The Press

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Letter From The Editor

Time seems to flow much faster at Stony Brook. So fast that somehow, I went from being an awkward sophomore looking to join a school magazine to becoming the executive editor of it. I never envisioned myself becoming this involved with a school club in my life. But as Kurt Vonnegut says, "So It Goes."

Stony Brook has changed a great deal within these past three years. The Stony Brook Union, the birthplace of student media, has turned into this archaic, skeletal piece of concrete next to East Side Dining. We no longer have a Dunkin Donuts in Tabler and some psychopath in FSA decided to replace Red Mango with a grimy ass Subway. It's funny to remember that there was once a time when we didn't have giant "Far Beyond" banners thrown into our peripheral vision everywhere we went. But I guess a branding campaign for a public university is much more valuable to this school than liberal art departments.

Simply put, this university looks very different since the day I first stepped off that LIRR train. And this magazine looks pretty different from the one I joined nearly three years ago.

However, this issue you are holding is still the same old Stony Brook Press. We're still a magazine looking to reach not just students within this small radius of Circle Road, but young college students in general. Hopefully, this magazine will resonate with you — whether you are a proud Seawolf or just another bitter college student who's just downed his third cup of coffee and is still staring at the screen of his MacBook, wondering what the fuck he's doing here.

In this issue we have enlightening news pieces on Long Island's furry feral cat problem, a piece on invisible disabilities faced by a Stony Brook student and a piece on a nonprofit fighting social media addiction.

The main features in this magazine include an eye-opening guide on how to create a killer Instagram profile, or as our writer puts it, making it "Instagram Aesthetic AF." We then head on over to a piece tracking the history of the intriguing relationship between anime and hip-hop culture. We'd love you to keep this magazine, but if you must part with it, recycle it and make sure to read the helpful little guide on how to reduce plastic waste at SBU.

And don't skim over our thoughtful opinion pieces on the film "Phantom Thread," the terrifying power of Alex jones and InfoWars, and the evils of Spotify and streaming music services.

Hopefully, you'll enjoy this magazine as much as we did. Remember that we're always looking to put you in these issues too.

-Lei

Feral Cats On Long Island

By Taylor Beglane

Armed with wire traps and cat food cans, Leslie Kappel rises early every morning to stem the tide of Long Island feral cats. Within 10 miles between the two towns of Westhampton and Hampton Bays — a fraction of the 118 mile length of Long Island — Kappel has trapped cats at over 40 feral colonies.

Kappel estimates that she has trapped and had neutered over 500 feral cats since she started trapping six years ago, and keeps finding more. "The only thing we can do is fix them so they don't multiply and put them back to where they came from," said Kappel. "This is where they live."

This method of trap-neuter-release, or TNR, is embraced by most animal welfare organizations as the most ethical way to deal with the nearly 100 million feral cats prowling the backyards, businesses and alleyways of the United States. A review published this month in "Frontiers in Ecology and the Environment" by Scott R. Loss and Peter P. Marra estimates that cats account for up to four billion bird deaths and 6.3-22.3 billion mammal deaths a year in the United States, and have contributed to the extinction of 63 vertebrates

But wildlife conservationists contend that TNR is not the right solution to these problems, and that with roaming cats comes disease and over hunting of endangered bird and mammal species. "Ecosystems are affected whenever a species is lost, and cats threaten the survival of many species," said Grant Sizemore, the director of invasive species programs at the American Bird Conservancy. "In Hawaii, for example, cats directly kill and indirectly harm a large number of endangered birds. These birds play important roles, such as pollinators or insect predators."

The presence of predatory cats outdoors is just one of many ways that humans impact the environment, but unlike climate change and pollution, the furry face of this force is that of the country's most popular pet. Over 90 million pet cats populate the United States, and according to the ASPCA, approximately 35 percent of households have at least one cat. There is no way to count how many feral cats roam

the outdoors of the United States, but most estimates match them with pet cats.

Even when well-fed, cats hunt and kill birds and small mammals; because sterilized feral cats are released back to where they were found, predation continues. "The problem with the trap-neuter-release program is that it's often accompanied by a continued maintenance of a colony of cats," said Michael Schrimpf, an ecologist at Stony Brook University who researches seabirds. "If the feral cat population is not being decreased, it's still having a pretty large impact on birds."

When the question of what to do with feral cats rears its head, cat advocates and wildlife conservationists sharpen their claws and fight on every front, without fail. The American Bird Conservancy filed a lawsuit last year stating that the Endangered Species Act was violated by allowing feral cats to roam near piping plovers in Jones Beach State Park, a move that Alley Cat Allies, a national feral cat organization, has promised to fight. The case is still pending.

Some wildlife conservationists claim TNR does not decrease feral populations, but in fact may increase them. "Scientific assessments of the efficacy of TNR have overwhelmingly indicated that TNR does not reliably reduce feral cat populations," said Sizemore. He cited ABC's website, which links to a study by Danielle Castillo and Alice Clark that found colony numbers increased in two parks in Florida over time after TNR.

"If I recall correctly, the Castillo and Clarke study spanned just two years," said Peter J. Wolf, the Cat Initiative Analyst at Best Friends Animal Society. "It's not uncommon to see initial population increases followed by decreases." He explained this is because new cats move into the sterilized colony, who are then sterilized themselves.

But where feral colonies make their home, species beloved by nature lovers become cat food. "Eventually, you're reaching the point where populations can't sustain themselves," said Schrimpf. "If we don't do anything about feral cats or outdoor cats, then in order to keep populations at sustainable levels, we might have to do just that much more to combat climate change, or to protect habitats, or to try and prevent window collisions for birds or reduce light pollution. Any one of those things has an impact, and what we're really talking about is the sum of those things altogether."

Cat advocates insist that it's a human problem, not a cat problem. "I think the term 'invasive species' is both loaded and imprecise," said Wolf. "I'm not saying that Felis catus is native to North America, but the term invasive species has become an easy way to demonize cats and many other animals — though, of course, this is done very selectively."

Organizations are also split on whether cats spread disease when allowed to roam. "Cats are the top carrier of rabies among domestic animals and disproportionately expose people to the disease as compared to wildlife,"

said Sizemore. He cites toxoplasmosis, a parasite that grows in cat intestines, as the disease responsible for the deaths of eight endangered Hawaiian monk seals, which were covered in an Outside article last year.

Wolf refuted this and said, "The writer [of the article] grossly exaggerates the Hawaiian monk seal issue: we're talking about eight mortalities over a 15-year period attributed to Toxoplasma gondii infection—about 4.5 percent of total mortalities. In fact, monk seal numbers are actually increasing in the Hawaiian Islands most likely to be infected with T. gondii."

According to the CDC, "over four times more rabid cats were reported than rabid dogs" in 2014. Despite this, no one has reported getting rabies from a cat in over 40 years.

Feral cats are distinct from stray or captive free-roaming cats because ferals have little to no interaction with humans. A roamer may approach someone and be friendly, but a feral cat will act like a wild animal and flee at the sight of humans. Past nine weeks of age, they usually cannot be rehabilitated into a house pet because outside life is all they have known from birth.

"They prefer that because they want to be outside. They don't want to be in somebody's house," said Teresa Meekins, a veterinarian at Southampton Animal Shelter on Long Island. Southampton has been so successful with its TNR program that it has branched out to other townships like Brookhaven.

Feral cat populations start when people abandon unfixed cats or let their pets wander outdoors, where the animals form groups and rapidly breed. "Cats can have a heat every time they finish nursing," said Meekins. "They can have four litters a year, and they can have as many as seven to eight kittens."

Alexandra Ogris, 23, lives in an apartment complex in Manorville with her husband, three dogs and a severe cat allergy. Cats roam all over the complex, agitating her dogs and keeping her up at night with midnight meows. Some have scratched her as she walks by.

"I don't like how people think that with a dog, if I were to just let it run around my apartment complex, people would be like, 'What are you doing,' and call the cops or report me," Ogris said. "But if someone has their cat outside they think that's perfectly acceptable. The cat's on my patio, my dogs are freaking out."

Unless more cat owners keep their animals fixed and indoors, the population won't go away. On that, at least, both sides can agree. "Keeping cats indoors is a really simple way to keep the cats safe," said Schrimpf.
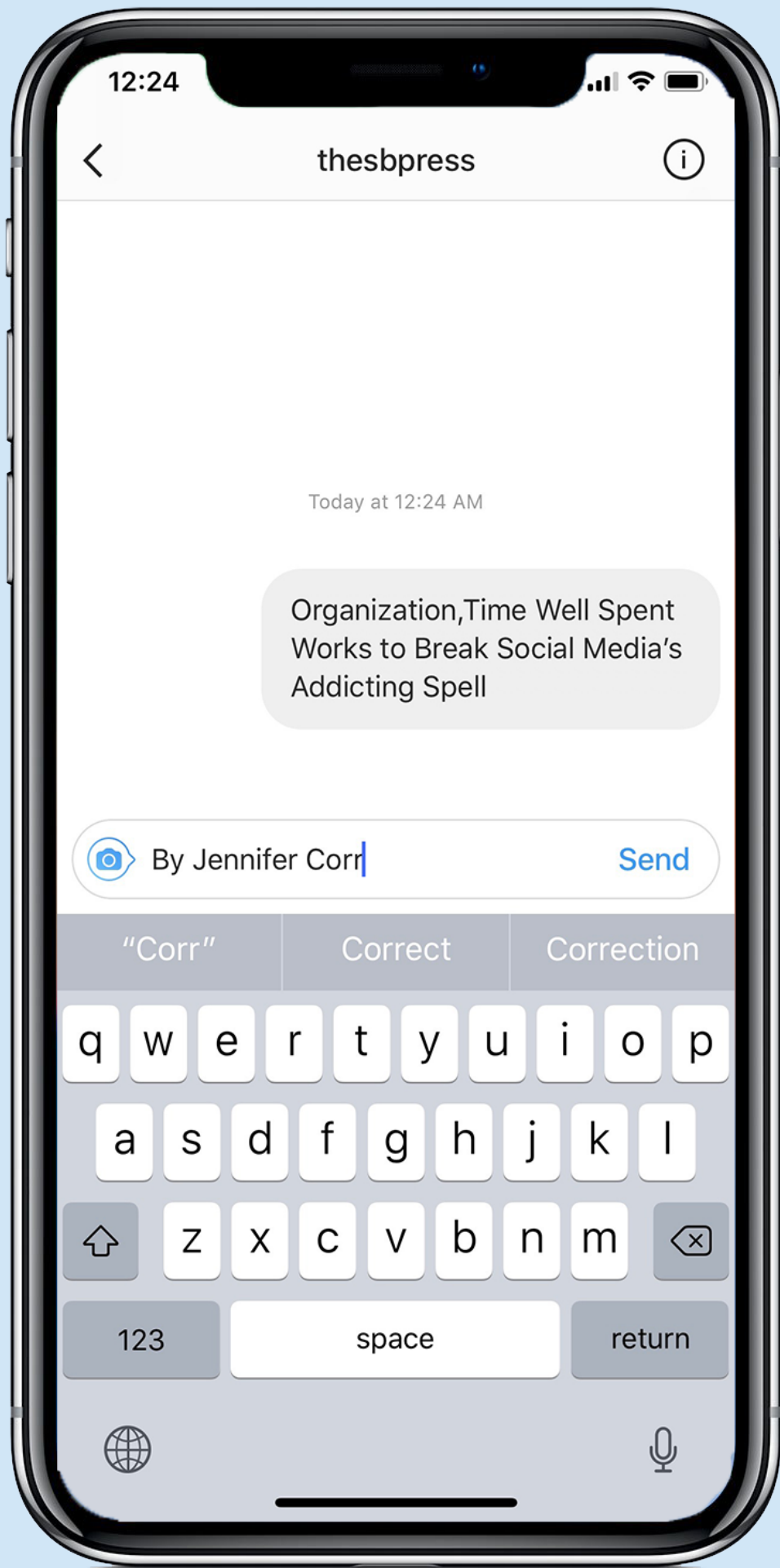
"It's really the humans who are irresponsible," said Meekins. "The cats are just trying to exist. Recommending that they're spayed and neutered and they stay indoors is going to get to the root of the problem."

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Today at 12:24 AM

Organization,Time Well Spent
Works to Break Social Media's
Addicting Spell

By Jennifer Corr

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Picture this:, it's seven in the morning and the first thing you do is send a message to thirty people on Snapchat so that you don't lose your streaks.

Sounds familiar? Well, you are not alone. According to Snap Inc, most of its 158 million users open the app 18 times a day. People enjoy Snapchat for its ability to peek into a friend's life and use those silly dog filters...on their dog. However, there is an underlying reason why people are hooked onto social media platforms like Snapchat. Social media networks are at war to capture our attention for a long as possible to make a few extra bucks, and they will do anything to get it.

In 2014, organization Time Well Spent formed with the help of tech insiders and CEOs. Its ultimate goal is to create and encourage technology and social media networks to promote good habits in their users, such as exercising and socializing, instead of taking time away.

"I love this movement because it's not about being a luddite (someone who opposes modern technology) and disconnecting completely," said Max Stossell, a representative from Time Well Spent. "it's about designing technology that truly enhances humanity."

Members of Time Well Spent formed the nonprofit when they became concerned about the effects social media was having on its users. They believe this race for attention is breaking down four pillars in society: mental health, children, social relationships and democracy.

According to Time Well Spent, companies disregard these effects as collateral damage because, in the end, they are making millions off of advertisers.
"The "Beautiful World Project," created by Time Well Spent, is calling on Apple and Google to design products to promote a good sleep schedule, quick-in-and-out usage and a being present in real life. It is also calling on social media designers to reduce loneliness by promoting coordination with others.

Stossel spent seven years as a

social media developer, working in advertising and the development of a social media platform. In those years, he learned who the true customers were.

"You don't pay for the service, which makes you not the customer, but the product. Advertisers are the customers, and they're buying our attention," said Stossel. "These companies have to make more money than they did last year, so they're always trying to devise new ways of capturing and holding our attention."

While social media users do not pay money for services, such as

Facebook or Instagram, those who use the networks excessively can pay in the form of health or time.

The American Psychiatric Association conducted research on 1700 adults who use social media between the ages 19 and 32. The study found that 30 percent of the participants experienced sleep disturbances and a quarter of them had high indicators of depression.

A psychologist, Nicole Matusow, has seen the effects of excessive social media use in her patients firsthand.

"In my practice, I've seen anxiety, low self esteem, dysthymia and loneliness. It can adversely affect sleep and increased distractibility," said Matusow of excessive use. "Relying on social media as a connection to the outside world or as entertainment can make it difficult to have alone time or just simply be without constant stimulation or distraction."

Karen Lojeski, the founder and CEO of a software company called Virtual Distance, has been concerned about this subject ever since the computer became an essential part of everyday life. Lojeski, who has a computer science degree, continued her education to study how and why technology was affecting people so personally. Through her studies, she found out that the way people interact with technology has a lot to do with their psychology, which coders are an expert on.

"Coders and software companies

know that we have this sort of innate sense to overcome challenges, if they're not too hard. If they are too hard we will walk away," said Lojeski. "So what they do is that they code, they program, either games or different activities in social media so that it resonates with us psychologically."

Matusow also stated that social media use may be linked to dopamine and other chemical surges in the brain.

According to Corinna Kirsch-Mc-Donald, an art history professor who focuses on the connection of art and technology, the design of social media plays a role in the way people use the network.

"Instagram, it's a lot of pictures. You can swipe quickly, that is an aesthetic design choice to be able to scroll quickly versus, for instance, clicking on a link and waiting for that link to load the next picture and waiting for it to go to the next page," said Kirsch-McDonald. "The aesthetic makes it easy to use and easy to spent a lot of time on."

The longer people use social media, the more advertisements they will see and the more money will be made from advertisers. Instagram and Facebook strategically place their advertisements to target specific audiences, and it works; 200 million Instagram users visit a business's profile a day. This is done by gathering information about a user's age, location and even the websites they visit.

Without charging a penny to its

users, Instagram was projected to rake in $3.64 billion dollars in 2017.

"We get to use these platforms for free. Technically, we get to use them for free. In exchange, we are letting ourselves become market research," said Kirsch-McDonald.

Sowell pointed out that the people behind Facebook, Instagram and other social media networks

"*Most programmers are 20-year-old men. So I don't want any 20-year-old guy, or a bunch of guys, telling me how to live my life.*"

believe they are solving world problems.

"They're good people who are well intentioned, but so long as their primary business model revolves around extracting human attention by any means necessary, they will have a negative impact on the world," said Sowell.
While social media networks have contributed to groundbreaking revolutions, such as the Arab Spring, lately there has been a rise in "fake news." According to a 2016 Pew Research Center survey, 23 percent of U.S. adults

have knowingly or unknowingly spread an article based on false information. Time Well Spent believes that social media rewards outrage and divides people instead of agreeing on truth.

When asked if technology should be designed to "enhance humanity", Lojeski disagreed vehemently.
"The problem with that is you are architecting society the way you want it. I mean, most programmers are 20-year-old men. So I don't want any 20-year-old guy, or a bunch of guys, telling me how to live my life," said Lojeski. "You're only getting a very thin slice of point of view because of who's programming and what the motive is to program. You're not getting rid of advertising. You're just giving it a different spin."

Instead, Lojeski believes the answer is education.

"What I think people need, my personal quest, is to just make people aware of what's happening to them. Because I think the best we can do at the moment is become more educated about how all this stuff really works," said Lojeski. "Once we are educated and we really understand what's going on, we can make a choice as to how we live our life."
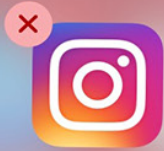
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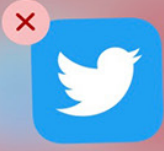
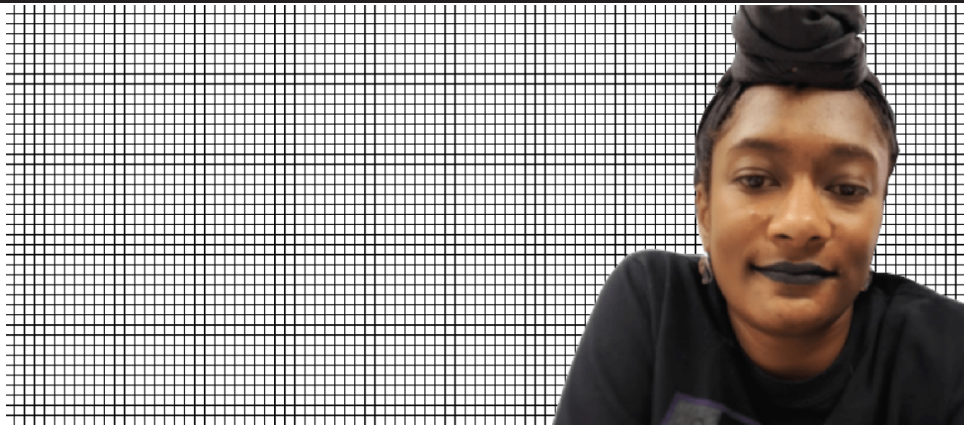**By Andrea Keckley**

Getting through college is never easy. But as Emily Heyward knows, living with an invisible disability can make it even harder.

Heyward spent two years at Spelman College before having a mental breakdown. She spent about a month in a psychiatric facility battling severe depression, anxiety and post-traumatic stress disorder. In 2015, she transferred to Stony Brook University, where her grades dropped to a near failing point. It was then that she was diagnosed with dyslexia and attention deficit disorder.

Despite these obstacles, Heyward earned her Bachelor of Science in Technological Systems Management this past May. Now she is working towards her master's degree and plans to go for her Ph.D.

But making it through college with psychiatric and learning disabilities isn't easy. Stony Brook University's Disability Support Services (DSS) worked with Heyward to determine what accommodations she should be able to request. For her, some of those include deadline flexibility and a copy of PowerPoint lecture slides. And while her professors are often very supportive, not all are so willing to comply.

"When people think of disabilities, the first thing they think about are physical disabilities and they almost completely forget about the mental disabilities," she said. "I think that's one thing that people completely ignore, because if someone were to look at me they wouldn't think that I'm disabled." Heyward is one of an estimated 74 percent of disabled people who do not use an object, such as a wheelchair, that makes their disability apparent to those around them. And while great strides have been made, accommodating students with so-called "invisible disabilities" is still something that colleges struggle with. Some faculty members can feel unsure of how to accommodate these students, or reluctant to honor requests.

This issue becomes more crucial as college enrollment rises. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, as of 2012, 11 percent of undergraduate college students reported having a disability. And even if that percentage continues to hold steady, college enrollment has increased overall since then. So colleges across the board can expect to see more disabled students on their campuses, and many of them won't be visibly disabled.

"There are tons of people with invisible disabilities in academia," said Dr. Pamela Block, the director of the Disability Studies concentration at Stony Brook University. "But they're passing. They're hiding it. So the students don't know that they're there. So they're treated like this is a strange and rare thing when a student has these issues."

Some invisible disabilities include chronic pain or fatigue, learning disorders, certain mental illness and many more. The symptoms and limitations of invisible disabilities can often be misunderstood when the person exhibiting them appears healthy and able-bodied. For instance, the fatigue someone with chronic fatigue syndrome experiences can be fundamentally different from the fatigue an able bodied person

experiences at times, even if they look the same from an outside perspective. When something like this happens, the need for assistance may seem unnecessary to some. Other times, faculty members may feel that accommodation requests impede on intellectual property rights, particularly if they designed the lecture notes or slides themselves. These are only some of the obstacles that can stand in the way of a disabled student's access to assistance.

But even when faculty members are not educated on disabilities, colleges like Stony Brook have qualified advisors who can determine what accommodations these students need. However, this does not always mean they will receive them. "The professors misunderstand what their rights are," Dr. Block said. "And I guess they misunderstand the law and what entitlements students have."

Even if students are legally entitled to assistance, denied requests can be difficult to appeal. "Students can be afraid of reprisal, because this is the professor that's responsible for their grade or someone that might be writing them letters of recommendation for their graduate training," Dr. Block said. "It's very tricky."

Heyward knows this conflict well. Receiving accommodations such as deadline flexibility can be hit or miss. "I've had professors not allow me extra time and I've had professors who say 'take as much time as you need, you can give it to me next week if necessary, just tell me what you need and we can talk about it,'" she said. But while some may feel reluctant

to accommodate students like Heyward, others simply do not know how.

In April of 2015, Dr. Block helped organize a workshop on access and learning at Stony Brook University. Although it was planned last minute, the event ended up being completely full. Faculty members came in from all ends of campus looking for guidance on how to better help their students.

"These were all professors who obviously cared deeply," said Dr. Block. "And they were sharing stories about their experiences with the students, and some of them were in tears because they wanted to help the students and they didn't feel like they were given information or support from the administration to help them do that."

Margaret Price, an associate professor and the author of Mad at School: Rhetorics of Mental Disability and Academic Life, spoke at the workshop. "The project of accessibility in higher education means more than just ensuring everyone has a proverbial seat at the table," she said during her presentation. "It means rethinking what that table itself means."

Dr. Block also pointed out that student services are often so overwhelmed with handling accommodations that they often lack the time to assist faculty in these matters. "The way that the students can consult with student services, there should be someone that the faculty can go to that's an expert in these issues as well," she said.
Another burden placed on the

students is disclosure. A person with an invisible disability often has the option to not disclose their disability, and due to the surrounding stigmas, may do so even if it means not being able to receive accommodations.

Of course, complete privacy is not always a guarantee. In one private communication, a professor from another college — whose name was requested to not be revealed — received a notice saying that a student's disability services were being cancelled. The reason for the cancellation was that the student said they did not need the service, but the professor felt that notice implied they were being deemed ineligible.

The professor replied to the notice: "I have 2 conflicting reactions. First, if so, it's none of my business. No faculty should know that you found a student ineligible because it brands them as a whiner or a liar. Second, if you said 'no,' I would want to speak to her myself to be sure she knows that I may be willing, even if you are not."

"Getting a degree is hard, everybody knows that," Heyward said. "No one likes it, but you have to do it and you have to go through it and having a disability makes it ten times harder. It's good to know you have people there, you just need to make sure people stay."

Phantom Thread: Obsession, Human Connection and the Mad Genius of Paul Thomas Anderson

By Joe Amendola

There's a moment early on in "Phantom Thread" where Reynolds Woodcock — the much-lauded dressmaker and central character of the film — is chastising his partner Johanna. Following this scene, she is never heard from again. Johanna, bemoaning Reynolds' coldness, simply asks him where he has gone, referring to his emotional distance. Reynolds decides to forgo an answer and simply replies, "I cannot begin my day with a confrontation." Reynolds, a man of rigid routine, views confrontation as the ultimate evil, tripping him up and disrupting his carefully planned inner world. "Phantom Thread" is, in essence, a film about confrontation, and what happens when such a man's norms are eroded — the consequences of living a meticulously planned existence.

"Phantom Thread" is the newest film by writer-director auteur Paul Thomas Anderson, the filmmaker behind such classics as 2007's "There Will Be Blood," 1997's "Boogie Nights" and 2003's "Punch Drunk Love." "Phantom Thread" is Anderson's eighth movie and his second (The first being 2007's "There Will Be Blood") collaboration with legendary method actor Daniel Day Lewis, whose role as the 1950s British dressmaker has been confirmed to be his last.

Paul Thomas Anderson has always been a director who's been defined — at least in part — by his influences. This is thanks in no small part to Anderson himself, who has made his own cinematic knowledge well known throughout interviews. It is widely believed that the best directors are the most rabid cinephiles,

and Anderson is certainly no exception. But Anderson, however influence-heavy his work may seem, always manages to occupy a stable middle ground between any of his would-be sources of derivation. He's too focused to be Robert Altman, too much of a humanist to be Stanley Kubrick, not quite glitzy enough to be Martin Scorsese and perhaps too grown-up to be Jonathan Demme. Paul Thomas Anderson's work is all his own in that it always manages to float just above any conventional film trope or plot. Just when you're thinking, "Oh, I've seen this before," Anderson quickly veers off in another direction, either emotionally or plot-wise, creating a viewing experience that is always worthy of the increasingly rare title of "unique."

"Phantom Thread" offers no deviation in quality from Ander-

son's earlier work. The film stars Lewis as Reynolds Woodcock, a renowned dressmaker in 1950s London, whose dresses are frequently found on the bodies of England's elite. Lesley Manville, a mainstay of the British film scene, plays Reynolds' sister and business partner, Cyril. Cyril is a domineering figure, always leering close behind in Reynolds' life, where she acts as a watchdog over all his relationships, both personal and business related. Luxembourgian actress Vicky Krieps amazes as Alma, the strong-willed woman who finds her way into Reynolds' strange world and inner orbit. To call Alma simply a "muse" or "love interest" is to do an immense disservice to the role she serves in the film; the story is as much hers as it is Reynolds, and Alma's often futile pursuit of vulnerability and emotional reciprocation from him purveys the entire two hours of the drama.

Reynolds is a complicated and frustrating man. He is shrill, a perfectionist and not exactly what one would call a "romantic." Reynolds suffers from a familiar problem of such obsessive personalities: He views personal relationships, leisure and love — what we would call "life" — as a thing to organize around his work, as opposed to the other way around. This is hardly unexplored territory in art, but the source of Reynolds' disruption makes for a fascinating study in human connection. Reynolds Woodcock shares many traits with another Anderson character, Adam Sandler's Barry Egan, the introverted bathroom supply salesman in "Punch Drunk Love."

But while Barry was haunted by crushing feelings of his perceived inadequacy, Reynolds is merely too good at what he does for his own well-being. Reynolds' incredible talent proves to be his main trouble as a person.

Reynolds meets Alma, who works as a waitress, in a countryside restaurant while spending the weekend at his cabin. Alma immediately shows her wit and charm, as she matches Reynolds' impossibly complicated brunch order — which he insists she deliver by memory, taking away her notepad — by delivering a note back to him with the meal, which reads, "for the hungry boy." Reynolds has met his match. From then on, the two develop a bizarre and ambiguous relationship, marked by Reynolds' numerous pathologies and peculiarities. For instance, after Reynolds and Alma's first date, there is no operatic love scene or emotional exchange. Rather, Reynolds' takes Alma upstairs and makes her model a dress, with his sister Cyril seemingly appearing out of nowhere to join in and write down her measurements. This is who Reynolds is: A dinner date is nice, but now it's time to work, and anybody will do. At one point, Reynolds remarks to Alma that "You can sew almost anything into a coat," when referring to a memory of his mother he stitched into one of his garments. Reynolds literally keeps his whole life within his work. He is dominated and consumed by his craft, from his restless perfectionism that plays out in frantic last-minute changes he makes to dresses before fashion showings, or in the memories of his mother,

which he recalls to Alma through an anecdote about making her second wedding dress. When two young women approach Reynolds while he's out at dinner, they wish not for a relationship, but to be buried in one of his dresses; everyone in Reynolds' life views him in the context of his profession, but Alma enters the picture viewing him as a man, a man to be understood and decoded.

From here on out, the movie is largely defined by Alma's attempts to slow down Reynolds routine, a routine his sister believes is "best not shaken." This proves itself to be true time and time again throughout the film; her attempts, to Reynolds, are "unsettling," "annoyances" and "confrontations." When Alma attempts to surprise Reynolds with a one-on-one dinner, Reynolds concludes, "This has been an ambush, and to what purpose?" Reynolds is a man so drowned in the processes of his everyday life that any derailment — no matter how minor — is seen as an insult to him, making for a chronically self-alienating existence. Alma doesn't back down easily, however. She has a quick retort for every snide comment at the hands of either Reynolds or Cyril, who lingers in the background of their relationship with a near-constant presence. When Reynolds suggests that Alma has poor taste after a mediocre review of one of her dresses, she replies, "Perhaps I like my own taste." Alma fires back at Reynolds in places where you could imagine his other muses shrinking and sinking into silence.

Reynolds is someone whose

silences are meant to mean just as much as his speech. This is shown when he is inspecting a dress made by his army of seamstresses, or the nervous anticipation he goes through when delivering a dress to a member of London's high society. He can usually be found at the breakfast table in his vast estate, sketching dress designs in his notebook and sneering at anyone who dares butter their toast too loud. Reynolds saves his most emotional moments for the aftermath of a fashion showing that doesn't go as planned, or a wedding he didn't wish to attend or lend his talents to. Reynolds can never be bothered to focus on anything other than his work for too long, and human connection, while clearly desired by him, is never worth the bother. Despite all this, Alma endures and endears herself to Reynolds, slowly replacing the icy Cyril as his main companion, much to the chagrin of the judgemental sister. Alma becomes at once a model, a seamstress and companion to Reynolds, who can never quite figure out just what the definition of their relationship is. Reynolds doesn't wish to find out, and it's up to Alma to decide for him.
W
Alma struggles to crack the code of Reynolds Woodcock, and, although she shares a breakfast table with him, and is unquestionably his closest companion save for his sister, always seems to find her goal of breaking Reynolds' thick detachment just out of reach. In fact, the first time they share an (implied) intimate moment comes after Alma steals back a wedding dress from a woman Reynolds sees as "not deserving

of the House of Woodcock." The dynamic that Reynolds and Alma share seems reminiscent of a previous Anderson film, 2012's "The Master," where a listless and unstable sailor played by Joaquin Phoenix strikes up a friendship with a charismatic cult leader played by Philip Seymour Hoffman; you never quite know what keeps drawing them toward each other. This is hardly a knock on the character development of the movie, however; Anderson thrives when he's exploring the ambiguity of human relationships, and "Phantom Thread" is no exception.

Eventually, Alma figures out how to tame Reynolds. "Sometimes it's good for him to slow down his steps a little" she remarks, and she achieves it — albeit by unconventional means. Alma's method proves successful, and although their relationship is not perfect from there on out, it provides Alma with a blueprint on how to domesticate such a difficult person. Alma devises a way to break Reynolds by tearing him down and making him strong again, so to speak; she leaves him with no choice but to finally submit to a state of temporary helplessness. (The methods by which she does this will not be disclosed, in the interest of remaining spoiler free) By doing this, Alma creates the vulnerability and tenderness she desires in Reynolds, and he seems to cop to it, if not accept it, by the end of the film. Reynolds is the ostensible main character of the movie, but Alma is the core. She breaks every tired stereotype of the "love interest" and shifts the movie to her point of view almost seamlessly, claiming power in the

relationship one breakfast at a time.

Near the end of the film, Alma and Reynolds are seen sharing one of her much sought after tender moments on a sofa. Alma, ruminating on her vision of an ideal future with Reynolds, proclaims near the end of her speech, "I am older and I see things differently, and I finally understand you." This, as the preceding two hours of the film show, is wishful thinking, but then again, who knows? Human relationships are often minefields of unspoken anxieties, disappointment and regret, but they also offer hope. We can never understand each other, or mold each other into our respective ideal versions, but we still try. "Phantom Thread" deals with these unsolvable problems, and people's efforts to answer them, in an incredibly compelling way.

The movie is stunning to look at, with a camera that — in true Paul Thomas Anderson fashion — never remains still for too long. A Renaissance painting-like framing that you can almost walk into. Such a visually compelling work makes for a viewing experience that makes two hours go by instantly. One hardly needs to be an expert on mid-20th century high fashion (I'm certainly not) to be completely engrossed by this neo-gothic, wonderfully bizarre love story. The film doesn't feel supernatural, per se, but seems to occupy a slightly different reality than our own. This plays out, partly, through ghostly visits and through the vaguely defined realities of all the relationships shown throughout the drama. "Phantom Thread" is both simple and impos-

"The movie is stunning to look at, with a camera that—in true Paul Thomas Anderson fashion — never remains still for too long. A Renaissance painting-like framing that you can almost walk into."

sible to describe, tirelessly detailed yet entirely digestible to a mass audience. It felt like I was watching a magic trick being pulled off.

The film is nominated for six Oscars, and it's hard to see how it won't win at least one. Paul Thomas Anderson, Daniel-Day Lewis, Vicky Krieps and Lesley Manville have pulled off something truly novel with this movie, an instant classic that is at once retro and totally new feeling. "Phantom Thread" is a fascinating tale of obsession, the dangers of routine and the hopelessness of our inability to ever truly understand each other.

How to be Instagram Aesthetic AF

By Neda Karimi
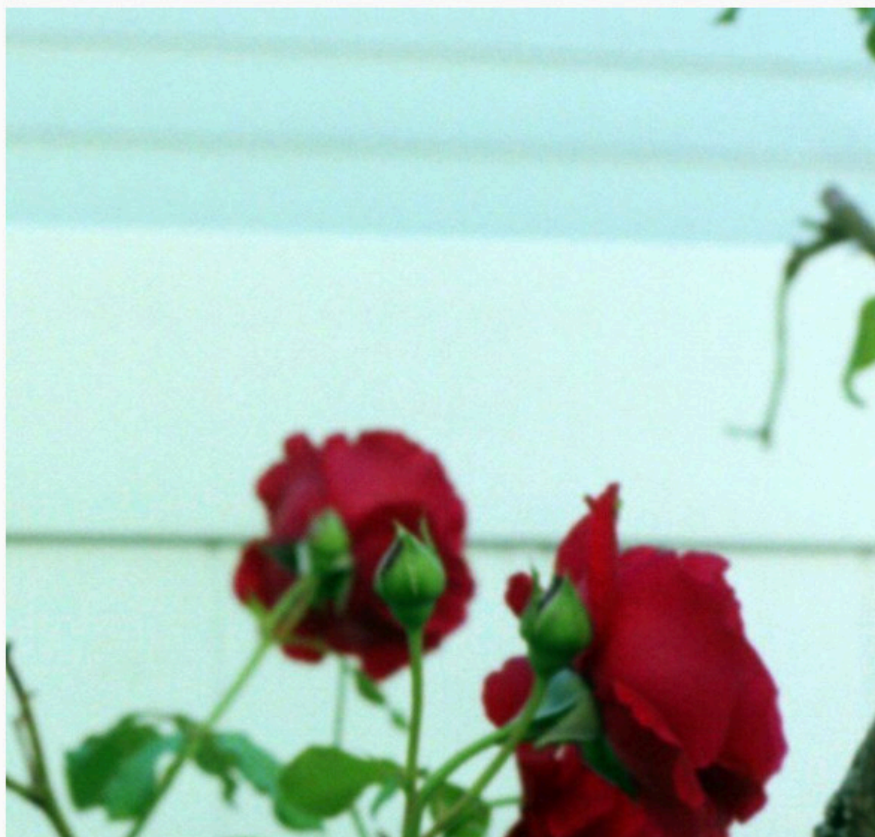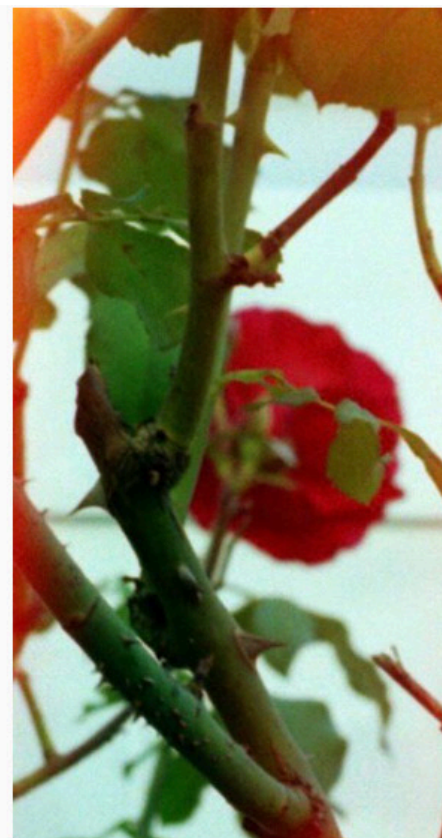
Life is picture-per-fect for millennials and Generation Z — at least the ones with visually appealing Instagram feeds.

It's 2018, and having aesthetically pleasing content (or a substantial following) can make up for a myriad of short-comings, including a lack of personality or social anxiety.

In short, you are your Instagram feed.

Maintaining a consistent theme or flow throughout your feed can be difficult, especially in the midst of school, work or whatever else keeping you from spending every waking moment posing against a white backdrop with an array of cacti. Below is a guide on how you can improve your feed from students who have mastered the art of Instagram aesthetic.

Consistency is key.

Choosing the right filter can seem overwhelming. With so many options, using a different filter for each picture seems like a good compromise for variety, but this can create a visual mess.

"If you use filters, use the same one," Izabella Varella, a 20-year-old at Iowa State University recommends. "Stop switching it around."

Izabella, who is also the photography director for SIR magazine, Iowa State University's student magazine, says she focuses on symmetry and consistency in color schemes.

"If you have too much going on, it can get overwhelming," Izabella said. "Post what you want, but don't be messy."

Avoid over-editing.

Over-editing is a mistake many Instagram newbies have made, and it's always embarrassingly obvious. You're trying to convince outsiders these pictures are your everyday life. If you can't stack on multiple layers of sunglasses without looking tacky, you should reconsider stacking filters.
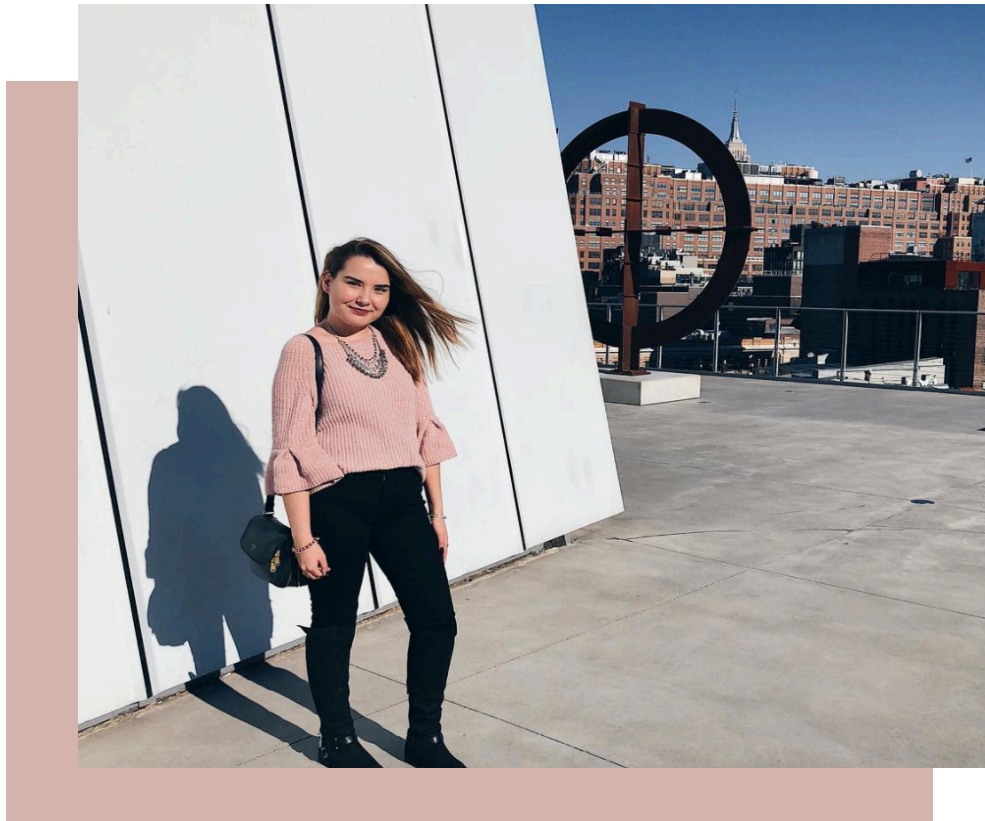
Toobah Wali, a 21-year-old pharmacy student in Philadelphia, recommends straying from Instagram's preinstalled filters and opting for more comprehensive photo editing applications such as VSCO. Rather than loading on the filters, she prefers to "edit to enhance."

"On VSCO, you can adjust how filtered you want a photo," she said. "I aim to lessen the filter and keep it around +6."
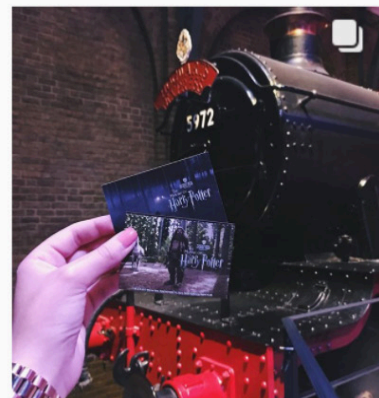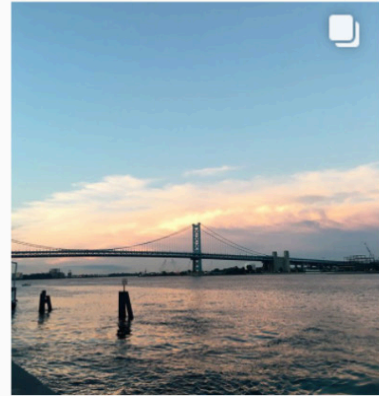
Her favorite filter on VSCO right now is HB1 or any of the E series filters.

Some photos may not need a filter. Adjusting other photo features can help enhance your photo without doing too much.

"I play around with the exposure, contrast and sharpen features, but most of the time I slightly adjust the sharpness," Toobah said.
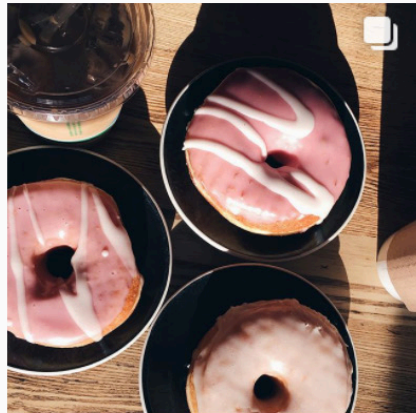
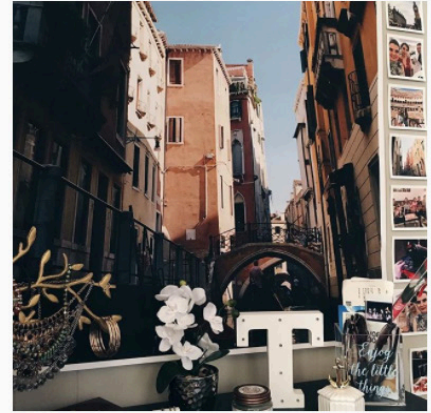# *Focus on variety.*

Incorporating different types of content can help enhance the overall flow of your feed. Toobah tries to incorporate food, outfits, skylines and flowers.

Snapping a quick photo of your brunch, or flowers on your way to class can do wonders, as long as you get the angles and lighting right.

"Flowers are best to add some color to your feed," she said.

Screenshot and delete.

The screenshot tool's typical use is for spilling the "tea," but Farida Eltigi, a 21-year-old Egyptian art student in London, uses the tool to assure photos complement her vibrant feed.

"I post it, and then screenshot it," Eltigi said. "Then I delete it, so I see if it matches my feed."
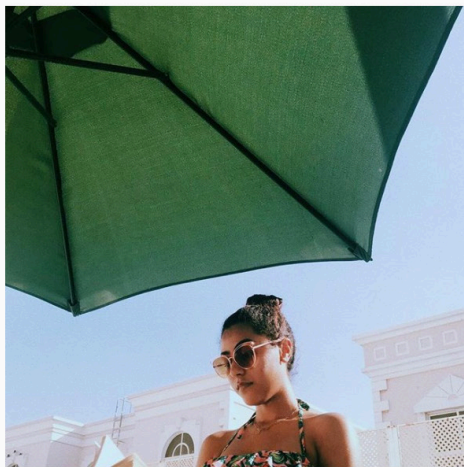
This tactic, which involves flipping back and forth between your actual feed, and the feed with the photo you're thinking of posting, allows you to take your time while evaluating. If you decide it doesn't fit, you don't have the stress of knowing everyone has already seen and liked it. It's better to be safe than sorry.

Be you.

If your feed is void of all authenticity, it loses an essence only you can provide, and your feed will inevitably get lost in a black hole of generic accounts that gets dismissed without even a simple "like."

Izabella takes pictures impulsively and tries not to plan, allowing her to avoid letting her feed conform to other people's standards.

"I don't want my insta to be for other people; I want it to be for me," she said. "Stop posting pictures for your followers and post pictures because you want to."

Of Gold Chains & Capsule Jackets:

The Cultural Diffusion of Hip-Hop and Asia

By Louis Marrone
Photography By Michaela Steil

Romance Dawn

Aesthetic is a buzzword that can have an immense amount of power. At its best, aesthetic is something that communicates a certain emotion or idea. It's something that represents its subject as a concept. Nowadays, especially in the social media-obsessed culture we inhabit, an artist's visual aesthetic is oftentimes the first exposure someone has to them. For example, take the band Elvis Depressedly. One only needs to take a single look at the band's album artwork — the often scratchy, grainy 16 mm photograph — to get a feel for the lo-fi, scratchy, somber-sounding music and lyrics they're in for.

Eventually, as with most things, cultures and genres begin to evolve. The changing times allow for new influencers and ideas to take center stage. As a result, new sounds, fashion statements and sub-genres are born.

With an early embrace of cross colors, celebration of oversized clothing and a great appreciation for footwear, hip-hop's definitive style serves as an example of how aesthetic compliments the lyrical and atmospheric tone of the music. It also serves as an example of the power of evolution. In November of 1993, we saw the release of the Wu-Tang solo album, "Enter The Wu-Tang." Aside from the whammo-blammo, in-your-face flows and intense production, the album featured many allusions to Chinese martial arts culture ("Shaolin shadow-boxing and the Wu-Tang sword style/If what you say is true, the Shaolin and the Wu-Tang would be dangerous/Do you think your Wu-Tang sword can defeat me? En garde, I'll let you try my Wu-Tang style").

This is something taken a step further with the release of GZA's 1995 solo effort, "The Liquid Swords." The album features similar themes and production, but the artwork is a tad more direct. It features a detailed, yet cartoonish drawing of GZA engaged in battle with a hoodie-clad samurai. The bloody aftermath of the previous events paint the background. What this, as well as the previous release of Wu-Tang Clan's "Enter The Wu-Tang," display is a cue from the aesthetics of Asian martial arts cinema.

In late 2016, the internet was handed the music video for "Flossing," by Atlanta-based rapper 6 dogs. The video features 6dogs standing and grooving in front of a white screen, shirtless, as footage from the anime adaptation of "One Piece" projects over him. It sounds like a bizarre idea, but he wasn't the first to do this. Frank Ocean and Kanye West have all made references to properties such as "Spirited Away" and "Akira" in their lyrics ("Stronger" being the best exam-ple), and have expressed their appreciation in interviews.

Aside from that, rappers such as Xavier Wulf and Chxpo have used anime, as well as Japanese writing and symbols, as a visual aide for album artwork and music videos. Look no further than the album artwork for Wulf's "Project X" mixtape.

At about the same time, promotional music videos, made by producers and fans, began circulating around the online feeds of audiences. The concept is simple: lo-fi hip-hop beats are layered over clips from various animes such as "One Piece," "Naruto," "Neon Genesis: Evangelion," and so on.

With these two cultures being so seemingly different, the grand question posed is "why"? Why is this such a big phenomenon? What makes these two cultures seemingly go together?

Once Upon a Time In Shaolin

Going as far back as the 1950s and 60s, Afro-Asiatic culture has had a place in modern history. The documentary "I Am Bruce Lee" features one commentator discussing how Bruce Lee's films hit a chord with black audiences. According to a piece in The Guardian, Lee's 1958 Cha-Cha championship shows rhythmic footwork and

presentational mannerisms that had African roots. To top that off, at a time when African Americans and people of color in general were struggling for their rights, many saw films like Lee's as inspirational — almost bordering on pure escapism in some cases. Think about it: The films presented a society in which oppression and discrimination were thwarted and overcome by determination, stamina and artistically curated violence. And the person to it? A suave, ripped, enlightened person of color.

With regards to hip-hop, RZA particularly took to the films of people such as Lee and legendary Japanese Akira Kurosawa. This is something that he brought with him going into Wu-Tang Clan. "Early on, Ol' Dirty Bastard and I used to watch kung fu movies, leave the theater, do some kung fu fighting, get on the train, keep fighting, and then run into MCs and musically battle them like it was a kung fu fight. That was my weekend habit," he said in an interview with The Film Society of Lincoln Center.

In many respects, East Asian cinema culture, especially anime, is similar to hip-hop culture. Both promote larger-than-life personalities. "We find both Goku and Ol Dirty Bastard and Lil Trav compelling because they're so over-the-top and delirious and strange !!and fun," Ezra Marcus, a former editor at VICE's nightlife publication THUMP, said. "Both anime and hip-hop allow artists to play with scale, physics and reality. Rappers building outlandish, cool personas hit us in the same pleasure centers as

anime characters bending time and space." Take for example, Kanye and Vegeta from "Dragon Ball Z." Both are in-your-face, delirious, eccentric personalities. They're people who think they're the greatest, and they don't back down from defending themselves. They're men of epic scope. What about the people in Wu-Tang? With their energetic, fast-moving mannerisms, could they not be considered similar to the Capsule gang from "Akira," or any ninja gang from any Kurosawa film?

Toronto-based rapper Sayzee released a "Dragon Ball Z" in-

> **"Everyone on ["Dragon Ball Z"] is trying to level up their powers and be the strongest fighter, and that's pretty much how I took the rap game — rappers want to be the best, they want to be the next guy."**

spired mixtape in 2013 titled "The Frieza Saga." In an interview with Noisey, he said, "Everyone on ["Dragon Ball Z"] is trying to level up their powers and be the strongest fighter, and that's pretty much how I took the rap game — rappers want to be the best, they want to be the next guy."

Anime is also something that many producers in the West have grew up on. "Anime has been a huge influence on me," Orlando-based producer BYSON said. "A lot of the producers working now grew up during the early-mid 2000s watching shows

like 'Dragon Ball Z'... I often find myself watching scenes from certain animes when working as a source of inspiration."

As said earlier, aesthetic is something that should tell something about the artist as a concept. When you watch 6 dogs dancing in front of "One Piece" footage while rapping in his signature monotone voice, you get the idea that this is someone who is mellow, yet artistic. They're someone with a story — someone with an interest. The same can be said of Wu-Tang. When you pair their action-packed sounds with their martial arts-based lyrical content, you get the idea that these are no-nonsense, ready-for-action fellows with their balls to the wall and their sights on the mic.

The influence didn't go one way, though. "Cowboy Bebop" was, in many ways, Shinichiro Watanabe's love letter to jazz and the American western. He carried his interest in Western pop culture into the 2004 anime "Samurai Champloo," a hip-hop-centric anime set in Edo-era Japan. This was a big turning point for anime and hip-hop in particular. The music for the show was composed by two producers: Japanese producer Nujabes and American producer Fat Jon. The two of them fused two African-American music forms together: jazz and hip hop. For example, the song "Shiki No Uta" is a jazzy ballad with a hip-hop drum pattern.

It's this, and other music, that helped establish a certain bi-cultural identity, and brought this culture into a more mainstream place in the pop cultural dialogue

of Japan. It's an aesthetic that was pushed heavily by the likes of Adult Swim and Toonami, thanks to the efforts of Jason DeMarco, who has mentioned being an anime fan in interviews. Through the usage of their on-air promotional bumps, as well as program advertisements, the programming block presented a strong, industrial sound to their otherwise eccentric lineup of animation, many of which was imported from the land of the rising sun. "Toonami not only brought dubbed shows to basic cable," Emily Yoshida wrote in her New York Magazine interview with DeMarco. "It also contextualized them in a world of hip-hop, DJ culture, comic-book sensibility and starry-eyed sci-fi earnestness."

On the other side of things, MC Jin and China Mac had begun taking the center stage of the underground freestyling scene, with the former killing it on his appearances on BET's "106 & Park." In the last decade, rappers such as Dumbfoundead and Rich Brian (F.K.A. Rich Chigga) have emerged, showcasing their love of both their heritage and their new ranks within hip-hop culture.

A Thief's Philosophy

With all of this, however, can come some concerns. Over the past couple of years, society has become far more socially conscious, and concerns regarding whitewashing and cultural appropriation have become apparent in a variety of arenas. Hip-hop is no exception. While people have been skeptical of white rappers such as Macklemore and Lil Dicky, and white commentators like podcaster Adam22, this is something that certainly has extended to people of Asian descent. Look no further than Rich Brian. His former stage name aside, there have been concerns regarding the way that Brian, as well as other 88rising acts, are partaking in the culture with heavy capitalistic intentions.

Cultural diffusion is an everyday part of human society, in a variety of places. They don't call America the melting pot for no reason. But it can also be argued that the executions of the aesthetics and personas described are gratuitous and somewhat cartoonish.

35

With anime, most of the rappers using the aesthetic do it purely for fun, and while there is nothing particularly wrong with that, the way it represents either culture at large can be a bit off. Both of these art forms are works that many people who work within them take seriously, and have a strong connection to. When these rappers use it for their own visual presence, there tends to be a lack of sensibility. It can make what originated as a serious, conscious art form look dumbed-down and indulgent. This, and more, can especially be said of white rappers in the mix.

"There are moments where that whole aesthetic comes from an anti-blackness," Daysi Sanchez, a staff writer at The Stony Brook Independent and WUSB business manager, said. "It's used mainly by white rappers to have a guiltless conscience about doing rap. Since it doesn't pertain to black culture, especially that of the U.S., it's a free-for-all, really, and there isn't this sense of responsibility of knowing rap's history anymore. It's so they can have all the glamor and have no understanding of the struggle that started rap in the first place."

Regarding whether this can be considered cultural appropriation, Marcus said "I guess it could be argued in some sense." Marcus's knowledge in this area comes through in a 2016 Noisey piece titled, "When White Producers Co-Opt Black Identity." In the piece, Marcus accuses white producers such as Marquis Hawkes and Perseus Traxx of branding their music and depicting their personas as though they were part of the black community, primarily basing it on things such as poverty and borderline blackface. Can [bsd.u] and 6 dogs be a similar case?

"I don't think it's fair to compare the decades-long fusion of rap and anime with what transpired in the article I wrote about white producers co-opting black identity," he said. "That's a totally different issue, to me, than trendy Soundcloud rappers using anime for their cover art. I think that as long as artists are upfront about who they are, and respectful of how people in the communities they're engaging with feel, than there's nothing particularly harmful in taking inspiration from other cultures."

But to flip it around, can the same be said of someone such as Rich Brian? People like him have written numerous songs about gang banging and guns — archetypal, surface-level tropes of the hip-hop "gangsta" culture — without being born or raised in that culture themselves. It's one thing to use anime and images as an aesthetic, regardless of whether or not it's necessarily needed. The rappers there aren't pretending to be Asian. However, it can be argued that 88rising-esque rappers are living in a culturally delusional state, one which is resulting in them essentially infringing on a culture they only know on an extremely shallow level.

We Got It From Here…

So, where do things go from here? Where does hip-hop go from here? What comes next in the grand scheme of things? Who's to say? One can only hope that the culture continues to evolve into new forms. To this day, cultural diffusion still makes its way back and forth across the oceans. In the Netflix original anime, "Devilman Crybaby," various types of music, particularly EDM and techno, as well as rap, are scattered throughout the Kensuke Ushio-produced soundtrack. Artists such as RZA have brought their talents to the big screen with films like "The Man With The Iron Fists," an orgasmic experience for any fan of kung-fu cinema and music as a general artform.

Asian and hip-hop cultures are a prime example of the power that two worlds can have on each other, and the true power and message that an aesthetic can convey in regards to an artist. However, it can also be seen as a cautionary sign regarding cultural respect and infringement. The arts should be an open forum for any person to exercise any form of expression, but at the same time, that shouldn't come at the cost of personal ownership of one's heritage. If the cards are played right, great things can happen. New advancements and formats can be made in music. One can only hope that this continues on into other genres, other cultures, and future generations.

How to Reduce Plastic Waste on Campus

By Margaret Osborne

It's 9 a.m., and your first class starts at 10. Your phone alarm goes off, rousing you from your much-needed sleep. You roll over in bed and unplug your phone from its plastic phone charger. Still yawning, you get up, put on your plastic flip-flops (those shared bathrooms are grimy) and grab your plastic shower caddy filled with shampoo, conditioner and soap, all held in plastic containers. You look around for your plastic toothbrush, plastic contact case with your plastic contacts inside, plastic hairbrush, plastic hair dryer, plastic razor, plastic ID card, plastic, plastic, plastic.

It's unavoidable.

According to Stony Brook University's sustainability website, each student produces approximately 640 pounds of solid waste per year. "In a lifetime, the average American will throw away 600 times their adult weight in garbage," said Kupenda Palmer, a sustainability officer at Stony Brook University.
While environmentalists certainly encourage recycling, plastics cannot be infinitely recycled. In fact, most plastics are downcycled, meaning that they cannot be reused for their original purpose and instead are turned into lesser-quality goods like benches, fleece and carpet fibers.

"A lot of people don't know this, but the three 'R's' are actually in order, and the first one is to REDUCE, then reuse and lastly recycle," said Condrea Zhuang, president of Stony Brook's Environmental Club. "Recycling is just a Band-Aid solution to our plastic waste problem, but reducing plastic production and usage will be targeting the root of the issue and causing less destruction to the planet overall."

So, what can students do to reduce their waste?

"The first step is to take a look at their lifestyle and carefully consider what plastic is unavoidable and what can be cut out," Zhuang said.

Here are a few suggestions to help you cut out plastic from your life.

1. Buy your own silverware

Plastic silverware is available at all of Stony Brook's dining locations. While it may be tempting to use disposable cutlery to avoid washing dishes, it's an enormous waste to throw it away after one use. Instead, buy your own silverware and carry it with you in your backpack.

2. Reuse your water bottle

Not only is buying bottled water more expensive than buying gas, purchasing one-use water bottles is extremely wasteful. While people claim to like the taste better than that of tap water, few can distinguish tap water from bottled water in a blind taste test. Additionally, the two largest bottled water companies in the world, Aquafina and Dasani, actually sell repackaged tap water. Stony Brook has water bottle fill-up stations all around campus. It takes 20 seconds to fill up your BPA-free reusable water bottle with the finest tap water that New York has to offer.

3. Buy fewer packaged goods

If you're planning to eat your food directly after purchasing it, plastic wrap is unnecessary and easily avoidable. Choose foods like soup or bagels that are unpackaged instead of chips or muffins that are wrapped individually.

## 4. Stony Brook's new reusable takeout container

Stony Brook has rolled out a new reusable container program for takeout in East and West Side Dining, and Zhuang said she highly recommends taking full advantage of it. The containers cost $5, which is refunded at the end of the semester. You don't even have to wash your own container; you can just bring it back dirty and get a clean one.

5. Move-out collection drive

At the end of the school year, perfectly functional items are tossed in the trash because students cannot bring them home. This year, instead of throwing away your things, donate them to the Environmental Club's move-out collection drive. The club then donates your items to community organizations and local food pantries. Not only are you helping the environment, but you're also giving back to the community.
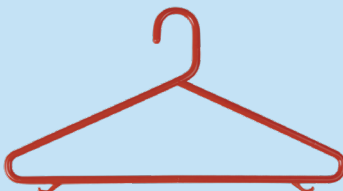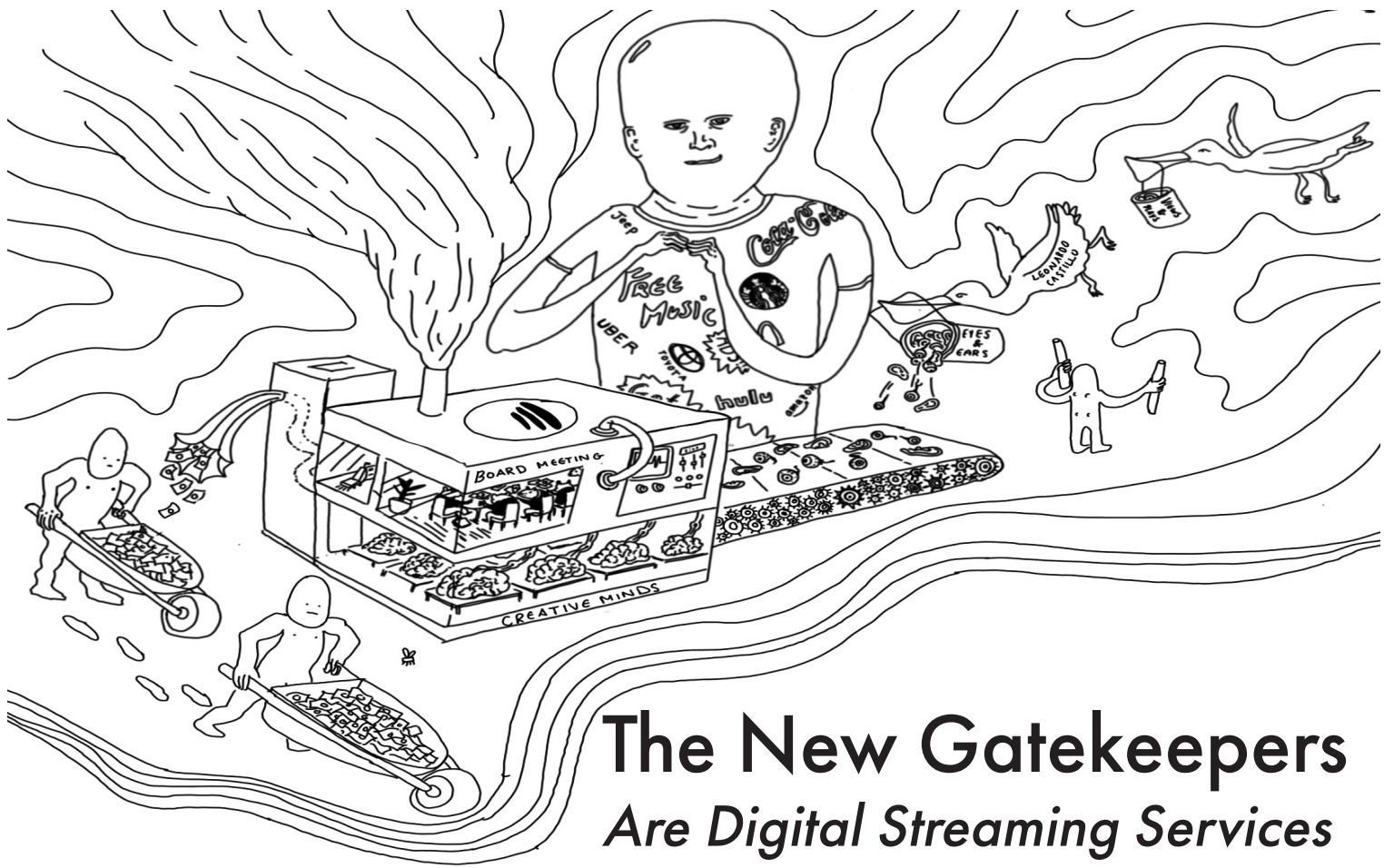
The New Gatekeepers
Are Digital Streaming Services Wolves in Sheep's Clothing?
By Conor Rooney

When Damon Kurkowski — formerly of the band Galaxie 500 — received his royalty checks from BMI for the first quarter of 2012, reality struck hard. For the performance of their song "Tugboat" across streaming platforms like Pandora and Spotify, the group was paid just over one dollar. Divided between the three members, their payday had amounted to cents. This is standard practice. It's notoriously difficult for an independent artist to make ends meet using streaming services, yet those platforms are currently the most popular medium to enjoy music. Last year, Billboard happily declared that "Happy days are here again," referring to the growth and prosperity of the music industry recently (in large part due to streaming).

If companies like Spotify are the future, what kind of future are we referring to?

The old model of the music industry was fairly basic and straightforward: You sold your music for slightly more than the cost to produce it — including recording, mixing, mastering and pressing physical copies. If you were lucky, you might have had the opportunity to tap into the wider support network designed to facilitate your career — labels, publicists, promoters and the like. Much of this infrastructure has dissolved, or at least splintered into a million tiny pieces.

The democratic nature of the internet meant gatekeepers were no longer necessary. Traditional record labels were suddenly obsolete, platforms like MTV were swiftly losing their relevance and the overhead required to spread your music was almost nonexistent. Fans flocked to file sharing sites, like Napster and Pirate Bay, like wildfire. When you expose an entire generation to readily available, free music, how can you expect to close Pandora's box?

Those peer-to-peer file sharing services were, of course, illegal. Many of them have either been forced out of existence through tidal waves of legal repercussions or fizzled out under pressure. Out of the ashes of the music industry bonfire came the emergence of digital streaming services like

Spotify, Apple Music and Pandora, among others. These legal alternatives to pirating gave listeners the opportunity to pay a small monthly fee and be given access to millions of songs at their fingertips. "Utopic" might have been a word thrown around during those early days.

Flash-forward to the present. Streaming services have surpassed downloaded (or purchased) music as the most popular medium for fans. As of February 2018, Spotify has 140 million active users, 60 million of whom are paid subscribers. Apple trails far behind with 30 million. Playlists are a focal point of both services. As evident in names like "chill.out.brain," "confidence boost" or "down in the dumps,they're designed to be played for specific moods — to act as personalized muzak,or passive background music. Even for the listener who wants to find some of the hottest new tracks, playlists like "Rap Caviar" and "Rock This" have them covered. According to a MIDiA research survey, 68 percent of paid subscribers to these services mainly listen to music through playlists. Spotify takes an algorithmic approach to playlist development, whereas Apple has invested more into human curation. Above all, both services are keenly aware of the role that they play in people's lives. In other words, they are the new gatekeepers.

Scroll through the "Browse" section of Spotify in particular, and you'll see numerous playlists with one of four logos attached to them. Besides Spotify-curated playlists, placed in the top left

corner will be the semi-transparent logos of Topsify, Digster or Filtr. Boasting hundreds of thousands of followers, playlists operated by those companies have immense influence. Respectively, Topsify, Digster and Filtr are owned and curated by Warner Music Group, Universal and Sony. This means their interests are represented as equally as any other major playlists on the platform under the not-so-hidden guise of independent curation.

These have become the holy grail for many artists hoping to publicize themselves. As you can

"Above all, both services are keenly aware of the role that they play in people's lives. In other words, they are the new gatekeepers."

imagine, successfully landing a coveted spot on a playlist is rare. This leaves little to no opportunity for newer voices and styles to be given the exposure they deserve. If it doesn't fit within the narrow schema of the most popular music, you are curated right out of existence. For independent artists operating within an industry that has seen a total deflation of album sales over the past twenty years, industry favorites like Spotify can leave them feeling hopeless. Musicians like Damon Kurkowski of Galaxie 500 might see their music being streamed

thousands of times, though royalty rates are so painfully low that the payout is almost insulting. In a piece for Pitchfork several years ago, Kurkowski estimated that for the band to earn the equivalent of just one physical sale, one song would have to be streamed nearly 48,000 times. Digital streaming may be the utopia that music fans for decades would have clamored for, but at what cost?

Thankfully, none of us have to subscribe to the new model of streaming behemoths. Alternatives include sites like Bandcamp, where fans can directly support their favorite independent musicians and artists with little to no middleman. Other startups like Choon are looking to challenge some of the aforementioned streaming giants by developing a blockchain-based streaming service that pays artists fairly proportional to how well they're performing on the platform — fair pay for fair play. Discovering and supporting live local music is perhaps an obvious one, but one that can be infinitely more rewarding than hitting "shuffle" on Discover Weekly.

Why should industry-leading streaming services care about independent artists? In short, they don't have to, but it doesn't mean that we shouldn't. Streaming isn't going away, but our reliance on them certainly can — and should.

INFOWARS Online ®

How Alex Jones Has Adapted to the Internet Age
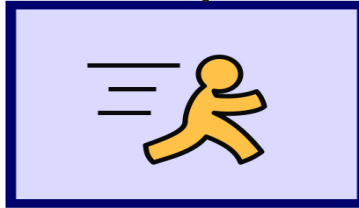
FAKE NEWS

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By Charlie Spitzner

Alex Jones, the creator and owner of the popular organization Infowars, has been spreading his rambunctiously-delivered style of fake news in some form or another for over 20 years. Starting in public access television and radio in the late 1990s, evidence of Jones' trademark outbursts and publicity stunts are available online in a variety of different forms. Jones has somehow managed to keep people talking about him for decades, and is one of the biggest names in conspiracy theorist circles even after all these years. More impressive than his longevity, however, is how Jones has managed to keep his platform afloat and financially secure in a time when long-standing media organizations are struggling with methods of raising revenue in the age of the Internet.

Currently, the effects the internet has had on the news industry cannot be overlooked. Time Inc.

recently cut down on the amount of issues they print due to a lack of revenue. The hits that magazines in particular have taken recently, with many prominent publications deciding that certain editors are simply outside of their effective cost range, are showing a shift away from physical copies of news and longer forms of journalism in general towards shorter, easily digestible and shareable forms of online content. When surrounded by evidence of legitimate news organizations facing challenges in an ongoing effort to make the internet as profitable as possible, it seems odd that an outlandish fringe figure like Alex Jones is making his way through this new territory and managing to turn a profit.

A Slate article from 2013 suggests that Jones was making north of seven figures in 2013, underneath an older business model that factored in conditions like YouTube's old monetization guidelines that

still allowed fake news sources to turn a profit through the inclusion of ads. The regular release of documentary films concerning conspiratorial subjects produced or directed by Jones himself was also mentioned. How much Jones makes today is uncertain, but he is doing so in a rather journalistically unethical way: selling alternative medicine to the niche Infowars fanbase that continuously supports whatever he has to say. This fanbase, of course, is made up of people who believe that they need a product sold to them by a man telling them that all institutions exist to profit off of their own existence. The irony is almost tangible.

Alex Jones airs his syndicated show through terrestrial radio via the Genesis Communications Network, but Infowars has expanded into the realms of satellite radio and online streaming through XM Radio and a streaming function on the Infowars

website. If a legacy news organization is defined as a surviving news association rooted in traditional forms of sharing news and information that predate the Internet, such as through printed copies of issues, television and radio, applicable to big media names like The New York Times and The Washington Post, then Jones' product certainly qualifies as some perverse distortion of that title.

The most common form of revenue made by news organizations online comes from advertisements, and the amount of money being made depends on how much an ad is worth, how many ads are displayed on a page and how much traffic a particular web page gets. According to this article in New York Magazine Alex Jones supposedly makes little of his money from placing advertisements in his web space. Rather, you will find that a great many of the advertisements seen on Infowars.com and heard on his show are for his own products. Alex Jones seems to have forgone the tactic of selling his space to interested advertisers in lieu of using that advertisement space for himself instead.

Utilizing this tactic has helped Alex Jones adapt to the internet in order to make the most out of his own self-advertising methods . His presence on YouTube is an interesting place to view this adaptation because of all of the ways Jones has used the platform to his own advantage. YouTube's modern monetization guidelines forbid Jones from making money off of ads YouTube places in his videos because, like many fake

news sources, he simply uses clips and screenshots from other news organizations and talks over them himself, which does not fit YouTube's description of original content. But Jones' methods of monetizing the platform come through several less obvious means.

One look at the Infowars website will show you a quantity of videos hosted on YouTube. Jones posts multiple videos a day, some of them several hours in length, but his status as a verified YouTuber lets him upload a large amounts of content in the span of a single day. These videos are posted on YouTube and embedded into the code of the Infowars website. In short, YouTube essentially hosts Infowars' videos for free. Infowars has no need for its revenue to go towards its own source of video hosting like larger organizations such as The New York Times do.

In addition to free video sharing, YouTube also plays into Jones' marketing strategy for the Infowars online store. Jones' videos usually have a short advertisement contained in them for his said store, an advertising strategy that most news organizations would find unethical. The New York Times, for example, might sell their own t-shirts, tote bags and special content made by associates of the organization such as books and photo prints, but the store is tucked away in the subsection of the dropdown menu on their website and ads to the store aren't necessarily intertwined with video content. Jones, contrastingly, not only sells his audience the products he is implying they

need in a world that, he says, is run by hidden conspiracies, but also advertises within the videos themselves, in the top bar on the Infowars website.in A link to the store placed in the description of every one of his YouTube videos.

In addition, YouTube grants Jones a measure of audience-assisted publicity. The easy, shareable nature of YouTube content means that it's just as easy for fans of Jones to take his videos and share them through other forms of social media like Facebook and Twitter like he does on his own website. Fans of Jones who see his content of their own volition, or go to websites like YouTube to view his content, have an easier time pushing it through to another pool of people, another audience that wouldn't have been reached beforehand if you had to seek out his content in order to be exposed to it. That kind of publicity, where Jones doesn't even have to do anything but use the website, is priceless.

It may be hard to take Alex Jones very seriously with his reputation and the way he presents himself, but the fact is that Jones has managed to not only adapt to a changing world of sharing information, but thrive in it as well. In a time when it is easier than ever to reach a wide audience, Infowars' methods have found a way to stay afloat while other legitimate organizations are still struggling to breathe.

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