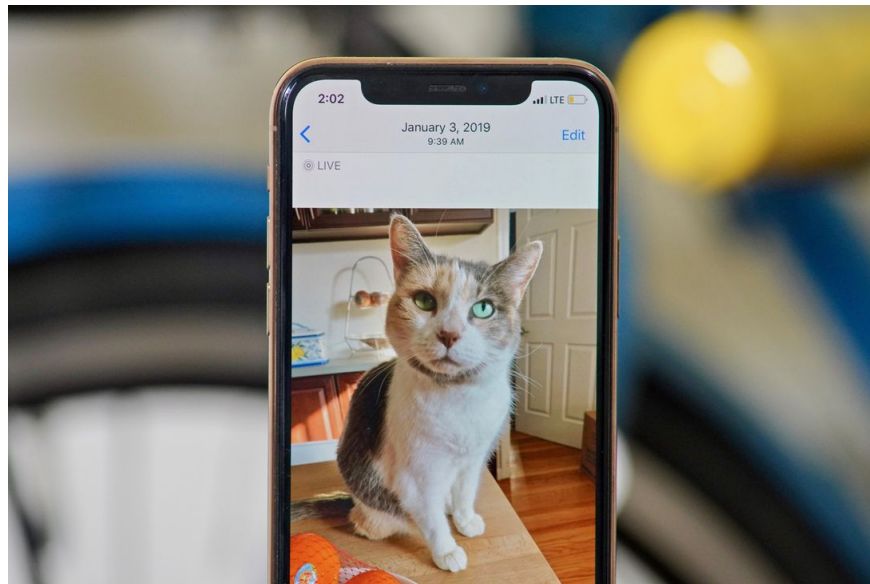


# My iPhone's Live Photos are hidden portals to a world before coronavirus

Commentary: Your phone is filled with tiny delights just waiting for you to discover them.

Just like many people these days, I've been stuck at home. It's been a difficult time for me. But in the solitude of what is now my bedroom, office and home video studio, I came across a ton of lost moments I'd forgotten about. They were living in my iPhone for years in the form of 3-second videos that were recorded when I took a Live Photo. But this isn't just an iPhone feature: Some were Motion Photos that I took using Android phones, which do the exact same thing. This isn't about OS loyalty or specs, but about discovering the emotional moments Live Photos captured without me knowing. At a time when tech companies loftily claim their products are life-changing, this is one instance when it was actually true for me.



Let's back up a bit. I have two roommates who are smart, funny and kind. But, as Tennessee Williams illustrates in *A Streetcar Named Desire*, when you put a bunch of people in a small space it's only a matter of time until things boil over. Right now, all three of us are homebound because of California's shelter-in-Place policy, put in effect due to the novel coronavirus that's affected people across the globe. Luckily after two weeks of staying home, the only thing that's boiled over in my house is some pasta water.

Because of all the anxiety that is engulfing our world, I've spent more time escaping to my room lately. It's my office. It's my studio. It's my quiet place. This meme is me in a nutshell: I've been stuck in this room for 14 days and cabin fever is taking over.

But one day last week, when I was feeling frustrated, I closed my work computer, took out my iPhone and started scrolling through photos to take a mental break. That's when I noticed a collection called Live Photos, which contained over 1,300 images. One was a live photo of my cat, Stella. I adopted her while working on *A Streetcar Named Desire* at the Writers' Theater in Chicago and named her after a character from the play. In the photo, she was napping on my roommate's heating pad. When I tapped and held it, Stella moved her head and let out a tiny meow.

That's when I nearly lost it. Stella died last summer, but as I tapped and held the photo she came back to life. A rush of emotions rolled over me like a thunderstorm rolling in on a hot summer day. To say the least, I did not expect a Live Photo to spark such intense feelings.

I immediately started scrolling through every photo looking for the tiny Live Photo circle indicator. The marketing guru at Apple that named this feature couldn't have had any idea how on-the-nose the name "Live" Photo would be for me.

I found another photo of Stella craning her neck looking at birds outside my window. I also found other photos that were of family, friends or people I met. There were Live Photos I took with GZA and Masta Killa from Wu-Tang and the Aflac duck at CES. Live Photos also revealed those first few seconds it took my friends to get ready as they were just about to pose for a picture.

(The only Live Photos I didn't engage with were a few I found of an ex girlfriend -- I'm not a glutton for punishment.)

True, I could just watch videos of my cat Stella or my video interview with the Wu-Tang Clan. But those provide a different feeling. Live Photos captured small candid, natural moments that were both mundane and intimate. And the best part was that when I took those photos, my friends, Stella and Wu-Tang didn't even realize these moments were being recorded. The 3 seconds of Stella that Live Photos brought back to life were a wonderful distraction from the uncertainty that surrounds us all.

As Eunice says at the end of *Streetcar* as she comforts Stella, "You've got to keep on goin' honey. No matter what happens, we've all got to keep on going."

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