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# Letter from the Editor

BY NIRVANI WILLIAMS

**A**s the sun comes around the bend on my last year here at the good ol' Brook, it's hard to reflect on a time rife with so many conflicting emotions. I really honed in on my skills over the past four years, but figuring out exactly the kind of person I want to present myself to the world...?

Yikes. Yeah, I'll have to take a rain check on that one.

It's exhausting, always trying to prove your worth to the rest of the world. Whether it be to your professors, your parents, family members, peers, job recruiters — they're asking you to define yourself while you're trying to figure out exactly who you are.

And shit.

I'm only 21 and I can tell you that I'm constantly shapeshifting and evolving into a more dynamic being every day. It's not always pretty, but I end up exactly where I need to be and only understand it after the fact.

Here I am in the midst of a sinus infection drinking peppermint tea in penguin pajama pants to tell you not to spoil your successes.

Relish in the victories. Bask in the sunlight. Breathe in your moments.

I guarantee that you'll always be met with challenges that you think are way above your paygrade as a very good human being who is just simply trying, but when I say you will survive, then I've done it, I've cast the spell.

You will survive.

The only way I was able to survive was to surround myself with creatives. I needed my daily dose of Kafka-Vonnegut-Carver-anarchism-revenge hellstorm on the bourgeoisie, get the tips of my fingers stained with oil pastels medicine amidst stressful and pressure-inducing fervor.

Reading the news every day is depressing as fuck.

We get it.

We're informed.

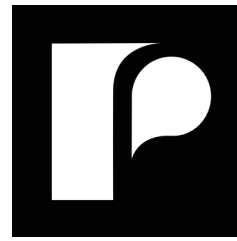
We don't need to be beaten over the head with what's new all the goddamn time.

Job markets are changing and actually finding jobs that suit your passion are popping up like daisies in the spring. Why not come and figure out exactly how you want to illustrate your passions with us over here at The Press?

Come meet the people who put the pen to page and produced some pretty fantastic content for your choosing today.

Trust me, we're a helluva time.

-Nirv



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# HIV and AIDS on Long Island

*HOW LI DEALS WITH A LINGERING CRISIS.*

BY DUFFY ZIMMERMAN



**S**ix years ago, Rafael Rivera was storming away from his boyfriend's apartment on Long Island when he noticed a cut under his chin.

Earlier that 2013 day, Rivera decided to surprise the man he had been dating for six months, arriving at his lover's home unannounced. When Rivera entered, he found his boyfriend cheating on him with a close friend. He confronted his boyfriend. The situation escalated to a physical altercation with his lover. Rivera punched him relentlessly. His boyfriend reached for the closest thing he could find: his own razor, which had a bit of blood on its dull blade. When they eventually grew tired, the two separated and Rivera left, noticing the cut soon after. His HIV-positive lover had used a blade with his own blood to make that cut — the cut that would change Rivera's life forever.

In a March 2019 text conversation,

Rivera recounted the day he got this cut, becoming one of the roughly 1.1 million Americans living with HIV, and among the nearly 7,000 living on Long Island.

Northwell Health officials from the Center for AIDS Research and Treatment announced last year that Huntington Station, Hempstead and Westbury are hotspots for HIV-positive individuals on Long Island, just as the CDC identified southern states like Louisiana, Georgia and Florida as national hotspots for the virus.

During the State of the Union address on Feb. 5, President Donald Trump announced his goal of eradicating AIDS in these hotspots, and the United States as a whole, within ten years. Trump has since requested a \$291 million budget for the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). Under a new plan, DHHS is aiming to reduce the rate of

new HIV infections by 90% over the next decade through modern preventative measures and treatment options.

Although the president's proposed model would work scientifically, the plan is underfunded. DHHS reports that current government spending on prevention and care is already in excess of \$20 billion each year.

A New York State plan that has been used to reduce the incidence of HIV infections since 2015 could be used as a model for the new national program. The plan, which focuses on identification, prevention and care and for high-risk and infected individuals, has been used to work toward ending the spread of HIV by 2020. According to medical professionals, the plan has effectively reduced the rate of new infections by about 40% in New York. "Across the country, the number of new infections has stagnated. We have the same number, around 39,000 or 40,000 new infections a year for the last three years, so we're not making progress. In New York, we're doing better," said Joseph

McGowan, a doctor of the Infectious Disease Department at North Shore University Hospital in Manhasset. "[State politicians] said we've got to do something about this because we're never going to get out of this epidemic otherwise."

AIDS was first considered to be a disease affecting only gay men, and politicians were less concerned with eradication. In fact, some people were critical of the infected population, like Reverend Jerry Falwell, who said, "AIDS is not just God's punishment for homosexuals, it is God's punishment for the society that tolerates homosexuals." Because of this stigmatization, funding to study AIDS was difficult to secure. Congress convened to address the epidemic for the first time in 1982, over a year after the first reported

## PICTURED:

► A World AIDS Day ribbon of hope created by a staff member at Long Island Association of AIDS Care.  
(Long Island Association of AIDS Care/FA)



case, when the CDC estimated that the infected population was in the tens of thousands.

The science is now clear that HIV can lead to acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS), a disease that makes the common cold a life-threatening infection. As the virus takes over immune cells, it replicates itself and cripples the body's immune defenses, allowing relatively benign infections to quickly grow severe. Pneumonia, for example, killed singer Freddie Mercury, who was infected with HIV and had developed full-blown AIDS in 1991. Unprotected sex, breast feeding and exposure to infected blood and bodily fluids can allow the virus to infect a new host. AIDS develops once the virus reproduces enough to weaken the immune system.

The New York State blueprint uses medicine to lower the chance of transmission. Pre-exposure prophylaxis, or PrEP, has been used as a preventative measure in the U.S. since 2012. People from high-risk groups, such as gay men and IV drug users, can take a pill each day to reduce their chance of contracting HIV. When used as prescribed, PrEP can lower the probability of contracting HIV by as much as 90%.

Local organizations like Project Safety Net, formerly known as the Long Island Association for AIDS Care, face obstacles with making sure patients reliably use these treatments.

"Many of the high risk groups our organization serve[s] are living on the margins of society. There are social determinants of health that impact how readily someone can access care," said James Carrant, a care navigator at Project Safety Net. Carrant also said such a person would likely prioritize acquiring more basic quality-of-life features, such as economic stability, community and education over addressing health and well-being.

New York State public health officials aim to help patients take their preventative pills, but the plan outlines contingencies as well. Post-exposure prophylaxis, or PEP, can be administered in emergency situations. Under this regiment,

antiretroviral drugs are delivered to someone who may have contracted HIV. Patients who take these antiretroviral pills up to twice daily for a 28-day period may be able to combat the infection before it takes hold. PEP should be started within 72 hours of exposure, and effectiveness varies depending on how quickly the program was administered, according to the DHHS.

In 1996, people who contracted HIV and subsequently developed AIDS at 20 years old had a life expectancy of 39. Results from a 2011 study show that this group is now expected to live to 73. This disease, which was often a death sentence in the early years of the epidemic, is now seen more as a chronic illness. Antiretroviral therapy, also called ART, allows the infected to live relatively normal lives.

"I live a normal life just like anyone else," said Rivera, who spends his days as another care navigator with Project Safety Net. "The only thing is that I take one pill before bedtime."

When people living with HIV take their ART medications as prescribed, they reduce the amount of the virus in their body, or their viral load, to such a low level that HIV is undetectable and untransmittable. This is a key aspect of the New York plan to stop HIV. Although medication could conceivably reduce the spread of HIV, practical obstacles, such as minors acquiring the proper preventative measures, could impede progress, according to Sharon Nachman, the chief of Pediatric Infectious Diseases at Stony Brook Hospital.

"We can recommend people wear seatbelts, but we can still go down the highway and see people without them," Nachman said. "I'm thrilled that New York State has this blueprint, but it's up to the community to follow it."

Hofstra public health professor Anthony Santella is helping to launch a campaign in New York called "U=U," which stands for undetectable equals untransmittable.

"The New York State 'Ending the Epidemic Blueprint,'...encourages every New Yorker to take a stand against HIV stigma. This includes knowing how to talk about HIV to avoid stigma," Santella said

in an email interview. "The words we use matter, and help avoid promoting stigma and misinformation around HIV."

Santella was given the World AIDS Day Commissioner's Special Recognition Award for HIV in December 2018 for his work advocating against stigmas associated with being HIV-positive. Even for people like Rivera, who hope to be advocates for HIV-positive individuals, a stigma makes coming forward difficult. The campaign operates on the notion that if the stigma is reduced among the HIV-positive population, patients would more reliably take their medications and reduce their viral load, lowering the chance that they transmit HIV to a new host.

Northwell Health, which includes North Shore University Hospital, was awarded \$834,000 to combat HIV and AIDS in 2017. With this federal grant allowing a continued adherence to the New York State plan to end the stop the virus from spreading, doctors like Joseph McGowan hope to see an HIV-free Long Island in the near future.

"It's an interesting time to learn about HIV/AIDS," McGowan said. "We can almost tell, especially our younger patients, that there's going to be a cure within their lifetimes."

For people like Rivera, these advances in medicine can offer a relatively normal life.

"I took my diagnosis as a blessing... I learned to care about myself and love myself more," Rivera said. "I have two beautiful nieces that I want to see grow up and get married and graduate, so I take pride in making sure that I take care of myself so I can see them in the future." ■



# Andrew Yang: A New Approach to American Politics

*HOW ONE CANDIDATE USED THE INTERNET TO RUN A CAMPAIGN.*

BY ALEX “GOOGE” ANTHONY AND KEVIN WU



**A**ndrew Yang’s opening statement was met with groans and laughter in the third Democratic presidential debate. “My campaign will now give a freedom dividend of \$1,000 a month for an entire year to 10 American families, someone watching this at home right now,” he said, referring to his signature solution — a monthly universal basic income. Whether or not this is legal is still up in the air. Following Yang’s statement, a slightly amused Pete Buttigieg had only one thing to say in response: “It’s original. I’ll give you that.”

With the 2020 presidential election on many Americans’ minds, the Democratic

Party of the United States has been overwhelmed by choice. A total of 26 Democratic hopefuls have thrown their hats in the ring, seven of whom have since dropped out. The party is torn between a new age of progressives and moderates hoping to balance Trump’s appeal to working-class Americans with the civility and trust that was sorely lacking in his 2016 campaign.

Whereas other Democratic hopefuls have been locked in an endless discussion on healthcare, gun violence and immigration (among other things), Yang is perhaps unique for placing the effects of automation and other contemporary

technologies at the forefront of his campaign. His signature issue, universal basic income, is his response to the effects of corporate automation. “What is UBI?” is plastered at the top of his campaign site.

Among this field of Democratic hopefuls, the former tech executive has been compared to Silicon Valley upstarts in the way he has chosen to conduct his politics. But unlike the irrelevant characters of Silicon Valley displayed in the HBO show of the same name or the competitive venture capitalists often profiled in the news, Yang isn’t a candidate out to disrupt the status quo with a flashy new app. He’s out to fix what he believes is a systemic flaw in the American economy: automation.

“It’s not immigrants that caused these problems,” said Yang, referring to Trump. “It’s technology.”

He brings to the table not a large body of political experience or strong opinions on mainstream issues, but proof that niche ideas that exist in the fringe of American politics can still attract supporters.

His grassroots campaign has raised a large percentage of his funds from small-dollar, passionate donors who donate more than once, and wealthy software engineers who can relate specific policies regarding automation.

However, as a result of his niche views, he has inadvertently amassed an similiary niche internet following. Supporters dub themselves members of the “Yang Gang.” They post memes that embrace an edgier brand of internet humor. They create unsanctioned music videos with references to Japanese

## PICTURED:

► Andrew Yang greets supporters at the New Hampshire Democratic Party state convention in Manchester, New Hampshire, U.S. September 7, 2019.  
(Reuters/Gretchen Ertl)

▼ Yang hoists a supporter’s sign after speaking at a rally in downtown Los Angeles.  
(Reuters/Lucy Nicholson)

anime and “vaporwave aesthetics.” It has brought both good faith to the campaign (Yang himself has adopted the term “Yang Gang”), and the bad, with articles highlighting Yang’s supposed alt-right following.

Furthering his online presence is his ability to attract attention from big tech executives, including an endorsement from Elon Musk, who said, “He would be our first openly goth president. I think this a very important,” jokingly referring to a high school photograph of Yang. Musk later re-emphasized the need for universal basic income. Reddit co-founder Alexis Ohanian Sr. offered to fund Yang’s opening statement promise if Yang could not follow through, citing the need to address the upcoming shift in automation and the rise of artificial intelligence.

However, the question remains whether his niche focus on technology, and his openness to online notoriety, will pay off in his quest to become president of the United States.

In early November 2017, the entrepreneur and child of two immigrants officially began his run for president of the United States. Yang’s run for the Democratic nomination seemed outlandish at first.

A technocrat spouting apocalyptic rhetoric about the upcoming robot revolution? Automation replacing truck jobs? Although many experts were sold on automation’s impact on the U.S. economy, an early New York Times profile labeled him as a “longer-than-long-shot candidate.” Very few voters knew who he was.

Similarly, a Times profile quickly sought to distance Yang from the race. Other than their now infamous “longer-than-long-shot” quote, which is now etched on a shot glass available for purchase [where], the Times profile displays Yang as an alarmist, hoping to fight off an upcoming robot invasion.

Writer Kevin Roose labeled some of Yang’s ideas “radical,” including one to install a White House psychologist. He ends the article claiming that Yang’s candidacy “won’t end with a parade down Pennsylvania Avenue.”

The Times profile is but one example of how little mainstream media took him seriously. Despite polling ahead of Senator Kamala Harris in her home state of California, he ranks beneath Tim Ryan and Tom Steyer, two men absent from Houston’s debate stage, in mainstream

media coverage. Frontrunners Biden, Warren and Sanders hog the limelight, with news outlets sure that the three are likely to overcome their competitors, many of whom are polling beneath 5%.

To this day Andrew Yang has amassed a weak 949 mentions between cable news networks Fox News, CNN and MSNBC, compared to leading Democrat Joe Biden’s 43,291.

But Yang’s campaign ended up doing something interesting. He focused his grassroots campaign toward the internet, using online platforms such as podcasts, radio shows and Twitter to appeal to potential supporters browsing through social media or going down rabbit holes on YouTube, letting his supporters spread the word about his candidacy through their own means.

“I think he had decent coverage in the recent weeks and it will only improve from now on. I don’t think that’s much of a concern,” said one supporter who asked not to be identified for fear that he may be contacted by other campaigns.

Instead of restraining himself to heavily edited short videos or brief stints on popular late night programs, Yang decided to take advantage of new media, talking for hours on end on popular podcasts and radio shows, allowing him to flesh out his ideas and reach a greater audience without a time constraint.

“If this dude can unite a YouTube comment section, he can unite a country,” commented one user under Yang’s appearance on hip-hop talk show *The Breakfast Club*.

It’s a common mentality among Yang’s YouTube audience. Many are struck by his eloquence and explanations of universal basic income. “I’m a capitalist,” he said, “and I believe that universal basic income is necessary for capitalism to continue.”

In one campaign video titled, “I Voted for Mr. Trump... I’ll Have to Follow You Now.’ | Andrew Yang for President,” Yang narrates his campaign goals while footage of him with a truck driver plays. “The fact is that you’re actually worried about





the little guy. You're actually worried about the truck driver," says the man featured in the video.

Yang also received a surprising amount of support from red-letter alt-right figures such as Tucker Carlson from Fox News.

"He's a serious person," said Carlson on his cable show Tucker Carlson Tonight. "And he has a pretty deep understanding of the problems this country faces. He may be the one person this year who's pitching a series of reforms that might actually help the country."

Aside from appearing on *The Joe Rogan Experience* a good seven months before Bernie Sanders, racking up almost four million clicks, he has appeared in both mainstream and internet fringe shows alike, from the *The Late Show with Stephen Colbert* and *The Daily Show with Trevor Noah* to *The Breakfast Club* and *The H3 Podcast*.

Interestingly, he is the only Democratic candidate for president who has been willing to speak to Ben Shapiro, a controversial media personality who has embraced new media as a platform for his conservative rhetoric. *The Ben Shapiro Show: Sunday Special* with Andrew Yang has around 250,000 thousand views.

Yang's campaign message is, as he puts it, "Not Left. Not Right. Forward." Yang has tried to make this one of the critical points of his campaign, not just limiting his appeal to liberal Democrats or neo-conservatives but building a community of all parts of the political spectrum.

There is a sense of humor Yang employs in his campaign. The term "Secure the Bag," commonly associated with hip-hop, has been adopted by YangGang members, referring to Yang's universal basic income policy. His marketing pushes his immigrant roots, with videos of Yang playing basketball, interviews with YouTube personalities The Fung Bros and quirky merchandise featuring MATH, or "Make America Think Harder" — a nod to his Asian-American heritage. "The opposite of Donald Trump is an Asian man who likes math," said Yang during a primary debate.



Yang fans at a rally in New York on May 14, 2019. (Reuters/Gabriela Bhaskar)

He has argued for the legalization of marijuana, with an offbeat twist, telling Rogan, "My plan as president is that on April 20, 2021, I'm going to mass pardon everyone who's in jail for a non-violent drug-related offense."

HIGH ENERGY | ANDREW YANG, an absurdist YouTube montage featuring memes from Yang's early internet following, has around 33,000 views. Positive social media posts flood a subreddit forum dedicated to the candidate. His policies and down-to-earth public persona have attracted thousands of diehard loyalists.

But with this grassroots come-up, Yang's organic rise to relevance has the potential to scare off America's more moderate voters — who may consider Yang's association with political meme culture as problematic.

Yang is also pushing the limits for how far his internet credibility can go. Last month he poked fun at the president, saying, "Like, what could Donald Trump possibly be better than me at? An eating contest?"

This sparked a discussion among his supporters, many arguing that they would be unable to support Yang if he sank to the same moral level as the president.

"I used Yang's contact page to tell him that I've been contributing to his campaign

to keep him in the debates, but that I will stop if he behaves like Donald Trump. One is enough," said one anonymous user on Reddit's *r/politics* subreddit forum.

But unlike his democratic counterparts, he can also transcend political boundaries, a quality quite apt for a candidate of the future. His adherence to technology policy during interviews is likely a large contributor to his ideologically widespread coalition of supporters, ranging among progressives, libertarians, Trump voters and disaffected voters.

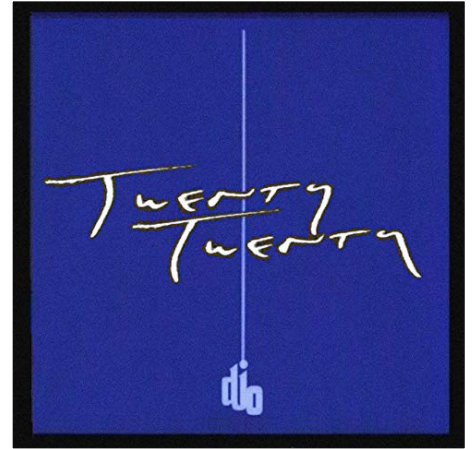
Andrew Yang has the makings of one of America's most fascinating political figures, one that has the opportunity to be looked back on with distinguished reverence, as someone who could embrace the future before his counterparts — someone who saw the cracks before anyone else could.

For all of his internet fame, whether or not Yang's off-brand politics can lead to him victory is something American voters in the coming months must decide for themselves. The question that remains is whether or not they are willing to take a chance on another political outsider, one who heralds the rise of artificial intelligence over well-established issues like healthcare and gun violence. ■

# Review: Djo's *Twenty Twenty*

JOE KEERY RELEASED HIS DEBUT SOLO ALBUM UNDER THE ALIAS DJO.

BY DEANNA ALBOHN



Joe Keery, also known as Djo. (Press)

Joe Keery, better known as Steve “The Hair” Harrington, released his debut solo album on September 13, under the moniker “Djo.” Before Keery adopted the stage name, he released music with Post Animal, a psychedelic rock group from Chicago. After leaving the band to pursue his “Stranger Things” career, he is finally back to releasing music.

*Twenty Twenty* arrives with little to no promotion surrounding it. The cover photos on his Instagram show him sporting a head of messy hair, dark sunglasses and a mustache. During the summer he released upcoming tracks from the album including “Roddy,” “Chateau (Feel Alright)” and “Mortal Projections.” Instead of following his co-stars’ heavily

publicized music careers, he’s letting his music speak for itself.

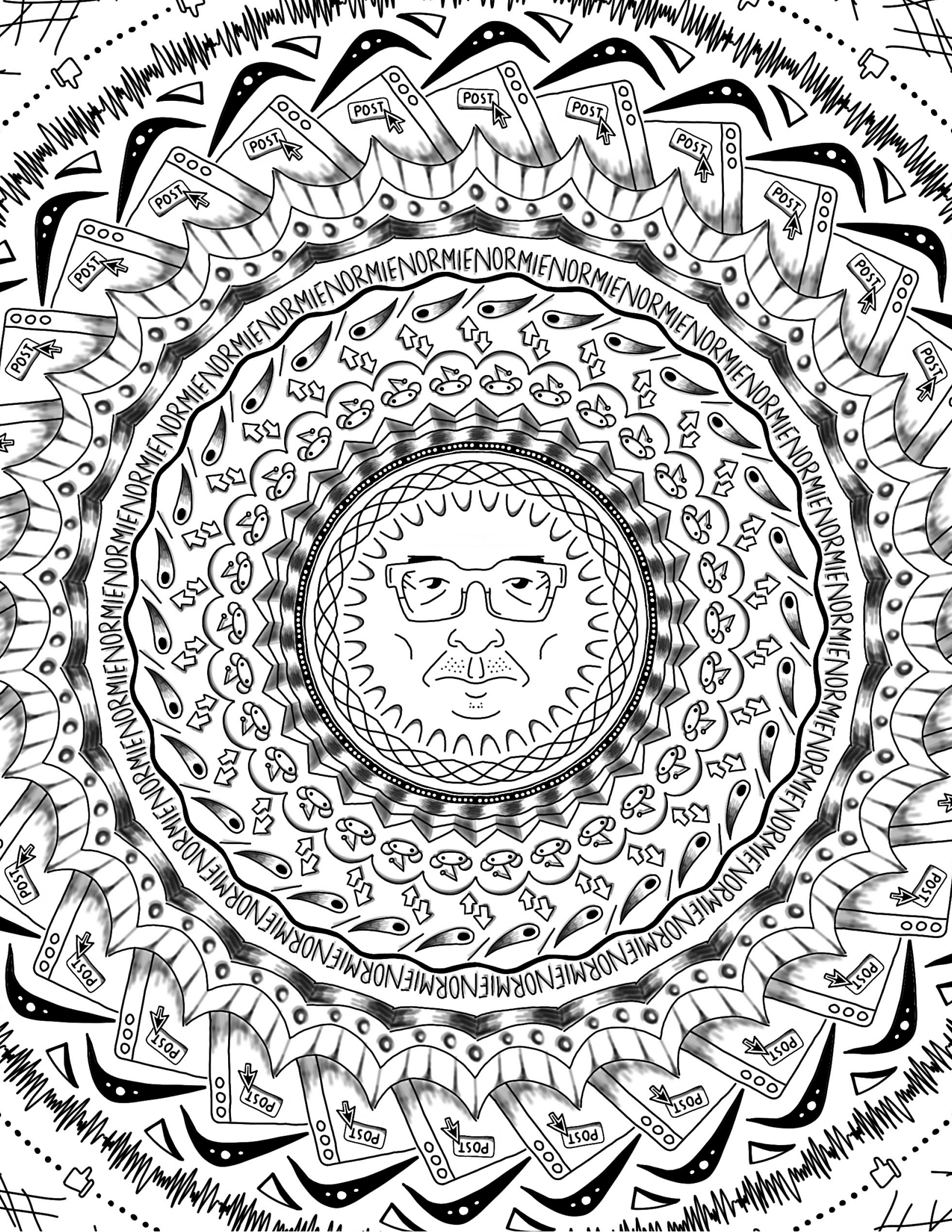
Post-Post Animal, Keery is entranced in a soft dream-pop world tinged with what he knows best — psychedelic rock, with the whole album littered with trippy effects and modal melodies. According to Spotify, Keery provides vocals, guitars, slide guitar, bass, drums, synthesizers and percussion to the independently released album.

“The whole record is primarily about change and things changing quickly and being nostalgic for another time, and kind of the triumphs and victories I guess of that change, the ups and the downs of that,” Keery said in an interview on the “This Must Be the Gig” podcast.

He draws inspiration from Daft Punk and Gorillaz, both of whom perform under a blanket of anonymity by donning new personas or characters to become. Keery is putting his own spin on their trick by going for the same anonymity, but based Djo on himself and tells personal stories on *Twenty Twenty*.

Each song feels new, and never gets stale thanks to the continually changing beats and progressions. Once you press play, you are thrown into a fantasy world where you are not sure if you should dance, cry or both. ■







# This Man Thinks His Taste in Movies Is Better Than Yours

**27-YEAR-OLD AUDEN BLAKE THINKS HIS TASTE IN MOVIES MAKES HIM INTERESTING.**

**BY KEVIN WU**

**A**uden Blake is not your typical fan of movies. A self-proclaimed film connoisseur, Blake spends most of his days locked in his room arguing about movies on internet forums, occasionally leaving his room to eat or shower.

“Every time I take my kids to a new Marvel movie, he’s always there, sitting in the back, yelling at the screen,” said Mary Winslow, a frequent visitor of the local theater chain. “He smells.”

The Press sent a reporter to interview Blake after reports from the locals about his behavior. Documents uncovered by our investigation team hinted towards possible new regulations to control rampant odor problems that have driven business away from the theater.

Our reporter found him at his suburban home less than a mile away, feasting on a Taco Bell \$5 box.

“*Captain Marvel* sucked,” said one post of Blake’s that he showed me. “I would’ve liked the character better if she smiled more.”

“But at least she set an example for women by showing that you can be both beautiful and unlikable.”

As for his favorite movies and directors, Blake’s answer was all but simple.

“My favorites are Christopher Nolan, Stanley Kubrick and Denis Villeneuve,” Blake said. “But I also love *Drive*, the hallway fight in *Oldboy*, *Children of Men*, *American Psycho*, the church scene in *Kingsman*, *Moon*, *Sunshine*, and that

one scene in *Django Unchained* when Leonardo DiCaprio cut himself but kept acting.”

While he’s occupied in his room, a joy of his is “enlightening beta cucks and their shitty taste in superhero movies and Oscar bait.”

As for social media, Blake does not use popular platforms such as Instagram and Snapchat, saying, “That shit makes you hella normie,” but is an avid consumer of Reddit, an internet forum that specializes in niche subcultures and fandoms.

“I don’t use r/movies. All that gets upvoted there is Disney capetrash and ‘SJW Wars,’” ranted Blake, referring to the immensely popular Marvel Cinematic Universe and the new *Star Wars* trilogy.

Decency laws prevent our Press reporter from repeating what Blake said of *The Last Jedi*.

It was at this point that Blake paused and scrunched his face as he audibly farted.

“I post on r/truefilm,” he continued. “That’s the only place I feel intellectually challenged when discussing films. And yes. Films, not movies.”

And his vocabulary was filled with big words that he shoved into every one of his sentences. Words like patrician, kino, epic, cinematography, and his favorite, “worldbuilding.”

“Yeah, the new *Blade Runner* is my favorite movie of all time. It’s just, the worldbuilding is so good. Roger Deakins’ cinematography makes the movie look so good. I just love his uses of purples and

pinks. And the worldbuilding? Dude. Denis Villeneuve is the next Stanley Kubrick. I can’t wait for *Dune*. *Blade Runner 2049* should’ve won the Oscar for Best Picture.”

On his wall hang two posters: *The Dark Knight* and *Fight Club*, two of Blake’s favorite movies.

“I relate to Joker so much,” Blake said, with a smirk on his unshaven face. “He just wants to see the world burn.”

Auden Blake does not have a degree in filmmaking or cinema studies, but he is a self-professed NEET, a term that means “Not in Education, Employment or Training.”

The Press was able to verify one case when Blake was employed. He worked a brief stint as a janitor at the high school where he graduated, but was fired after repeated incidents involving sexual misconduct.

“He was always jacking off,” said Charlie, 17, who asked not to be identified by his last name. “You go into bathroom? There he is. The roof? Boom. The science lab? Surprisingly, yes. It was like playing ‘Where’s Waldo’ but with a serial masturbator.”

During my visit to his room, Blake showed me his Letterboxd account, a niche social networking site used by movie fans to catalogue the movies they’ve watched. Think of it as an online database for films, but with social media options.

He showed me lists he had made on the site, with titles such as “Movies for edgy depressed youth,” “A24: Saviors of Cinema” and “Kino that mindfuck me.”

“I’ll move out when I’m ready,” said Blake, 27, in response to my question on why he still lives in his parents’ house.

Despite his son spending days on end patrolling the internet without going outside, Auden Blake’s father is fine with their son staying jobless and in his room.

“I think he told me once that he got fired from his job at the high school. I think he was a garbage boy,” said Randy Blake, 75. “I told him, ‘Get out of here son, I’m trying to watch the game.’”

“We don’t talk that much. He has his computer gizmos and I have my games to watch. What more is there to say?” ■







# The Best of Times, The Worst of Times

**GOOD INTENTIONS ALONE  
DON'T BUILD A BETTER WORLD.**

**BY JENI DHODARY**

**A** notorious winter entrenched American towns the year Prohibition swept across the nation, driving conversations over Gin Rickeys and Mary Pickfords into dubious contraband bars underground. Since then, the United States government has been consistent in its regulation of consumption goods deemed to be detrimental to the American public. A hundred years later, we can finally enjoy our Moscatos and Jagermeisters, but various mainstream goods, such as cannabis and categories of electronic cigarettes, remain inaccessible in public markets. Beyond a change in laws, the volatile rise and fall of our government's regulatory patterns reveal the growth and regression of its moral trajectory. Every law passed, every presidential executive order ever announced, and every legislative bill proposed reflects the moral bearings of our representatives in the way our lives ought to be governed — and the absence of protective laws indicates a failure in the moral mission of government in keeping us safe.

It is now 2019. Tens of hundreds of wars later, we can finally fly. It is the best of times: the age of global unification and bubbling innovative novelty. A simple search on Ecosia, a search engine that plants trees with its every search, informs me that September is supposed to mark the end of the dry Congolese heat, but the weather continues forecasting it in asphyxiating levels. While I am considering the slogans I will put on my protest board for the upcoming Climate

March in New York City, children as young as seven are mining for cobalt — not the beautiful color, blue, but a ubiquitous blood mineral present in the majority of our smartphones. We know in the back of our minds that the products we consume follow an unethical supply chain. In passing liberal discourse, we bemoan the possibility that our phones necessitate violent labor practices in which workers, in addition to bearing exploitative conditions, face the impact of climate change as it disrupts weather patterns and generates conditions unsuitable for labor. It is no secret that the iPhones and Samsungs of the corporate world are responsible for the perpetuation of increasing global calamity, from inequality to expansive climatic ruin. The vast majority of American industrialism allegorizes a production scheme in which stakeholder compensation is emphasized over employee welfare, while profit maximization sees a prioritization over sustainable labor practices. And where does our accountability fall when lavish shops displaying phones with sleek, obsidian casings temper us to cave into our consumerist desires, despite our awareness that perhaps we should resist? It is the worst of times.

It is the worst of times because the collective moral stance we have taken is complacency. It is a conscious decision to bat an oblivious eye to the jarring reality that in our increasingly integrated global economy, our consumer habits are the most lethal instruments in the war against the poor. It is the worst of times

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because we use our unconsciousness to evade necessary moral dilemmas — and because we are incapable of the foresight that informs us that cheap, disposable products accrue higher overtime costs for both ourselves and the environment than products that are ethical. It is the worst of times because our government does not shy from restricting consumption when it appears detrimental, but refuses to regulate a production scheme that has been complacent in the shredding of human dignity; and unless we vehemently transform ourselves, we too will be complacent in this genocidal process of mass affliction against not just human lives, but our planet as well. So the next time you are signing off on a seemingly harmless economic transaction, like a caramel macchiato in Starbucks or a lunch buffet in Whole Foods, ask yourself: is my action condoning child labor, violent overseas practices or environmental devastation? The answer is most likely yes. ■



3:40



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# Influencer Influence in Fashion

## ARE INFLUENCERS AFFECTING YOUR STYLE CHOICES?

BY PAMELA WONG

New York Fashion Week (NYFW) ended on Sept. 14 and social media influencers took to Instagram to vlog the catwalks and fashion.

The way the fashion world used to work was that trends would be found on runways and the clothing worn by supermodels and celebrities. Now, anyone can call themselves a model because they post photos of themselves on their Instagrams. How many times have you read an Instagram bio that claims the user is a “model”? Influencers are posing for their cameras, posting daily for their social media accounts and gaining new followers.

Influencers are reaching people at a speed that didn't exist a decade ago. Influencers — or bloggers, as they used to be called — are now bridging the gap between fashion consumers who wouldn't have been able to reach fashion shows aside from impersonal press releases. They occupy roles as bridges between the elite fashion industry and the masses, and the coverage they provide is more tailored to their audience than if it were to come from large renowned publications like Vogue or ELLE.

Big brands use influencers like James Charles, Bretman Rock, Liza Koshy and Nikita Dragun, who have mastered the social media scene and have a huge online presence to represent the brands. Charles catapulted his career further in 2016 as the first male “CoverGirl,” an ambassador from the makeup brand. Their relatable nature makes them good sponsors, since their audience can trust and identify with

them.

Even influencers with a smaller following can make an impact on their audience. They are called micro-influencers, and although they have a smaller following, their following is more dedicated due to better fan engagement. These influencers are seen as more authentic and relatable than the bigger influencers, who might not have the time to respond to each and every one of their comments. When their audience sees an item of clothing or product they are sporting, it can be used as a marketing strategy.

The idea that one can see someone wearing a certain piece of clothing and then buy the same thing in minutes is very changing to the industry. Instagram has implemented a feature in its app where users can buy products from the photos they see on their feed from their favorite influencers. The influencers just tag the products that they're wearing and then it will show the item name and price. Just by tapping, the next page can bring you to the website to buy the same product. It makes buying so painless and easy, and the need to go out to the mall and look through racks of clothing begins to look obsolete. The efficiency makes shopping a painless experience for some.

Fast fashion retailers such as Fashion Nova, ASOS, PrettyLittleThing and Misguided have been dominating sales with their frequent insane discounts, sometimes up to 60% off, with their sizes ranging from XXS to 3X. Without these advantages, even clothing giants like Forever21 have been slowly going out of

business.

Even influencers and fashion shows have intersected. PrettyLittleThing had a collaboration with rapper Saweetie for NYFW 2019 and had their first NYFW Victoria's Secret-esque show where Lil Kim, Quavo and Ashanti performed onstage while Instagram influencer models walked the catwalk. The collection showed off pieces on models with different sizes and body types.

“I feel like my style is so diverse, so I wanted to give everyone the tomboy feel, the boujee feel, the showing-some-skin feel,” Saweetie told Instyle.com. “No matter what kind of girl or boy you are, I have something for you.”

The collection included luxe reflective sportswear, showy bikini tops, crop tops, tight shorts, high-waisted flare pants, latex body-con dresses and a lot of bling.

Influencers are here for now and have adapted over the years to finally become part of the fashion industry. They received a lot of backlash in the past years because as bloggers, they weren't considered up to par with other attendants of runway shows.

“I have to think that soon people will wise up to how particularly gross the whole practice of paid appearances and borrowed outfits looks,” Alessandra Codinha, Vogue's current culture editor, said in a recap article of Milan Fashion Week in Fall 2016. “Looking for style among a bought-and-paid-for (‘blogged out?’) front row is like going to a strip club looking for romance. Sure, it's all kind of in the same ballpark, but it's not even close to the real thing.” Influencers are getting their foot in the door to the fashion world one step at a time. ■



# Giant Mysteries in the Dwarf Pine Plains

*LONG ISLAND'S DWARF PINE PLAINS ARE ONE OF ONLY THREE IN THE WORLD.*

BY TAYLOR BEGLANE AND MARGARET OSBORNE



**N**ot too far from the ritz and glamour of the Hamptons lies almost 800 acres of a globally rare ecosystem: the dwarf pine plains. Named after the stunted trees that grow only 3-6 feet, the dwarf pine plains on Long Island are one of only three in the world.

All dwarf pine plains are located in the northeastern United States: Westhampton, Long Island; the Pygmy Forest in the New Jersey Pinelands and the Shawangunk Mountains Dwarf Pine Plains in the Catskills. They're classified, both globally and statewide, as "imperiled," meaning the ecosystem is highly vulnerable.

"The pines here, they look very tiny, very small, but they're actually very, very old," John Pavacic, the executive director of the Pine Barrens Commission, said. "It's believed that in many cases that there's a genetic predisposition to allowing them to grow here, that allows them to thrive here."

Emily Caulfield, a teacher at Hampton Bays and recent Stony Brook graduate, spent the summer of 2018 collecting soil samples from both the dwarf pine plains in Westhampton and the surrounding forest. She explained that scientists don't really know why the trees don't grow

to their normal height; these pines are genetically identical to pitch pine trees found elsewhere.

"The whole topic has been confusing scientists for a long time," Caulfield said.

The mystery persists throughout all three dwarf plains. In 2006, scientists took seeds from the dwarf pine plains and regular pine barrens and switched them, monitoring their growth. Over six years, the seeds from normal pitch pines became stunted in the dwarf pine plains,

and the seeds from dwarves grew to normal height. That pointed to the environment, not genetics, as the deciding factor in tree height.

Some scientists hypothesized that the poor, pebbly soil of Long Island was even poorer in Westhampton, and without adequate nutrients, the trees couldn't reach their full height. But studies sampling the soil have not supported their hypothesis.

Caulfield worked with another student, Deysi Garcia, to test the physical soil properties in the dwarf pine plains and the surrounding area.

"We did analyze all the physical soil characteristics we could think of — the porosity, the grain size analysis, saturation rate, things like that — and between those, we didn't find any significant differences," she said.

They also tested the calcium to aluminum ratio in the trees' needles.

The more calcium in soil, and the less aluminum, the better; calcium is a nutrient, while aluminum is a toxin. Trees from both areas were similarly high in aluminum. Caulfield said this makes the trees "stressed," meaning they struggle to

## PICTURED:

► A group of buckmoth caterpillars explore a leaf in the dwarf pine plains. (The Press/Josh Joseph)

▼ A dwarf pine tree within the pine plains. (The Press/Taylor Beglane)

grow through these harsh conditions.

“Even though they are stressed in their nutrient levels, it’s not the reason the trees are so small,” Caulfield said. “A lot of people suggest maybe a microclimate, something to do with the fact that the pine barrens are closer to the water table, or maybe the dwarf pine plains are closer to the salt water. None of that has been proven yet, but that’s sort of the idea that people play around with.”

On a walk through the dwarf pine plains, Polly Weigand, the science and stewardship manager for the Pine Barrens Commission, explained that human activities, like suburbanization, threaten this ecosystem.

“The loss of species and habitats isn’t something that’s uncommon,” she said. “It’s on the news commonly that we’re continually experiencing a mass number of extinctions, and this ecosystem would be one of those statistics. That we continue to lose species diversity, not just in Africa and Asia and other areas, it’s in our backyard. It’s right here and this is one of those ecosystems that we’re at risk of losing.”

Weigand stuck diligently to the path to avoid disturbing the undergrowth. The

sparkling white sand crunching underfoot wouldn’t be out of place at a beach on the South Shore. The dwarf pines are too short to provide respite from the sun, making both the winters and summers harsh. The undergrowth is patchy, exposing the sandy soil underneath. Blue lichen blooms flat across the sand and, when baked by sunlight, crumbles at the slightest touch.

Though the pine plains is a relatively small patch of land, it contains an abundance of rare and endangered species.

Pine warblers and prairie thrushes nest in the plains, while screech owls and nighthawks patrol the skies at night. White-tailed deer, foxes and opossums regularly wander through.

In June and July, buck moth caterpillars cluster on scrub oak leaves, like bristly black fruit. They like the tender leaves best, before the branch ages and tannins embitter the foliage. In New York State, buck moths are only found on Long Island. They rely heavily on scrub oaks for sustenance, making the dwarf pine ecosystem critical for their health.

The plains are located within the Central Pine Barrens area, a protected 100,000 acres of forest, which is split up between completely preserved land and land that

can be developed upon with certain restrictions.

Characterized by sandy, acidic soil, pitch pines, oak trees and plants like prickly pear cacti, rare flowers and ferns, the pine barrens are the largest swath of undeveloped forest on the island.

But nowhere in the pine barrens is quite like the dwarf pine plains — or the mystery surrounding them.

“We only really scratched the surface,” Caulfield said of her work. “In what we researched, we didn’t find any differences, but obviously there is some sort of difference that’s accounting for it [the stunted growth] and that’s why other people have to delve into it in the future.” ■





# Baseball's Home Run Explosion



*JUICED BASEBALLS ARE CHANGING THE GAME.*

BY DANIEL MARCILLO



**T**hroughout the 2019 Major League Baseball (MLB) season, home runs have flown out of ballparks at rampant rates never seen before. With three weeks left to play, the 6,106th home run of the season was hit, breaking the all-time league record, and that number keeps growing larger. Home runs have now become as standard as any other play in a game.

This season, 102 players (and counting) have reached 20 home runs and 257 players (and counting) have slugged at least 10. A decade ago, just 80 players reached 20 homers and only 181 players had 10.

What does this mean?

Individual players are not putting up monster home run numbers like Barry

Bonds and Sammy Sosa did in the late '90s and early 2000s. During that period they would routinely reach the 60+ mark. Players who should not be hitting home runs at their current pace are doing so for the first time in their careers.

Ketel Marte, who had 22 home runs during his first four seasons in the big leagues, suddenly has 32 and is an MVP candidate. Danny Santana had 13 career homers in five seasons, but now has 25 as a member of the Texas Rangers.

Marte and Santana are severe cases of what is going on throughout baseball. Players who have been home run hitters throughout their careers are adding another 5-7, in some cases above 10, to their season totals. All of those extra

dingers add up when it is happening across the league as a whole.

Juiced baseballs have played a major role, but they are not the sole reason why home runs have been flying all over the place. They are the headline of choice for the increased home run rate.

MLB bought Rawlings in the middle of the 2018 season, giving them full control of how their baseballs were made. Rob Manfred refuted the juiced ball claims in 2017, despite the original league home run record of 6,105 being set that season. The league stated there had been “a change in the aerodynamic properties of the baseball.”

This may have been done to bring a younger generation into the game because home runs are so popular. Unfortunately, when there is an abundance of homers, it becomes less appealing.

“It seems like they want to create a home run derby every night,” Alex Schweitzer, a longtime Yankee fan, said. “I love watching Judge and Torres spray the ball all over the place, but after a while the home run does not seem special anymore.”

True home run hitters used to have power capabilities far beyond everyone else. Now it has become something anyone can do. It

## PICTURED:

► Arizona Diamondbacks' Ketel Marte gestures after hitting a single off Colorado Rockies starting pitcher Jon Gray in the sixth inning of a baseball game Monday, May 27, 2019, in Denver. (AP Photo/David Zalubowski)

▼ Texas Rangers' Danny Santana leaps to slide into third after he hit a triple against the Seattle Mariners during the first inning of a baseball game, Wednesday, July 24, 2019, in Seattle. (AP Photo/Ted S. Warren)

is as normal as hitting a single or double and it has harmed the game more than it has helped.

The baseballs are not just coming off the bat for more distance: the seams are also made differently than before. Pitchers have complained about their inability to spin their curveballs and sliders the same way.

“When I tried pitching with the Major League ball, I had to reteach myself my curveball,” said James Reilly, a pitcher at St. Thomas Aquinas College, who struggled when he tried out the new baseball. “The seams on a college and minor league ball are so much higher, so it is a huge adjustment for anyone to make.”

Baseballs aside, the way pitchers are handled is also a major issue that often

goes overlooked. Even though we live in an age filled with concerns about pitch counts, more people are getting Tommy John surgery (TJS).

In plain terms TJS is the worst surgery a pitcher can get. A healthy tendon is removed from an arm or leg and used to replace an arm’s torn ligament. The healthy tendon is threaded through holes drilled into the bone above and below the elbow. The recovery time is at least nine months and some pitchers never return the same.

From 2000-2004, there were 50 TJS surgeries performed on MLB players during that period. Since 2015, that number has shot up to 104. With all of the science and technology we have

in baseball, those numbers should be decreasing instead of rapidly increasing.

The average pitch counts for the American and National League Cy Young winners from 1998, 2008 and 2018 go as follows:

(NL) Jacob deGrom/(AL) Blake Snell: 97

(NL) Tim Lincecum/(AL) Cliff Lee: 107

(NL) Tom Glavine/ (AL) Roger Clemens: 111

Managers are taking out starting pitchers earlier than ever due to the imaginary 100 pitch limit. The number is not backed by any science and slowly caught on in the MLB as the century turned. Pitchers are no longer conditioned to go deep into games, when the role of a starting pitcher used to be to finish what they started. Fourteen pitches might seem like nothing, but that

True home run hitters used to have power capabilities far beyond everyone else. Now it has become something anyone can do.



is another inning’s worth of pitches.

What happens when relievers take the mound earlier? The ones who should not be big leaguers come into the game, especially when the rosters expand from 25 to 40 in September. Only a bad manager would waste their best reliever in the sixth inning. This leads to an increased chance for home runs, and bullpen earned run averages (ERA) skyrocket like they have this year.

“At the college level you’ll see coaches let their starters throw 125 pitches, because they have no one better after him,” Joseph DePalma, a baseball coach at Nyack High School, said. “Major League teams are so reliant on their bullpen with the way the game is played now.”

The Seattle Mariners — who, granted, are a very bad team — have used 42 different pitchers this season. In 2009, 20 different

pitchers were used. That 2009 team only had two pitchers throw over 100 innings, while this year’s team already has five players over the century mark.

So many unproven guys are pitching during important situations, further enabling the home run threat. Relievers have always been failed starters and they are in the bullpen because they cannot get batters out over a long period of time. A fatigued starter who has been in the game for six innings is always more reliable than a fringe MLB reliever coming into a big spot.

Combine these factors with the hitter’s mentality of launch angles and high exit velocities and there is no way for pitchers to have continued success. Starters like Jacob deGrom and Hyun-Jin Ryu, who put up Cy Young numbers, are truly trailblazers in this home run-driven

league.

How can this be fixed?

Allowing starters to do their job and go deep into ballgames will only throw a Band-Aid on the issue, which will be hard to overcome as long as the baseballs are still juiced. This home run trend in baseball will plateau and eventually go down, the same way the dominance of the pitcher did in the late ’60s. Their dominance was resolved by the league lowering the mound from 15 to 10 inches. To level the playing field again, the baseballs will have to return to the way they used to be made at some point in the future.

You can bet nothing is going to change for the postseason, so strap yourself in for a homer-happy October. ■



# The New California Fair Pay Bill That Could Change College Basketball Forever



*SB 206 COULD PAVE THE WAY FOR COLLEGE ATHLETES TO GET PAID.*

**BY WILKO MARTÍNEZ-CACHERO**

October 31. It will go into effect in 2023. The pressure is now on the NCAA to act and, so far, it has vehemently opposed the Fair Pay to Play Act.

Its president Mark Emmert has deemed the bill “unfair” to other schools, and the association has threatened to expel California schools from NCAA competition. This would especially hurt the Pac-12 Conference, the most successful athletic conference in NCAA history featuring schools like Stanford,

the University of South California and Berkeley, but it would also harm the NCAA. In 2018, Pac-12 revenue was \$497 million, and essentially eliminating California — one of the most profitable markets in sports as a whole — from NCAA competition would certainly lead to backlash.

Some will argue athletes already receive enough compensation with financial scholarships, the opportunity to receive a college education and nationwide exposure, but that does not take the massive revenue they generate for their respective colleges into account. It also ignores the idea that some college athletes’ goal is not to finish school.

“Why should we have to go to class if we came here to play FOOTBALL? We ain’t come to play school,”



**A** new California law could redefine college basketball.

SB 206, also known as the Fair Pay to Play Act, will radically alter long-standing amateurism laws by allowing college athletes to be paid for their name, image and likeness and enabling them to sign endorsement deals.

The movement to pay college athletes is gaining traction, with mainstream

politicians like Bernie Sanders and Andrew Yang endorsing the idea. More importantly, high profile basketball figures like LeBron James have also come out in support.

“College athletes can responsibly get paid for what they do and the billions they create,” James tweeted about the bill.

Flanked by James, California Governor Gavin Newsom signed the act into law on

## PICTURED:

► Calif. Governor Gavin Newsom joins LeBron James, Senator Nancy Skinner and former college athletes on UNINTERRUPTED’s The Shop. (UNINTERRUPTED)

▼ Philadelphia 76ers’ Ben Simmons reacts during the second half of Game 4 of the team’s second-round NBA basketball playoff series against the Toronto Raptors in Philadelphia. (AP Photo/Chris Szagola, File)

# High school basketball players are exploring alternative routes to a professional career, besides college, more than ever.



Cardale Jones, a former quarterback for Ohio State University, once tweeted.

Ben Simmons, a current NBA All-Star and a former number one draft pick, would probably agree with Jones' stance. Simmons admitted to only working "hard" enough to maintain a 1.8 GPA so he could play the entire school year. During his sole year in college, he averaged 19 points, 12 rebounds, and 5 assists — an unprecedented stat line in college basketball — but he was ineligible for end-of-year awards due to his poor academic performance.

Despite his remarkable on-court performance and the attention he brought to a dormant LSU basketball program, Simmons did not receive a single piece of the pie while at Louisiana State University. Keep in mind the NCAA made nearly \$1 billion in revenue while Simmons was in college during the 2015-16 season. Three years after leaving LSU, he has now signed a five-year, \$170 million contract extension with the Philadelphia 76ers. Some believe this is the proper compensation he has merited all along.

However, not everyone can be like Simmons. Most college basketball players are not generational talents that can combine once-in-a-lifetime physical gifts, an advanced understanding of their sport and a relatively mature approach to life. Yet, that does not stop them from trying to emulate the success of previous high

school stars like Simmons.

High school basketball players are exploring alternative routes to a professional career, besides college, more than ever. R.J. Hampton and LaMelo Ball, two high school prospects touted as future first round picks in the next NBA Draft, will bypass the upcoming college basketball season and instead play in the Australian league.

Hampton had a 3.7 GPA and an SAT score in the 1300s coming out of high school, meaning he could have comfortably committed to a basketball powerhouse like Duke or Kentucky. However, that would have meant passing up on an opportunity like signing a lucrative five-year shoe deal with Chinese apparel company Li-Ning.

Even less starry prospects are determined to pave a new path. Kenyon Martin Jr. had initially decided to play for Vanderbilt University before recanting his letter of intent, preferring to complete a "post-graduate" year at IMG Academy, a glorified boarding school in sunny Florida that also serves as an NBA pipeline. Martin Jr. was generally perceived as either a multi-year prospect or a non-prospect during his college recruitment process, but that has not deterred him from declaring his intention to enter the 2020 draft after his stint at IMG.

Even Phil Wheeler, a 17-year-old high schooler, will no longer finish his senior year. He chose to sign what has been

reported as a three-year contract to continue his basketball education in Italy. "Now I won't have as many distractions," he told Stadium. "This is all about development. I want to improve on the court, and I feel like this is the best way for me to do that."

Even if Mark Emmert and the NCAA are somehow able to repeal or delay the Fair Pay to Play Act, it may be too late. Other states, such as South Carolina, have also started work on similar legislation. Moreover, athletes are more empowered, at younger ages, than ever before. Combine that with the possibility that the NBA might allow entry into the NBA draft directly out of high school once again, and it's tough to imagine the NCAA not dying a slow death in the coming decades.

In fact, the NCAA's only option for long-term survival might be to embrace the Fair Pay to Play Act and hope exposure to a United States audience, the possibility of a college education and the added bonus of revenue is enticing enough to convince prospects to not buck what has been the trend for over a decade. ■



CARINE  
GREEN



HOUSE  
OF  
SHADE

*“Every time I think of ‘House of Shade,’ I’m overrun with unbelievable pride and satisfaction. It’s so amazing that this little idea I shared with a few other queer black students on campus (Amadi Agbomah and Ashley Harley, to name a few) was able to grow into a home and community. I wish there was something like HoS when I came in as a first-year student struggling in their journey with self-acceptance. It makes me warm to know that a journey may be a little easier for someone else now that a welcoming space exists for queer black students to be their most authentic selves without having to tone down one of their identities; it’s a space where they can learn more about themselves without judgment and with the support of people who share similar experiences. I know HoS is going to continue to play a powerful role in bringing REAL diversity and inclusion to Stony Brook University and in sharing the important resources, knowledge and history that’s too often lost to the members of this community.”*

-Abajanai Sealey, founder and former HoS president

**S**o what is House of Shade (HoS) and what does it mean? HoS is a club created by and for black and queer people, founded by Abajanai Sealey in 2017. HoS means so many different things to so many different people. For some, it’s a cool place to hang out with really chill people and have fun; for others, it’s a place to feel normal, a place where you can be

100% yourself, whether you’re extremely “weird” and outgoing, or quiet and shady. I really haven’t met a person who didn’t have a place in HoS.

HoS pays homage to the monoliths of black and queer history. Leaders like Marsha P. Johnson, Bayard Rustin and Audre Lorde are figures whose contributions to our communities are timeless and immeasurable; these figures made it possible for us to be as flamboyant and fierce as we want to be.

Marsha P. Johnson was an AIDS activist, a gay rights activist, an outspoken fighter and, above all, a *bad bitch*. Johnson was on the front lines of the Stonewall Riots and fought tooth and nail to ensure the liberation of all gay people, even those who didn’t support her and didn’t want her as the face of the movement because of the way she dressed and chose to identify.

Bayard Rustin, like Johnson, was an openly gay activist who worked alongside Martin Luther King Jr. He stood up for blacks as he stood in his truth as an LGBTQ+ person while expressing the values of peaceful, non-violent protest.

Audre Lorde, similarly, represented her struggles as a black queer woman through her writing and gave a voice to many communities that were marginalized and silenced.

These figures all stood up in the face of adversity and dared to be themselves, dared to be unique, and all have greatly influenced the values of authenticity, resilience and respect HoS upholds.

In addition to the remembrance of essential and pivotal black and queer figures, HoS makes it an integral part of our discussions to include issues facing black and queer people in terms of bullying, health disparities,

violence, injustice, etc. An example of an important issue we would discuss is the disproportionate killing of black transgender women and the immense violence and neglect they face. Despite continued oppression we remain resilient, creative and cultured.

Culture is something we hold tightly to in HoS. We not only remember and celebrate our culture, we cultivate and add to it whenever we can. What exactly is black and queer culture? Well, it’s defined in many ways and is extremely complex and intricate. A major part of this culture is ballroom culture. Ballroom culture is the most dominant part of black and queer culture that we express in HoS, as well as its relation to drag culture, which has been cultivated and upkept by RuPaul Charles, another essential black and queer figure.

Our annual KIKI Ball is the most extravagant and bold expression of black and queer culture. KIKI Ball is part of how we celebrate ballroom culture’s competitive way of expressing unique skills and talents relating to one’s ability to illuminate themes of race, gender and sexual orientation. This is done in many different categories in order to win trophies and prizes as well as the respect of the community. People sashay, model and are as fierce and as confident as they want to be. It does include a great deal of practice, which is why before our ball we host voguing and runway workshops that teach essential skills such as dipping, voguing and ultimately ballroom etiquette. The fanfare leading up to it is just a small part of the spectacle that is KIKI Ball. Even if you don’t win, it’s just so much fun laughing and feeling the love that exists in ballroom culture. Another fun part of the experience is watching shows that feature ballroom cultures, such as *POSE* and *My House*. They give us the real and the ratchet parts of ballroom culture that makes it exciting, irresistible, heartbreaking and compassionate.

In HoS we make sure to include the importance of representation in the media and look to contemporary black and queer celebrities such as Frank Ocean, Tyler The Creator, Raven Symone,





Lee Daniels, Azealia Banks, Jussie Smollett and many more. We also observe and discuss their contributions as black and queer representatives, and their contribution to the future of black and queer culture.

As integral as it is to showcase the importance of media representation, I find it equally important to look to our past as well as the future when planning how we will conduct our club moving forward. Like the club's previous presidents, I believe the past serves as a reminder of the black and queer culture that once existed and continues to exist.

However, I also believe the future represents the possibility of continuing that culture and creating more culture that will be accessible for our current and future generations. With HoS' support and solidarity amongst its members, I am certain that it will grow and flourish for years to come. I believe we will continue to be a space that discusses intersectionality, or overlapping marginalized identities, and the way that we can create more solidarity amongst our

different communities instead of hate and division. In resonance with what Audre Lorde states in "The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House," I will say that in any case of overlapping intersectional identities, disregarding race, class, gender, sexual orientation, country of origin or ethnicity weakens all discussions of each identity individually. Fighting for a single identity without regarding its interacting parts cuts out one's own people.

To me, HoS isn't just any one thing. It is a place where I'm not just a black person or just a gay person; I am a black and queer individual. And by that I mean that my identities, for the first time, are not separate. For a long time, I lived my life constantly switching hats. I knew there were times when I could be more of my gay self and times when I couldn't. Similarly, there were times where I could be more of my black self and times where I couldn't. Think of this as a form of "code-switching," only instead of doing it for success, I did it for survival, because for me the alternative was alienation and

rejection. I never really knew that there was a need for a club for black and queer people until I started seeing myself as a whole black and queer person instead of just a sum of my parts.

My experience was no different than that of many of HoS's members. HoS started a conversation. It was created by and for black and queer people in order to build the feeling of love and acceptance in a way that wasn't previously available at Stony Brook or anywhere else. Additionally, in our weekly meetings, HoS teaches many people about black and queer culture, history, struggles and emerging figures of today. As president of HoS I stand on the shoulders of the giants that came before me to see further for our continued progress.

In this fight we must stand together; otherwise, we'll be fighting an endless battle against both one another and our oppressors. Unlike our president, we must teach those around us how to build bridges and not walls. Sorry about it!! ■



# CONFLICT IN KASHMIR

BY FALAH JALAL





As one of the world's most militarized regions, Kashmir is familiar with chaos and disorder.

As India's northernmost state, Kashmir shares its borders with Pakistan and China; its governance is split between these three nations.

Pakistan and India have fought two of their three wars over Kashmir. Both nuclear-armed neighbors have had a long-standing conflict over this territory.

Within India, Kashmiris do not live in harmony. A rebellion in Kashmir is completing its 30th year in 2019. Kashmir, India's only Muslim-majority state, has a strong military presence, which makes the locals feel scared in their own homes.

The U.N. has reported several human rights violations, like enforced disappearance, rape and torture committed by soldiers of the Indian army against Kashmiris since 1990.

Tensions in have always been high, but on Aug. 5, when the Hindu-nationalistic right wing government of India announced the removal of Article 370, the anger and anguish of Kashmiris increased.



### What is Article 370?

Passed in 1956, Article 370 gives Kashmir a special status, enjoyed by only 10 other states in India. It guarantees Kashmiris substantial autonomy to make their own constitution and develop their own laws on all matters except foreign affairs, communication and defence. It protects indigenous land and prevents non-Kashmiris from buying land in the state.

### PICTURED:

Indian policemen beat and detain Kashmiri Shiite Muslim mourners on Sep. 8 in Srinagar, the summer capital of Indian administered Kashmir. (Getty Images)

Protestors demanding freedom for Kashmir outside the United Nations on Sept. 27th 2019. (The Press/Falah Jalali)

Abrogation of Article 370 comes as a shock to all Kashmiris.

India promised Kashmir their autonomy through Article 370, which played a major role in Kashmir becoming one of India's states. The people of Kashmir were not consulted before the decision to revoke Article 370 was made; it was decided unilaterally by India. Without it, India's promises of autonomy dissolve.

### Why is it being removed?

The prime minister of India, Narendra Modi, says the removal of this article will bring stability and security to Kashmir. He claims it will help the country fight terrorist organizations in Pakistan that are radicalizing the youth of Kashmir against India. It will enable Kashmiris to gain access to the same benefits as all Indians under the constitution.

However, some people see this as a step closer to making India a purely Hindu nation and getting rid of the Muslims in India — which has been one of the underlying agendas of the ruling Bhartiya Janta Party (BJP). Ramesh Shinde, a

spokesperson for Hindu Janajagruti Samiti, a Hindu nationalist organization that works closely with the BJP, said, "The elimination of Kashmir is a historic step towards establishing a Hindu Rashtra (nation)."

### How do the Kashmiris feel about this?

A few days before the removal of Article 370, thousands of additional troops were deployed to Kashmir. A crippling curfew was imposed. All forms of communication were shut down, including the internet, schools and banks. Businesses were closed, people were told to not move out of their houses and political leaders were arrested.

Since the removal of Article 370, Kashmiris have assembled in large numbers to protest.

"Article 370 gave me and many others like me an identity, a sense of belonging to Kashmir," Tanzila Mukhtar, a 31-year-old Kashmiri, said. "We do not feel that sense of belonging to India or Pakistan. Abrogation of this article is not only unconstitutional but a symbol of systematic oppression and abuse India has



A protest sign and a puppet of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi outside the United Nations on Sept. 27th 2019. (The Press/Falah Jalali)

been doing on Kashmiris.”

According to a Reuters report, 10,000 locals protested on Aug. 9 in Kashmir. The spokesperson of the Indian Ministry of Home Affairs denied any protests took place, and claimed the information was fabricated and videos of the protest were old. He was proven wrong by more videos from the protest, which showed banners referencing the removal of Article 370.

As a result, on Aug. 16 another large protest took place, and this time people started writing dates on their signs.

Indian officials have changed their story multiple times, and Kashmiri police officials said no bullets were fired on the protesters. However, a BBC video showed people being shot by the police. When confronted, the police officials said they fired pellets, not bullets. Even though police officials claimed people are allowed to protest, the wounds on protesters' bodies tell a different story.

On Sept. 4, The New York Times confirmed the death of a teenage boy named Asrar Ahmed Khan, who was killed by security forces that opened fire on protesters Aug. 6.

#### Why should I care?

President Donald Trump opened for Narendra Modi on Sept. 22 in NRG Stadium in Houston, Texas where Modi spoke to a crowd of 50,000. Trump also tweeted, “The USA loves India!” with a video of Modi greeting the audience. If this was not enough, they both walked hand in hand waving to their supporters. This is not a regular friendship. Trump and Modi's friendship is a statement. They both support each other's vision.

When the “leader of the free world” comes out and supports Modi, it sends out a message that whatever he may be doing, it must be right. Trump's support

of Modi has resulted in little international condemnation. What does it mean for America when the president, who represents Americans globally, supports world leaders who rule like dictators?

Since Narendra Modi came to power, India has witnessed a surge in hate crimes against Muslims and lower-caste Hindus. According to a Reuters report published June 2017, 28 Indians have died in mob lynching; 24 of them were Muslim. With cow-vigilant groups (who protect cows and uphold the cow protection law) getting national funding and mob-lynching in broad daylight going unchecked, this ruling party has brought a new strain of divide and conquer to the country.

Modi, his party and his supporters are rewriting the national narrative of India and redefining it as a Hindu state. What we are witnessing in Kashmir is the price minorities will have to pay for it. ■





**JOE  
ASKS  
A  
PHILOSOPHER  
ABOUT  
TIME**

The image features a series of concentric circles in various shades of gray, creating a tunnel-like effect. On the left side, there is a black gear-like shape with several teeth. The text is positioned in the center-right area, following the curve of the circles.

**BY**

**JOE**

**AMENDOLA**



Are we going to be ok? There's an old saying about what happens when myths start to crumble: The entire structure the myth was meant to justify in the first place starts to break apart as well. The sexual revolution of the 1960s sprouted following widespread revolt against the repressive myths of the 1950s, with cultural dictums about the necessity of the nuclear family and traditional gender roles starting to ring hollow. Secularization and centering of the Self — what we understand today as “modernity” — could only be made necessary by the retreat of the Catholic Church as the center of power and ideology in the West. If you think about it, societal progression could basically be defined as the friction that occurs with the crumbling of myth.

It is always hard to shake the feeling that you are not unique, that every generation experiences ruptures in the social fabric. In a way, this thought has sort of a spiritual quality to it: Every decade brings about massive, unexpected changes to which society adjusts. Just like how South Asian farmers prepare for a yearly monsoon — these things are works of nature and forces beyond our control, so it is best to not harp on them at all.

But things today seem different, don't they? We're seeing myths crumble before our eyes at an astonishing rate — to an extent that barely allows for reflection, let alone even the most cursory attempts at adjustment. There too, exists an old dictum in the realm of storytelling: Put your character in a tree and throw rocks at them. This piece of advice has traditionally been taught as a crucial method to move a story along, igniting the friction that propels conflict and eventually births something anew. Today, as we lay inert in our various trees, we aren't just being hit with rocks — we're being pelted with hand grenades.

Ever since, say, 9/11, when the societal malaise of a post-Cold-War Earth was shattered in favor of an endless panic and new vague mode of imperialism, every single cultural form seems to be trembling. In 2019, no cultural norm or structure is sacred. This has played out both in net-

positive ways (like the acknowledgement of the sexual/gender spectrum and the mass-outreach and voice enabled by the internet) and net-negative ways (the increasingly unjustifiable horrors of neoliberal capitalism, the breakdown of governance structures and “liberal society,” the death of any notion of meritocracy).

Still, it seems like we are living through something even *more* unprecedented and uncertain than in previous generations: the bewildering pace of myth-crumbling cannot be explained by mere changes in cultural attitudes. What we seem to be experiencing is a fracture in our perception of existence — a massive, inadvertent reorientation of how to go about our lives.

In all honesty, the explanation is most likely pretty simple — it's because of the internet, to quote a convention-bending artist himself.

The internet, as has been examined already, isn't another world, as some people suggest, but a hyperreal *extension* of our physical realm. The internet exists on an equal mental-plane with our material world; it takes up an equal amount of our mental faculties.

This reality has many implications, as you could and have probably already guessed; but one of the more seldom-examined side effects is a break in our basic conception of *time itself*. The rise of the internet has — whether we know it or not — all but shattered the concept of 24-hour time, maybe not in a literal sense, but rather the time we experience on say, a calendar or a clock.

Think about it. The internet is an unceasing realm of content onto which most crucial conversations, news and culture have essentially shifted. As more and more generations grow up with the internet as a hyperreal appendage of the physical world, the more this new reality will solidify. *We no longer live according to the confines of the clock*; digital spaces have unmoored information from the rigid 24-hour structures it once adhered to.

One of the few people writing about our new world and time is the young British philosopher Tom Whyman. In one of

Whyman's more recent Outline articles, “Everything Happens So Much,” Whyman put this new dilemma in stark terms:

“If everything never stops happening, then it must become impossible to get a proper sense of when anything in particular started, or ended, or was going on, or whatever.”

Whyman uses this point to illustrate another fact:

“Why has this sort of distortion arisen? Possibly it has something to do with the way in which the internet continues to run, for the most part, parallel to the everyday — it has not yet sucked the whole of the everyday in. Different people are differently Online, but most people will just dip in and out, with the internet and social media being just one facet of a life also lived and worked in Offline.”

Think about it: It seems like Donald Trump's been president for an eternity; given our new internet time, I'd venture to guess that there's been more content written about the man in two and a half years than the entirety of say, Ronald Reagan's equally racist and embarrassing 8 years as president. All of this leads to a skewed relationship to the passing of time. The Parkland shooting seems like it could've happened a decade ago, that stupid fucking Harambe meme seems like it was just yesterday and was SNL ever even funny to begin with? Who knows. We are all experiencing an unwitting whiplash, helpless before the tyranny of the hyperreal realm and the accelerated time it causes.

I haven't been able to stop thinking about Whyman's specific takes on The New Time, and reached out to him for some clarification and guidance. Whyman had his first child shortly before I reached out to him, and was tremendously gracious with the little capacity he had for higher level thought. We touched on three topics in our chat: the new and old time, the question of new time being an accident and time and the eternal present.

### The New and Old Time

All of these new revelations about time have particular relevance for young

people. Being a subject within the grey, hazy horror that is our postmodern moment is hard enough; we can barely stop to contemplate current events, let alone ourselves. We try on new identities and cultural postures at increasingly rapid rates, shedding them similarly to the way The New Time sheds events in favor of new ones.

This experience is fundamentally unique to us — not everyone, as Whyman suggests, is “equally online.” There are many pressing schisms between today’s young and old, but perhaps none as salient as the very realities we live in.

“One obvious effect of this is that time is going to be felt differently across generations. If younger people live on internet-time and older people continue to live on the old clock-time... well then increasingly their realities are going to come apart,” said Whyman. “We’ve already seen this in the different ways that older and younger people consume news media. Recently I’ve been thinking that generational divisions in politics are often less to do with a clash of values, as we might most obviously assume, and more to do with the fact that politics is set. If you’re an older person who still mostly only reads newspapers, you live in a different universe than a young person who gets their news from social media.”

This seems undeniably true to me. What’s even more interesting, though, is what happens when such older generations do subsume themselves within the hyperreal, 24-hour content loop inherent in an online life. It is hard to imagine the rise of conspiracies such as Qanon and the Flat Earth occurring mainly within a digital-native generation such as Gen Z, for example; the flattening of time and information overload inherent in that phenomenon has many externalities, or accidents, to quote the French philosopher Paul Virilio.

### Is the New Time An Accident?

The New Time is, really, just a technological innovation. And technical objects bring about their own accidents — the ship invented the shipwreck, and so

on.

“I suppose one might say that what I identify as a new conception of time is itself an accident, since it has been an inadvertent effect of the internet and social media,” Whyman replied in response to my question. “And then what is really needed, is a way of responding to it that will allow us not to be oriented towards this accident in a wholly passive way... (like how one might protect against shipwrecks by inventing the lighthouse, I suppose).”

One might respond to such skepticism of such technological-runoff with charges that the person raising the concerns is a reactionary luddite opposed to culture’s progression. But the opposite is true: Our new conception of time could be liberty if we put in place the proper defense mechanisms for policing their potentially odious effects — the ship, the shipwreck as well as the lighthouse, as Whyman described.

### Time And The Eternal Present

None of this, however, addresses the issue of presence and its relationship to how we experience time.

The French philosopher Jacques Derrida had a particularly astute, if not obvious take on the present: The entire concept as such is incoherent to begin with. We never are really fully present. Think of a piece of music; we never process the present note in a vacuum, but rather are always haunted by our impression of what came before and the anticipation of what comes next. The internet, however, and by extension its reorientation of time, flips this notion on its head.

In the aforementioned Outline article, Whyman recalls the writings of late British-cultural theorist Mark Fisher. Whyman mentions Fisher’s writings on our cultural condition in the 21st century, how we “have lost the ability to grasp and articulate the present.” Fisher, however, was describing a culture that can only feel presence, but cannot do much else.

Whyman reiterated this sentiment when asked about time and its relationship to presence.

“When responding to news events (for

instance great tragedies), there is very much a demand to be present — which actually we are quite good at seeming to meet. But the problem is that these events never take place in a vacuum, that in fact they are part of a rush of cause and effect which we could only really do justice to by untangling. Our response to these events is usually more: we are present, we express our horror and/or condolences, then we move on. What’s missing is the work of memory. See how easily, for instance, those billionaires could pledge money to rebuild Notre Dame — only to never actually donate it. The narrative had already moved on from people caring about Notre Dame, by the time their real intentions became clear.”

### The Bastards of New Time

Of course, the work of time is never finished. It really is quite terrifying: Every single event, large and small from the Pliocene until today, affecting the web of circumstances we find ourselves in, the unimaginable weight of time looming over us always. What we are experiencing is the rapid acceleration of time, brought about by an unforeseen runoff of a technical entity. We are seeing the bastards of The New Time sprout before our eyes — sometimes they take the form of a lack of collective memory, and sometimes they manifest themselves in other ways, such as our ever-growing detachment from calendar time. There are probably dozens of other effects we have yet to notice.

I suppose calendar time is just another myth that is starting to crumble. ■



and The Clouds

A BREAK-  
UP CAN  
PUT YOU  
BACK TO-  
GETHER

BY JEN  
LOVE IS:  
HAPPY





It was a rainy April afternoon in a strip mall parking lot. The person who I had just spent three years of my life with was sitting in the driver's seat of his car, the car that I had spent hours of my life in, laughing, crying, kissing, fighting.

And it resembled a movie, with the rain falling down. He acted the part as I told him that it was time to go separate ways. Although he resisted, he sent me off with a smile. It was the last time I saw him, smiling and waving through his car window, though he claims his heart was splitting into two. Mine was too.

Some relationships make it to the 30s and beyond, and others just remain as memories, acting as lessons for us to look back on. They're hard lessons, but vital ones.

I'm writing this for the people who are in a relationship that they're unhappy in and for the people who have ended a relationship, but are feeling lost. And those who have been broken up with and don't know what to do.

I'm here to tell you that a breakup is a time for you. A breakup is a time to put yourself back together. If you play your cards right, depending on the situation, it could be the most reflective and even the best time of your life.



I had work at the grocery store at 6 p.m. that day.

I remember as I worked at the cash register that anytime a customer would ask "How are you?" I would have to take a deep breath. It was like holding in this wave and trying to keep it from crashing down. So I would just force a smile and say "I'm good."

When I took my 15-minute break, I turned on my phone to find message upon message. He was asking for me to come back. He was apologizing. He was offering me all the things I knew I needed in a relationship.

But here's the thing. A person should fulfill your needs, as long as it's healthy for both parties, because they want to make you happy. They should always be afraid to lose you because you're important to them. It may also be that they weren't able to give you what you need, which may not be anyone's fault, but it's a deal breaker for you. Maybe your lives are heading in different directions. Maybe it's just time to let go.

By the time my shift ended, the wave had subsided for that day. But what wouldn't subside was the need to know if I made the right decision. I remember discussing it with my best friends that night over a quart of cookie dough ice cream.

"The worst part is that he's a good person," one of them said. "But you two just met each other at the wrong time."

"You guys really think I made the right decision?" I asked.

"Yes," they both proclaimed.

Still, the question lingered for weeks.

I must have watched every video and read every article on the subject of breakups. I needed to know if I made the right decision.

Even though everyone in my life was telling me I made the right decision, I couldn't believe it. Even with a final the next morning or an unfinished essay I knew I needed to turn in, I had to prove to myself that I did not lose the person I was supposed to be with, with the help of the Google search bar and YouTube, of course.

This wasn't just losing some guy I spent a lot of time with. We had plans to marry each other after college. We already agreed on names for children and we were going to have a pitbull named Maggie. Did I just ruin that?

No amount of videos or articles provided me with the concrete answer I needed to know.

It was when I looked through our photos which captured our dates, like the time we went to go apple picking, but the apple picking was closed so we bought apples instead. Or the time we went to MoMA PS1 and got Thai food afterwards. I remember the laughs, the love we exchanged. But I also remembered that behind a lot of these pictures taken on a lot of these dates, there was a fight behind it

not reflected on the smiles on our faces. All of those fights were a tug of war between needs and boundaries and neither of us wanted to give either of those. And honestly, people shouldn't.

My mom always reminded me that love should never be hard.


Ask yourself these questions: Do you miss the person you were before you got into the relationship? Do you ever wish you broke up before you became too emotionally invested? Do you two bring the worst out of each other? Are you curious about exploring other options?

It took me awhile to honestly answer those questions. But until then, I remember telling myself and him, "If it's meant to be, it's meant to be."

Getting through this portion of your life will be difficult, even with catchy, cliché sayings, sad music and lots and lots of ice cream. Fortunately, there are ways you can make the pain yours.

I remember one night, I was driving around aimlessly, tears falling onto my steering wheel, when my car broke down. After somehow getting it to the side of the street, I decided that I needed some air. So I left my car about ten minutes away from my house and walked, and it was during that walk I decided I could write about this someday, because I will be able to look back at it and laugh at myself.

It was as if I became the star of my own



EVEN THOUGH EVERY-  
ONE IN MY LIFE WAS  
TELLING ME I MADE  
THE RIGHT DECISION, I  
COULDN'T BELIEVE IT.

chick flick, but remember, chick flicks often have a happy ending.

The hardest part of the breakup was thinking about how he was feeling. All the little things in life began to remind me of him because my life was adapted to his. Even my cat Stanley would remind me of him, because he loved my ex so much that he would rush from my room to greet him when he walked through the door.

And yes he may have been the perfect cat dad. However, we held different ethics, we had differences in religion, we had two different visions of our lives and we both had demons that we needed to confront. The right person will help you manage your inner ugliness, not exaggerate it.

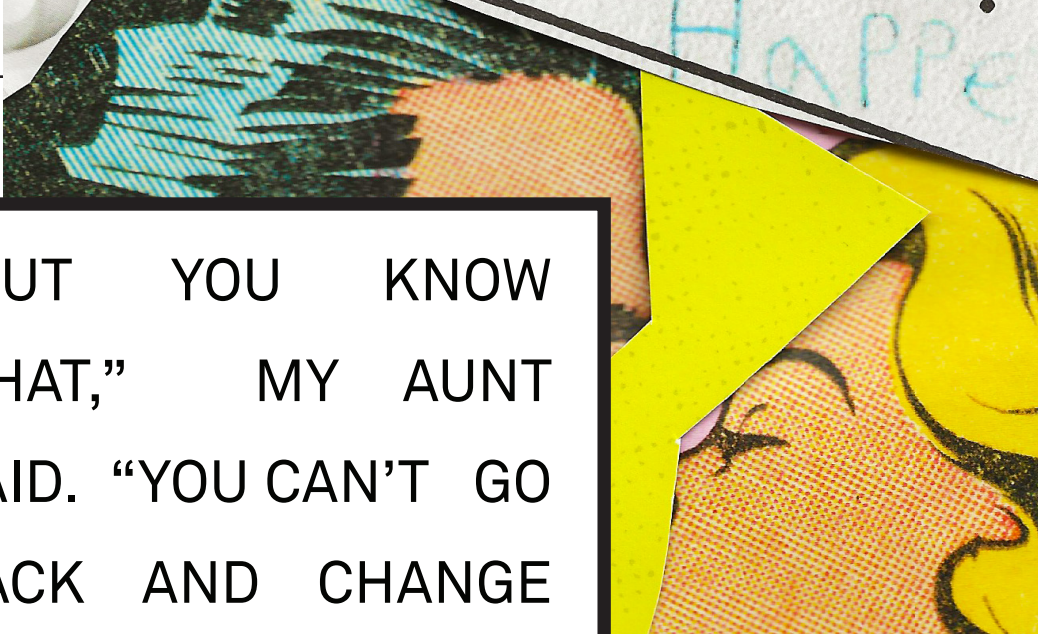
I also felt angry. I was angry about situations I remembered during the relationship that I never confronted. I felt like there were things I needed to say that I never got to say. I was mad at myself. I was mad at him. I was just mad.

I confessed that to my aunt over margaritas.

“But you know what,” my aunt said. “You can’t go back and change the past. This was a lesson you were meant to learn, and think about how equipped you will be for the next relationship.”

You’re allowed to have all these emotions. For me it was constant flashes of happiness, sadness, anger, regret and loneliness.

But don’t let anyone tell you that you have to “just get over it.” You will experience or are experiencing the loss of a person who you loved enough to spend a significant portion of your life with. A person who you gave yourself to physically, mentally and spiritually. The person who knows your secrets. The person whose mannerisms you have memorized and whose little details you spotted. I will never forget his playful smile that would reveal his dimples and how warm and safe I felt in his arms. How funny he is. How much I love his friends and family.



“BUT YOU KNOW  
WHAT,” MY AUNT  
SAID. “YOU CAN’T GO  
BACK AND CHANGE  
THE PAST.”

But the good news is, I will never forget. Here is the part of the chick flick when the star begins finding themselves.

The night of the breakup, my best friend referenced the movie *How to Be Single*.

“The whole time she is going through different relationships and feeling the need to be with someone until she realizes she needs to be alone,” she said. “And then at the end of the movie, she climbs a mountain and smiles. You need to climb that mountain, Jen.”

We both laughed. Because it was true. Ever since I was 17, I was only single for about three months, as I went through two serious relationships. I never really got to experience being a single adult.

A month later, after I surprisingly passed my finals, I felt different.

It was when I rode bikes with classmates at 12 a.m. through the warm, rainy air that I truly knew I made the right decision. For the first time in a while, I felt like a college student. I felt my age.

The summer of 2019 was the best summer I’ve had in a long time. I poured all my energy and focus into my summer internship and I met two new friends who I spent many days with.

A summer I thought would be nothing but working became a summer of evening tennis, late night drives, trips out east, night swims and beach days.

I reconnected with a friend whom I’d

grown distanced.

I stayed on a beach in Southampton until 2 a.m., laying on the beach with a

new friend and listening to Pink Floyd.

Old friends from high school and I held hands as we walked down the streets of Patchogue, laughing and drunk on Long Island Iced Teas.

A new friend and I poured our hearts out to each other as we walked through a neighborhood in Massapequa till 4 a.m.

My best friend and I got soaked by the waves when we were watching the stars on the beach in Montauk.

I went to Philadelphia for the first time in my cognizant memory.

I drove outside the state for the first time.

I rented an Airbnb with my friends to go to Six Flags.

I got practically front row tickets to see TLC, who got me through my commute all summer.

Even though I suck at dancing, I danced my heart out at a silent disco.

I found myself walking in the city at 3 a.m. with people who I’ve only known for less than three months.

And though I’m not completely there yet, I’m slowly becoming the person I used to be, but better.

I was meant to go my own way, as was he. In some time, you too will know. But until then, there is a person who has been needing commitment and love too, and they may be reading this. ■





BIG BOYS  
ARE CUTE

WANTED  
PLUS MALE  
FASHION  
INFLUENCERS  
BY KIAN MICCOY



**S**ocial media has become the tool of choice for people, especially millennials, who wish to take an active role in advocacy. #BlackLivesMatter and the #MeToo movement originated on Twitter and managed to garner international attention and action. In the same spirit, a body positivity movement is stirring, with plus-size people taking charge of conversations around “acceptable” body standards. The #BodyPosi movement on Instagram allows women to voice their outrage with the fashion industry, creating visibility and real change within clothing companies. Plus-sized men stand to benefit from utilizing social media in the same way — and their movements are beginning to take root.

These male-centric body positivity movements have found their place on Twitter. Hashtags, such as #BigGuyTwitter and #BigBoysAreCute, showcase selfies and outfit-of-the-day posts of big guys, as members of the community often refer to themselves, exuding positivity. There is a myth perpetuated by the fashion industry that bigger men don’t care about style. Most companies carrying extended sizes seem to be complacent in having clothes that “fit” plus-size men. But why does it have to be a tradeoff between fit and style?

“Shopping is difficult at times, mainly due to lack of availability of my size in most stores, if they even carry it,” said Steven Green, a traveling fashion photographer and blogger based in the U.S. “Also, finding fashionable clothes in my size is difficult. The options available for clothes and patterns that are trendy are very slim.”

The issue starts with the clothing stores; there isn’t even a consensus on what constitutes “plus size” in men’s fashion. Plus-size women’s clothing has an established range of size 12-14 and up. For men, the minimum range is between 32-38 waist; but with no set standard, the decision is left to the clothing companies. ASOS, an online store credited with establishing the first plus-size men’s section, starts their collection at size 44 waist, with shirt sizes up to 4XL. This makes ASOS the main competition for



## WHY DOES IT HAVE TO BE A TRADEOFF BETWEEN FIT AND STYLE?

fast fashion brands with brick and mortar stores, such as Forever 21 and H&M, where plus-size male clothing is nonexistent and standard sizes don’t exceed 2XL.

Big guys are forced to shop in big and tall chain stores, such as Destination XL (DXL), where the choice between fit and style is most consequential. A quick glance at their website shows an endless scroll of basic t-shirts, button downs and blue jeans. Still, the convenience and size availability has allowed DXL to control the lion’s share of the market, with 339 stores nationwide and a handful in Canada and England. And even here, in this big guy

haven, there are still issues when a guy might be big and not tall, or vice versa.

“Usually, I have to go get my pants tailored in order to get them to fit the way I want,” Aaron Jackson, a Stony Brook student who frequently contributes to #BigGuyTwitter, said.

Plus-size men also point out advocacy for the underserved plus-size male market is nearly non-existent. Meanwhile, plus-size women have spokespersons and models, such as Tess Holiday as well as singer and self-proclaimed “bad fatty” Lizzo, to battle retailers and champion the normalization of bigger bodies in the media.





“I believe that the movements surrounding body positivity and self-love spurred these changes, [in the industry,]” Nana Otoo, a Long Island woman, said, “there are women outwardly loving themselves for who they are and what they look like and encouraging others to do the same. These women show that there is a market for clothes in larger sizes.”

In 2016, Zach Miko became the first plus-size male model signed to IMG Models when they unveiled their Brawn division, in the hopes apparel companies would follow suit and diversify their products and representatives. In comparison, by that time plus-size supermodel Ashley Graham had been with Wilhelmina Models for 15 years.

Instagram has emerged as a marketplace for independent retailers and designers, acting as a de facto online store and filling in the gaps left by big brands.

“I live in Indonesia...it’s harder to find big sizes here, since the industry is still stereotyping ‘Asian-sized,’ said Juris Bramantyo (@juristhegreat), a plus-size fashion and art blogger, said. “But Instagram is making it easy. A lot of small-batch local fashion labels [started] focusing on big-sized men’s apparel. Like BigBoysLookGood and WGB in Indonesia, they are mostly based on Instagram.”

The Winston Box is a subscription service dedicated to the big guys. They use their Instagram page to advertise new stock and

showcase customers in their latest gear, doubling as a style guide and promoter of plus-size models. A common excuse brands give for their small extended-size offerings is bigger clothing uses more fabric and, by extension, is more expensive. All of this is despite the \$1 billion in revenue the big and tall market earned in 2018, according to a study by IBIS World. Designer menswear brand JCRT responded by creating custom clothing, made to order, to address the issue of fabric use and size diversity within the plus-size spectrum. The sustainable clothing business model is predicted to be on the rise in 2019 by fashion analytics company McKinsey & Company, as companies notice a hike in consumers’ interest in social and environmental issues.

Plus-size model and stylist Tevin Evans (@fatchuckbass) experienced firsthand being served excuses for slim pickings in plus-sized clothing at photoshoots and while shopping.

“It’s really frustrating that the stores that do carry plus-size clothing tend to carry very bland selections,” he said. “Everything is offered in cuts that make us look bigger than we really are and it’s always offered at a premium.” The social media influencer recently worked with KingSize Direct, an online store carrying shirt sizes up to 9XL and pants up to 72 waist, and now calls them one of his go-to

brands.

With visibility at the center of the issue, photography projects such as “Arrested Movement” by Anthony Patrick Manieri (@arrestedmovement) could catapult size discrimination for men into the public consciousness.

“The topic of body positivity in mainstream media has usually always focused on women and I wanted to create a dialogue that would hopefully include men in the narrative,” Manieri said about his project. “The overwhelming practice of comparison has increased with social media and media as a whole, there is little representation for anyone other than a gym body.”

Instagram is Manieri’s platform of choice for the project, where he has garnered 8,253 followers as of publication. “Since we have become a visual world [especially] through social media... I wanted to beautifully photograph men of all sizes and races, to show representation, to show that you are as beautiful as the next man,” he said.

Like Instagram, blogs and other online communities are vital in keeping plus-size men in the fashion loop. Chubstr, a lifestyle blog run by Bruce Sturgell, was created “to call out retailers and brands that were hiding or not offering extended sizes at all,” according to their website. The blog also serves as a plus-size fashion aggregator, listing the most inclusive brands and where to find them. Sturgell used Chubstr to form a community of big guys who share style tips and outfits. They also host occasional meet-ups, most recently March 21 in Portland, Oregon.

With all of these moving parts working to address the lack of clothing and opportunity for plus-sized men, there is still a major piece missing: a unifying influencer, or influencers, to rally behind and be the face of the plus-size men’s movement. For plus-size women, their main face is Ashley Graham, who broke into the mainstream in 2016 when she became the first plus-size model to make the cover of the Sports Illustrated Swimsuit Issue. Men are still waiting for their Ashley Graham. ■





WOMEN ARE STILL  
WAITING FOR  
THE  
ASHLEY GRAHAM





Tom Manuel, owner of The Jazz Loft, leads the club's big band playing his silver cornet.  
(The Press/Frank Gargano)

# BIG BAND ROCKS SMALL TOWN

BY FRANK GARGANO

In a dark blue suit and white newspaper-boy hat stood a man in front of a big, classical jazz band, submersed in the glow of the fluorescent lights. In one hand, a silver cornet was threaded between his fingers, glinting with each turn of the wrist. The other stayed empty, doubling as a baton for the large band behind him. This man is the legendary Tom Manuel. Manuel works tirelessly to preserve Long Island's history of jazz and present it to future generations — he has even been acknowledged for it in publications like *The New York Times* and *Jazz Inside Magazine*.



The audience consisted of 27 people. The average age exceeded double the amount of years I've been on the planet (except for three teens). All of them waited for the next song with bated breath.

This was the scene at The Jazz Loft in Stony Brook on Thursday, Sept. 5 as the Loft's Big Band performed various works from the first half of the 20th century. "I've been playing the drums since I was eight years old," Ellis B. Holmes III, the Big Band's drummer, said.

Holmes grew up watching his father, who was also a drummer, play gigs and was inspired to learn how to play. "The president of The Jazz Loft, Tom Manuel, he and I met actually many years ago doing a show together. We started playing together more and more, and one day he hit me with this idea: 'You know? There's gonna be a place where we can go and play. It'll be like a jazz club and also have a little memorabilia.' And I said that'd be really hip."

The Loft officially opened in May 2016, after the building was left vacant for 10 years. "It was really just this serendipitous, once-in-a-lifetime opportunity," Manuel said. Prior to its current purpose, the building was the Suffolk, now Long Island, Museum. Once the museum moved, a gardening club occupied the building for nearly 40 years and ran a consignment and antiques shop.

Manuel, throughout his professional career, amassed a collection of jazz memorabilia from elder musicians he worked with and befriended. "It got to overwhelm my home and I was looking for a space to store it, like a library or a university or archives, and around the same time that this came to light, a woman that was president of the heritage organization that owns some of the historical buildings in Stony Brook reached out to me," he said.

According to the website, the facility is actually a combination of two different buildings. One is the original 1909 firehouse, and the other is a 19th-century house nicknamed the "Stone Jug" due to its facade consisting of stone and rock.

Manuel, aside from The Loft, occupies a part-time teaching position in the jazz department at nearby Stony Brook University. "I usually teach different things from semester to semester," he said. "I teach some improvisation and history classes and I also run some of the combos, but it varies."

One of the teens that attended the event, Fernando Acevedo, is a junior at Stony Brook University working on an assignment for his psychology class. "I came to the Jazz Loft for an assignment, but to be honest I wouldn't have come if it wasn't for that because I don't really like jazz," Acevedo said. "But, I really liked the experience of just walking in. The museum is really nice with all the pictures and the way everything is set up, and the music is really good as well."

Despite only being around since 2016, The Jazz Loft feels like it's been in Stony Brook for so much longer. "A lot of doors opened that normally you never imagined you could get through. It's really amazing," Manuel said. ■

Assorted instruments in the Jazz Loft's museum section.  
(The Press/Frank Gargano)



# SCOTT PILGRIM

## 15 YEARS LATER

BY DALVIN ABOAGYE



This past August marked 15 years since the release of *Scott Pilgrim's Precious Little Life*, the first entry in the trailblazing six-volume graphic novel series written and illustrated by Canadian cartoonist and writer Bryan Lee O'Malley. The gap in time's done little to hurt its recognition. Most people have crossed paths with the series in some form or another. That's partially thanks to director Edgar Wright's work adapting the superpowered antics of the part-time performer and full-time slacker in 2010's *Scott Pilgrim vs. The World*, where actor Michael Cera portrayed a lovestruck loser. In the nine years since the movie, the iconography of the franchise has outgrown both the books and the film, and for obvious reasons. It's hard not to fall for the endless video game references and bursts of punk-rock flair all sandwiched between the anime-inspired battles our titular hero Scott has with Ramona's seven evil exes. As a result, its impact can be found in the most unexpected places. Back in April of 2016, rapper Lil Uzi Vert released his third mixtape *Lil Uzi Vert vs. The World* with cover art — designed by St. Louis artist Fvrris — that featured the Philly rapper stylized to look like Scott Pilgrim along with a host of other supporting characters in the background.

"I always thought it was cool," O'Malley said of the homage. "My books were influenced by the music that I loved when I was a kid, so it's like his music is influenced by the books he read." Uzi even went so far as to include a song called "Scott and Ramona" and continued the motif in the cover art for his subsequent mixtape, *The Perfect Luv Tape*, which dropped a few months later. After the series' end in 2010, O'Malley kept his creative momentum going by releasing another solo graphic novel, *Seconds*, in 2014. In 2016, he decided to take a stab at writing serialized comics with *Snotgirl*, his ongoing Image Comics collaboration with artist Leslie Hung. Despite remaining his most popular and expansive work to date, he's only gone back to the *Scott Pilgrim* well a couple of times; helping out with the full-color hardcover editions of the series that came out back in 2012. To this day, the *Scott Pilgrim* series has become a staple in the larger canon of independent comics and a pop culture powerhouse.

We recently got to speak with O'Malley about why the love for *Scott Pilgrim* is still going strong, where he gets his inspiration from and what he's got in store for the future.

**When I look at your self-contained work like *Scott Pilgrim, Lost at Sea* or *Seconds*, they all line up perfectly with different stages of growing up. Was that intentional? How much do you tend to pull from your own life?**

O'Malley: I feel like everything I do is kind of tracking my own life. Yeah, *Lost at Sea* was coming out of high school, being in your early 20s, looking back. It felt like the last five years ended up percolating into this project. And *Scott Pilgrim* obviously took six or seven years to complete so it spanned, like, my whole 20s. I think I was 31 when the movie came out and now I'm 40. I'm just trying to keep up with myself in my work.

***Snotgirl* backs away from that a bit, though. Besides being serialized as a monthly comic, you're writing about these two worlds — fashion and social media — that you aren't super familiar with.**

O'Malley: Yeah, it's true. It's probably because it is a collaboration with my artist and co-creator Leslie Hung who's 10 years younger than me. The characters are around 10 years younger than me. It's like I kind of have to delve into this new generation that I didn't necessarily grow up in exactly, although there's a lot of crossover. The interests and points of reference are a little different than my own, but I kind of have to find my way in a way that's less obvious than it was with *Scott Pilgrim*, which is completely one hundred percent myself.

**Was it difficult adapting to those slight generational differences?**

O'Malley: It's definitely not quite as natural, but also my girlfriend and her friends are around that age too, so it's just sort of a world that I've been immersed in the past couple of years. It's not a huge stretch. It does take more of a conscious effort than my personal stuff.

**Besides the anime and videogame influences, how much did your musical taste inspire the story? Some moments remind me of dropping by to see a friend's band play at some DIY venue or basement.**

O'Malley: Yeah, in my late teens [and] early 20s, I definitely grew up in that world

— the indie rock scene. I was in a couple of bands and I was just kind of messing around with music before my comics started taking off. When I go to shows now it's like everyone's way younger than me. All of *Scott Pilgrim* is this chronicle of someone's early 20s and the music is a big part of that for me.

**What specific types of music were you into around that time?**

O'Malley: A bunch of it went into the movie because once I met Edgar Wright we were kind of trading mixtapes back and forth. A lot of Canadian indie rock. I was really into old country rock at that time. Gram Parsons and Johnny Cash were playing in my "studio" so to speak — like my studio was the corner of my kitchen at that time. Yeah, I was really into that kind of scene at the time, like in the early to mid-2000s. I feel like the character of Stephen Stills expresses a lot of that stuff. You know, he dresses kind of country. That was just something I was discovering at the time.

**The whole art style and iconography of *Scott Pilgrim* ended up becoming its own thing. Do you notice other comics or media that take inspiration from it?**

O'Malley: Yeah, I think it's weird because it doesn't really happen the way you might expect. I thought, "Oh, maybe someone will do a comic that kind of looks like 'Scott Pilgrim,'" but I haven't seen much of that. I feel like the style of it is so specific it's kind of like a meme in itself to people. But then you see it in Lil Uzi Vert and you see all these Soundcloud rappers using *Scott Pilgrim*-style art. In mainstream culture, you see something like *Steven Universe* or *Star vs. The Forces of Evil*. I feel like those are directly influenced by *Scott Pilgrim* at least in some small way and they become huge hits in their own right.

**What were some influences you drew from in your other work?**

O'Malley: I've been churning through influences so fast my entire life. *Lost at Sea* was really influenced by Lynda Barry, who's an alternative cartoonist and just an incredible person. *Scott Pilgrim* was influenced by *Ranma ½* but it was also influenced by some comics like *Nana* by Ai Yazawa. That was huge for me

around that time. It's also a comic about a struggling band and young 20-somethings living an artist's life in Tokyo. That was inspirational to me because I was the same age. It was coming out in the early 2000s. Then I got really super into Osamu Tezuka during *Scott Pilgrim*. He's the guy who created *Astro Boy* and so many other characters. He was like a huge, huge anchor point for me as far as comics go.

I've been all around the world now and people have this idea about comics being separate — like there are American comics, there are superhero comics, there are manga and anime, Euro comics, indie comics and art comics. To me, it's all the same thing. You can draw influences from all of those things.

**The internet has made it easier for creators to find each other's work and riff off of each other. Do those distinct styles even matter anymore?**

O'Malley: Yeah, there's a ton of surface differences or even deeper kinds of differences in the way people think, but it's still the same medium and you're trying to do the same thing. It is totally different with the internet. Obviously, I've had the internet for most of my life at this point, but it was very different in the early days. There was no Instagram. Now you can just go online and see a million examples of anything at a moment's notice. It's very different. It's a lot easier to see stuff but maybe it's a lot harder for us to sort through all the stuff that we're seeing because I just kind of tend to feel overwhelmed by it.

**Does the ability to get instant feedback on social media ever get to you?**

O'Malley: Yeah, I guess you could say that. I feel like when I started out you had to really seek out the internet discussion, but now you don't have to look for it. It kind of comes in your face. It's not necessarily the best thing when you're trying to go through a creative process because you basically get people judging every step of the process. You feel like there are eyes on you all the time. That's obviously partly because I'm known now, but also it's just kind of how the internet works now. You have to be seen, you have



to keep contributing and you have to kind of constantly be a part of the whole machine, otherwise you get lost in the shuffle.

**Has the internal pressure grown?**

O'Malley: Oh yeah, for sure. Yeah, especially in the past few years. It's just that constant discussion and feedback and what's next and also the sheer level of craft and stuff that I'm seeing everywhere. I just saw the new Tarantino movie. Every time I see something that's really good I'm like, "Damn, I don't know if I could do that," or "I'm not sure if I could do that again because people really liked my last shit." It's like you kind of got to step it up every time.

**Do you judge your past work even after**

**it's been out for years?**

O'Malley: You always do that a little bit. I feel like I do it less. I think once the book is a book and it's out and people see it, I kind of stop worrying about it. I go crazy on the attention to detail when I'm trying to finish a project. It's just like way too much. It's all I can think about for days or weeks depending on the size of the project. Once it's wrapped I kind of forget about it for the most part, but at the same time we just put out this new edition of *Scott Pilgrim* and I spent a really long time looking over it with a fine-toothed comb looking for problems and whatever things I could tighten up — like making sure the packaging's right. It kind of never ends, so you have to force yourself to

look at the next thing.

**What do you do to decompress when you're in the middle of a stressful project?**

O'Malley: I don't know. It's really hard for me. It's good to get out of the house, get out of the room, and just do something totally different. You know, do normal life stuff — wash dishes, go to the grocery store or, like, walk the dogs. That kind of stuff. That's kind of like my go-to because when I'm deep in something I forget to do normal life stuff and doing that normal stuff is kind of what keeps you grounded. It's important to shake up the work routine and just be a human being for a while.

**What's your workflow like? In the past, you used to work both digitally and on paper, right?**

O'Malley: On *Scott Pilgrim*, I didn't draw anything digitally. I just did final scanning and cleanup digitally. For *Seconds* I had a Cintiq for the first time and I did all the roughs on the computer because it's so much easier to move stuff around and edit compositions and stuff on a computer. I don't like doing finished art on the computer because I just feel like I'm not very good at that medium. I like to print it out and transfer it to paper somehow. I have a lightbox. I'll do various ways of getting it out on paper: figure out the composition on the computer screen and then put it on paper, finish drawing on the paper and scan it back in. It's not super intuitive but it works for me.

**Do you think the reception to *Scott Pilgrim* would've been different if it were released now as opposed to back in 2004?**

O'Malley: Well yeah, times have changed. I feel like a lot of that response of people seeing the characters more critically is because they read it when they were too young at first. Now they go back and read it and they're like, "Oh my god, this guy was trying to trick me into liking this character," but no. I think



all the characters are flawed and that's what makes them interesting.

I was very lucky to kind of be ahead of my time as far as this shit. You couldn't go to the store and buy a Nintendo shirt in 2004. It wasn't like that. The whole kind of geek culture has exploded around me in the past fifteen years and I was lucky enough to kind of be a part of that wave. It was something I totally didn't anticipate. I started doing these books and, you know, I didn't know where it would go and this is where it went. It's not the world I thought I would live in but it's worked out for me.

**What kind of comics or other media are you into now?**

O'Malley: The Marvel movies have been a constant surprise in the last few years. I can complain all I want but we live in the Marvel movie world now. Those movies just keep getting better and better, which is good and bad. It's good and annoying. How does an artist like me compete with something like that, which has all the money in the world? They can hire all the talent in the world and everyone fucking loves those movies. Everyone loves to watch them. If they start making more of those, what else are we going to be able to watch or read or whatever? I complain about them but at the same time, I love them.

There's a ton of stuff now. There's so much stuff that's so good. The new *Twin Peaks* was one of my favorite things I've ever seen. *Atlanta* is like so good. Oh, and *Barry* on HBO. It's been all TV lately for me.

**What is it about the *Scott Pilgrim* series that's made it resonate with people for so long?**

O'Malley: I don't know. It's so hard for me to answer that. It's popular in countries where I've never been. It's popular everywhere I go. It's so weird. There must be some like essential thing in *Scott Pilgrim* that's just easy to get for people, or for a certain type of person anyway. I've never really been able to put my finger on it, whatever it is.

**Your fanbase is global now. What's that like?**

O'Malley: I was in France last month for a book tour and I was given a book

by a cartoonist from Spain or Portugal or something, and he wasn't even there but he really wanted me to have it because I was a huge influence on him. That kind of stuff is cool. But like the fan stuff, you know — I have cosplayers in Russia. I have people from Brazil talking to me every day on Instagram. It's just everywhere. I love that but it feels like a big responsibility. It feels like they're all my children.

**Any new updates on your next graphic novel *Worst World*?**

O'Malley: Yeah, I kind of went quiet on it because I don't want people to see it. I want some surprise when it's done. For the first little while, I was kind of throwing a lot of stuff online, just sharing the process with people. Ultimately, I want it to feel fresh. I want it to not feel like you've watched the whole thing. It's a really long process making a book and this is going to be a long series so I'm setting up a lot of stuff. When it's close to completion I'll start showing stuff again. For now, I kind of went dark on it.

**Is it going to have genre elements like your other work or is it more grounded?**

O'Malley: It's definitely in the genre world. My take on it is kind of like anime, superhero-ey kind of thing. It's a more grounded take on genre.

**Does seeing how something is made ruin the final product for you?**

O'Malley: I mean, on some level I feel like it diminishes the finished project a little bit. Obviously, some people really eat that stuff up. Some people are wannabe cartoonists or filmmakers and they love seeing behind-the-scenes information. I

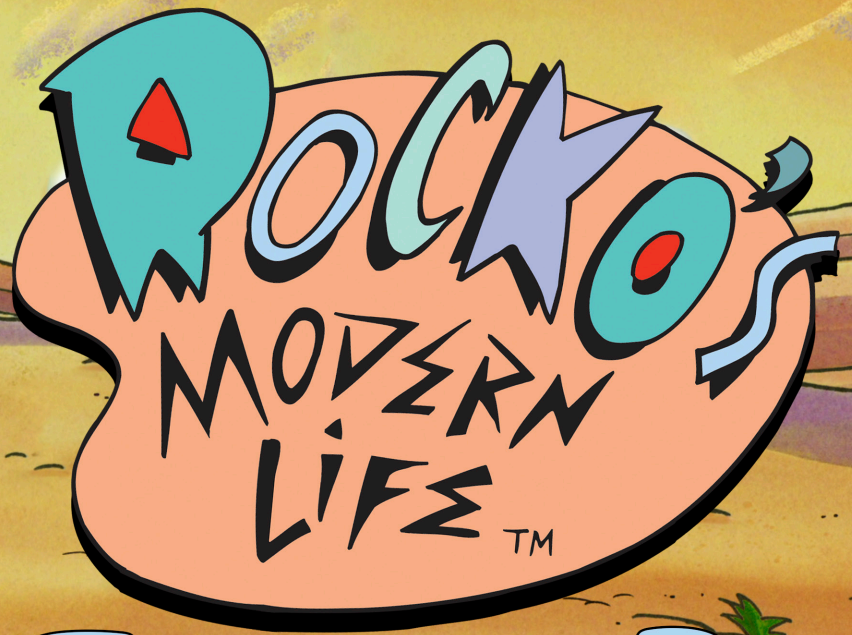
feel like for most people they want to see the movie or they want to read the book and these little trickles of information are just kind of like feeding that want. For me, when I was younger, whenever I went into something knowing everything about it — you know, being obsessed with it for six months or whatever beforehand and researching it — I would always feel like I'd have less fun on the day. Nowadays I kind of try to avoid spoilers in general and not even watch trailers for some stuff. That's just personal preference. Ultimately, in this world, we're just going to have access to all this information and we're going to have to deal with it in some way.

**Do you see yourself working in another medium besides comics?**

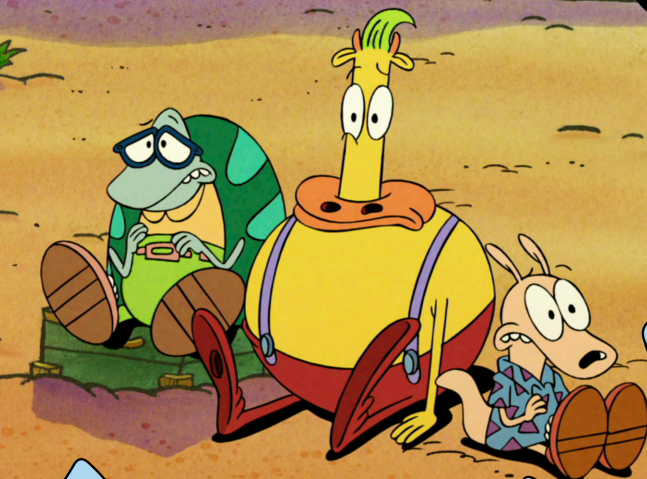
O'Malley: Not really, not that much. I went out for a few meetings when I first moved here (Los Angeles) for the first couple years. I went to Cartoon Network and Nickelodeon and stuff but when I kind of learned how cartoons worked, like, I don't want to spend 10 years working on this cartoon, having meetings and stuff. It just didn't seem like the lifestyle that I would want. And also it's so hard to have a hit cartoon, you know, but if you do have [one] then it's going to be a whole shitload of work for like the next 10 years, or forever if it's a huge hit. I already have enough on my plate with *Scott Pilgrim*. It's kind of like a full-time job being the *Scott Pilgrim* guy. ■







# ROCKO'S MODERN LIFE™



CREATOR  
JOE MURRAY

BY  
LOUIS  
MARRONE

HE WANTS YOU TO  
EMBRACE  
CHANGE

**1** 993 was an interesting year for animation; *The Simpsons* entered its fifth season, *Beavis & Butt-Head* premiered on MTV, and Hannah-Barbera attempted to reclaim their former glory by producing *2 Stupid Dogs* for TBS.

For all the beginnings there were also a few endings. Nickelodeon's flagship animated shows *Ren & Stimpy*, *Rugrats* and *Doug* were nearing the end of their production cycles.

Enter *Rocko's Modern Life*. *Rocko* was and is a beautifully bizarre show. With its adult innuendos, squash and stretch animation, and satirical nature, the show could in some ways be described as *Seinfeld* meets

*Ren & Stimpy*. Take the episode "Trash-O-Madness," wherein *Rocko* tries to take out his garbage without being attacked by an aggressive pitbull. It's an episode with an everyday relatable idea: doing something you don't want to do. In this case, it's taking out the trash. But it's also so mundane that it's almost strange to center a story around it. In fact, on its own, it's almost about nothing. Then take things one step further by adding a layer of Warner Bros. style antics to the mix.

*Rocko's Modern Life* had a certain edge not quite found in Nickelodeon's previous efforts and helped usher in a new generation of animated shows.

As of this writing, Nickelodeon has released all three of their planned reboots, the other two being *Invader Zim: Enter The Florpus* and *Hey Arnold: The Jungle Movie*. Of the three movies, *Rocko's Modern Life: Static Cling* feels the most timeless. Whilst *Jungle Movie* and *Enter The Florpus* were certainly high quality, they had their flaws. *The Jungle Movie*, as ambitious, adventurous and charming as it was, felt like a poor entry point for potential new fans, as it relies on a storyline setup 13 years prior to the film's airing. *Enter The Florpus* was fast, furious, and absurdly hilarious, but even then, it felt a bit much at times; after the first act, you began to feel a bit drained from all the



yelling and bright colors. On top of that, the visual design for both films is slightly altered, and as such, it can be a smidge hard to adjust to. *Static Cling* on the other hand is near perfect. It's as though the show never went off the air, providing the same biting commentary and cartoonish charm it had during its original '93-'96 run. Even in a visual sense, the show looks exactly like it did back when (though now in high-definition).

We spoke to *Rocko* creator Joe Murray about coming back to the special, after twenty years off the air.

**What made you want to bring the show back in the first place? Was it your idea or Nickelodeon's idea?**

It was Nickelodeon's idea. They called me out of the blue. I was really kind of shocked. I guess they were kind of looking at a lot of their old '90s properties and they thought, "Well *Spongebob* has been doing really well for us, let's bring back some of our other '90s properties." The series is more popular now than it was when it was out, it's kind of interesting.

**When they called you, were you initially down to do it?**

No, I definitely was not down for it (laughs). I thought I could really mess it up. There are a lot of reboots that I thought shouldn't have been made — that they actually pulled back from the original. We had a really great crew on the series. I felt we did a lot and said a lot. I'm happy. I've kind of made peace over the last twenty years and feel really good about all the episodes that we did. Why mess with success? So I originally said that I didn't think I wanted to do it, but I wanted to think about it.

I called Martin Olsen and Doug Lawrence, who worked on the original, and talked to them about it and they were pretty enthusiastic about the things we could do with it, and then I started thinking about a story and I thought "Yeah, that would be pretty cool." So I went in saying, "I'm gonna pitch you this story and if you don't like this story I'm okay, I can walk away from it. This is a story I want to do." I thought maybe they might have a problem poking fun at themselves a little bit, since it's about a network wanting

to bring a show back by popular demand, but they went for it. So, we went forward with it and we put together a really good crew. We had a good time and it ended up being a really good experience.

**Nickelodeon brought the show back along with *Hey Arnold* and *Invader Zim*, which are also properties from the '90s/early 2000s. That said, *Rocko* was always a satirical series. Where did the idea to make fun of a network banking on nostalgia come from?**

*The Fatheads* (the fictional cartoon series that exists within the *Rocko* universe) was meant to be a satire on the entertainment business. In the initial episode with them, [Rocko, Heffer, and Filbert] go to Hollywood and everything's a facade and pretty shallow. I thought "well, [Nickelodeon] is bringing back the series and we have *The Fatheads*... the story really came together. *Rocko* comes back from space and he misses his show. We could poke fun at how networks are bringing back old properties. And, you know, movies are always remakes of something. How many times are we going to see *A Star Is Born* redone over and over again? So I felt it was really ripe for something to be done with that.

It seemed really logical for it to be about change since it's been twenty years. Doug and Martin and I sat down and went through all of the things that have happened over the past twenty years. It's an endless list. It seemed perfect that Heffer and Filbert would embrace it and *Rocko* would be resistant.

**When we look at a lot of the modern day satire, we think of late night, where most of the jokes revolve around Trump or someone adjacent. Was there an effort to avoid doing more topical material like that?**

Well, there's always the danger of dating yourself. I think one of the things we really worked hard in the '90s to do was keep it from aging poorly. I think that's one of the reasons why it's held on so long and people still like it. It's interesting though, because a lot of the things that we were satirizing in the '90s are worse now. Like flying on an airplane (laughs), credit cards, buying technology equipment. I

made a joke recently; we did a thing on *Rocko* where they go on an airplane and the baggage handlers shot his luggage into space. I was at this live event and I said, "It would be the same thing now, except they would charge you a hundred bucks." And Conglom-O saying "We own you" and "We still own you"... the corporate world has gotten worse in the last twenty years in terms of the bridge between the corporate and the real working person.

**Towards the end of the special, when they're looting the blown-up remains of the Conglom-O headquarters, one guy just yells out, "This is the fruit of capitalist redundancy," which is something I'd never thought I'd hear in a kids show. Do you think kids would get a joke like that?**

No (laughs). That was actually a Martin Olsen line, to give him proper credit. *Rocko* has a history of doing this thing where there's jokes that kids are going to get and jokes that they're not going to get. But they can see the visual of the redistribution of profits to the everyman. So if they don't get that line, then that's fine.

**Was there a concern regarding being too political with the special?**

Well, before I signed on to do it, I sat down with top people at Nickelodeon, and I said, "I'm not interested in doing a watered-down version of *Rocko*. So, if you want to sign on for this, then we're gonna do it as much as we did it before. We went into politics on *Rocko*. There was political and social satire that bit, and I don't want to get away from that." And I said, "If you say no to that, that's fine, I'll walk away. It's okay. But if you're on board for that, then let's do it."

So when I submitted a story, they were sort of like, "Well... okay... we signed on for this, so... we're along for the ride." It was kind of a pre-agreed-upon direction to make sure it was as biting as it could be.

**One of the biggest changes with the special, and one that's gotten a lot of attention, is the decision to turn Ralph Bighead into Rachel Bighead, a transitioned transgender female. Where did the idea to do that come from? Was there resistance from Nickelodeon or**



anyone on the crew, and has there been pushback from the public?

I wrote this original story that basically had Rachel, who was formerly Ralph, go off into the world to find herself. That was really as far as I went with it, because I wanted that character to go through a change that was difficult. I brought it to Doug and Martin and the idea to transition Ralph into Rachel was brought up. I thought it was great. It all seemed so natural. Rachel was always someone who's had something going on with her identity. The story was about change, and there's a history there of parent and child conflicts.

So I brought it to Nickelodeon as something that we really wanted to do. It was one of those things where I figured, if we're gonna do this special, I want to address what's modern. The whole way that the trans community has been represented has changed, and so has the way we view it.

There was a little bit of reluctance from Nickelodeon to do it. So we went to the top. We went to the president of Nickelodeon and asked her to sign off on it and she did, but under the condition that we brought on GLAAD (Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation), which I thought was a great idea. So we did it. The community is very happy. I was a little concerned because, to me, it was a part of the storyline, and a natural progression for Rachel's character to transition, and an overall point that encompassed and worked within the story. But I was worried it would overshadow the overall story — which I kind of feel like in some ways it has. It's garnered a lot of attention. There have been a lot of articles about it. As much as I'm proud of it, there's still a lot of the special that I hope people can absorb and not be so preoccupied with that one point. But I'm really glad we did it, and based on the mail I get from transitioned people, it seemed like we hit the mark with it, so I feel good about it.

The overall response has been 99% positive. There are a few people who are mad and saying things like "YOU CHANGED IT!" but those are very, very few.

**Getting a bit more process-oriented for**

**a second, what was the process of writing and putting together the special?**

We did this exactly the same way we did the show. We did an outline, and that outline went through a few drafts. It was like four or five pages — usually for an eleven-minute it's about two pages. This was 44 but it laid out the story structure. So then I brought Cosmo Segurson on as a co-director, and Tom Smith and Dan Becker, who are storyboard guys, and we all started writing the show with storyboards. All the jokes and visual gags are in the storyboards. There were even a few things in there that weren't in the outline. We then turned that into an animatic, which is just a filmed collection of the storyboards, and we started cutting things out and timing it.

Plus, we did the backgrounds hand-painted on illustration boards, and all of the animation was done with pencil on paper. We didn't go as far as doing cels, because I can't stand cels. But we tried to regain that look as much as possible. We actually added cel shadows on the characters to make it look like the old days.

**Are you happy with the overall visual presentation?**

Yes. It took a lot of work. Somebody told me that "you seem kind of anti technology, but you must have used a lot of technology in making it." I don't feel like I'm anti-technology. I think there's certain things about technology, just like anything else, that can be taken too far and sometimes it erodes our ability to have relationships. Plus, it's far too easy to tweet and email things that can be damaging. I was a little taken aback the first time I saw *Rocko* in HD (high definition). It kind of freaked me out because I've never seen it like that. What's interesting is that we did a screening with Jerry Beck, a known animation historian, and he was like, "Did you guys use cels on this? It looked exactly like it did in the '90s." That was pretty cool. I was really glad we pulled it off.

**What are your thoughts on the current state of the animation industry? Would you say it's changed a whole lot since *Rocko* went off the air? And if so, is it for the better?**

That's a tough question. It's kind of veered off into either ultra edgy "let's see what we can get away with" stuff or something softer, which even then is usually aimed at kids. I don't know. I can't say that something has really excited me. I think there's a reason that *Spongebob* continues to be Nickelodeon's most popular show.

The whole streaming world has also brought a different feel to the entertainment. We used to think that TV used to really eat up time — I used to call it the monster that needed to be fed — but we would do a season of thirteen episodes and think that it was high volume. But nowadays, you can binge-watch a thirteen-episode season in one night. And streaming just eats up content. You can go through it so fast. With Netflix, if you're not bringing in the numbers, you're off. It just takes two seconds. It took *Spongebob* two years to take off. Nickelodeon really had to believe in it and keep putting it out there. Audiences didn't get it at first. I don't know, I think there's some of it that's a bit too "immediate gratification-oriented."

**Now that you've brought *Rocko* back, would you consider bringing *Camp Lazlo* back?**

It depends on the situation and what the relationship is and who's in charge and what the budgets are like. I'm always willing to talk about things. I think it's a pretty big long shot for Cartoon Network to want to do *Lazlo*. They seem to be going in a different direction. But I don't know — it would depend on the situation.

**What are you doing now? I know you currently have a show at PBS (*Luna Around The World*). Do you think there could be more "Rocko" in the future?**

I'm working on the PBS show. We just got another order. And then, I'm moving to Belgium next month. I've already started having discussions with Nickelodeon Europe, and some of the players over there, to develop some things that may or may not end up airing in the states. But Nickelodeon U.S. is still interested in doing something, so I'm not shutting that door. ■

You can watch "*Rocko's Modern Life: Static Cling*" now on Netflix.



**BUBBLEGUM**



**AFRO-SYNTH**

**DANCING AS A CATALYST  
FOR LIBERATION**

**BY TUHIN CHAKRABARTI**



**M**usic and dance engage in a codependent relationship for survival. They need each other. But what's behind the two art forms is expression. Music expresses a condition — whether it's the condition of the individual, the collective or no one in particular.

Black, Latino and LGBT communities have used music and dance as a coping and articulation mechanism for the painful condition of disenfranchisement. For Blacks, Latinos, gays and trans people in the U.S., the most potent example of this is Chicago house music. For black victims of Apartheid South Africa, it was the Afro-synth bubblegum disco that ignited activism. For the island of Jamaica, it was roots reggae that expressed outrage at the never-ending cycle of colonialism against the African diaspora.

What unites all of these genres is the strong emphasis on rhythm and meter. All of these genres employ danceable grooves that entice the body and quiet the mind. This music is about detachment, the meditative power of music, and its ability to remove you from your headspace and place you into the present, hedonistic moment.

Dancing is the kinetic representation of the soul. Most people “lose themselves” when they dance. In fact, thinking too much can hinder the ability to dance, if one over-anticipates each move. Dancing is the act of not-thought, making it one of the purest expressions of the body and its feelings.

Dance music is known for its lack of lyrical substance and musical complexity. It relies heavily on rhythm and “looping,” which is the use of a certain “sample” or a repeated four- to eight-bar loop of

music  
to  
create a

hypnotizing,  
trance effect that  
you can really only  
dance to. It's not head  
music most of the time.

There's not really much to think  
about regarding the substance of the  
music. There are always exceptions to the  
rules, but for the most part, dance music is  
straightforward pop music. It just sounds  
good.

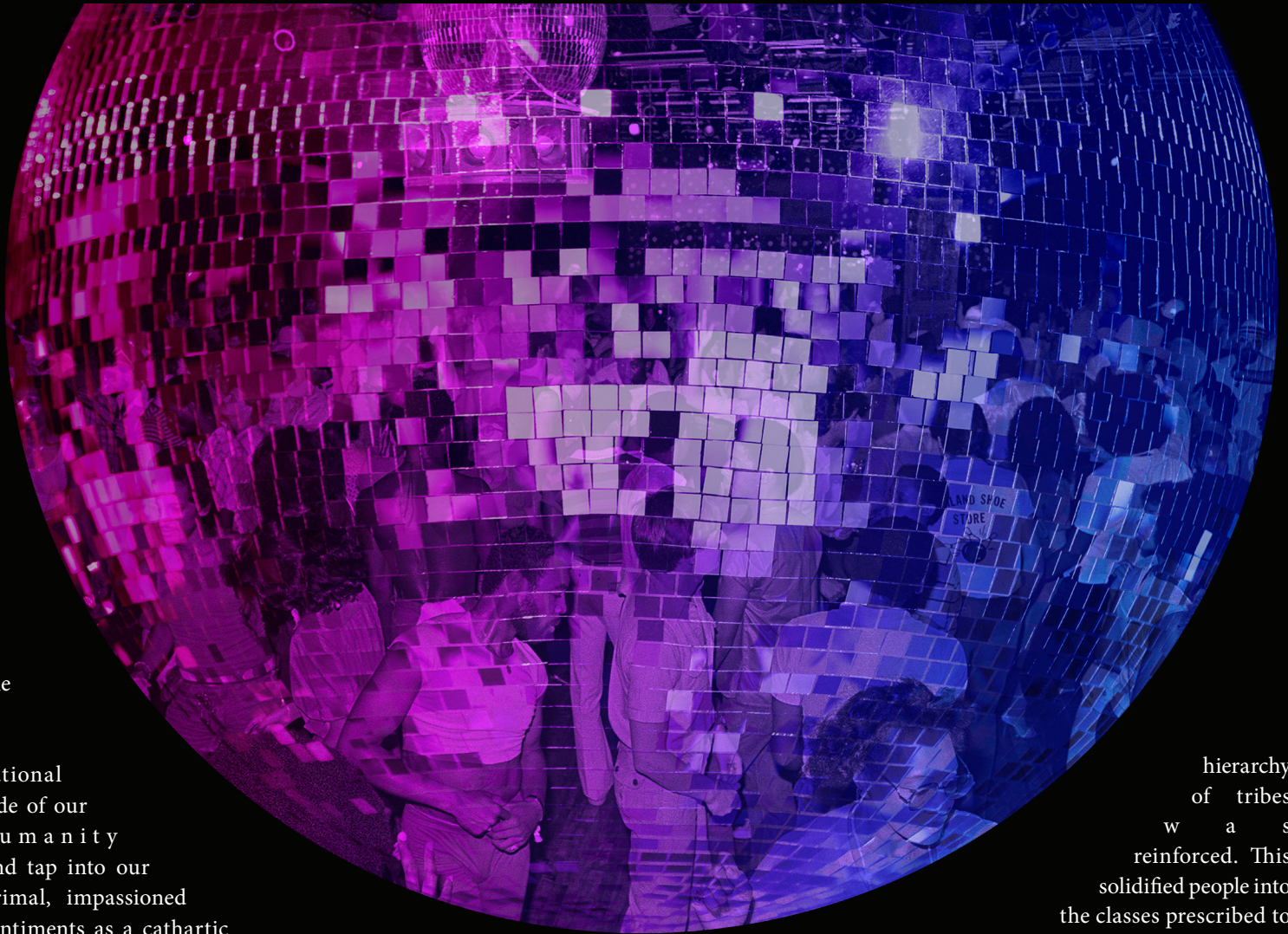
But if dance music creates an environment  
of not-thought and near idiocy (discotheques,  
nightclubs, dive bars), then how were  
some of the most passionate responses to  
socio-political repression supported, even  
spearheaded, by sub-genres of dance music?  
We can learn a lot from the effect music has  
on culture — it teaches us that sometimes  
vapid intellectualism isn't a catalyst for vital  
policy overhauls — sometimes unbridled  
passion does the trick.

Usually, there is an anti-  
emotional sentiment  
when discussing  
politics. We like  
to ignore the  
fact that

policies  
cause  
emotional turmoil and  
affect everyday lives. Instead, we hyper-focus  
on logic, even claiming rationalism as a staple  
of Western civilization. Services like Kialo  
boast that they “empower reason” and create  
a platform that subverts “internet screaming  
matches.” There's a strong appetite these days  
for “civil debate” and a yearning for formal  
debate culture. But cutting emotion out of  
debate is the nullification of a vital facet  
to complex issues. Don't get me wrong, a  
compelling logical argument is always useful,  
and emotion isn't always the best driver when  
discussing socio-political issues. However,  
when the heart is ignored, a political issue like  
apartheid loses its significance. If we forget  
about the social and psychological turmoil  
engendered by segregation, and focus only  
on the economic and political, we're ignoring  
a significant lump of the issue. That's why  
music, even music without very direct lyrics,  
can be the light that illuminates the true  
pain of an ill-affected people. Sometimes  
ideas are petrified by language, and proper  
articulations fail. Sometimes music is a  
more compelling argument than a grand  
oration. Sometimes we need to forget about







the

rational side of our humanity and tap into our primal, impassioned sentiments as a cathartic expression of our pain.

Observing how a certain group of people dance and shout to their own music is probably the best way to tap into their collective consciousness and the pain they all connect to.

The South African bubblegum movement elucidated the pain of generational apartheid in the simplest terms possible — through sound and dance. The lyrics were either painfully general or hollow through and through, because they were covers of American synth-pop hits. The result was Afro-synth, a genre that teased the idea of afro-futurism. The direct idea of technological accelerationism was not explicit in the genre, but an inkling of a future beyond the now existed in the sound of the music.

If it doesn't explicitly display a yearning for the future, it at least embodies some hope. Everything about the music was unrelenting and cheery, almost annoyingly so. Dance

music of the '80s all has this feeling — it is the result of digital recording and electronics taking the music scene by storm. It's the result of people being overwhelmed by novelty, like a child in a toy store. Synthesizers and other electronically produced sounds found their way into popular music and overwhelmed all other traditional sounds. This overarching philosophy of looking forward focused itself into the continental South African psyche. Bubblegum Afro-synth emerged, and it subverted traditional, state-enforced sectionalism based on music. Apartheid was not an exclusively violent affair — Radio Bantu, a state-run broadcasting system, reinforced regionalistic tribal identity through the compartmentalization of music based on language and tribal style. Zulus felt they could only listen to Zulu music, and a

hierarchy of tribes was reinforced. This solidified people into the classes prescribed to them by the state.

Bubblegum offered a more colorful, buoyant and multicultural alternative to this traditionalism. But eventually, the carefree bubble burst and segregation turned increasingly violent. The carefree energy was translated into desperation and anxiety, and the solidarity established by dance music's magical power of assembly helped mobilize people towards a common cause. By the time the '90s came around, the edifice of apartheid shattered.

Assembly and mobilization can alter the trajectory of nations, but one of our most powerful tools of unification is music. The process of deindividuation occurs when you're in a crowd of dancing people. Dance music turns a middle finger to the doctrine of divide and conquer, a method known intimately by colonized peoples. ■





THE PRESS PRESENTS

SONGS OF  
THE SUMMER

THE FINEST



Each year,  
all of us at  
The Press  
look back  
on the long  
summer break  
and try our  
best to pick  
out the music  
that defined  
the season for  
us.

Here are the  
songs that  
moved us,  
excited us and  
kept us going  
all summer.



# Bags

## Clairo

by Deanna Albohn



My summer was bad, to put it frankly. I spent my days working at the local town restaurant and bar. On the days I didn't work, I can't even tell you what I did, because I honestly don't know. I sat alone in my room for days at a time doing nothing. When I think of summers, I picture screaming along to fun and upbeat songs in the car with the windows rolled all the way down. I tried listening to dozens of "summer vibes" playlists to imitate the warm, fuzzy feeling that I associate with summer, but instead found myself wallowing in my own sadness to the most depressing music I could possibly find, which just so happened to be Clairo's debut album *Immunity*.

I had the lead single "Bags" on repeat for the whole summer. The song recounts her memories of being with a girl for the first time. Her stream-of-consciousness lyrics are accompanied by a driving bassline and drums from Danielle Haim, and accentuated by a keyboard. The song is more refined than her earlier lo-fi songs, but does not stray far from her bedroom pop roots.

I don't wanna be forward  
 I don't wanna cut corners  
 Savor this with everything I have inside me  
 I'm not the type to run  
 I know that we're having fun  
 But what's the rush?  
 Kissing, then my cheeks are so flushed

Someone's summer anthem can be very telling of the summer they had, which is exactly why I'm so excited to see and listen to all of the songs in this playlist.

# Lip Service

## Thaiboy Digital

by Kevin Wu

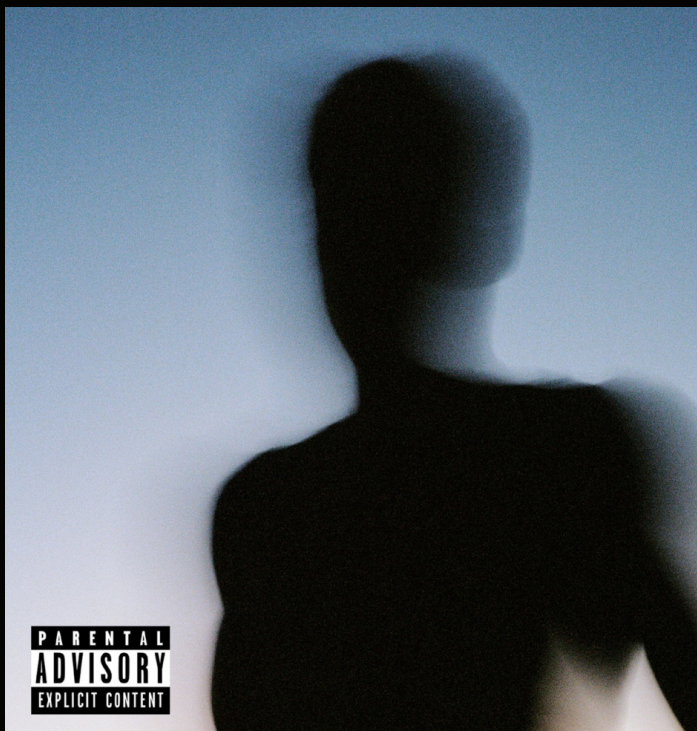


With a celestial, almost religious-inspired approach to album presentation, Thaiboy Digital reinvents himself with "Lip Service," off his upcoming album *Legendary Member*. Reorienting his traditional gruff and tough attitude, Thaiboy combines his usual braggadocious lyrics with a sense of uplifting positivity not traditionally found in the drain gang's iconic approach to abstract and dark trap. Fellow Drain Gang member ECCO2K channels his inner Playboi Carti, rapping in a high-pitched "baby-like" voice to breathtaking effect.

# Cyanide

## Daniel Caesar

by Julio Taku



After a summer of consistently going to work in the afternoon, coming home late, late dinners and sleeping in, the only solace I found in those few hours before I went to sleep was learning songs from Daniel Caesar's *Case Study 01*, starting with "Cyanide" — such a sweet melody.

The bouncy reggae-style tune pays homage to Caesar's Jamaican descent. The vocalization and exclamations in the intro lend the song a very tropical and laid-back feel (guest appearances by Toronto-based artists Kardinal Offishall and River Tiber). Although the poisonous chemical compound cyanide might not put one at ease, it serves as an analogy for the toxic relationship described in the song. Caesar's half-sung/half-spoken patois delivery is underscored by a rich progression of seventh chords. This incorporation of seventh chords is present throughout the album and harkens back to his earlier works. This proved it to be a danceable bop as well as chill background music for doing chores around the house, two elements I believe are essential to a song of the summer.

"Best Part," "Japanese Denim," "Get You," "Death & Taxes," "Violet."

Daniel had already provided the soundtrack to my 2017 summer. The Canadian singer/songwriter created an atmosphere of acoustic love ballads and neo-soul R&B that was the soundtrack for my late nights and early mornings.

If life was a movie, then you're the best part

Surely my sins have found me out.  
God rest my soul, but show me out

These two lyrics from his songs "Best Part" and "Death & Taxes" show us a man with depth who can verbalize the beauty and innocence of love as well as the melancholy of his spiritual fate.

His sophomore effort poised to drop — I had lofty hopes for it and expected greatness. I had thoroughly fallen in love with his freshman debut *Freudian* (2017) and had even covered his music for a concert at my high school. The neo-soul inspired instrumentals, chord choices and vocals of the album carried with them a spiritual yearning and atmospheric sound that gave the impression of floating on tracks like "Neu Roses" and "Transform" (feat. Charlotte Day Wilson).

Imagine my delight upon hearing his familiar falsetto croon:

Feel my love drip over your skin,  
Sweet dark chocolate, sweet melanin.  
Forevermore you gon' be my kin.  
Whatever Jah has binded let no man enter in.

I think it's safe to say, at least for me, that he delivered on *Case Study 01*.



# Sanctuary

## Joji

by Joe Amendola



I had a bad summer, to be honest. In hindsight, I don't think it was too dire — the tragic, emotional ebb and flow of being human just hit a little harder this time. The occasional feelings of inadequacy, of feeling like you were in the right place at the wrong time, and the dread that's implicit when you're a limited being in a limitless situation fucks with everybody from time to time. These are all hegemonic human experiences, but they are fleeting as well.

None of what I said above is explicitly stated in "Sanctuary" by the Austro-Japanese singer Joji. On the face of it, "Sanctuary" is a paint-by-numbers love song. There are references to souls, not having to wait to fall in love, that sort of thing.

But Joji's music has a knack for eliciting feelings not presently felt within the confines of the song structure itself. Joji is fundamentally a moody singer; any suppressed pathos or forlornness can be brought to the surface by the sound of him crooning over some autotune, where he barely seems to be opening his mouth. I suppose this is called "mumbling," but that seems reductive — not every lyric or sentiment has to be belted out like you're in an Italian Opera. We don't experience emotions in these sorts of bombastic roars all the time, and I don't see why song lyrics should be different.

Sanctuary is a relative departure from Joji's lo-fi R&B sound on his first LP, *Ballads 1*. The spacey, minimalist beat seems to be very much at home in the canon of contemporary lo-fi at first, but is immaculately produced in way that, when coupled with Joji's equally slick vocals,

seems like you could hear it playing over the speakers at H&M. This is the opposite of an insult; Joji wants to make pop music, and with "Sanctuary" is beginning to make that crucial transition.

With "Sanctuary," Joji seems to be pulling off the emotional magic tricks Brian Wilson of The Beach Boys did some years ago — making happy songs about being sad, and sad songs about being happy. "Sanctuary" falls into the latter camp. I suppose that's why the song has such an effect on me; it makes me feel the way I do when I'm on hour 5 of being drunk, when I become wistful and withdrawn — when I space out and start imagining one of my good friends getting a job teaching English in Tokyo or something so I can have an excuse to run away from everything once in a while. When Joji sings about love, his voice evokes loneliness instead. I guess that's just part of the emotional ebb and flow of being human.

# Doin' Time

## Lana Del Rey

by Katherine Hoey



In Lana Del Rey's typically hypnotic fashion, like falling down a rabbit hole into her dreamy world, she sings the opening lines to one of Sublime's most notable tracks, "Doin' Time":

## Summertime, and the living's easy

It's the fifth track on her latest LP, *Norman Fucking Rockwell!*, which released Aug. 30.

The 1950s-style music video depicts a Godzilla-esque Del Rey, lounging in the concrete basin of the L.A. River. It goes back and forth between shots of her stepping over city buildings and escaping to the ocean, before cutting to a blonde bobcut-Lana, sipping a soda at a drive-in movie, looking up at herself on screen.

For those who have been following the indie pop singer's career, this song feels like a nod to her own self-development as an artist, from dropping "Summertime Sadness" in 2013 to this.

Throughout the New York native's career, California has been a focal point in Del Rey's music and it oozes from this album. She teased and released the Sublime cover back in May, blessing us with an entire summer to enjoy that Southern California sound.

Del Rey's dizzying melodic vocals transform the original track, which dominated the Long Beach ska punk scene in the late '90s. She was asked to cover the song by director Bill Guttentag for the documentary *Sublime*, which premiered at the Tribeca Film Festival back in April.

Her breathy voice cools the violence depicted in the song's lyrics, which focuses on the fantasy of killing a promiscuous girlfriend. Del Rey's version was reworked and slowed down to follow the often nostalgic way in which she sings, not feeling obligated to cut a note short for fear it's too drawn out to maintain the listener's attention.

Hers is a voice that cascades us into reverie, with a timeless beat that has transfixed my mind since stumbling upon Sublime in the late 2000s. Music is a form of escapism and this song fit perfectly in my playlist. It has kept me company when summer nights fade into mornings on back roads in Montauk, as I sunbathed by the pool and roasted marshmallows by the fire.

Summertime, romance and freedom have been constants in a majority of Del Rey's work.

"Doin' Time" was released Nov. 25, 1997, a year and a half after lead singer, Bradley Nowell, died of a heroin overdose while on tour in San Francisco. Yet the roots of the song are pulled from the '30s, when George Gershwin composed "Summertime," with lyrics by DuBose Heyward, for the 1935 opera *Porgy and Bess*.

With over 25,000 recorded covers and adaptations, "Summertime" has been at the forefront of the American collective consciousness for nearly a century. Summer is a symbol of American society, as mandated summer vacations for students only became a thing here during the late 1800s, due to the industrial revolution and urbanization.

The ever-changing renditions have kept this song relevant today, with Del Rey being the latest to cover this song. It's a feat that has catapulted her into a category with some of America's most iconic stars: Billie Holiday, Ella Fitzgerald, Ricky Nelson, Nina Simone, Louis Armstrong, Janis Joplin, the Doors and Sublime.

# The 1975

## The 1975

by Emily Scott



The 1975's fourth album, *Notes on a Conditional Form* (NOACF), is due to be released in February 2020, and the band is already dropping hints about the album, including not one, but two songs this summer, one of them sharing the same name as the band. On every previous album, the first song is self-titled, and is usually about giving blowjobs with instrumentals done to suit the "style" of the album.

For NOACF, the band has taken a different approach by opting to not sing about getting head in a car, which was almost shell-shocking to the whole fandom. We were ready for a reinvented version of our beloved self-titled song, but the change was welcomed with praise across Twitter. Rather, the group layered a speech by 16-year-old Swedish climate change activist Greta Thunberg over the instrumentals. Commenting on social issues isn't something new for the band (hello "Love It If We Made It" and "I Like America & America Likes Me"), but the execution for this song is new. Thunberg's speech discusses how we are in the midst of an ecological crisis, and that change is needed in order for us to stop the inevitable, irreversible damage, ending with a call for us to "wake up!" The change over from blowjobs and car lights is a welcomed change, showing that the band is taking a step in shedding light on how critical the climate change crisis is, and that there is more to it than just using metal and paper straws to "save the sea turtles!"

Out of all the songs the band has written covering hot topic issues,



this one is by far my favorite because we only have a short span of time before we truly damage the planet in a way we cannot recover from. If this is any inkling towards what *NOACF* will be like (besides “People,” which was released in August), I think I can say the entire fandom is excited.

# Boy Bye

## Brockhampton

by Josh Joseph



Brockhampton’s “BOY BYE” is an addictive listen. It cruised, glided and grooved through my headphones and my car stereo all last month.

There’s something instantly alluring about the way the song’s beat churns ever-forward. A sample from an Iranian bossa-nova instrumental lays the groundwork, made instantly groovier by sputtering hi-hats. And somehow, wedged in seamlessly, a bouncy, chromatic synth guitar pluck makes the track even better. That unrelenting tickle of a lead inverts what could have been corny and enhances its already silly-spooky vibe.

Verses from all six of the band’s vocalists balance wordplay and braggadocio. Dom McLennon and Kevin Abstract particularly impress, with complex flows that stay right in the pocket of the sampled beat.

The song is short, sweet ear candy, a callback to the stasis of sum-

mer. Each musical cog turns and turns in sync and I can’t help but cede my own head to the grinding gears, nodding the whole way through.

Today, the unease of school, work and procrastination loom large in the back of my head. Hearing “BOY BYE” again, I yearn for just a few weeks ago, when everything felt oddly in place and I could spend whole days getting sucked into the rhythm of a song.

# Clones

## Tierra Whack

by Sarah Beckford



Out of all the songs I blasted this summer, Tierra Whack’s “CLONES” wins as the one I kept coming back to. It perfectly demonstrates Tierra’s versatility as an artist and rapper, and why she is part of this year’s XXL Freshman class.

It’s the perfect hype song for an everyday walk, workout or if you need a pick-me-up. Tierra Whack is unique in the fact that whatever beat she has, she’s able to truly make it her own, in her own style, which is constantly evolving. For example, “CLONES” is a polar opposite of the upbeat cyber pop feel of her viral hit “Hungry Hippo.” Her flow on “CLONES” is structured, with enough space for her to play with her verses and background adlibs.

“CLONES” is my song of the summer because as soon as it comes on, the dancing starts. It’s a song that makes you feel like a million dollars and a bag of chips. It’s a hype song about you stunting because you have to job to do — being your fabulous self. And of

course, as the title suggests, people want to copy that:

Everybody walkin' like me now  
Everybody talkin' like me now  
Heard I'm who they wanna be now

It's incredibly catchy, and it's a song for people of all ages to dance to. It's a song to milly-rock to with your best musical stank face. It's a song to yell in your car. It's a song of pure glee, like Beyoncé's shoulder shimmy on the Everybody Mad dance break from Beychella. Overall, it's the perfect song and Tierra Whack should *not* be slept on.

# Surf

## Young Thug ft. Gunna

by Tuhin Chakrabarti



Why wouldn't I pick "Surf" as my song of the summer? So Much Fun is addictive. It's literally so much fun. Who doesn't love the dynamism of Young Thug's voice? This man can wail, growl, croon and yelp. Every other line is a new flow, and every lyric is a concoction of questionable genius. Young Thug is the iconoclast of the rap music institution, a monolith guarded by the uncompromising power of black masculinity. A genre so obsessed with itself, unwilling to assimilate "fruitier" styles of music like dance and pop, seemed

like it would never give up its hubris. Does anyone remember when Young Thug dropped *Lifestyle* in 2013? His babbling and scatting, his melodic approach to music and overall vocal inflection-centric approach to rapping was considered absurd. And his androgynous fashion sense made it easy for rap conservatives to write him off as "that gay shit." That dynamic is not new. Rap's gatekeeping of a specific strain of black masculinity is the reason why '80s house music in Chicago was relegated to underground gay culture. Rap music used to pride itself on gritty realism in its lyrics and minimal room for musicality and color. Tracks armed with a bass/drum loop and basic melodic elements only had room for verse, not complex instrumentation or arrangements. In this sense, rap has been traveling up a long arc towards being more "musical," or pop-informed, starting at the radio-focused Run D.M.C. and leaving off at the "new wave" of rappers (Lil Keed, Lil Uzi Vert and Playboi Carti). Rap has always had its fair share of genre-pushing eccentrics, but never did they propel the genre to the level that Young Thug and the new wave he catalyzed have.

He's always had an extraterrestrial presence — there's an array of quotes from him saying he's "not from this planet" and iffy tweets circulating saying he reads off of a notepad adorned with illegible characters when he raps. He's an ATLien (no disrespect to Andre 3k) at its finest.

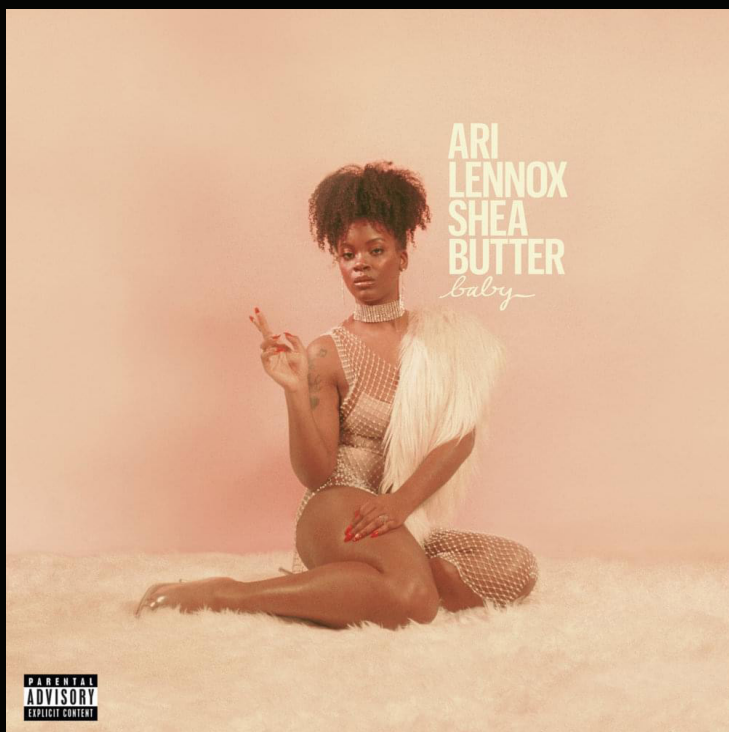
"Surf" is a self-acclamation of Young Thug's colossal influence on rap music. He's widely appreciated for being a revolutionist, and his fluency in business is the reason why people are still listening, and the reason he's able to manage the YSL collective. He's aware that he's birthed and groomed rappers just like him (Lil Keed, Sahbabii), and he's not offended — he sees it as an opportunity to perpetuate the life of a subgenre he's created. He's curating these artists under his wing. It's apparent that he's aware of his power when he repeats "These n\*g-gas gon' ride the wave" on the hook. He knows how big his wave is, but he's having fun with it, hence the name of his album, and the "bounciness" of Pierre Bourne's production on "Surf." He doesn't take himself too seriously. Most ego-driven artists claim complete ownership over their sound and writhe at the thought of anyone encroaching on "their creation." Thug understands that music is an ever-changing language and force, and no one person can claim full ownership or originality. Any music made by him is informed by the past and anticipatory for the future. Young Thug knows he will have a lasting effect on rap music, but he also knows that he is simply a wave, and that nothing that he does should be considered immortal or deserving of exclusivity. He knows that he must nurture the young artists born from his style, not hate them.



# Whipped Cream

Ari Lennox

by Falah Jalali



I've been eatin' whipped cream, havin' vivid dreams  
Of your face and through people on TV screens  
You've been everywhere  
And I wish I didn't care

Above is the hook to my favorite summer song: “Whipped Cream” by Ari Lennox. This light, soul-R&B track is an easy favorite; especially if you’re a millennial. As a millennial we live in an era where one can say that romance is dead. In our generation, replying to a text in the same hour is considered desperate by some. Love and romance have lost the battle to ego and the desire to seem cool and nonchalant. In the last line she wishes she did not care as much. In my opinion, all millennials that have fallen in love have felt this emotion. Navigating your way through dating someone in 2019 is an adventure all its own.

She is pining for her lover but she wishes she is not; this confusion and sweet frustration makes the song as tangible as the mess in my backpack. She sings about yearning, lust and frustration with such ease that these heavy feelings feel light. Ari’s vocals gave the song a permanent spot in my nighttime bath playlist. The song is upbeat, peppy and easy on the ears. Lennox’s voice is smooth, soulful and

strong. The first time I heard it, I started vibing with the song at the 30-second mark; that’s when you know you like a song. Lennox, whose real name is Courtney Shanade Salter, is a 28-year-old born in Virginia and lives in DC. She is signed with J.Cole’s label, Dreamville Records. Her album *Shea Butter Baby* is a soulful R&B treat. People compared her to SZA, H.E.R. or Summer Walker but Lennox has a vibe and aesthetic of her own. She is a confident black American working her magic.

# Fear Inoculum

Tool

by Nick Wurm



Immunity, long overdue  
Contagion, I exhale you  
Naïve, I opened up to you  
Venom and mania  
Now, contagion, I exhale you

I waited 13 years for those words, 13 years for new music from Tool — but it was worth the wait.

“Fear Inoculum,” the title track and first single off Tool’s fifth LP, is a nostalgia trip through a symphonic, Middle Eastern haze, guided along the path by Danny Carey’s incomparable drums. Adam

Jones' tonal shifting guitar emulates an electric orchestra atop Justin Chancellor's pounding bass groove. Maynard James Keenan's lyrics float through on airy whispers.

Let me be clear — nothing about this song is really new, but that's okay. The drums are reminiscent of previous efforts off their last two albums *Lateralus* and *10,000 Days*. The tempo changes are old tricks. Maynard's songwriting revisits familiar themes of personal growth, while still leaving room for interpretation.

Forfeit all control  
 You poison, you spectacle  
 Exorcise the spectacle  
 Exorcise the malady  
 Exorcise the disparate  
 Poison for eternity  
 Purge me and evacuate  
 The venom and the fear that binds me

Who is the spectacle, the malady? I can guess but that's just, like, my opinion man. Like *The Force Awakens*, I think it's important they called back to earlier work. It's comforting to hear the familiar woven through new sounds, taking me back to 2006 when I'd only scratched the surface of their music.

When the song was released on August 9, I opened Spotify. I turned off my lights, put on some headphones — the good Sennheisers, not the crap JVC's I bring to class — laid back and closed my eyes as the first ping hit.

In the dark, I imagined a cool, twilight desert under a deepening purple sky. The dusty breeze guided me to a cave where hooded figures chanted the song to me. It was some real fantasy shit.

Maybe it was the atmosphere I'd created. Maybe it was an acid flashback. Maybe I'm just another pretentious Tool fan trying to show the world the unappreciated genius of a two-time Grammy Award-winning band. I don't know, but I think about that scene every time the song comes on.

# Gone, Gone/ Thank You Tyler, the Creator

by Justin Ligasan



“GONE, GONE / THANK YOU” is an emotionally heavy bop.

This song baits you in with this incredibly upbeat and dreamy delivery of Tyler mulling over the end of his relationship.

This song is waiting in the rain for your friend's mom to pick you up because you don't want to talk to your family about a breakup.

This song is deleting every photo you have with someone from the past two years.

This song is complaining about your ex to a friend in a Wendy's parking lot at three in the morning.

This song is accepting that you can get into a relationship with someone you think is perfect and find out you just aren't compatible as people.

This song is that bittersweet feeling of looking back on good moments in a failed relationship.

This song is a thank you to every ex for some of the time you shared together while knowing you don't want or need to go back.

I've been in an extremely wonderful relationship for the past nine months with someone I love, and this song still manages to bring me back to the first time I had my heart broken and slap at the same time.



# Potions

## Slander, Said the Sky, JT Roach

by Pamela Wong



I would say “Potions” was one of my favorites of the summer. It was hyped up before its release because of the collaboration between Slander and Said the Sky. Slander, the heaven-trap duo Derek Andersen and Scott Land, is known for harder EDM beats. Said the Sky, aka Trevor Christensen, is known for his melodic songs with emo bass. This song was released on May 31 and the song was played at the EZOO sets for both Slander and Said the Sky. When I went to EZOO, I felt sad with a sea of sadboiz singing along with me.

The song starts out with a sad melody that matches the melancholic lyrics. The chorus is my favorite part of the song, aside from the drops Slander is known for:

For ya love  
I would take potions  
For ya love  
I would cross oceans  
All the hurt  
And the pain  
You could take it all away  
For ya love, ooh  
I would take potions

The song made me feel nostalgic for a time in my past I can't quite put a finger on. It reminds me of my middle school days and how simple life used to be. I listened to pop-punk music in my bedroom and this gives me the same feeling. I think this was a summertime favorite for me because I have a love for sad songs, even though I wouldn't be inherently sad at the moment. I also think the song is about wanting to go back to a past love that didn't work out. If I could take a potion to let me go back in time to change some parts of my life, I might take that chance.

# Present Tense

## Francie Moon

by Nirvani Williams



This semester started out kind of abruptly for me. Some emotionally exhausting trauma that pinpointed sections of my mind and brought me crumbling into a spiral of sadness started to subside. The semester came in like a period in the middle of a sentence I was still writing. I was really waiting to get to the end of it, just to reread how much I had changed since the thought for the first word of it began.

A favorite professor of mine asked me how my summer was

and I replied, “It was a summer of growth,” and smiled. We both immediately broke into laughter. She knew what I meant.

Dialing a couple months back, when I was smack dab in the middle of threading through my emotions and how situations were shaping me into the person writing this; my boyfriend Conor took me to a popular DIY set called Pizzafest. It’s this three-night event where DIY bands perform onstage in the back of this bar meets bowling alley meets rustic arcade. That night a cotton candy swirl of light blue and soft pink bled into a deep red and gold sunset that loomed above me. I felt like I was returning to a place where I desperately needed to be — you know, totally wandering around and falling into some really dope shit. I didn’t get a lot of things I wanted this summer, but that feeling did not abandon me completely.

Each band laid out stellar punk rock sets. There I was totally digging it, but just bobbing my head did not cut it when Francie Moon, a garage psych-rock trio from northern New Jersey, entered the stage. They had such an energetic live performance that had me jumping and waving my arms around madly. Their energy shapeshifted seamlessly between tracks.

One track called “Present Tense,” which debuted on their summer EP *New Morning Light*, started out with a bass that had me boppin’ my head. Then, all of a sudden, the lead singer came in with this eclectic, vibrant voice that reminded me of Lucius singing “Turn it Around,” and made me take two steps back. I looked at Conor and mouthed “Wow,” as I continued to shake myself out.

Two minutes into this high-energy, guitar-heavy intro they switched it up. The guitarist slowed down and played a calming riff while the lead singer sang:

**All the oceans will join hands  
And all the hills will sing songs  
And all the clouds will cry tears of joy  
Everywhere they belong**

Then out came a sick flute-like solo that fused with the guitar, and man it really got me. It really did.

I hope it gets you too.

# SONGS OF THE- SUM- MER



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