



VOL. 43 ISSUE 4



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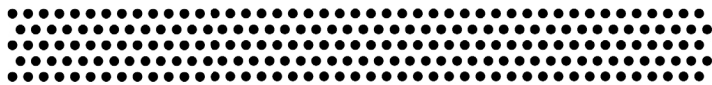
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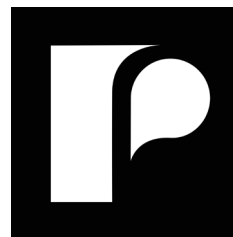
By Josh Joseph

As we inch closer to commencement, I've begun the process of compressing myself, shrinking into a little, palatable photocopy that works efficiently and is eager for employment. I've seen this happen to so many fellow editors, and it's an essential part of college — otherwise we'd all end up in the "real world" without a clue what to do. Yet, there's something that strikes me as fatalist about committing entirely to the career grind while life is blossoming all around me. Conversely, it's so easy for me to get wrapped up in today's projects that I forget at times that I'll need to prepare for the future. So yes, there is merit in career advancement — but don't treat college like a springboard to a springboard to a springboard to some kind of comfortable plateau. Each step along the way has irreplaceable, wonderful things to do if you slow down for a second. Without wasting time, places like The Press wouldn't exist.

Besides, the future we're hurtling towards can feel a little bleak — in January, Google emailed us to let us know that they would be discontinuing the free services we relied on for years to produce the magazine, asking for over \$1,000 yearly in exchange for continued use of those same exact services. As I was scrambling to find a solution over the past weeks, I got to thinking about the faith that we put in gigantic companies like Google all too often. The only reason that they're able to pull the rug out from under us so quickly and effectively is because we have no other legitimate choice; we've been fed the idea that we deserve these tools for free, and they took the time we spent using them to consolidate their power and influence until we couldn't say no. Now, rather than leaving Google, we're simply coughing up the money.

I think this speaks to a wider trend — the companies that dominate our lives want to ensure that physical media is abolished, and in its place, they offer these amorphous promises that feel like the real thing, but can be snapped away at any moment. Music and video streaming, subscription gaming, cloud storage, even fucking ape NFTs — they all offer convenience at the expense of real ownership. Even our website won't exist in perpetuity; one missed payment could render our work entirely gone. That's why print is an act of protest. You control this magazine's destiny. You picked it up, and now it's really, truly yours. In a world where people can exert massive amounts of influence on our lives on a whim, it's a comfort to know that these pages won't disappear.

In this issue, we've asked Masha Pogorelova, a refugee from the demolished Ukrainian city of Kharkiv, to use her beautiful wool artwork for our cover. We felt that the best method of supporting Ukrainians, as well as refugees around the world, was to fund their creative pursuits, and we've done just that. You can read our interview with her in this issue, along with a great array of pieces about music, celebrity, queerness, fashion and — above all — creativity. This issue celebrates the power that comes of making things, in the face of prejudice, destruction or death. On its face, doing anything creative without a greater goal may seem irrational. But in times of crisis, creating may just be the most rational thing we can do.



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The Press is located on the third floor of the SAC and is always looking for artists, writers, graphic designers, critics, photographers and creatives!

Meetings are Wednesdays in SAC 307K at 1PM and 7:30PM.

Scan with Spotify to hear what we've been listening to lately:





R-A-W

CATHARSIS AND JOY

REMEMBERING BETTY DAVIS

BY SARAH BECKFORD

As a Black woman who fell in love with rock and roll at a young age, seeing and hearing Betty Davis' music not only energized me, but moved me too. For a long time, I was told that my listening to rock music, often termed "the devil's music" by members of my Christian community, was sinful and displeasing to God. Of course, I wouldn't want to displease either God or those around me, so much of the rock music I liked, I listened to quietly. In addition, my music taste made me an outlier — most of my peers told me I was listening to "white music." This couldn't be further from the truth. With careful study over the years, I'd come to learn that rock music was born out of the Black community and fused elements of gospel, blues and jazz. Even now, as I read more, I've learned that Black women have played an incredible role in shaping the tone of rock music — and many of these women weren't credited for it, or paid enough.

Rock's early days predate the civil rights movement of the 1960s, and artists like Fats Domino, Little Richard and Chuck Berry were early hitmakers. Black woman artists like Big Mama Thornton and LaVern Baker were trailblazers as well. Many of the songs sung by these artists were covered by white artists to work around the racism and segregation prevalent within the music industry and the U.S. at large. A white artist's cover of a song was usually more popular and seen as the "sanitized" version by white listeners. In these covers, gospel- and jazz-inflected adlibs and expressive lyrics were toned down.

The music charts and genre classifications of the 1940s and 1950s were segregated as well. Rhythm and blues was the catch-all term for music made by Black musicians — and pop, rockabilly, rock and roll and country were among the broad range of terms reserved for music made by white musicians.

The advent of girl groups like The Shirelles in the late 1940s and 1950s allowed for Black women to become visible in rock and roll, but they were forced to conform to a set image and a set sound. Their influence still had a lasting effect, as many artists from the initial wave of British rock — The Beatles, The Rolling Stones and others — all began their careers studying or covering songs by Black artists. They took Black

vocal stylings and instrumentation, watered them down until they were palatable for white audiences and popularized them, just as their white American predecessors did before them. Behind the scenes, as author Maureen Mahon reveals in her book *Black Diamond Queens: African American Women and Rock and Roll*, Black women were the background singers adding texture to these hit songs.

Mahon also points out that Black women were exploited in rock — they had to behave and appear a certain way: soft, proper and ladylike, not too sexual. Yet they're often fetishized in music. Black women have long been victims of stereotypes within music in the way they're marketed, written about and discussed.

Though Black women and Black music tradition have long contributed to the sound of rock music, Black women themselves weren't able to fully own who they were in music.

Think back to The Rolling Stones' hit song "Brown Sugar." The song immortalizes a Black woman who is sexual, who is seemingly *supposed* to be and is only seen for her sexuality:

Brown sugar, how come you taste so good? Uh-huh

Brown sugar, just like a young girl should

The song tells the story of someone sold into slavery in New Orleans, where the old slave owner was known to "whip the women just around midnight." The rest of the song tells the story of interracial and clearly nonconsensual sex between the slave owner and a Black woman. Here, the Black woman is merely an object of sexual desire, exotic property not meant to be seen as human.

It's due to this truth — the brutal history of how violently Black women were treated during slavery — that many Black women did not express their sexuality in their music. In *Black Diamond Queens*, Mahon notes that in the early 1900s, Black women often presented their femininity in a restrained, Eurocentric manner — seemingly because they had no other choice.

"This persistent denial of sexual expression has led African American women to maintain a deep silence around sexuality," Mahon writes. "As historian of science Evelyn Hammonds

BLACK WOMEN HAVE LONG BEEN VICTIMS OF STEREOTYPES WITHIN MUSIC IN THE WAY THEY'RE MARKETED, WRITTEN ABOUT AND DISCUSSED.



SHE WAS A

TRUE ARTIST

**WHO CARRIED A VITAL
UNDERSTANDING OF HER CULTURE,
THOSE WHO CAME BEFORE HER
AND THE SPACE SHE OCCUPIED.**

notes, ‘One of the most enduring and problematic aspects of the ‘politics of silence’ is that in choosing silence, Black women also lost the ability to articulate any conception of their sexuality.’”

This is why Betty Davis is, without a doubt, an underrated visionary. Davis was born in Durham, North Carolina, but grew up in Pittsburgh, and she moved to New York for school. During her time at the Fashion Institute of Technology, she worked as a model and songwriter, as well as a co-manager of a dance club. During that time, according to Mahon, she utilized her music connections to help artists like the Commodores and others. In 1968, she married legendary jazz artist Miles Davis and introduced him to prominent musicians like Jimi Hendrix. Though they were only married for a year, it was through Betty that Miles found the title of his 1970 album, *Bitches Brew*, and that in his own music, he began to experiment with fusions of funk and rock.

Betty Davis occupied a world that had a splintered view of Black women. She lived in a time when fighting for freedom meant putting on a uniform in hopes of breaking stereotypes. However, this uniform had its own price. Davis rejected the expectations of her role — she danced and sang from a place of deep emotion and paired her words with a confident sexuality. But in expressing herself authentically, she was shunned, considered too vulgar and barred from playing on TV.

Betty Davis released her self-titled first album in 1973. It’s hard to find reviews of the album, and her subsequent two records seem to have been released with little fanfare on the charts. According to a retrospective Pitchfork review from 2018, Rolling Stone Record Guide called her 1975 album *Nasty Gal* the work of a “black Marlene Dietrich,” referring to the German American actress and cabaret star best known for portraying sexually liberated women. In this characterization, it’s clear that Betty Davis’ work was reduced to a comparison to white standards, and not the unique work of a Black woman who owned who she was. After her albums did not become commercial successes, Betty Davis was dropped from Island Records, and then went on to become incredibly private. She wouldn’t return to the public eye until 2017, when a documentary about her life and career was released.

In a New York Times interview around the time of the documentary’s release, she said, “I figured it would be better to have them cover me when I was alive than when I was dead.”

I can’t quite recall the first time I heard Betty Davis. I believe it was in high school, not long after I began to learn more about the Black community’s impact on rock music. In my memory, the context is vague, but her music is stark and clear. I was either in school or at home, trying to learn more about women in rock music and came across her name. The first song I ever heard was “Nasty Gal,” and I was floored. Here was a woman who sang with an authority and individuality deeper than I had ever heard before, who knew all of the influential players within funk and rock music — and who performed with platform boots and an Afro.

For someone who grew up in a religious, reserved environment that focused on the holy and remaining modest (not that there’s anything wrong with that, but it was stifling at times), hearing Betty Davis was a definite turning point in my own musical journey. Though I’m long past the days of wearing a safety pin in my ear among other strange fashion choices, I’m grateful to Betty Davis for the honesty and self-determination in her music, which still inspires me to boldly be who I am today.

Without Betty Davis and other women in rock music, it’s hard to imagine how we could have the music of Megan Thee Stallion, Rico Nasty, Prince and other groundbreaking mainstream artists. Even though she’s passed, her music must be passed on so the Black women of the future can remember their history and be proud of pioneers like her. And even though she wasn’t given her flowers during her time, she didn’t ignore her counterparts within music. In her song “F.U.N.K.,” she sang of her love for music and the Black musicians who impacted *her* — Stevie Wonder, Sly Stone, Ann Peebles and more. And, even in “They Say I’m Different,” she sang about her family and other artists that shaped her. She was unapologetically herself, and unapologetically Black — not reduced to her lively performances or the shock she caused white audiences. She was a true artist who carried a vital understanding of her culture, those who came before her and the space she occupied.

As she did then, so we should do now: Share her artistry and honor the Black artists we have with us now, especially those still coming up today. Own what makes you different, don’t dilute who you are to be more acceptable, tell your story — and don’t censor the nastier details. ■

Q&A WITH UKRAINIAN ARTIST MASHA POGORELOVA • BY JOSEPH AND KATE ZELENYE

SUITCASE
OF
WOOL

A few days after the Russian invasion of Ukraine, we discovered Masha Pogorelova's art on Instagram (@woolforest) and followed her story as she fled Ukraine and looked for safety elsewhere in Europe.

Pogorelova was born and raised in Kharkiv, Ukraine — one of the border cities almost completely leveled by Russian forces. City officials estimate civilian deaths to be anywhere between a few dozen to over 250.

Pogorelova was able to make it out before Russian soldiers began shelling the city, traveling to stay with relatives in Naples and Milan for a few weeks before eventually making it to Switzerland. She has been supporting herself during this time by making wool figures and selling them online. Her Etsy shop is called Woolforest.

We initially planned on paying for photos of Pogorelova's wool sculptures to include on the cover of the magazine in an effort to help her Etsy and Instagram pages get more attention (and customers) in her time of need. However, we were struck by her dedication to optimism and playfulness despite her situation. Her art is full of cute, smiling faces, bright colors and light humor — all things often lost during times of such darkness and violence. Pogorelova was so kind and open with us — and so funny, too! — that we came up with the idea to do a Q&A with her over Instagram. Through her answers, we learned how much her personality mirrored her artwork — each reply was peppered with emojis, GIFs and exclamation points. While we cannot look past the atrocities happening in Ukraine and all over the world right now, she is an active reminder that we cannot lose sight of triumph and hope.

Masha Pogorelova posing two of her felt pieces for a photo.
All photos courtesy of Masha Pogorelova.



How did you get into making things out of wool? How did you hone your technical skills, and was it challenging at first?

When I was very young, I loved to find images in everything — since childhood, I loved to draw and invent. I was fond of old Hollywood actresses and color illustrations, and all these sights and experiences I combined in small sculptures and illustrations. I made a store on an electronic platform and chose wool to create my works, since wool is light in weight and transportation is safer than ceramics. I got acquainted with wool thanks to my friend.

She suggested that I try it and I succeeded. Of course, at first it's not easy, and my fingers were very unhappy during that period of trial and error, but everything comes with time. The main thing is concentration and perseverance.

What are your favorite subjects to craft?

My favorite subjects are vegetables and fruits, animals and plants. I really love nature and I like humor, and I mix and match it all and make funny things.

Your work is so often cute and optimistic, filled with smiles. What inspires your light-hearted style? Does the war change your outlook on this optimism, or does the optimism help you cope with being displaced by the war?

I am constantly inspired by communication with people, meeting people, museums and music. All this energy getting into my head turns into wonderful inspiration and ideas. I have fun coming up with and sharing my ideas with the world. This is my essence and meaning. Yes, now is a special time, scary and terribly frightening, but thanks to my creativity, I can survive this dark time, help my relatives, and of course, thanks to my creativity, I know wonderful people! It inspires and makes [me] believe in the future. I try not to lose heart and of course I encourage others!

Do you know if all of your friends and family in Ukraine are safe? Have they also been able to relocate?

I called my relatives and friends even before the start of the war. [I] even tried to talk before leaving. I have always relied on intuition and logic. I tried to warn everyone in advance and persuade them to leave, and think over a plan B if the war starts. But everyone laughed at me and said that I was delirious and did not believe [me] — some even sympathized with Putin. But when the war started, people woke

very special. There is a very special microclimate — everyone knows each other and is very close-knit, all because in Pyatikhatki, [there's] the Physics and Technology Institute where the first atom was split. Professors and scientists worked and lived in this place, and the territory itself is located at a strategically important height relative to the city, and surrounded by forests. Scientific research has been carried out there and it is very important for science. I've always been worried about this [place's safety]. Now I know that they hit [it], but where and how dangerous it is, there is no possibility [of knowing right now].

This is the first point in Ukraine that was attacked and entered by Russian killers. Before the war it was a wonderful place with beautiful places, trees and flowers, wild animals and very very kind and beautiful open people. All my friends from other cities, when they got to my place, wanted to stay there. I generally felt like a movie star, because everyone said hello and asked how they were doing. For many people, it was incomprehensible how so many acquaintances [could exist] in one place. It's microcosmic.

Having to pack up your life and move because of the invasion must be very difficult for you. How are you doing now that you've relocated, and what was the process of relocating like?

I have been fully confident in the preparations for the invasion since November. My productivity was at zero. I constantly argued with my mother because of Russia. She believed all the propaganda. I was afraid that I would not be able to work and live in any way, and on February 9 I could not stand it and left for Italy with my boyfriend Aleksey — his mother lives in Naples. We drove for two days and two nights in a car with suitcases, since people were not allowed in via plane because of COVID, and then the situation escalated. We



up. The first week of the war, I called everyone and we thought over rescue plans [and] offered help. It was hard to persuade them to leave everything and [flee]. It was very very hard, but thanks to the dialogue over the phone, my loved ones were able to find the strength in themselves and go to safer places or leave the country altogether.

What was it like living in Ukraine before the war?

I was born and raised in the Pyatikhatki neighborhood of Kharkiv. My area is

tried to convince everyone about the plan B, that we should leave, but no one believed that — they were doing household chores. And on February 24, my cousin called me, and he said that the tanks entered Kyiv and Kharkiv at the same time, where my house is close to the border.

I packed my things in full confidence that this is the last time I [would] see my apartment. I took a suitcase of wool — because I knew that this was the only chance to earn money and help — three t-shirts, [the] jeans on me, an iPad and an album with sketches. [I] threw all [my] photos onto a portable hard drive and I scanned my grandmother's photos.

The trip was terrible and very, very stressful. I could not take [my] cats, but I prepared an emergency suitcase and food for them and warned my mother what to do with them.

I had to leave the cats with my mother, but I bought carriers and food and asked her to be ready to leave for the country, and asked my friends to take her to the village on the way to their village. Everyone laughed at us and said we were crazy! They sent me a video about what would be better done when repairing. I called everyone again on February 22; I thought they would invade on the 23rd — this is a holiday in Russia, the Day of the Defender. I always felt that [Putin] thinks mystically and wants to go down in history loudly. And on the 23rd, I went to Milan to stay there, then [went] to the border, and from there my Swiss friend [Marck] would pick us up by car. Marck is just a miracle! And we spent the night at Ada's (a ceramic artist she met on Instagram) — she became my sister. On February 24, the irreversible happened, but my mom and friends did everything according to my instructions. They left quickly and hell started there. Then, everything was in a fog, but I called a lot and persuaded my friends to leave. [These were] very difficult conversations [about] pain

[and] death... and everyone supported me a lot. Paolo and Pam Puck (popular artists) shared my pieces and people started buying my works. It was so touching and merciful!

Marck is very sensitive and empathetic. He helped us a lot and helped us survive this horror, and my mother came with my cat — the cat stayed in the village with relatives. The things that remained in the apartment are very beautiful and dear to me, but now I don't think about them, only about people!

2014 because my boyfriend is from Donetsk (a disputed territory in Eastern Ukraine) — he lost everything in the war that Russia started. I felt very calm on February 9 when I got on the train, Kharkiv to Kyiv then Kyiv to Chernivtsi, then the minibus to Naples, to leave the country. I don't have the strength to build a new world in my city. My mental health is crippled. Of course, I will go to visit my friends, but I don't live there.

How has being able to support yourself through selling your art impacted your life in the past few weeks?

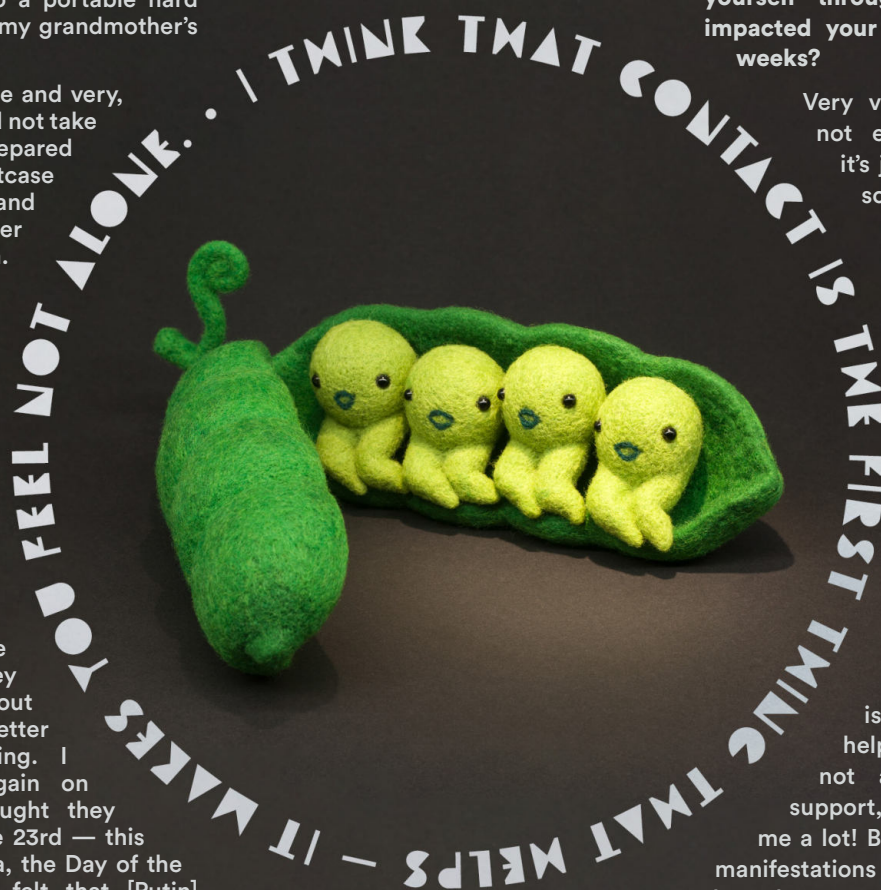
Very very powerfully! I did not expect such support, it's just magic! People are so kind! I helped and moved my mother with [my] cat, and I helped my friends! It's so important for me — it's my life!

What can Americans do to help Ukraine during this intense time?

I see how people want [to] provide this help. Everyone is very attentive! I think that contact is the first thing that helps — it makes you feel not alone. Dialogue and support, in my case it helped me a lot! But also, of course, any manifestations of help. I even think that the more people learn about the fate of a particular person, they always want to help more. I think that a journalist is a mouthpiece to the world of good deeds! I like America's attitude to tell the truth. There is nothing more valuable than the truth.

Do you have any final thoughts?

I want to say that people can adapt to any situation and things will all come back; there is no need to despair, [just a need] to look for a new opportunity and, most importantly, [to care for] family and friends! ■



When the war is over, do you plan on returning to Ukraine?

Unfortunately, there is almost nothing left of my place. I haven't found out about my apartment because it's useless; there are [still] battles going on and they got into the Institute, [so there may be] radiation. I most likely will have nothing to do there, and I can't live in ruins. I lived on the seventh floor. If the house stands, I would like to take some things — my bicycle and my artwork — and leave. I can't live in constant fear. I have lived like this since

writing
for
you

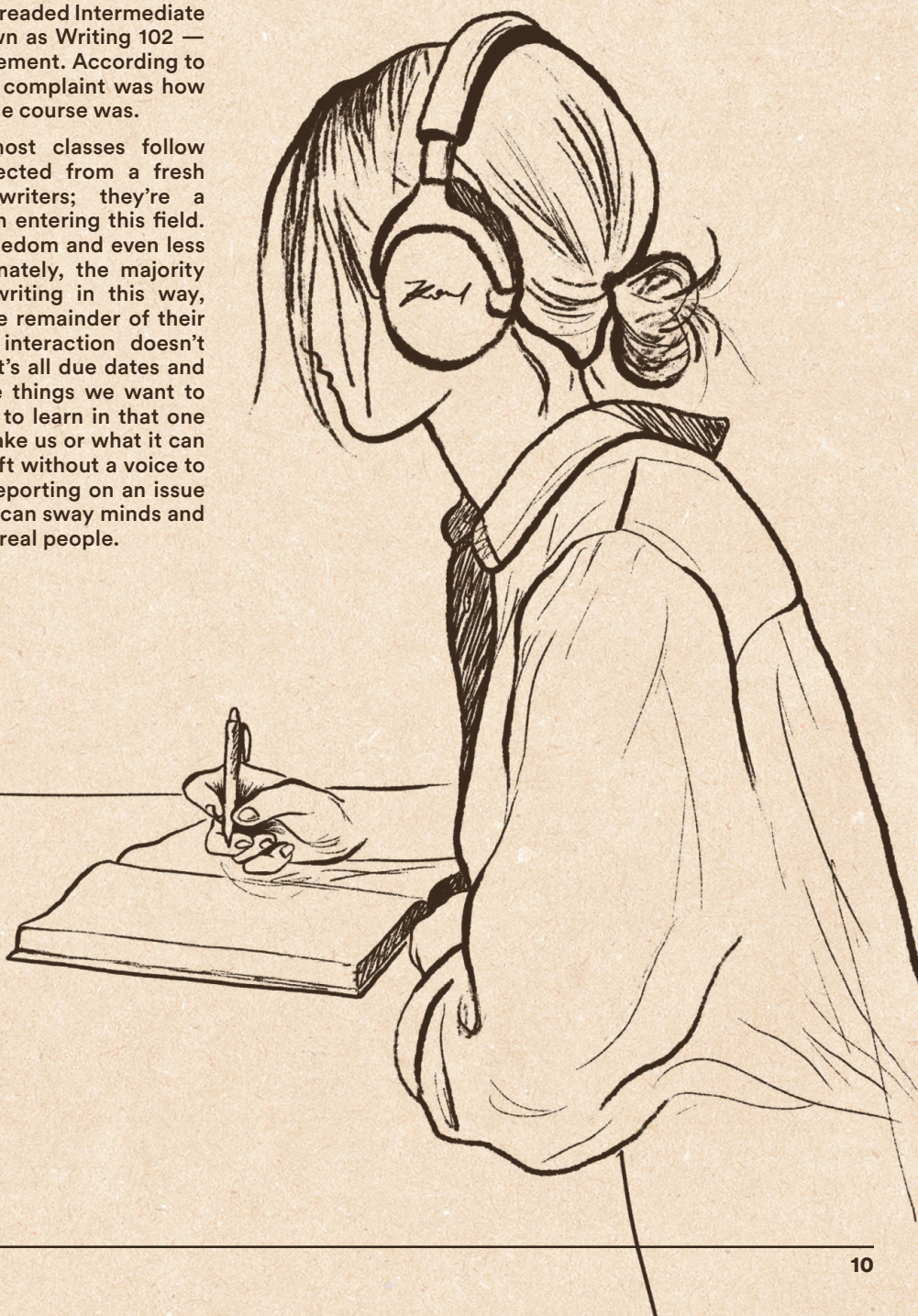
BY CARMELA CASSARA

I

often hear people dismiss writing. At my predominantly math- and science-based high school, it wasn't really considered important. I've witnessed my peers, like cats after a pestering fly, swat the idea of it away with disgust. When I created a writing club during my freshman year of high school, only one person showed up the entire semester. Despite this, I persevered — after all, those fanfictions weren't going to write themselves. Even as a college student, I've heard so many people complain about the dreaded Intermediate Writing Workshop — better known as Writing 102 — that most need to take as a requirement. According to a poll of my peers, a noteworthy complaint was how “old-fashioned” and “formulaic” the course was.

It's hard to disagree when most classes follow rigid rules that remain disconnected from a fresh demographic of prospective writers; they're a nuisance for those uninterested in entering this field. There's little room for creative freedom and even less for personal enjoyment. Unfortunately, the majority of students are introduced to writing in this way, leaving a bitter impression for the remainder of their academic careers. This limited interaction doesn't do anyone justice. For students, it's all due dates and grades, leaving us to neglect the things we want to learn or do for fun. We don't get to learn in that one semester the places writing can take us or what it can do for others. When people are left without a voice to defend themselves, writing and reporting on an issue can make a world of difference. It can sway minds and bring attention to issues affecting real people.

WHEN PEOPLE ARE LEFT
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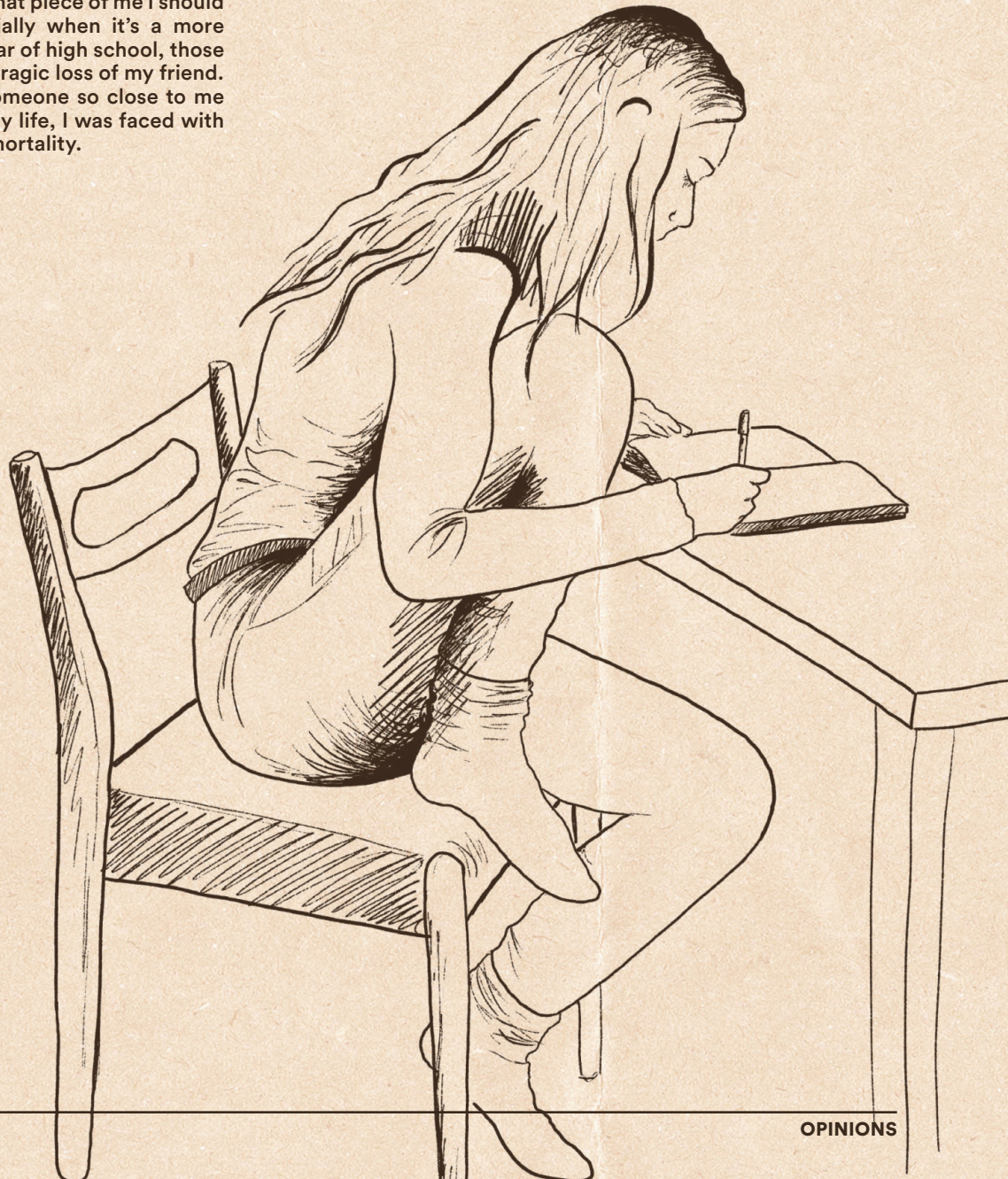


Another genre I feel is often overlooked in academia is creative writing. It's my personal favorite because I find there's no limit to the things I can make. Ever since I was little, I'd been fascinated by what my mind could create. I remember conjuring up mystery novels and fantastical kingdoms modeled after my favorite stories. My thoughts never reached a page, but it was the start of my budding interest in all things literary.

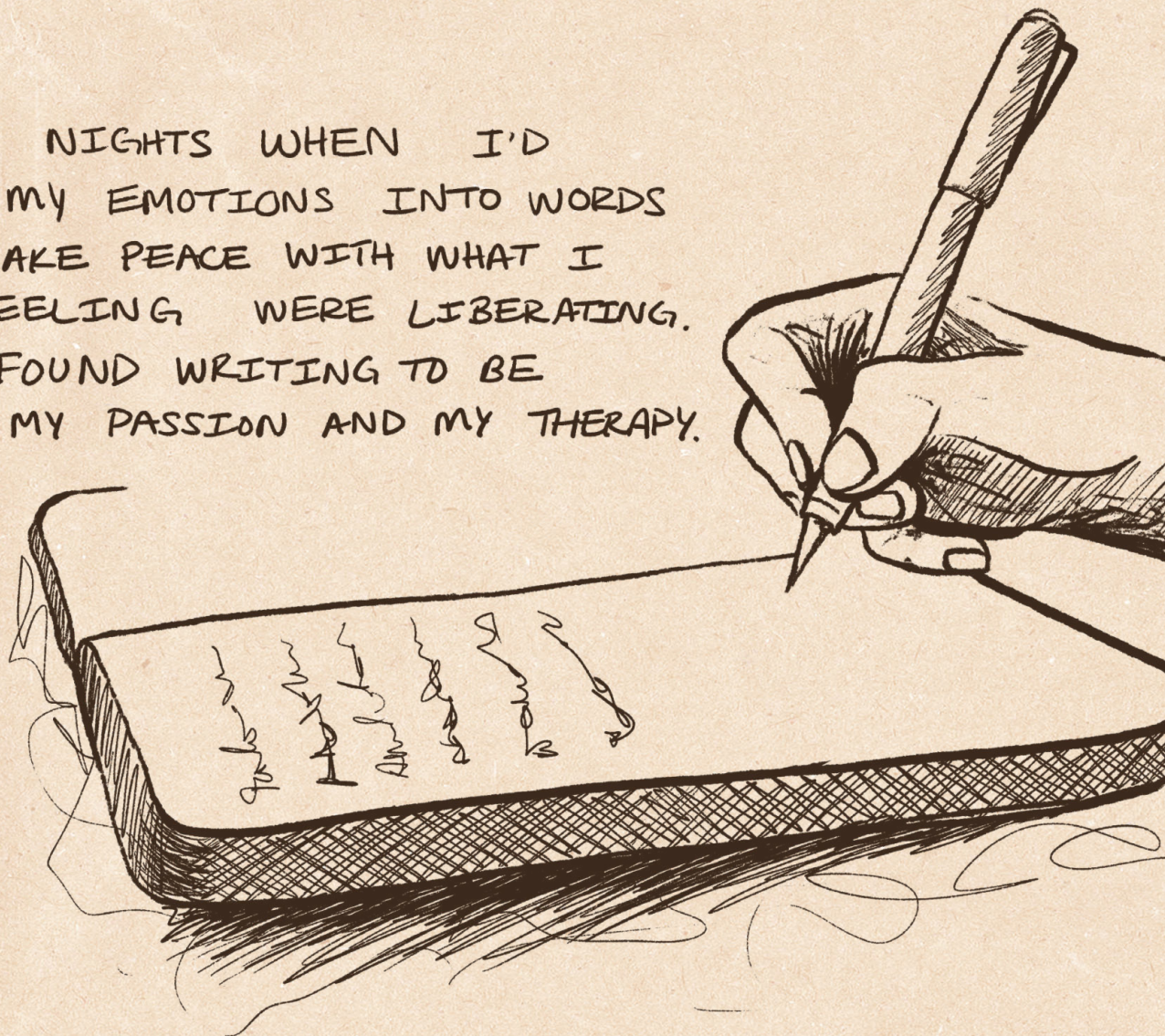
Through this memory, I realized that writing has always been more to me than just a class or an extracurricular activity. It's become my stage, a place where I can express myself without fear of judgment. Growing up, sharing my emotions was always a hard task. Constantly talking about what I felt — good or bad — seemed like a burden to place on others. Even now, I struggle with deciding what piece of me I should share with loved ones, especially when it's a more vulnerable part. In my junior year of high school, those feelings were amplified by the tragic loss of my friend. I'd never experienced losing someone so close to me before — for the first time in my life, I was faced with my own ethical questions and mortality.

As my friends and I sat in the school library in preparation for the wake, everyone seemed to know how they wanted to express their love, whether it was through art or music. I was left wondering how I wanted to say goodbye. I realized that the only thing I knew how to do was write. Where my voice fell mute, my hands could piece together my thoughts. For a long time after this, I still found myself unable to speak about their passing. It was easier to channel my grief into various poems, short essays and letters in dedication to them. Slowly, I was able to talk about them aloud, and I could eventually recall the good memories without blurring them with the bad.

Whenever I hear someone say they hate writing, I can't help but think about all the times I've found myself through it. Those nights when I'd pour my emotions into words and make peace with what I was feeling were liberating. I've found writing to be both my passion and my therapy. Even now, I'm using my love for writing to soothe the recent loss of my cat.



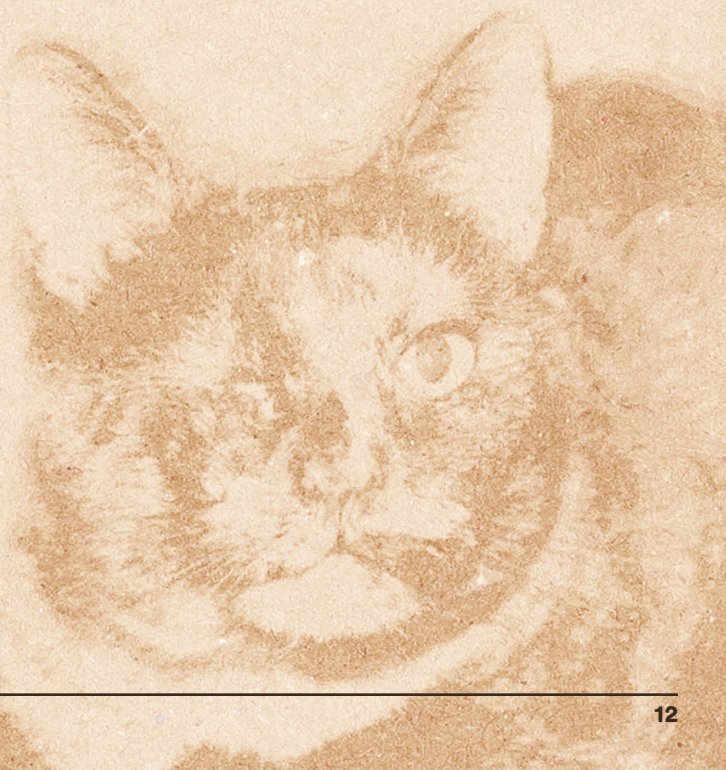
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I understand it may not be for everyone — just how some think math is too difficult, or how playing a sport is challenging for those without an athletic bone in their body. Despite this, the one thing I ask is to try writing on your own terms. As someone who often finds herself daydreaming while walking to class, writing out scenarios has become a fun hobby of mine. Without the pressure of grades or classes, I've come to appreciate the liberating feeling that typing out a story on my laptop has brought me. So if you're really curious but scared to take that first step, throw everything you have in your brain on a Google Doc or a piece of scrap paper and go crazy.

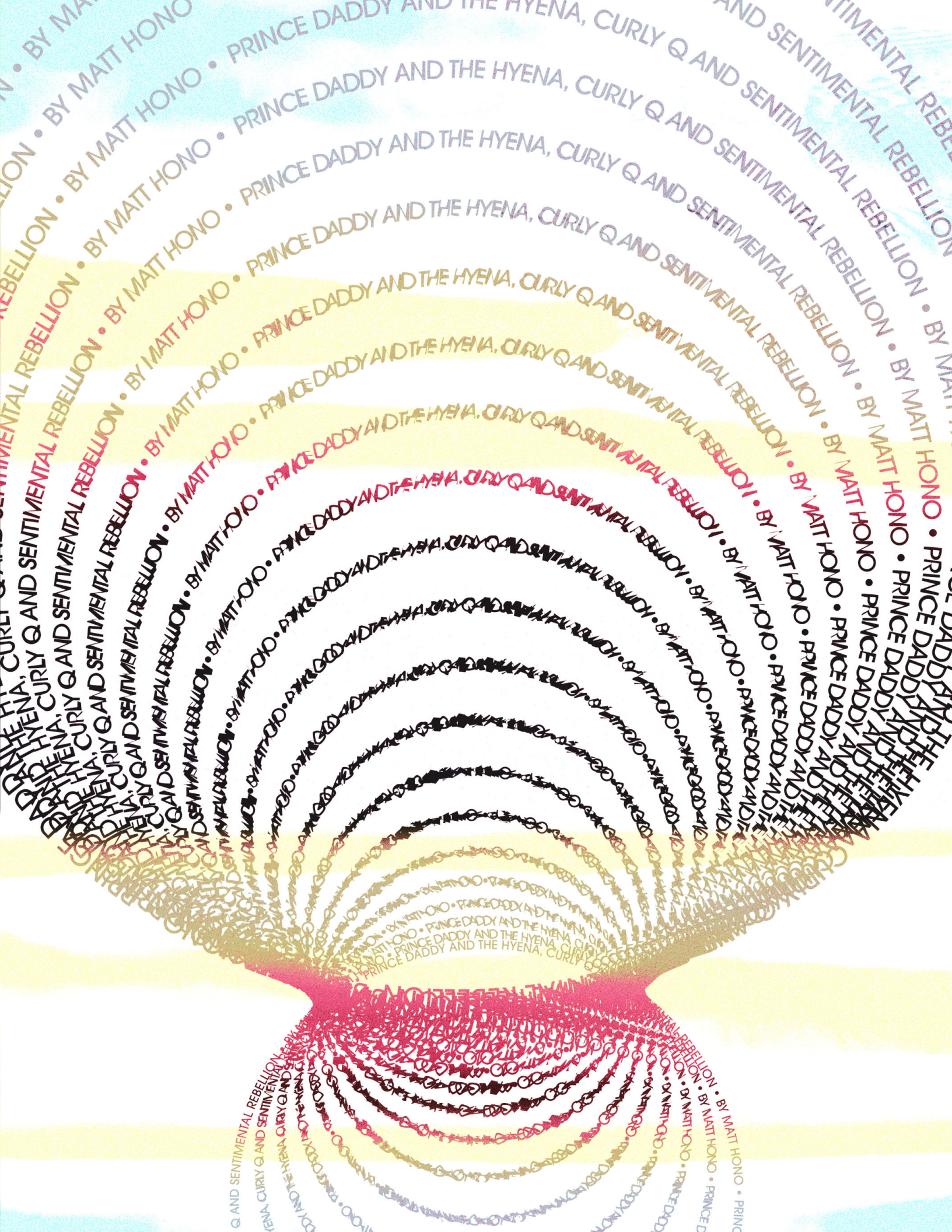
There's no guarantee that you'll create a masterpiece or be even remotely good at it, but there's something so beautifully personal and intimate about writing. It doesn't matter what it means to others — only what it means to you. You can write about your wildest dreams, social issues, your interests or, in my case, your emotions. Worlds, empires, even entire galaxies have been forged in the creative fires of an imaginative writer. The only limit is what you decide it to be. ■

This piece is dedicated to Winx Cassara, a beloved friend and pet. May she rest in peace.





...ENTIM... REBELLION...
...CURLY Q AND SENTIMENTAL REBELLION...
...CURLY Q AND SENTIMENTAL REBELLION...
...CURLY Q AND SENTIMENTAL REBELLION...



PRINCE DADDY AND THE HYENA, CURLY Q AND SENTIMENTAL REBELLION • BY MATT HONO

I've been following Prince Daddy and the Hyena — or "P Daddy," as they are known by fans — since 2018, when a friend introduced me to their EP *Now That's What I Music Vol. 420*. The project encapsulates the quintessential P Daddy sound with self-deprecating lyrics hiding behind heavy distorted riffs, fast tempos and joke titles. The allure of P Daddy has always been their absurdity. Their music is undeniably fun and encourages me to jump, finger-point and shout lyrics at every show. The band has brought my friends and I closer with road trip jam sessions, routine lyric sharing and matching forest-green branded hoodies. The name Prince Daddy and the Hyena, an unexplained enigma itself, is eye-catching and lighthearted.

Beneath the humorous exterior and all the catchy hooks, however, you can find heavy emotional weight. The band misleads you, saying "just when you might have thought/I'm doing fine, I'm not." P Daddy celebrates its own absurdity, writing party anthems about feeling inadequate. The music often rejects rumination and accepts a strain of Camus-based-philosophy, asserting that one can find joy by embracing the absurdity of life. It seems that the music is telling you to embrace sorrow but find joy despite it. This kind of mosh-through-the-pain mindset is largely what keeps me coming back to modern emo. The genre often accepts and highlights hurt but

keeps it from being something that can slow you down. The emo solution to tragedy? Appreciate your friends, get high and enjoy the music. Is this never-slow-down-and-never-give-in attitude always realistic though?

P Daddy released "curly q" in October 2021 ahead of their self-titled album, released in April. On this track, P Daddy admits that never processing emotions might not always be effective and that sometimes a cathartic, simple, sad song is needed. The song rebels against the expectation that P Daddy will bury hard-hitting lyricism behind punk riffs. It departs from the band's signature raspy, riotous basement sound and aggressive self-deprecation, marking a new direction for the band I've been growing up with. It's slow, sentimental, tame and doesn't mention smoking.

Kory Gregory, the band's lead vocalist and lyricist, has matured and confronted the fear of being emotional in plain sight. The song is a ballad about the hardships that Gregory's young nephew will have to face as they grow up and find their place in a terrifying world. Gregory gives into his climate-fueled existentialism and starkly predicts that "the sun will explode/and you'll be burning underneath." He has never been afraid to tackle intense topics of self-medication, anxiety, loneliness and familial disappointment, but the emotionality of "curly q" doesn't hide behind distorted riffs, a fast tempo or scratchy vocals, as the band's other releases do. Gregory sings softly on the song, giving his vocal cords a rest from constant yelling. The lyrics are front and center, and there is no doubting that this is a *sad song*. It is efficiently stripped down and beautifully subtle. Gregory comes out from behind a roaring backing band and admits to himself and audiences exactly how he is doing — and it's not great.

Photos by Matt Hono



The late Tavish Maloney — a close friend of Gregory's and the guitarist of Long Island emo band Oso Oso — is unmistakably tied to the song. Maloney passed away in March 2021, and "curly q" was reportedly his favorite off P Daddy's upcoming album — the reason it was released first. In live performances, the song has repeatedly been dedicated to him. Maloney's death adds a layer of somber reflection to the lyrics. Many parents and guardians will have to welcome members of a new generation into a world full of loss and post-COVID consequences in the coming years. Gregory sees himself in his nephew, the song's subject, singing "they said I looked like you." The song emphasizes Gregory's hopes that his nephew won't have to experience the same hardships he has. He hopes that his nephew won't have to experience losing a friend so young.

Despite the song's lyrical lament and its doomsday predictions, the ethereal, delicate instrumentation encourages listeners to hope for a better future. A slow, humming string section creates a calming aura. Clear

influences from Gregory's side project, Jophus, appear on the track with similar acoustic strumming. A roaring, magnificent guitar solo, introduced with electrical rumbling, concludes the song. The song does not rush to the finish line. It builds slowly and allows the listener to fully grasp the gravity of the lyrics. Instead of offering the solution to keep on moving — never allowing oneself to process emotions — the song touts the benefits of calm reflection through its structure. "Curly q" shows that Gregory is finding a new way to cope with his fears.

Along with the soaring closing, the future of the band leaves much to look forward to. This single is also the first song the band has released with Pure Noise Records — the well-known punk label behind bands like The Story So Far and Microwave. In addition to the third album released on April 15, they are also starting a headlining tour with Macseal later this spring. "Curly q's" quiet worry for the future is juxtaposed with the band's skyrocketing potential energy.

"Curly q" and this new direction from P Daddy displays the benefits of having a variety of coping mechanisms, instead of a one-size-fits-all approach. It emphasizes the importance of *exploring* quiet reflection alongside the harsh rejection of rumination, balancing the ballads with the ragers. I think I am still trying to find that balance. Based on this track, it seems that Gregory feels the same. P Daddy continues to rebel and subvert expectations, but accomplishes these goals by writing a slow song instead of a party anthem. Sometimes mellowing out is the most hardcore thing a punk band can do. ■





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Donda West spoke to her son in a way that always managed to cut right to the chase — his heart always received the validation from her that few have provided for him in the wake of her passing.

The first installment of Netflix's three-part documentary on Kanye is a testament to the confidence that West always had. Donda not only saw that confidence, but encouraged it in every facet. The first episode of the documentary sees Kanye enter the same phase in his life that I'm at in mine.

We see a Kanye full of the ambition that his music later instilled in me, along with the generation that grew up listening to him. He runs New York — a city that he's determined to make his own — pleading with A&R representatives, executives and assistants — hell-bent on making them as confident in him as he was in his own abilities, and as confident as his mother was in those abilities.

These industry execs may have had confidence in Kanye's beat-making, but not in his essence. On top of that, the people who he expected to lift him up, Chicago's very own, didn't seem to believe in him much either. Friends who had no problem taking beats from Ye would rather share a piece of the fame he already had than push him further.

Only Donda, Kanye himself and a few friends who deserve every single one of their flowers saw in Ye what we've witnessed for 20-plus years.

That vision is something reminiscent of what I've felt materializing in myself for a while now. I'm a very insecure person, but there's something about what I'm doing right now that feels incredibly right to me. I've met people in the past few months that I know are integral to my future, similar to what we see in this first act of Kanye's story caught on camera. There's this strange feeling that what I'm doing is what I'm destined for.

I've entertained the possibility of not writing anymore — to stop talking about the shit I love most and give up on what I'm most passionate about. However, the people I've met in my final semester of college have put a mirror up to myself and made me question any ounce of hesitation I've had in my abilities. They seem to be the ones I've been looking for these past four years.

I'll say it until my fingers go numb, until I'm blue in the face — Kanye was the first artist that made me want to talk about music. The first that made me want to be creative. He put a battery in my back to discover others of his ilk, and those are the artists that I'll be indebted to for the rest of my life.

This first installment of *jeen - yuhs* is a reminder of confidence's significance. All this manifesting bullshit is nothing compared to self-esteem — putting stock in yourself as an entity and banking on that being enough. In time, somebody with the resources to put you on will see that and believe in you the way you've been believing in yourself since you started.

This is the last page of the prologue of the life you've dreamt of. Now, the life you were truly destined to live out begins.

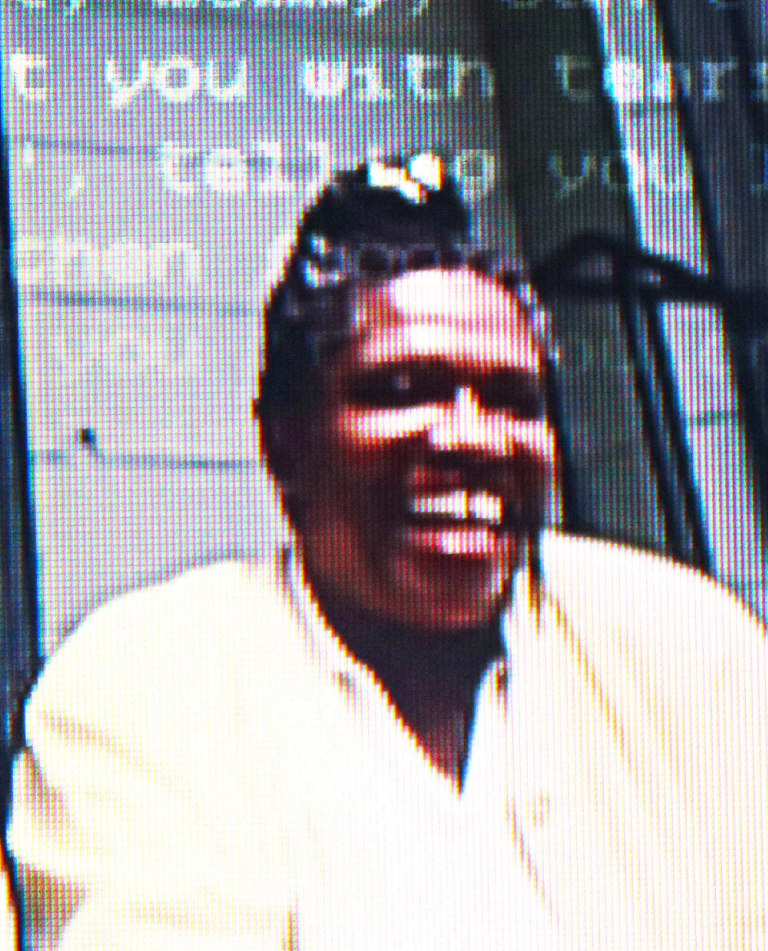
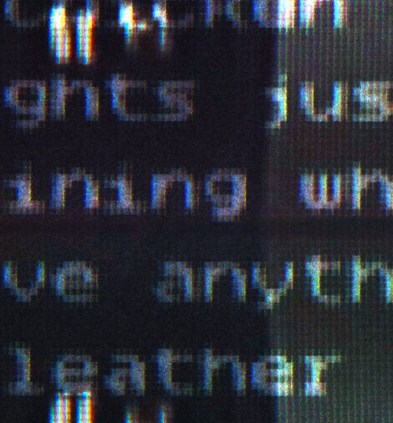
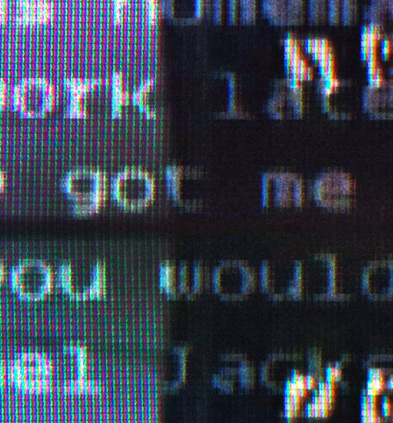
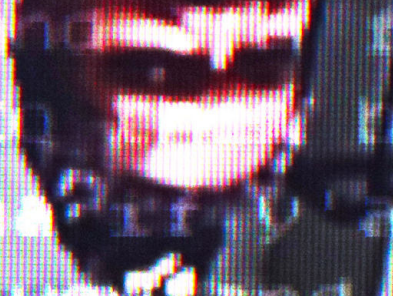
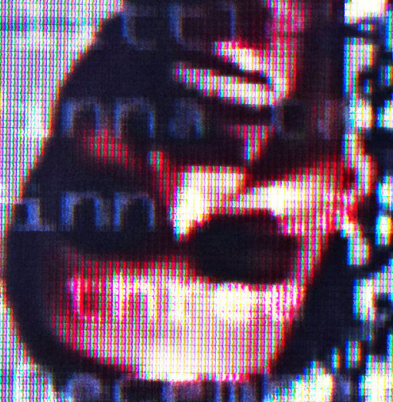
Getting signed to Roc-A-Fella was supposed to be the chapter that began Kanye's new life, but that life could only come after one chapter more than previously anticipated.

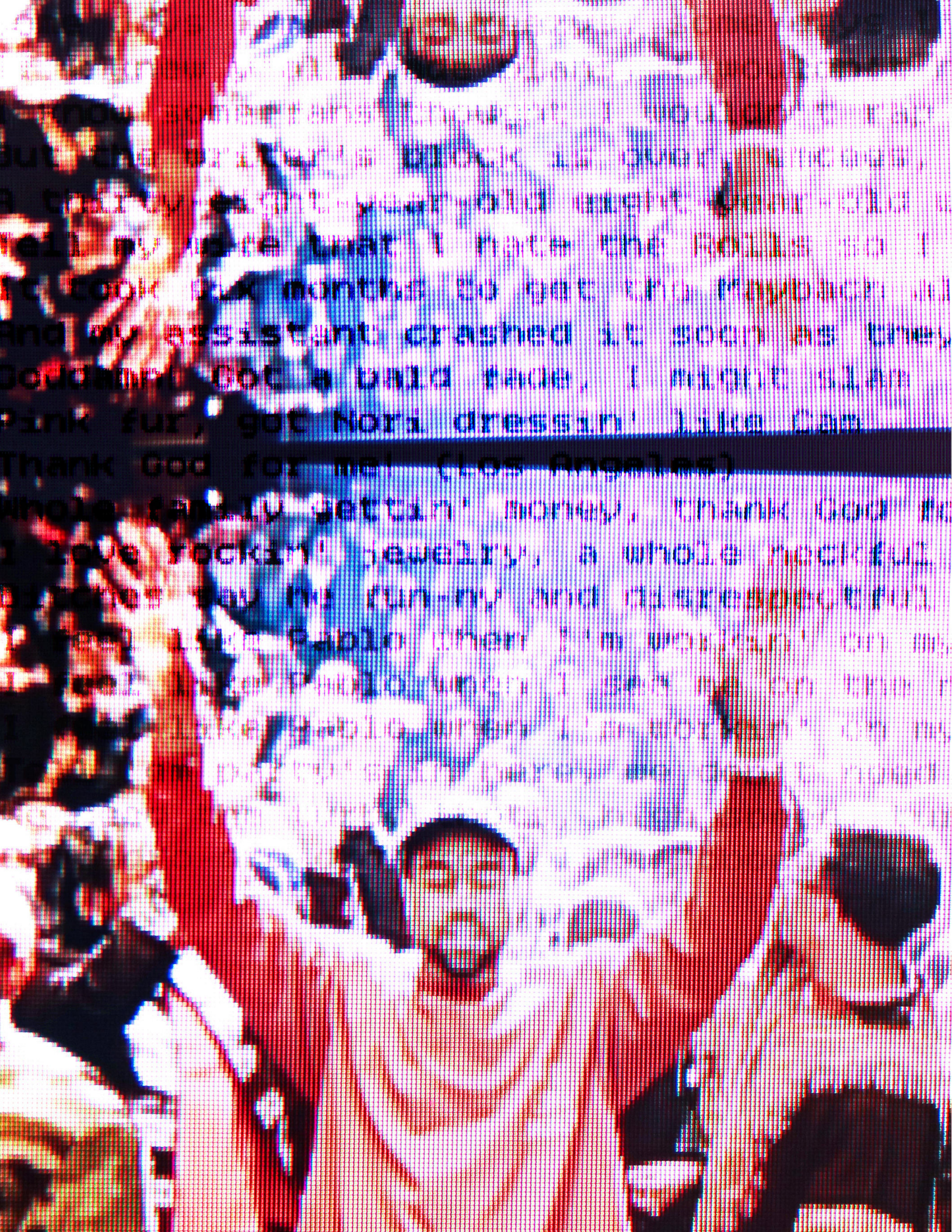
Kanye's car accident in the fall of 2002, which left his jaw firmly lodged in the back of his mouth, became that chapter. His triumph was now one over his own mortality, rather than the people who got in his way.

Those people still remained obstacles, even after Kanye signed to a label that could no longer ignore a talent they so casually overlooked for years. He had to borrow studio time from the pockets of other artists. He had to beg to find out when his first album would actually be released. The persistence that got him in the same room as Jay-Z — as well as his own record deal — was the same persistence *The College Dropout* required in order to be released.

Kanye was signed, but the box in which he was unreasonably locked seemed even more fortified than before. The accident gave those in Ye's way an excuse to further doubt him.

During a 10-minute, spur-of-the-moment studio session, while Ludacris wrote the hook for "Breathe In Breathe Out" in his G-Wagon, Pharrell Williams heard "Through the Wire" for the first time. Williams realized what Kanye had already known — he was here to stay.





...from the ...
...BLOCK IS OVER ...
...year-old ...
...I hate the ...
...took six months to get the ...
...and my assistant crashed it soon as they ...
...Got a bald fade, I might slam ...
...Pink fur, got Nori dressin' like Cam ...
...Thank God for me! (Los Angeles)

...family gettin' money, thank God for ...
...love rockin' jewelry, a whole neckful ...
...you're fun-my and disrespectful ...
...Pablo when I'm workin' on my ...
...Pablo when I see me on the ...
...Pablo when I see me on the ...
...Pablo when I see me on the ...

Self-sufficiency was always a motif on West's path to destiny. Leading up to the release of his first album, it became the sole driving force. The music video for "Through the Wire" was entirely funded by one man — the man who so desperately wanted it to be heard by an audience large enough to quantify the greatness and triumph behind it. Chicago was the heart and soul of *Dropout*, the way that Donda remained the heart and soul of the son who she was so incredibly proud of.

The second installment of *jeen – yuhs* feels like the last few moments in Kanye's life before everyone decided it'd be beneficial to document it for him; Coodie Simmons, the director of the documentary, was just ahead of the game.

Every second captured feels surreal. At the time, only those present saw these moments that showcased the true vision Kanye always had. The purpose behind it all was finally starting to materialize, which feels incredibly deserving for a man like him. But still, his work was far from finished. A new life was approaching on the horizon yet again.

In the third installment of *jeen – yuhs*, Kanye embarked on a path without the guidance that got him there. He lost his beacon — Donda West — and used luminescent strobes and camera flashes as a

A hero's journey if there ever was one.

Rhymefest, J-Ivy, Coodie and Chike, among others, have been with Ye from the start. I think he required time away from them, enduring turmoil in large part on his own, to realize the most important people in his life had always been there.

Better yet, they only knew a fraction of what that turmoil entailed. When Ye came back, they were still waiting with open arms.

When you reach rock bottom enough times, it becomes crystal fucking clear who's supposed to be in your life. As manic episodes compound on each other, you realize who on your team is going to try to lock you up, and who will actually stand by you to provide the care you need.

The awakening within Kanye West didn't just happen when he gave himself over to Christ. It didn't happen when he realized he was cutting off the friends who were limbs that couldn't grow back. It was trial and error. With each perceived misstep, Ye leapt closer to who he was always supposed to be.

Reaching levels of fame that only Michael Jackson has had to face, Kanye experienced a revelation: He was as indestructible now as he believed he was way back when he was making beats for Jay-Z.

"I just wanna bring as much beauty to the world as possible. I'm only 38 years old."

substitute for the light he thought would never go out.

As a result, many believed the Kanye they grew up with was gone. Following Donda's death, his actions began to overshadow his character. The person who'd been so sure of himself, so desperate to catch a glimpse of stardom, had allowed that stardom to define his worth. Instead of a man defining the culture, many saw him as a man defined by culture.

Creatively, I don't think anyone could say that Kanye's judgment really faltered. In the long run, getting *Yeezus*, *808s & Heartbreak* and *My Beautiful Dark Twisted Fantasy* wasn't worth shit if the man behind them suffered. In his personal decisions, his friendships and his public appearances, West seemed so detached from the person he was when he started this journey.

That's why it comes as no surprise that today, his roots seem to be so deeply embedded in the people who were responsible for this documentary — those who were responsible for the support that his quest began with.

That liberation opened a vision board that Kanye's required for a long time — one he's still painting on to this day.

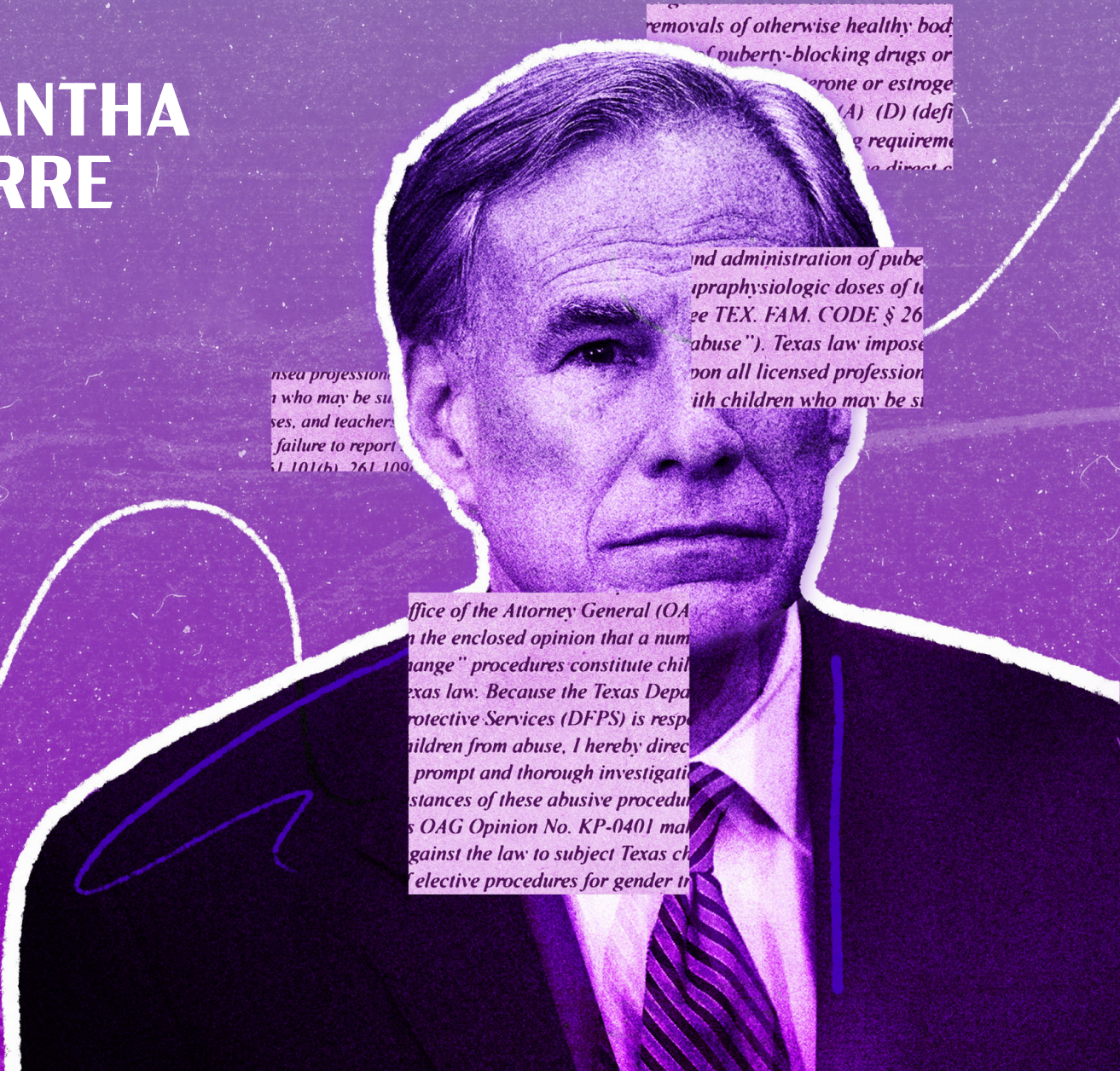
Kanye West has been the greatest singular force of artistic creation of the past two decades — whether that's through his own art, or what he inspires others to create. Without him, I wouldn't have written about this series, or probably anything. I don't know how much longer it would've taken me to pick up a pen to write down my feelings if it weren't for his music.

Today, his creative ventures seem to have finally interlocked with his deepest emotional ventures. *Donda* is the title of West's tenth studio album for that reason. She was the point of intersection for Kanye's creative and emotional planes of existence. She always will be.

Finally addressing Donda as such is the culmination of what Ye's been dealing with since her light went out. I think that's why we see Coodie so deeply ingrained in Mr. West's life once again, tying a bow on the "ending" of this story — for now. ■

QUEERNESS IS NOT UP FOR DEBATE ANTI-LGBTQ LAWS IN THE U.S.

BY
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AGUIRRE



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A string of bills and policies concerning the LGBTQ community in the U.S. have gained vast attention and pushback this year. The continued transphobia and homophobia that fuels this legislation is dangerous for queer people around the country and detrimental to the existence of queer youth.

Texas Gov. Greg Abbott wrote a letter addressed to the commissioner of the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services on February 22 in which he asserted that gender-affirming treatments and procedures for transgender children could be considered “child abuse” under Texas law, in line with a previous statement from Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton. They state that these procedures should only be performed when a person reaches the full age of consent — 18 years old — and anything before should be considered a criminal act. Paxton called for an “investigation” of instances of gender-affirming practices in the state, which could range from the prescription of hormone blockers to surgeries and other procedures.

If this interpretation of Texas law is upheld, it will affect family members, doctors, teachers and all other professionals involved in a child’s gender-affirming journey. It would effectively punish people for supporting their queer children and prosecute practitioners of vital healthcare as child abusers.

This persecution of LGBTQ people was further exacerbated by the Parental Rights in Education bill, also known as the “Don’t Say Gay” bill, introduced by Florida Rep. Joe Harding and signed into law by Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis on March 28. This bill prohibits the teaching of topics regarding sexual orientation and gender identity in Florida elementary schools from kindergarten to third grade, and after that, only if it is deemed “age appropriate or developmentally appropriate.” This law can have effects throughout the entire grade system in Florida, allowing schools and teachers to take advantage of its vague language and implement it however they see fit — to the detriment of LGBTQ students and families.

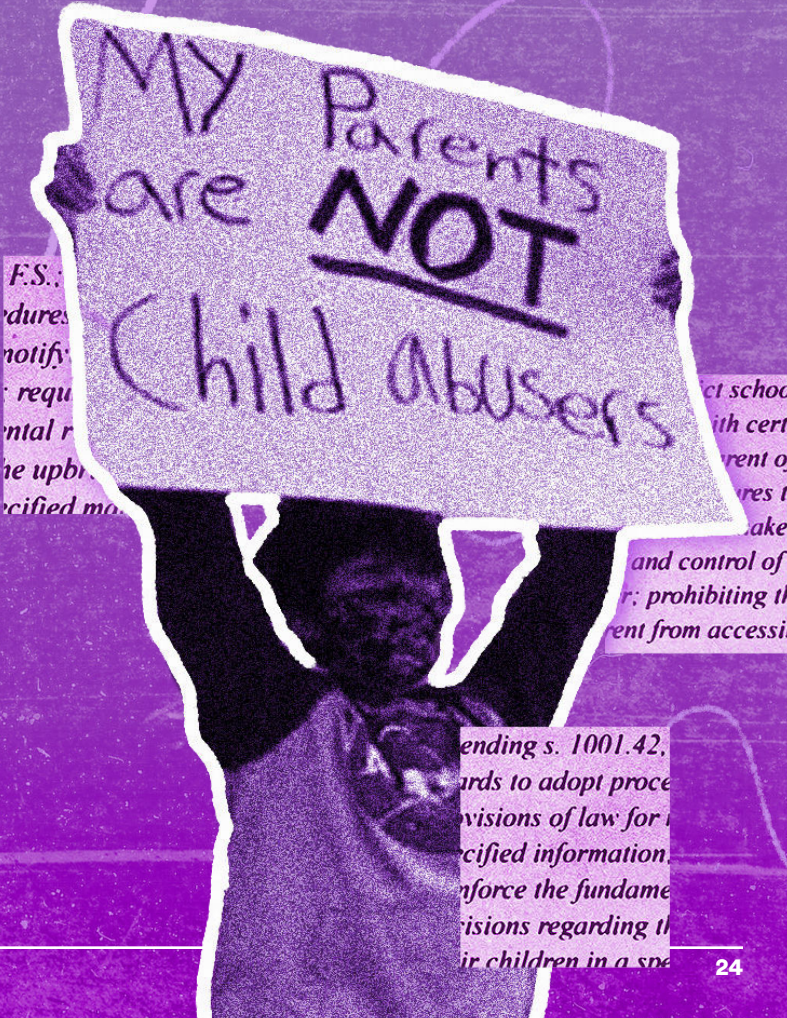
Rep. Harding has claimed that the law is not intended to prevent discussion of LGBTQ history. Critics cited in The Washington Post argue that since sex education is banned until fifth grade in Florida anyway, the law cannot “protect” young children and has no reason to exist. It only serves to limit a student’s self-expression.

Jade Kai, a doctoral student and graduate instructor in the Women’s, Gender and Sexuality Studies Department at Stony Brook University, sees the legislative action as an attempt to exclude diversity in gender and sexuality from young Americans’ value systems.

“Since children are seen as the future, and in the eyes of the state children are expected to reproduce U.S. American values, these politicians hinder education about the vast range of sexual and gender expressions and identities that exist and target supportive parents of gender nonconforming children,” Kai said.

The law also requires schools to share information with a child’s parents about any resources the child seeks for physical or mental support from the school, except in cases of suspected abuse or neglect. A student could seek out resources for a range of reasons, including issues about gender or sexuality.

IF THIS INTERPRETATION OF TEXAS LAW IS UPHELD, IT WILL AFFECT FAMILY MEMBERS, DOCTORS, TEACHERS AND ALL OTHER PROFESSIONALS INVOLVED IN A CHILD’S GENDER-AFFIRMING JOURNEY.



This requirement could make students feel uncomfortable confiding in counselors or other staff members at their schools, reducing the accessibility of mental health resources for kids. Requiring schools to disclose this information to parents would also be harmful for queer children who come from families who do not accept their identity.

Legislation like this indicates that the conservatives behind these bills cannot accept the idea of a person in a child's life being supportive of their gender or sexual identity, revealing deeply rooted oppressive ideologies. Kai says long-standing cis-het norms in the U.S. have contributed to such oppression.

"This concept of the 'natural' perpetuates the idea that transgender people who get gender-affirming procedures like chest surgeries, genital surgeries and hormone replacement therapy are mentally unstable and that there is something inherently 'unnatural' or 'wrong' with them, along with the idea that body modification is 'mutilation,'" Kai said.

Studies from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have shown that adolescents and teens who identify as LGBTQ are at a higher risk of suicide and mental health challenges such as depression and anxiety. About 34% of queer kids experience bullying from their peers, which can contribute to suicidal thoughts and tendencies — and queer kids experience

these problems at disproportionately higher rates. The 2019 national Youth Risk Behavior Survey reported that 14.5% of heterosexual high school students considered suicide, compared to 46.8% of lesbian, gay or bisexual students.

If children do not feel safe discussing their challenges with adults at school, how will they be able to express themselves and explore their identities? If families are penalized for accepting and encouraging their children to explore their gender and sexual identities, these kids may internalize an unhealthy shame about these identities.

"These mandates do not stop people from being queer, but they do increase shame and violence toward those who are," Kai said.

The repression and fear linked to these feelings will have a mental toll on many queer children, with detrimental effects that can last throughout their entire lives. According to the Trevor Project's 2021 National Survey on LGBTQ Youth Mental Health, when LGBTQ youth have a space to express their identities freely, they report lower rates of suicide attempts. It is essential that these spaces are accessible for queer children and teens.

Abbott, Paxton and other supporters of anti-LGBTQ policies pose their efforts as pleas to protect children

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from “abuse.” In reality, preventing children from gaining access to gender-affirming experiences that improve their quality of life would be truly abusive. Politicians in favor of such legislation claim they seek to strengthen the family, yet they are actively trying to condemn families that do not fit their perceived ideal.

“To strengthen the family’ actually means to enforce families to reproduce structures of power that harm women, people of color, immigrants, disabled people, Indigenous people and those in the LGBTQ+ community,” Kai said.

In other debates, many of these politicians claim to be against government regulation of bodies. Abbott banned vaccine and mask mandates in Texas so people could make public health decisions based on their “personal conscience,” yet he considers government involvement necessary in consensual gender-affirming procedures that only affect an individual. This hypocrisy proves that this fight is not about human rights — it’s about upholding a mythical norm of what is acceptable in our society, making laws work for specific groups of people while ostracizing others.

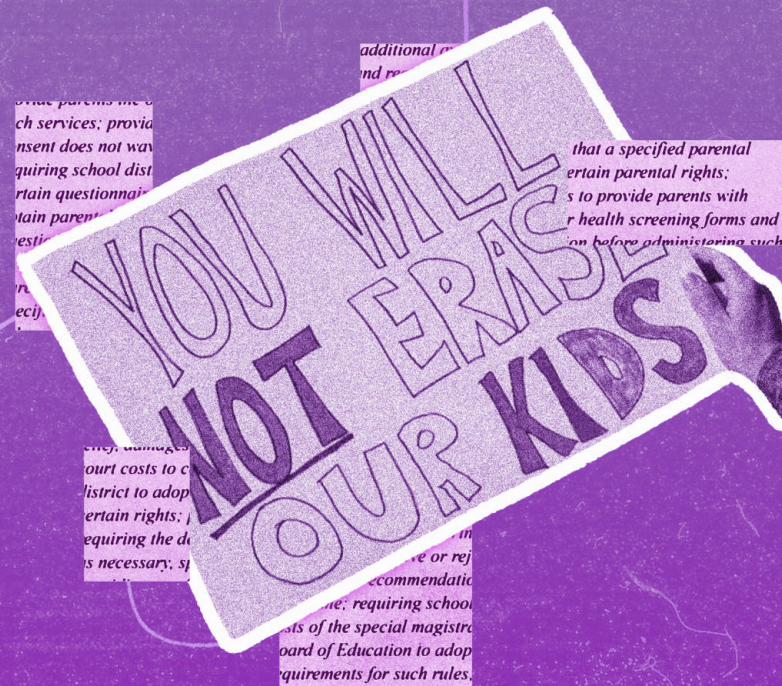
As members and allies of the LGBTQ community, we must educate ourselves on discriminatory laws and the potential effects that they will have. This is an election year for Abbott, but Texas and Florida are not the only states pushing this type of legislation. Lawmakers in Oklahoma, Arizona, Utah, Iowa and Alabama have all passed anti-LGBTQ legislation in the past year. On April 7, Gov. Kay Ivey of Alabama signed into law two bills that effectively do what Abbott and Paxton seek to do — HB 322 and SB 184 both limit what transgender and queer students can do with their bodies under state law by restricting which bathrooms children can use, banning conversations related to the LGBTQ community through fifth grade and effectively felonizing gender-affirming care in the state.

All of us need to ask ourselves how much longer we can tolerate oppression in our government. We cannot let these lawmakers dictate the way people express their gender, sexual identity and bodily autonomy. Rather than trying to shut down these conversations, we must encourage education that includes and respects queerness. Since these bills were passed, there has been an outcry of support for the LGBTQ community, including protests and rallies around the country. Let’s continue to challenge our lawmakers and stand up against discriminatory laws by educating ourselves on what is happening around us, fostering conversations about social injustices and listening to and supporting queer people.


“As a queer and trans educator of color, I want all of my students to have the opportunity to grow up and into their identities with the confidence, care and safety they deserve,” Kai said.

We all deserve the freedom to express ourselves for who we are. We must continue to support the LGBTQ community so that freedom is accessible. ■

WE CANNOT LET THESE LAWMAKERS DICTATE THE WAY PEOPLE EXPRESS THEIR GENDER, SEXUAL IDENTITY AND BODILY AUTONOMY.







MELANIE FORMOSA/THROUGH THE LENS AT

love rocks nyc!

STEREO
THE FINEST IN JAZZ SINCE 1979

2022 THE PRESS

I've never seen a herd of people happier. Faces radiating joy, smiles beaming, bodies jiggling. The crowd was emitting energy, vibrations bouncing off the musicians on stage. Dancing lights of warm reds and cool blues added to the excitement of it all as guitar necks sliced through the air and drumsticks flailed.

On March 10, I experienced the four-hour, sold-out, sixth annual Love Rocks NYC show in the grandeur of New York City's Beacon Theatre. Yet my perspective was far different from the rest of the audience. I studied the musicians, yes, but from their backs. As I hunched from my post as drum tech, securely hidden behind the kit and the congas, my eyes darted from the musicians I was working for to the faces of nearly 3,000 radiant music fans.

Love Rocks NYC is an annual benefit concert for God's Love We Deliver, an organization that provides high-quality meals and illness-specific nutrition education — free of charge — to people living with HIV/AIDS, cancer and other serious illnesses. All the proceeds from Love Rocks go to God's Love We Deliver. This year's concert celebrated the delivery of the organization's 30 millionth meal. The organization, now composed of over 18,000 volunteers, was the epiphany of one woman during the brunt of the HIV/AIDS epidemic.

In 1985, Ganga Stone, a hospice volunteer, delivered a meal to Richard Sale, a man living with AIDS and too ill to cook for himself. Stone realized that due to the severity of Sale's situation, medically tailored meals were required to sustain him. On the way to deliver the meal, a minister stopped Stone and

asked what she was doing. She told him, and he replied, "You're not just delivering food. ... You're delivering God's love." A year later, God's Love We Deliver was co-founded by Stone and Jane Best.

Since its inception in 2017, Love Rocks has raised \$20 million and helped fund 2 million meals. In 2021, God's Love We Deliver distributed more than 2.6 million nutritionally tailored meals to nearly 10,000 New Yorkers. During the show, God's Love We Deliver CEO Karen Pearl announced that at least \$50,000 of this year's raised funds will go toward aiding the people of Ukraine due to Russia's invasion of the country.

Stars from the entertainment and music worlds filled the bill. Keith Richards reunited with the X-Pensive Winos for one of their only performances since their 1993 American tour. The show featured guest stars, each playing one to three songs with the house band, ranging from Mavis Staples to Hozier, Warren Haynes, Melissa Etheridge and Jackson Browne.

Between performances, comedians and entertainers floated on and off stage to encourage the audience to donate. Hosts included Steve Schirripa of *The Sopranos*, Mario Cantone of *Sex and the City*, comedian Michelle Buteau and actor Laurence Fishburne. *Groundhog Day* star Bill Murray, a longtime surprise guest at Love Rocks, appeared the most. At one point in the show, he was center stage, microphone in hand, jesting with the audience for donations. At another, he found a home at the congas with percussionist Pedrito Martinez contributing to the beat with a percussion instrument in hand.

Photos by Melanie Formosa

STEREO
THE FINEST IN JAZZ SINCE 1979

2022 THE PRESS

**i studied the
musicians, yes, but**

**FROM
THEIR
BACKS**



Pedrito Martinez/Will Lee/Shawn Pelton

STEREO
THE FINEST IN JAZZ SINCE 1979

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'But The Audience Makes It'

ALL WORTH IT



The concert, which takes at least eight months to organize, unites the house band and crew at the Beacon on a Monday in the beginning of March to prepare, rehearse and produce the Thursday show. I've been involved in every show, now up to six. I am a drum tech along with Tony Formosa — my father and a veteran of the music industry. We work with legendary session drummer Steve Gadd and Shawn Pelton, the house drummer for *Saturday Night Live*.

Being a drum tech at Love Rocks generally means I work with my dad to set up and break down the drum kit and jump to fix anything that goes wrong in between — flying wingnuts, pedals snapping or bulbs dying in the middle of a tune. My primary concern during the show was making sure a wingnut didn't soar off Pelton's cymbal stand. I eyed it as it spun in one direction and then the other, like a lazy Susan, while he pounded out, channeling Keith Moon, for a rendition of The Who's "Baba O'Riley" with David Shaw fronting the band.

This year I discovered a newfound passion. On the first day of rehearsals, Pedrito Martinez (@pedritomartinezmusic on Instagram) — a Grammy-nominated percussionist who has worked with Paul Simon, Bruce Springsteen, Dave Matthews, Jackson Browne and Elton John among many more — unzipped a black, unassuming backpack and eased out an impressive-looking, expensive camera. I was in awe as he handed it to me with a huge grin and instructed me to snap away.

The Canon EOS R5 occupied my first two days of house band rehearsals. I wiggled underneath Pedrito's congas as he worked his magic, aiming for a worm's-eye view of him at his instrument.

Next I found myself at the top balcony, leaning against the seats of the very last row, getting the whole production in frame. I let the camera be my guide as I documented the rehearsals of the marquee show, one that featured both Keith Richards and Bill Murray.

The event organizers announced, prior to the encore when all the musicians herded onstage to sing "Like A Rolling Stone," that the seventh annual Love Rocks NYC will be held at the Beacon Theatre on March 9, 2023.

Being part of a production means there is an overarching obligation to perfection. Not only are you focused on getting the job done for yourself, but you don't want to disappoint your fellow crew members, the musicians and managers you are working for or, most importantly, the audience. The people who paid the money, the people who dedicated a Thursday night to simply unleash and revel.

But the audience makes it all worth it. My station behind the drums always shifts that Thursday night.

When the familiar sight transforms into a sea of faces, each with stories and secrets I'll never know, I remind myself how lucky I am — to have witnessed so many mind-blowing musical moments, to be involved in a concert for a noteworthy cause, to be able to soak in all that joy from the thousands gathered. I have always been amazed at the indescribable talent musicians hold, the utter beauty they transmit through their instruments and the audience's excitable urge to have an excuse *not* to be stiff for once. It stuns me that we, as humans, have the ability to surrender to music, a language we somehow all innately know, just by simply listening. ■

I WATCHED EVERY WES ANDERSON FILM SO YOU DON'T HAVE TO



BY JANE MONTALTO

PART I: THE EPIPHANY

All my life, I have thought of myself as a film lover — a cinephile, one might call it. I inherited this love for movies from my parents. Growing up, they shared the movies that were important to them with me. Some of the ones that stuck with me are *Stand by Me*, *Ferris Bueller's Day Off* and *Sixteen Candles*. Watching these movies helped me feel more connected to my parents, and I learned how these films could capture a specific feeling, speaking to a shared experience with the viewer. Movies are powerful because they have the ability to make you feel something. Though I love watching movies, I admit that I don't know much about the history of film, and I think that now is the time to change that. I have never fully immersed myself in a specific director's full body of work. Cue my stroke of convenient genius: "Why don't I pick a famous director and watch all of their films?" Here we stand, at the edge of the ocean, ready to embark on a voyage of film.

To start this journey off, we have Wes Anderson. I have always heard film bros* refer to him as the god of filmmaking, worshipping the very ground he walks on. I decided to watch all his work in chronological order. Prior to this experiment, I had only seen three of his movies: *Fantastic Mr. Fox*, *Isle of Dogs* and *The French Dispatch*. I remembered these movies as artistic and charming, so I was excited to expand what I knew about his filmography. Still, I felt nervous, as he has quite a substantial body of work — 10 films in his arsenal, to be exact.

Be warned — there are slight spoilers of Wes Anderson's movies ahead. Since the objective of this piece is to introduce you to Anderson's films and hopefully inspire you to watch some, I will try my best to give away as little as possible.

PART II: CLASSIC WES

Wes Anderson has been refining his craft for quite a while now. Every Wes Anderson movie includes a few distinct trademarks. He employs symmetry, drawing the viewers into his whimsical universe. Shots of interest include bird's-eye views of peculiar spreads of things, a unique panning and tracking style and x-ray shots of his maximalist set designs. These sets are full of lively colors yet limited to specific color palettes, and the font choices in each film are absolutely scrumptious to the eye. The characters are quirky and imperfect, which humanizes them to the audience. They are typically played by a recurring group of actors — some of the usual suspects include Owen and Luke Wilson, Bill Murray, Jason Schwartzman and Anjelica Hutson.

These particular style choices make his films instantly recognizable. There is a certain charm to his style — the universe he has created is immersive and indescribably his own. Watching his films in succession shows you the way his style has changed over time, which makes it even more enjoyable. I went into this project skeptical as I had heard a lot of hype. However, I have come to appreciate him as an auteur. His films contain little quirks that he fussed over in order to align with his overall vision, and I recognize how much commitment and creativity that takes. His movies are so full of his style that they are practically overflowing with Anderson-ness. Wes Anderson movies transcend genre, and there is one for every kind of person.

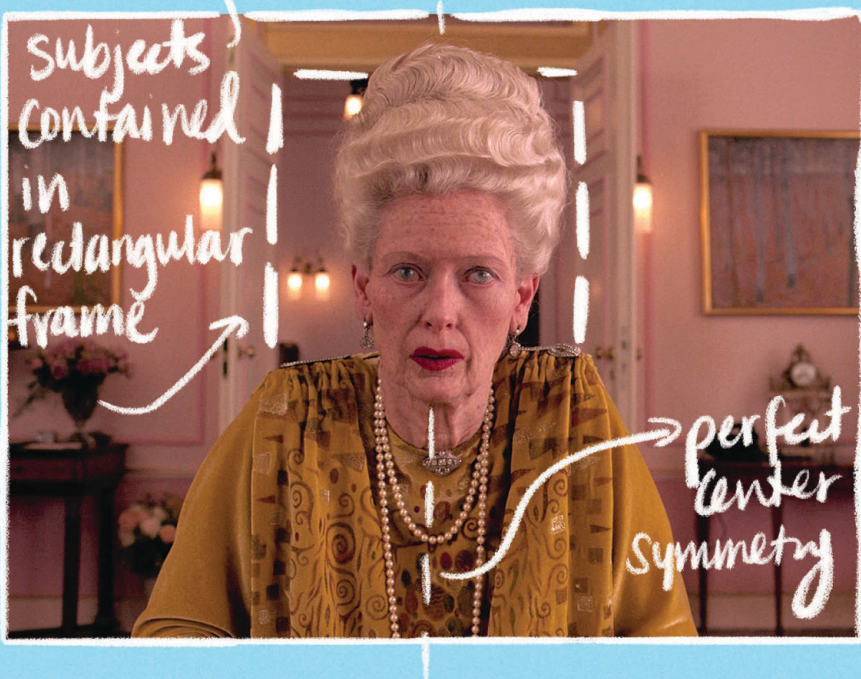
* A film bro, as defined by the ever-reputable Urban Dictionary, is "an arrogant and often condescending person who pretends to know a lot about film."



PART III: WHICH WES ANDERSON FILM IS FOR YOU?

When I was first going into this project, I was planning on doing a ranking, and then talking about each film in the order I decided to rank them. As I continued to watch, I noticed that after every movie I said pretty much the same thing: "That one was my favorite!" Each movie had unique elements that captured my heart. I learned that all of Anderson's films are my favorite in their own way.

At the end of it all, I failed to create a ranking. What I have decided on instead is a list to help you find the movie that would suit you best. I truly believe that every Wes Anderson movie is good — I did not feel like there was a single one not worth watching. Without further ado, here is the list, in no particular order.



THE ONE EVERYONE SHOULD WATCH: *THE GRAND BUDAPEST HOTEL* (2014)

Set in 1930s Europe, *The Grand Budapest Hotel* combines comedy and crime to create 100 perfect minutes of excitement and laughter that you just can't take your eyes off. The Grand Budapest Hotel is a formerly bustling and extravagant ski resort operated by the ever-accommodating host Gustave H. (Ralph Fiennes) and his best pal Zero (Tony Revolori), next in line for the job. The story is exciting and adventurous. Anderson has such a humor to all his films without them being pure comedies — there is so much more to it than just a laugh. I just really loved how this one made me feel. I was completely invested in it the entire time. If you don't take anything else away from this list, I hope you at least watch this movie. ★★★★★

THE ONE FOR THOSE WITH THE BROKEN FAMILY THEY CAN'T HELP BUT LOVE: *THE ROYAL TENENBAUMS* (2001)

This one is representative of Anderson's classic storytelling, as it is full of character development. *The Royal Tenenbaums* is a character study of a family that has fallen apart at the hands of its patriarch, the titular Royal Tenenbaum (Gene Hackman). The three Tenenbaum children, Chas (Ben Stiller), Richie (Luke Wilson) and Margot (Gwyneth Paltrow) are all child prodigies in their own fields — business, tennis and writing, respectively. At the start of the film, they all move in under the same roof for the first time in over a decade, following the news that their father is dying of stomach cancer. Royal is characterized not as an "asshole," but instead as "kind of a son of a bitch." He is also a pathological liar. Hijinks ensue. This is definitely one to watch if you can because the film is both visually pleasing and comical. It must be mentioned that it features a very important scene set to a song by Elliott Smith, who is one of my most favorite musicians of all time, so that was a lovely treat. I highly recommend this one. ★★★★★



THE ONE FOR THOSE PICKED LAST IN DODGEBALL: MOONRISE KINGDOM (2012)

This movie is after the hearts of formerly friendless children. Maybe they lingered on the outskirts of multiple friend groups, but never felt comfortable or safe in any one place. They always felt different, sticking out like a sore thumb — the ones who quietly fell behind the group on the sidewalk when there was not enough room. Alright, I might be projecting here a little bit, but this movie felt like a warm hug. *Moonrise Kingdom* is the story of two young outcasts and their naive, forbidden love. The characters are charming underdogs, and you really root for them all the way through the movie. It has a pretty intense climax — which was a nice change of pace, as many critics argue that Anderson's movies tend to be about nothing. The ending is also delightful.

Without giving too much away, this movie has a few pretty intense scenes where unexpected things happen. Anderson makes the interesting choice to hide the action of the scenes, including just the sound effects of the occurrence, followed by a visual that displays the aftermath. He is taking hold of the art of the implied, which piqued my interest and added power to what could have been gruesome to watch. He is basically telling the viewers, "I'll spare you the grim details, you get the idea." This was the first time I noticed this in one of his films, but I think it's a cool trademark to add to his arsenal. ★★★★★

THE ONE FOR THE MISCHIEVOUS CHILD AT HEART: FANTASTIC MR. FOX (2009)

Anderson's style shines its beautiful light on the audience in *Fantastic Mr. Fox*. This is a stop-motion film, so every little detail has been very carefully planned through, and it shows. Based on the Roald Dahl book of the same name, *Fantastic Mr. Fox* is about a charming fox's extravagant, three-part raid of his fox-hating human neighbors. This movie is full of whimsy and wit. I love the character design, the coloring and the set design. Every single aspect of this film is just so insanely pleasing to look at. It was such a treat to watch — truly a joy. I remember watching this as a kid too, which added a nice layer of nostalgia for me. I would love to see Wes Anderson's take on other Dahl stories, as their styles meld together quite nicely. ★★★★★



THE ONE FOR THOSE WITH BAGGAGE (PHYSICAL AND EMOTIONAL): *THE DARJEELING LIMITED* (2007)

The Darjeeling Limited is easily one of Anderson's most underrated works. It opens with a chaotic and funny scene where we watch Bill Murray chasing after a train, only to be bested by one of our main protagonists. This opening is great — it throws us into the world of Francis (Owen Wilson), Peter (Adrien Brody) and Jack Whitman (Jason Schwartzman), brothers who have grown apart in the years following their father's death.

All three brothers have a strained relationship with their mother. This manifests in Francis' peculiar maternal relationship with Peter and Jack. I would describe his love as smothering, the kind that makes your cuddly pet squirm out of your clutches when you just want to hug and snuggle them. I was intrigued as I watched this very realistic portrayal of complex familial love unfold. ★★★★★½

THE ONE FOR THOSE WHO USE HUMOR TO MEND THEIR GRIEF: *THE LIFE AQUATIC WITH STEVE ZISSOU* (2004)

Steve Zissou (Bill Murray) is one of those characters that you hate to love, and I think those characters are the ones that typically stick with me the most. I am starting to notice a trend with this kind of Anderson character, the *ah-he-sucks-but-why-do-I-kind-of-like-him* type. I love the moral conflict that Anderson puts on the viewer by focusing on characters like this. People are not perfect — they contain multitudes. *The Life Aquatic with Steve Zissou* paints an interesting picture of a once-great researcher who is dealing with the loss of his best friend. I was surprised by the emotional turn this movie took. I also loved the small stop-motion animation segments and the soundtrack, which consists of acoustic David Bowie covers sung in Portuguese. These touches add a sense of magic to the film as a whole. ★★★★★½

THE ONE FOR THE PRANKSTER WHO HATED HIGH SCHOOL: *RUSHMORE* (1998)

Looking back, this one may have been more forgettable than I thought. I enjoyed it, but it doesn't really stick out that much. However, that doesn't mean it wasn't an entertaining watch. *Rushmore* is about Max Fischer (Jason Schwartzman), an overly ambitious prep school student who falls in love with a teacher. Yeah, the plot might be a little problematic, though what sticks out to me most from this film is Bill Murray's performance. His hilarious physical comedy made this movie for me. And who doesn't love a classic prank war between a middle-aged father and a 15-year-old boy? ★★★★★



THE P.O.V. SHOT

THE ONE FOR THE WES ANDERSON BUFF: *BOTTLE ROCKET* (1996)

Since I decided I would watch these movies in chronological order, *Bottle Rocket* was the first I watched. It starts when protagonist Anthony (Luke Wilson) leaves a voluntary mental hospital, faking an escape so that his best friend Dignan (Owen Wilson) thinks they are about to start a life of crime. They are charmingly bad at being self-proclaimed criminals.

The movie is definitely fun to watch. You can see here and there the seedlings of classic Anderson. Particularly, I noticed the beginnings of his now classic comedic style, eccentric characters and interesting bird's-eye views. This one may not be his strongest film, but that's understandable — it was the first film he directed. It is a great film to watch if you are looking to see the origins of Wes Anderson. ★★★½

THE ONE FOR THOSE WHO CRY WATCHING TIKTOKS ABOUT MAN'S BEST FRIEND: *ISLE OF DOGS* (2018)

I have a soft spot for this one. I have seen it only once before and it is a fond memory. I saw it with my dad at a pre-screening in 2018. It was so cool to experience a brand-new film with such a small group of people.

I rewatched *Isle of Dogs* for this article, and it was just how I remembered it. Though it is arguably one of Anderson's weaker pieces, I still enjoyed watching it. It has beautiful stop-motion animation, the same type that was used in *Fantastic Mr. Fox*. If you enjoyed *Fantastic Mr. Fox* and feel like you can't get enough of that style, I would recommend this one. It is full of adventure and contempt for the government, and delivers a heartwarming story about dogs that may make you shed a tear. Or maybe it's just really easy for me to cry watching stuff about dogs — I just love them so much. (Cut me some slack, I'm a Pisces moon!) ★★★½

THE ONE FOR THE ARTSY FILM (OR JOURNALISM) MAJOR: *THE FRENCH DISPATCH* (2021)

Being that *The French Dispatch* is Anderson's most recent release, I was very excited to see it in a movie theater. However, I was a tad disappointed. I actually watched this movie twice just to make sure I felt the same the second time around, and I did. After having watched every other Wes Anderson movie, I think I liked it less on the second viewing. Don't get me wrong, it's still an enjoyable movie that depicts the journalistic process in a very interesting and accurate way. Yet, knowing Anderson's expert storytelling skills, I was left wanting more. The format of this story was interesting, but as a viewer, I wish I could have learned more about the other characters in the newsroom rather than some random stories for the magazine.

With that said, this movie is Anderson gloating and flexing his cinematic muscles for all of us to gawk at. It is practically overflowing with technical skill, always offering something to look at — almost too much to look at. I remember during my first watch, I felt overwhelmed, like there was so much on screen that I didn't know where to look. Watching this movie again, with prior knowledge of what was going on, I felt more confident to focus on some of the minor intricacies of each scene. Still, this is a cool movie to watch if you are particularly interested in Anderson's cinematic style. ★★★



PART IV: I THINK I AM A WES ANDERSON FILM BRO

Ten movies and just under 17 hours of watching later, I have officially watched every Wes Anderson movie made thus far. I am ecstatic to be able to have those bragging rights. It is so interesting to see his films develop over the course of his career. I especially like the way certain style choices that appear to be minute recur throughout his body of work. For instance, the organization of Dignan's itinerary in *Bottle Rocket* is showcased by an overhead shot — a type of shot I saw appear regularly in every subsequent film. Little details like this make me smile to myself when watching, especially now after seeing all of his films. My favorite thing about Anderson's films is how emotional they make me feel. At first glance, his movies might appear to be simply quirky and aesthetically pleasing. However, underneath the surface lie profound emotional stories about imperfect characters.

His films remind me of this made-up word I saw on an Instagram post once — sonder. Sonder is the realization that every person that you see in passing is living a life just as complex as your own. They have their own classes, jobs, love interests, traumas and worries — just like you. Anderson's films capture this phenomenon by focusing on a character and giving the audience a glimpse into their nuanced life.

Without this project I would not have gotten to watch what are now some of my favorite movies, specifically *The Royal Tenenbaums* and *The Grand Budapest Hotel* — though I genuinely enjoyed every single one of his creations. I hope you found at least one movie you want to watch out of these 10, and maybe you will find your new favorite movie like I did. Happy watching! ■

EBB & FLOW
THE POETRY OF DÉJÀ RAE
BY LAUREN CANAVAN



Déjà Rae has been journaling for as long as she can remember. It wasn't until a spontaneous conversation with her roommate that she decided to begin sharing her words with the world. Since its creation two years ago, her poetry and prose account has gained over 40,000 followers on Instagram and 18,000 followers on TikTok.

"Everything I write is based on something that I've experienced before," she said.

Déjà Rae sugarcoats nothing. Her words express raw emotions that often get lost in the shuffle. Drawn to the human condition, she has an innate ability to craft some of the most complicated feelings into simple, eloquent words. Her writing reminds readers to embrace and accept their struggles. She shares thoughts on topics including faith, relationships and her journey to finding self-love.

If we don't practice self love, we will search for that love elsewhere.

We will assume that the love we crave is in the hands of another human. We will betray ourselves, put others on a pedestal, and lower our self-worth just to grasp at scraps of affection.

Sweet friend, the love you are looking for is inside you.

Keep digging.

A San Jose native, she attributes her poetic clarity to countless soul-searching walks along the shore.

"I think the beach has really shaped me as a writer because it's allowed me this quiet place of solitude to really go inward."

In 2020, she took a yearlong trip south to Venice, California. While away, she was still drawn to the ocean, the crashing waves serving as the soundtrack to many 15-mile runs. She speaks fondly of her time there, referring to it as the most transformative year of her life.

Shortly after the trip, she got a "spiritual feeling" that it was time to start mapping out her very first collection of writing. The title came easily: *Ebb & Flow*. The organization of the chapters reflects a cyclical pattern of emotions that we all too commonly face. Déjà Rae refers to her chapters as "seasons," implying that, like nature's patterns, past experiences are bound to resurface.

You do not have time for anyone that does not have time for you.

Let me say that again.

You do not have time for anyone that does not have time for you.

"The whole concept of *Ebb & Flow* is that yes, we are all on this growing journey, but once we learn a lesson, we're probably going to have to learn it again and again for the rest of our lives — and that's okay," she said.

Ebb & Flow is a therapeutic read — one that assures readers they are not alone in their complicated feelings. Despite the wisdom she shares in the book, Déjà Rae admits to readers that even she, the author, is a work in progress. She says that writing gives her the opportunity to dissect her own feelings and, in turn, hopes it can help others to reach some level of personal healing as well.

One of her favorite pieces from *Ebb & Flow* is about receiving "half love."

"At that time, I was going through a situation with someone where I was getting half love. [The poem] was sort of me putting my foot down and saying, *I'm not settling for half love anymore.*"

In the midst of the publishing process, Déjà Rae moved to New York, where she is currently pursuing a master's degree in data analytics. While it took some time for her to adjust from the sounds of crashing waves to the sounds of street construction, her creative juices haven't stopped flowing. In fact, she is almost finished with her next book, which is set to come out later this year.

Regardless of what's to come, Déjà Rae will continue fostering a space that both normalizes and celebrates the often-arduous path of self-growth. Her writing is unapologetic and invites readers to embrace emotions that have long been stigmatized.

"I think the more that we can just surrender to the process [of growth], the more at ease we can be. Whenever I'm in a tough season now, I remind myself that it's just a season, and it isn't forever." ■

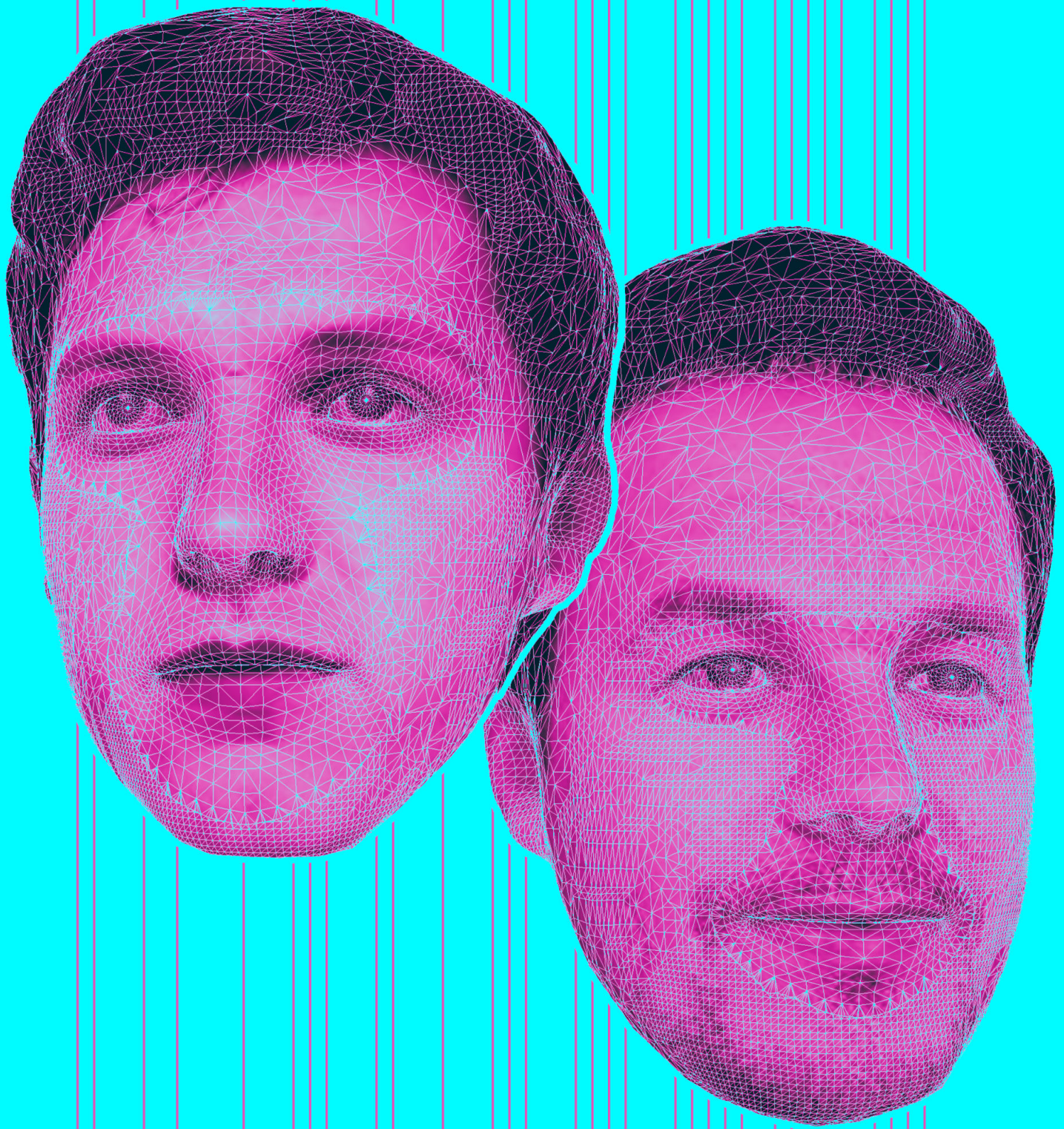
*If you want half love
You'll have to find another heart
I don't give my love in pieces
I don't give my love in parts*

*If you want empty kisses
You'll need to look somewhere else
I don't need your sweet nothings
I can fully love myself*

*If you're looking for a fix
If you need a loving touch
You can find another woman
I am not your lustful crutch*

*If you're longing for a fill
If you need some satisfaction
You should look within yourself
Instead of searching for distractions*

*I am not your toyed attraction
I'm not your sexual transaction
I don't need your reactions
I don't give my love in fractions*



DOES

THE
CURE
FOR
THE
VIDEO
GAME
MOVIE
CURSE?
BY DYLAN CALLO

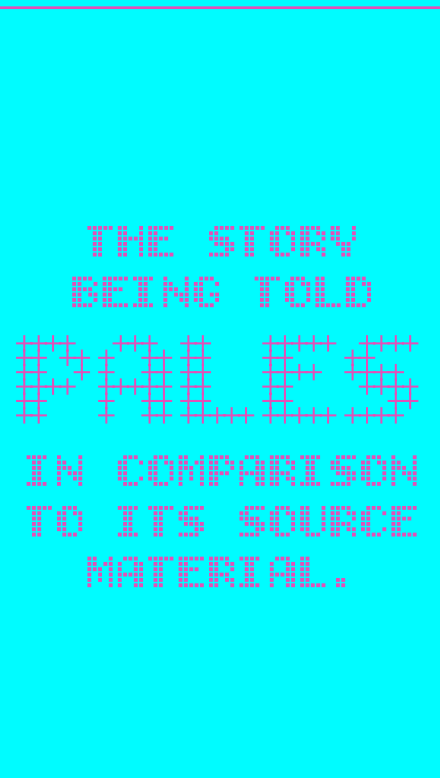
++++ Since the early 1990s, starting with the now infamous *Super Mario Bros.*, movies based on video games have been the laughing stock of the film industry. Most films based on games have a Rotten Tomatoes critic score of 40% or less, so it is easy to wonder why they keep getting made and why the quality has not improved past mediocre.

The video game movie genre was born in the '90s, when movie producers realized they could create low effort B-movies under the names of popular games like *Mortal Kombat* or *Street Fighter* and make loads of money. As these movies have become more popular, viewers have started to notice their poor quality. This so-called "video game movie curse" has slowly found its way into mainstream conversation with films like *Doom*, *Resident Evil* and *Lara Croft: Tomb Raider*, all released in the early 2000s. Each of these films were panned by critics despite bringing in millions to the box office. Many video game movies have come out since then, and their track record has slightly improved with movies like *Sonic the Hedgehog*, leaving people wondering if the curse may one day be lifted. With recent entries into the video game genre ripped to shreds by critics, fans of the Sony-owned *Uncharted* series began to worry that their favorite game franchise would become another victim of the curse.

Admittedly, I was one of those skeptical fans going into this movie. When the trailer was released, I was less than impressed. I thought it would be hard to separate Tom Holland from the Peter Parker/Spider-Man role that he has been attached to since 2016's *Captain America: Civil War*. However, I feel he does a good job making the character his own. Dropping the awkward high school mannerisms he used in *Spider-Man* in favor of a more suave and headstrong character makes Tom Holland's Nathan Drake an enjoyable lead to watch. While he is not a perfect replica of his in-game counterpart, Holland's Drake has the perfect balance of smarts and swagger — harkening back to the *Indiana Jones* films that the *Uncharted* series gets most of its inspiration from. The same, however, cannot be said for Mark Wahlberg's Victor Sullivan. Sully in the film — unlike in the video game — is essentially a basic Mark Wahlberg character, lacking depth and personality outside of the classic "charisma" that we have come accustomed to throughout Wahlberg's career. That being said, the chemistry

between Wahlberg and Holland is one of the high points of the movie if only because Tom Holland's charm and wit make Wahlberg more palatable.

On the topic of wit, the *Uncharted* series is known for it. Drake's fast sense of humor, wisecracks and jokes in the face of certain doom add another level to the tone of the movie. I feel this film certainly delivers in that regard, largely due to director Reuben Fleisher. Fleisher's history in directing includes the *Zombieland* films and the first *Venom* movie, and his sense of humor certainly carries over from his previous works. The jokes are snarky,



well written and certainly fit the tone of classic *Uncharted*.

But every rose has its thorn. While the humor and set pieces are very well done as per Fleisher's norm, the cinematography and writing certainly leave a lot to be desired. The film sees our protagonists traveling to many different and truly gorgeous locations like Rome and the Philippines. I wish it had the cinematography to showcase the beauty of each locale. The main games in the series put a large emphasis on location, with Drake and his friends traveling to a wide variety of locations as the score changes to match the theme of each place. Long sequences of the player walking around to take in the atmosphere and environment, like the

Tibetan village sequence in *Uncharted 2*, help give each of these locations a unique personality. The *Uncharted* movie does little to showcase Drake's travels aside from a playful homage to *Indiana Jones's* map segments.

The main flaw *Uncharted* faces is the script. It tries to compile a mishmash of famous sequences from the game, such as the cargo plane set piece, while also trying to tell a story unique to the film. The result is a somewhat disjointed adventure with pacing issues that slow down the second act, leading to a lackluster climax with little emotional weight due to strange decisions in character writing. For example, at the beginning of the third act, leading lady Chloe, played by Sophia Taylor Ali, drops out of the movie never to be seen again — presumably because the writers did not know how to include her in the finale.

For a large portion of this movie, all three leads are trying to find out who they can trust, simultaneously betraying each other. The "will they, won't they" partner dynamic that Drake and Sully share throughout the movie gets stale after their many falling-outs, especially since those who have played the games already know the outcome.

The film's primary antagonist, played by Antonio Banderas, seems to harm it more than help it, constantly walking the line between over the top and painfully bland. A better script certainly could have been the saving grace of this movie, as a lot of its core issues come down to poor writing. Multiple betrayals and flat antagonists bog the pacing down, especially in the second act, and make *Uncharted* a predictable mess at times. Aside from the flashy set pieces, flying pirate ships and puzzles akin to the likes of *National Treasure*, *Uncharted* is a rather boring and unsurprising experience. While the film does deliver on being a fun popcorn romp, it doesn't exactly feel worth its weight in golden treasure. At the end of the day, the story being told pales in comparison to its source material. While big names like Tom Holland and Mark Wahlberg have certainly helped the movie to plunder the box office with a \$44.1 million opening weekend, the taste of the video game movie curse still lingers in the back of my palate after watching, as I feel the film barely passes the mediocre mark. ■

LATE BLOOMER

I did not realize I was queer until I was 19 years old. There were hints and clues here and there growing up, but my sexuality never really crossed my mind.

I was always the perfect kid. My parents never put any pressure on me to have good grades or to stay out of trouble. Lucky enough for them, I came with a system programmed into my brain that always kept me in check.

When I graduated high school, I opened up a time capsule I made in fourth grade. I was surprised to find I had made a list of requirements for future Jane. On it were rules that advised me to make sure to never drink alcohol or do drugs, accompanied by a threatening message that I had better be going to an Ivy League school. I hate to break it to you Jane, but I did not uphold your standards. I didn't even apply to an Ivy.



Memories of my childhood are plagued with anxious feelings and moments that make me wince looking back on them. Kids are brutal — they have no filter and will call it how it is, no matter how painful the truth may be. They can smell that you are different from a mile away. The reason you are different from them might not be apparent at first glance, yet somehow, they can still tell that you stick out from the rest. I often felt outcast and out of place in elementary school. I found my closest friends to be boys, and I loved when I was called a tomboy. As we grew older, the girls and boys got more and more separated into their gendered friend groups. The boys I was friends with quickly became swooped up with their “girlfriends,” and I was left not knowing what to do. I spent a lot of my time in elementary school in tears, sad for a reason that no one was able to discern. I so badly wanted to be perfect and to fit in with everybody else that I was creating my own rules to follow in order to meet my own idea of perfection.

I moved across the country as I was going into middle school. In my eyes, moving to Texas was the perfect blank slate. I saw it as an opportunity to finally fit in.

I was depressed and I didn't know why. There was a disconnect between the way I felt and the way I looked.



In Texas, I had some good friends and made some good and bad memories.

I still felt different though, almost like I was putting on a different skin every morning, a perfect-girl facade. I learned that it was necessary to do that because I was so terrified of being different.

High school was fine however much I claimed to despise it. Nothing terribly bad happened to me since I went to a huge school with around 4,000 kids total. It was quite easy for me to fall to the back and go unnoticed, but I was depressed and I didn't know why. There was a disconnect between the way I felt and the way I looked — I knew something was off. Even though I felt like there was something going on deep down, I knew my life in the South would be better off if I fell in line with everybody else. The walls were my home. I blended in and survived through a period in my life when I felt like a ghost.

Looking back, the fact that I'm queer feels like it should have been something I figured out much earlier than I did. It was lying under my nose this entire time. I never had a boyfriend. Any time a boy started getting a little too close, I would cut him off entirely. I subconsciously started to dress unconventionally and cut my hair short in hopes of further deterring the attention of boys. I would get nervous when girls asked me who I had a crush on, grasping at straws to pick a random boy so I didn't seem different. I was insanely obsessed with *RuPaul's Drag Race* at 14, crying when my favorite drag queen won the competition, then turning around and claiming it was just because I was an ally. I think I knew, but I didn't want to think about it.

Everything I had been worrying about was on the table for me and my mother to see.



It is very hard when you're in a position like that, when you have to question something you thought was concrete your whole life.

It hit me the hardest as I started college. College is supposed to be about finding yourself, but I felt less myself than ever. I felt almost like an NPC — someone who was just there to serve as a sidequest for someone else, not even a fully developed person.

My depression was at an all-time high, and I had no idea how to fix it. I spent my days hiding in my dorm, texting my mom about how much I hated college. There was an emptiness I felt — something was missing. I figured it was intense homesickness. I decided to commute the next semester in hopes that it would help my issues a bit.

Then the pandemic started. I was locked in my room with nothing but a single skylight in a two-bedroom apartment with my parents. My mom encouraged me to try and find love through dating apps. I tried many times, talking to countless boys on end, forcing painfully dry conversations.

I was a serial ghoster. If I could tell all those boys I ghosted that I was terribly sorry for treating them that way, I would in a heartbeat. It was not their fault that I was a lesbian who just did not know it.

Every once in a while, my mom would check in with my love life and ask me how it was going. She would ask why I wouldn't call the boys I would talk to or meet them for coffee. The conversation would make my stomach turn. I would lash out at my mom, something I am not proud of. These were the only times we would argue. Still, I did not realize why I was feeling the way I did.

It all came to a peak in December 2020. I was trying to force myself to like this one boy from a dating app. He messaged me on Snapchat and I opened his picture. Following suit, I tried to

take one to send back. None of the pictures would cut it for me — I was retaking them over and over in a frenzy. I got so worked up that I started to cry. My mom sat with me on the couch and we tried to talk it out. What exactly we said is unclear to me now, but the sentiment remains. Everything I had been worrying about was on the table for me and my mother to see. It is very hard when you're in a position like that, when you have to question something that you thought was concrete your whole life.

I thought being perfect meant being the societal default. Even if I wondered in passing what life would be like if I was gay, I would quickly shoo the thought away. I never gave myself the chance to spend a moment and think about how I actually felt — not just what the heteronormative society I live in perpetuates. Once I had given myself that moment, it all started to unravel.





I remember taking a picture of myself after I wiped my tears in the bathroom to remember that day. It was like that moment in the movie *But I'm a Cheerleader* when Natasha Lyonne's character screams, "Oh my god, I'm a homosexual!"

A weight was lifted off of my shoulders. There was still a lot of pain and tears between then and now, but I finally feel like myself. My outside matches the way I feel on the inside. It is a euphoric feeling.

Finally being true to myself and my own identity has brought people into my life that are so special to me. Things are really good. I transferred to a new college and I love it so much. I have some amazing friends that understand me for who I truly am. I have a girlfriend who is so perfect I could cry just thinking about her.

Falling for a girl came so easily to me — I just had to allow myself to. It was just like fitting that last piece of the puzzle together. I have never been happier. When I look at old pictures of myself from before I came out, I don't recognize the person I see. It's the weirdest phenomenon. Even my girlfriend doesn't recognize me in old photos. I guess gay puberty just hits different.

I see someone so sad and so lost, craving love that she doesn't think she will ever deserve. I think if she saw me now, she would be scared but relieved.

Everybody's coming out is different. Queer realization can hit you like a bus or creep up over time — maybe even a combination of both. There is no right way to go about it. Now I feel the most like myself that I ever have, and I have gained a confidence that I didn't know I could have. I feel secure in my identity, and that makes me finally feel confident when I walk into a room. The pride I feel in my own identity is something I hold close to my heart. It is something I fought and hid away my entire life, but now it's one of my favorite parts of myself. ■

*Falling for a
girl came so
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myself to.*





If you or somebody you know is in the LGBTQ community and needs to reach out for help, visit thetrevorproject.org or call their free and confidential helpline at 1-866-488-7386.



how to select the clothes you wear every day

by rafael cruvinel



Every morning, Kaitlyn Foley stares at her closet for at least 20 minutes. As the web director of Blush Magazine, the Fashion Institute of Technology's student-run publication, Foley said she's "not a planner" when it comes to selecting her outfit for the day — but she still pays attention to detail.

Foley said that while her work clothes are mainly black, her everyday style is more colorful. She likes to match colors with the current season.

"I usually would stick to neutrals and gray tones in the winter just because that's what winter feels like to me," she said. "In the summer, I wear a lot of brighter colors, and in the fall, I wear a lot of browns."

Like Foley, many young adults are attentive to their everyday clothing choices. Even so, selecting clothes for a daily routine remains a puzzling topic.

I know from personal experience that, although a fun process, developing a regular style is not easy. Sometimes I'll imagine *the outfit*, but when I try it on, it doesn't seem to be that pretty, or different, or "aesthetic," or whatever word I had in my head when I thought it up. And because I'm not fashion knowledgeable, it is hard to distinguish whether I'm just being picky or the outfit really isn't that good.

Knowing that a lot of people have this difficulty, fashion influencers decided to share what they wear through social media, usually with tags such as "#lookfortheday." But you don't need to be a professional influencer to do it.

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Katie Hill, now a sophomore magazine journalism major at Syracuse University, created an Instagram page back in eighth grade to post mirror selfies of her daily looks. She still posts her outfit nearly every day.

Hill explained that her process of creating an outfit starts by checking the weather before she goes to sleep. Then she will choose a piece of clothing and craft the next day's look around that one piece. When pairing and matching items from her wardrobe, she draws inspiration from other social media pages.

"Sometimes I'll see an outfit on Pinterest and try to recreate that outfit using my own clothes," she said.

Beyond aesthetics, giving your daily outfits attention can have a positive impact.

Ariana Dimitrakis, a fashion writer, said that what you wear should make you more confident. She is the author of *Female Empowered Fashion*, co-founder of FIT Magazine and creator of the Here and Haute blog.

"Dressing up makes it easier to go out and be more motivated to do things," she explained. "It brightens your day to get dressed up."

I understand her point. I feel much more motivated to go to my classes when I'm wearing a nice piece like my yellow vest, my beige boots or my maroon cashmere sweater. It gives my daily commitments a sense of fanciness and importance because I prepared myself for them — I made an effort to look good for them.

It is also important to understand that styles are volatile, meaning that your style will be subject to change – sometimes extreme change – depending on your state of mind.

Dimitrakis said that she doesn't have a style. What she wears one day can be completely different from what she wears the next.

In my experience, what I wear depends on a variety of factors, including how I'm feeling, who I'm seeing and what I'm doing that day. That's why I don't like to tie my everyday wearing to a particular style.

And it is also important to understand that styles are volatile, meaning that your style will be subject to change — sometimes extreme change — depending on your state of mind. Fashion model Jared Hoke said that his style

changed several times as he grew up. He said part of this change came from what he learned about fashion through books, YouTube videos, friends and social media. However, he emphasized something you shouldn't forget: fashion is all about your identity.

"Fashion is the only art that we all indulge on [a] daily basis," Hoke said.

He also argued that you can be taught everything about what is fashionable and what is not, but the clothes you wear should reflect what you think looks good on you, which reflects your uniqueness.



I agree with him and have something to add: If you don't show how special you are, how are others supposed to value you? Regardless of what I wear, I always try to add some element to my look that I think will enhance my personality and make people notice me. For example, recently my anthropology professor laughed at a joke that was written on my shirt and asked me where I got it from. During the next lecture, he called me by a nickname among a class of 200 students. But it's important to say that, like Hoke, these are details I started paying attention to with time.

Akili Dzwil, fashion editor for Blush Magazine, has watched her fashion sense evolve as well. When she was a junior in high school, she said she wore leggings and sweatshirts all the time. Now as a junior in college, she not only pays more attention to what she is wearing, but also shops more consciously.

"Now, if I have an event, I would buy a piece I can work with and put together in different ways, so I don't need to go out and buy something every single time there's an event," Dzwil said.

This is something that I practice too. When I buy a piece, I buy it thinking of holding onto it for several years. I still have my first winter jacket, which was bought when I was 14. In the past eight years, I only had to buy one other and lived perfectly fine with that. Many people worry so much about buying sustainably produced clothes that they forget to consider the merit of just buying less. It is important to understand where our clothes come from and how they were made, but it's also important to shop with quantity consciousness.

Dzwil also said that every process is different, and that fashion can be an amazing tool for self-expression.

I want people to see me as someone who dresses well, or at least someone who tries to.

Foley agreed — when she started college, she was self-conscious because she thought her way of dressing was ordinary. However, time taught her that each person's style is unique.

"I think that with getting older, I realized that I got more comfortable with myself," Foley said.

When I was in my early teens, I asked my parents if they thought I was stylish. At the time, not even I knew why I was asking that. However, I realize today that it is because I want people to see me as someone who dresses well, or at least someone who tries to. It makes my day when my friends compliment a piece I'm wearing.

Jeans and sweatshirts don't work for me every day. I care about colors, textures, brands, moods and concepts. And, because I care about all of that, it was disappointing that I was unable to craft outfits for myself.

It's inspiring and enlightening to see that there are people on this same journey who are helping others on their paths to, as Hoke said, indulge in art on a daily basis. ■





THE INTERNET'S
GREATEST

MUSIC MYSTERY

BY SEAN
DEBELLO

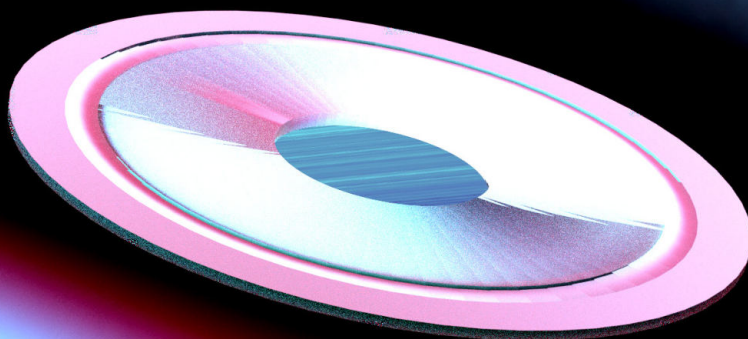
falling out of love is the worst feeling in the world. I'm constantly falling in and out of love with people, ideas and interests. Capturing someone's interest is a tall order to fulfill. It is an even taller order to maintain interest over a prolonged period of time. The album *D>E>A>T>H>M>E>T>A>L* by the British indie band Panchiko encapsulates this exact sentiment. Shrouded in mysterious origins, the indie-rock record was posted on 4chan at some point in the 2010s. The author of the original post had found a CD with a simplistic album cover of Japanese manga in a used music shop. He uploaded the cover and the audio of the album to 4chan and asked if anyone knew about its origins, but no one who stumbled upon the post had any information to offer him. For years, online communities have worked together to discover more about the band behind this mysterious CD, leading to what would eventually become the internet's greatest music mystery.

D>E>A>T>H>M>E>T>A>L was bizarre for two reasons: only one known copy of the original record existed, and the band that produced the record was unknown. The music itself is extremely impressive, especially for an album produced by an unknown band. The record features flowery, light vocals and plays heavily on the theme and sound of nostalgia. The fact that the CD was plagued with disc rot — aging of a CD that typically deforms the sound produced — only further fueled the interest that this album was attracting online. With relatively little information available, many skeptics began to question if this was

all some sort of scheme to market the album. With only the first names of the four band members — Owain, Andy, John and Shaun — and the band name "Panchiko" on the cover, the internet began to search for answers.

Nearly six years after the original post, we finally got the answers we had been looking for. According to Bandcamp, Panchiko member Owain eventually received a message from a random individual asking if he was involved with the band. Within a couple weeks of that first message, ex-band members Shaun and Andy also began to receive emails. Believing their music had fallen into complete obscurity, they were surprised to hear interest. With this new access to the band, years of questions could now be answered.

The members of Panchiko confirmed that the album was released in the year 2000, but that was not enough for the intrigued corners of the internet — they wanted further information. Unfortunately, the band members chose to shy away from the spotlight — although they remastered the album in 2020 and uploaded it to Spotify. In the end, the original 4chan post was not a scheme to gain marketable attraction, nor an experiment of any kind. After garnering so much attention, the people of the internet discovered that Panchiko was just a group of 16- and 17-year-olds making music for the fun of it. This album was simply a case of media being lost and eventually rediscovered.

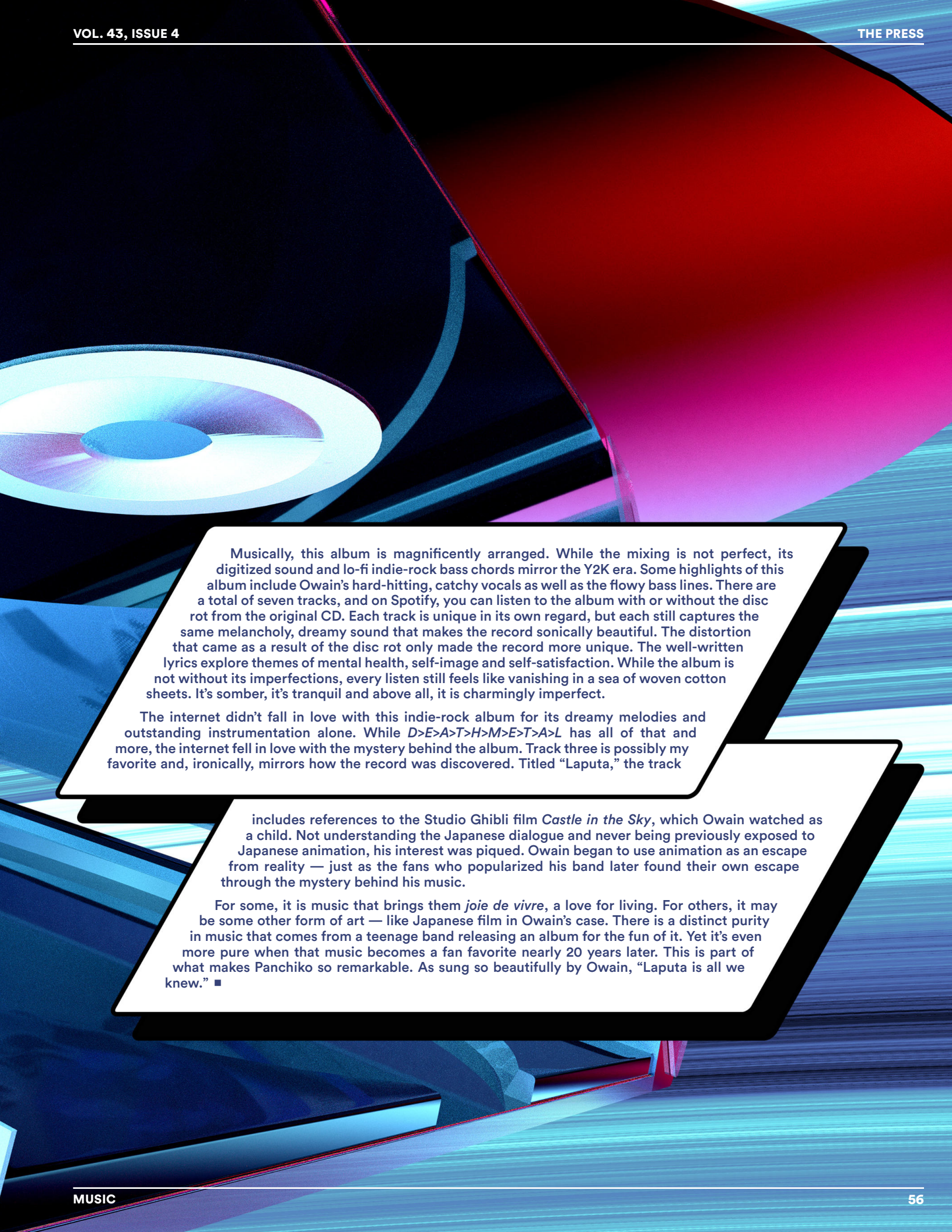




EVERY LISTEN
STILL FEELS LIKE

vanishing

IN A SEA OF WOVEN
COTTON SHEETS.



Musically, this album is magnificently arranged. While the mixing is not perfect, its digitized sound and lo-fi indie-rock bass chords mirror the Y2K era. Some highlights of this album include Owain's hard-hitting, catchy vocals as well as the flowy bass lines. There are a total of seven tracks, and on Spotify, you can listen to the album with or without the disc rot from the original CD. Each track is unique in its own regard, but each still captures the same melancholy, dreamy sound that makes the record sonically beautiful. The distortion that came as a result of the disc rot only made the record more unique. The well-written lyrics explore themes of mental health, self-image and self-satisfaction. While the album is not without its imperfections, every listen still feels like vanishing in a sea of woven cotton sheets. It's somber, it's tranquil and above all, it is charmingly imperfect.

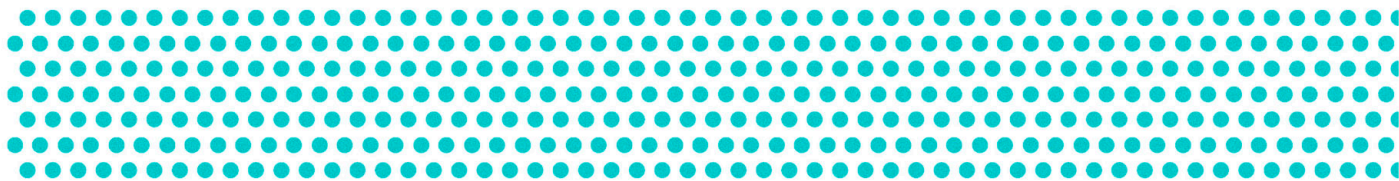
The internet didn't fall in love with this indie-rock album for its dreamy melodies and outstanding instrumentation alone. While *D>E>A>T>H>M>E>T>A>L* has all of that and more, the internet fell in love with the mystery behind the album. Track three is possibly my favorite and, ironically, mirrors how the record was discovered. Titled "Laputa," the track

includes references to the Studio Ghibli film *Castle in the Sky*, which Owain watched as a child. Not understanding the Japanese dialogue and never being previously exposed to Japanese animation, his interest was piqued. Owain began to use animation as an escape from reality — just as the fans who popularized his band later found their own escape through the mystery behind his music.

For some, it is music that brings them *joie de vivre*, a love for living. For others, it may be some other form of art — like Japanese film in Owain's case. There is a distinct purity in music that comes from a teenage band releasing an album for the fun of it. Yet it's even more pure when that music becomes a fan favorite nearly 20 years later. This is part of what makes Panchiko so remarkable. As sung so beautifully by Owain, "Laputa is all we knew." ■

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