particularly in preventing depression and how music might aid that process.

Suga personally participated in de-



SEVERANCE

Suga of boy band BTS, left, with Keum Ki-chang, president and CEO of Yonsei University Health System, at Severance Hospital in western Seoul.

veloping a music therapy program by attending related sessions from March to June this year on weekends, during his military service leave, according to

the hospital.

He began working with Prof. Cheon Keun-ah from the Department of Psychiatry at Severance Hospital in

November. There, he learned that existing short-term treatments were insufficient in producing tangible results for autistic individuals. He donated the funds to support long-term support programs spanning over 10 years.

This marks the largest single donation by an individual artist to the hospital, according to Severance.

The Min Yoon-gi Center will enhance the MIND program — a music-based initiative designed to improve interaction, build social networks and promote diversity — codeveloped by Suga and Prof. Cheon. MIND stands for the program's core elements: music, interaction, network and diversity.

“While I was preparing the program with Prof. Cheon Keun-ah and doing volunteer work, I learned how music can become a pathway for communication and self-expression,” Suga said in a press release. “It has been such a pleasure and privilege to join the journey of supporting autistic children.”

Suga completed his military service on June 21 as the last member of the septet.

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