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VOLUME 58 ISSUE 1

RUTGERS REVIEW



Letter from the Editor

In between live meetings and Zoom calls, the College Ave Student Center and Murray Hall 114, The Rutgers Review crew spent a substantial amount of time this past fall trying to figure out what our feature theme was going to be. You should've seen the state of our jam board, the scattered multi-colored notes and zig zags. Eventually, we found a common theme among our mess of ideas, which is that we were usually split between two contrasting ideas, whether they be love or hate, guilt or pleasure, and after sifting through various dichotomies, *duplexity* was born.

The events of this past fall have proven themselves to be duplex as we were often faced to decide between one thing or another. At the start of the semester, it was a question of "*to mask or not to mask?*" When we cast our votes for the 2022 elections, the question across the nation was "*Democrat or Republican?*" As I write this, The World Cup is keeping the entire globe glued to their screens: "*Team Portugal or South Korea?*", "*France or England?*" It's quite strange how life deals us with twos, and in the year twenty twenty-two, that's become all the more apparent.

In this semester's issue, readers will find a magazine that is full of character and color, showcasing a wide range of writing and original art from Rutgers students. This year also brought a breadth of new talent to The Review, with several new general members and a whole new e-board. It truly feels like an RU Review renaissance up in here, and I'm grateful to be working with people who are full of creative energy and zest. We hope you enjoy reading this body of work as much as we enjoyed making it!

-Vanessa Tirok

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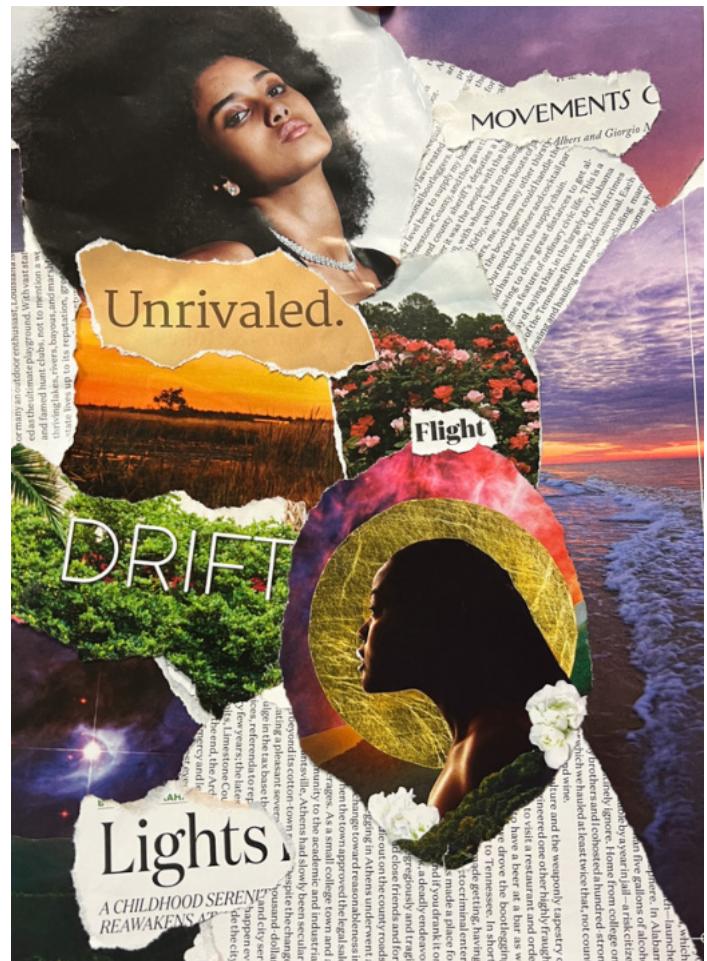
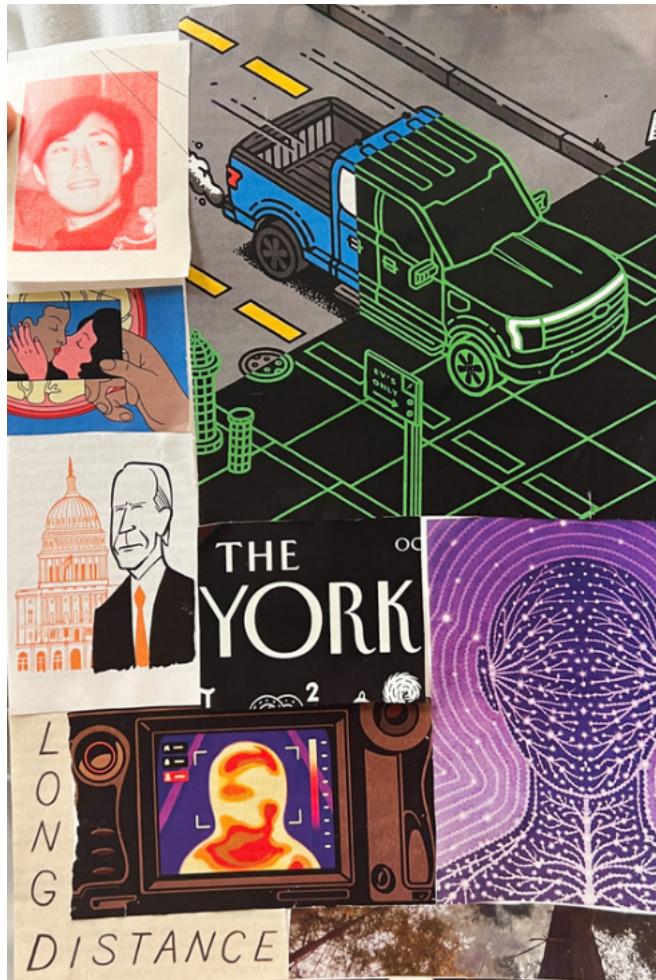
CULTURE

Collage by Ben Argon

Photo by Kyle Handoo

"Strawberry Blonde" by Mitsi

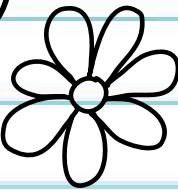
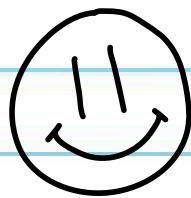
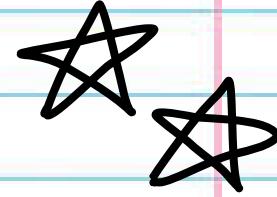
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Collage by Sophie D'Errico

Anthropological Study of Fanfic Culture

by Sahana Iyer



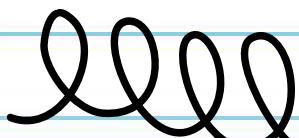
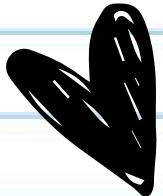
Fifty Shades of Gray. *After*. *Gabriel's Inferno*. Notorious titles that have reached ears and left impressions well beyond the fanfiction community. They all point towards a single story: fanfiction is a subpar, angsty pornographic imitation of "real" books, "real" ideas, and real people. Fanfiction writers are never mistaken as legitimate authors and any engagement with fanfiction is ridiculed. In fact, members of the fanfiction community are compelled to hide behind aliases and "quirky" usernames. Fanfiction is a publicly unspoken genre that thrives in the shadows of the internet.

But what is fanfiction exactly? And surely there must be more than a one-dimensional account of it?



Fanfiction has an extensive history prior to the creation of fanfiction designated online forums and websites. In art and literature, pieces that emulate another artist, work, or period are labeled *pastiche*s. Pastiche are professional endeavors; they pay homages to original inspirations. Some literary notables that are pastiches are *The Aeneid*, *Hamlet*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Paradise Lost*, *The Lord of the Flies*, and *Inferno*. Can they also be considered fanfiction? Technically, yes. The sole distinction between pastiche and fanfiction is the level of professionalism granted to them; fanfiction is an amateur venture and pastiche is a highly respected one. However, they can be perceived as one and the same—fanfiction just has bad publicity.

Some of the stereotypes associated with fanfiction are justifiable. The writers are mostly angsty 13 year old girls or middle-aged white women. And the stories can get freakishly bizarre and kafkaesque. Exhibit A—59 year old E.L. James published the *Fifty Shades* trilogy (a *Twilight* fanfiction centered on sexual and domestic abuse). Or consider *My Immortal*—a Harry Potter fanfiction starring gothic, sex addicts and a love triangle involving Draco Malfoy and Harry Potter. *My Immortal* is infamous for, supposedly, being the worst fanfiction to ever be written (reader discretion advised). However, these extremes barely scratch the surface.





There are various sub genres within fanfiction. Not all glorify sexual intercourse.

1. **AU (alternate universe):** alternate universe fanfiction writers depart from the fictional or actual universe that their fan work is based on. They explore the possibilities of pivotal changes made to characters' history, motivations, and environment. For example, a *Naruto* AU fanfiction writer can imagine a highschool setting for all the characters instead of a village in Japan.
2. **Crossover:** crossover fanfiction combines multiple fandoms and/or universes into a single story. For instance, *Sherlock Holmes and the Ravenclaw Codex* intertwines two England worlds set in Victorian Hogwarts. Sherlock Holmes is recruited to investigate the disappearance of a magical artifact at Hogwarts. Crossovers are a delight to those who obsess over many fandoms.
3. **Fluff:** fluffs are lighthearted and happy reads intended to produce warmth. Fluffs contain gentle scenarios.
4. **Oneshot:** Oneshots are short works- they are not multi-chaptered. Oneshots are equally easy to read as they are to write: quick and painless. They usually never exceed 2,000 words. *Solving the Clues* (a Harry Potter fanfiction) is a riveting one shot with Kingsley Shacklebolt as the hero. Kingsley Shacklebolt discovers a security leak while doing his crossword puzzle on the Daily Prophet.
5. **Smut/lemon:** Smuts or lemons have explicit sexual content. Those who eventually stumble upon them (it's inevitable really) are either enraptured or dismayed. Smuts and lemons are written porn- equivalent to *Playboy* or porn websites. Young adults are often the authors, but ignorant adolescents are always the prey.
6. **OOC (out of character):** fanfiction writers sometimes revise a character's personality completely. There is fanfiction with Slytherin Hermione and vengeful Gandalf; these characters have undergone a 180 switch.

Fanfiction is ubiquitous among a few popular websites: Archive of Our Own, Fanfiction.net, Quotev, Wattpad, and Tumblr. Archive of Our Own (or AO3) and Fanfiction.net are exclusively reserved for fan work. AO3's progressive manifesto states: "we believe that fanworks are transformative and that transformative works are legitimate." Quotev and Wattpad permit any creative writing enterprise. Individuals on Quotev and Wattpad can literally open up their imagination to anything; yet, romance and sex consistently happen to be the pinnacle of everyone's fantasy.

The sex crazed rage established on creative writing forums have recently infiltrated the publication industry via BookTok. BookTok is a subcommunity on TikTok featuring book/literature reviews. However, BookTok sensations are not authored by Ernest Hemingway or Toni Morrison. No. The ones in vogue, the big hits, are *It Ends With Us*, *Book Lovers*, *A Court of Thorn and Roses*, and *The Spanish Love Deception*. And the authors are all white women over the age of 30 (there is absolutely nothing wrong with them being women or white, it is just slightly unsettling). The books are heavily sexual, scandalous, and found in the hands of teenage girls at the dining table.

Repercussions of exposure to sexual content solely affected avid fanfiction readers. With BookTok persuading everyone to become a "bookworm", many are in danger. Young readers who esteem relationships in fanfiction and romance books and get exposed to sexual jargon will have a warped perception of reality. The consequences of sex in books- with no plot objectives- are severe. It is (rightly) the reason that both fanfiction and romance books are disparaged.

But fanfiction does not always have to be sloppy and inappropriate. Ingenious fanworks are not a rarity.

Here are some fanfiction that are worth the read (list curated by a former avid fanfiction reader/writer):

- *Life Sentence, No Cellmate, and Ceasefire* by HollyComb (A Kylo Ren fic)
- *Housebroken* by MissHoneyWell (Hunger Games fic)
- *Harry Potter and the Methods of Rationality* by Eliezer Yudowsky
- *The Life and Times* by Jewels5 (Harry Potter fic)



THE SPRING 2023

NEW JERSEY FILM FESTIVAL

BY VANESSA TIROK

The 41st Bi-Annual New Jersey Film Festival will be taking place on select Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays January 27–February 19, 2023. The Festival will be a hybrid one with online presentations as well as in-person screenings at Rutgers University. All films will be available virtually via Video-on-Demand for 24 hours on their show date. Each ticket or Festival Pass purchased is good for both the virtual and the in-person screenings. The in-person screenings will be held in Voorhees Hall #105/Rutgers University, 71 Hamilton Street, New Brunswick, NJ beginning at 5PM or 7PM on their show date. Tickets: \$15=Per Program; Festival All Access Pass=\$100; Student Tickets = \$10 for the In-Person shows!

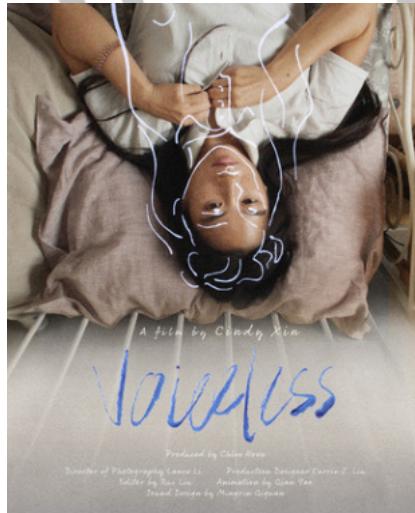
For more info go here: <https://watch.eventive.org/newjerseyfilmfestivalspring2023>

Since the beginning of 2022, I've had the privilege of interning at the NJFF. I'm among one of the many interns who preview the films before they are shown to the public, and am always wowed by the work we receive. While we do a lot behind the scenes, the real magic happens at the film festival itself, and I'm glad for the opportunity to meet film professionals and work with super cool people (shoutout to Yazmin, Loren, Jack, Emily and, of course, Al). Here are a few selected films that I'm looking forward to seeing:



New Jersey Film Festival

Indie film lovers, you will not want to miss out on the most exciting film event of the upcoming season, run by our very own Rutgers University--- The New Jersey Film Festival! Running on its 41st year, the film festival showcases a variety of works from talented filmmakers all across the globe, ranging from short films to documentaries, feature-length to experimental films, and more. Among hundreds of entries, only a handful of high-quality films make it to the big screen. Each screening concludes with a Q&A with those involved in the films, giving the audience the chance to interact with the filmmakers/actors themselves, learn more about the films, as well as learn about the overall filmmaking process.



Voiceless

by Cindy Di Xin

short film- online/in-person @7pm Fri, Feb 3, 2023

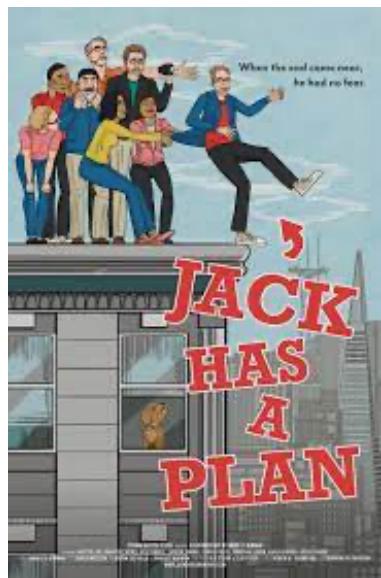
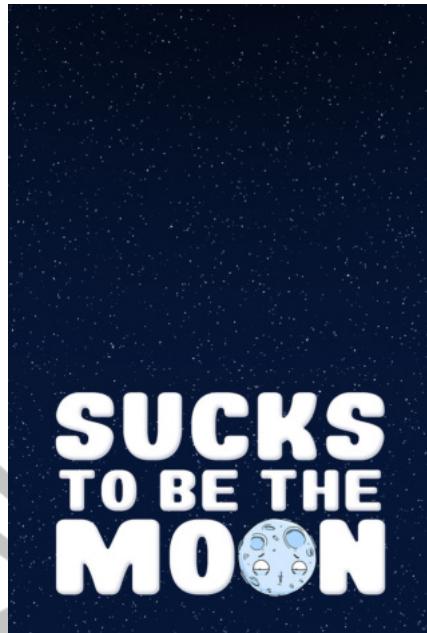
A foreign exchange student struggles with her new environment, finding solace in her love for painting (a love which complicates itself as the story goes on). Shifting from reality to artistic animation, we weave in and out of the main character's inner world, making for a unique viewing experience.

Sucks to Be The Moon

by Tyler March and Eric Paperth

animated/short film- online/in-person @7pm Fri, Feb 10, 2023.

A musical cartoon short in which the outcasted Moon struggles with self-acceptance, taking the audience on a journey of self-discovery. A humorous merge of the childhood cartoon with adult vulgarity. Also, the songs go hard on this one.



Jack Has a Plan

by Bradley Berman

documentary- online @12am, Sat, Feb 4, 2023

Tells the story of Jack Tuller, a man with a terminal tumor who decides to end his life--- and go out with a bang. The film showcases a life well lived and full of impact. Truly touching to watch.

Winners to be announced Feb 19, 2023.

Maison Margiela

FASHION BOHEMIANS ON CAMPUS

BY: ISHAAN CHAKRAVORTY AND VIRAJ SAINI

The night before wearing your new outfit to school is something many of us have experienced. The ecstasy of seeing all the pieces lay perfectly together along your dresser or chair before you could show off. However, excellence in fashion style has staggered through the years, in some cases resulting in outfit burnout (a condition where one can only muster up the willpower to put together pajama pants and Crocs).

At Rutgers, there is a newfound spark; some people communicate their personalities via apparel choices. For the uber-rich, subtle designer essentials such as Alexander McQueen leather platforms are a must. For others, it might be their newest pickup at Goodwill bins or 'lowkey steal' from Depop. But for most of the campus, certain items seem to be an absolute hit- appearing almost everywhere you see. The usual suspects are Chuck 70s, Birkenstocks (extra points if they're the Bostons), and Vans. While these articles of footwear have primarily withstood the test of time and trends, a unique reflection of modern haute couture and streetwear appears along the Rutgers grounds.

The first rendition you may see on campus is that of the peak 2020 Instagram streetwear style. Graphic tees, cargo pants, and Dunks. There are many different elements to this outfit. Still, more often than not, the Dunk, Air Jordan 1, and/or cargo pants are essential to this combination. Sometimes those who brandish these items camouflage themselves among lowly, unenlightened individuals sporting only one of their vast collections of baggy Levi's. They've dipped their Yeezy-Slide-shielded toes into the world of vintage but aren't quite there yet. They "used to skate"; their Dunks are worn without blemish. Drawing inspiration from Travis Scott or r/streetwear, these individuals roam the campus looking for "What Are You Wearing Today?" interviews.

In many cases, younger individuals who have taken a deep dive into clothing skipped past the BAPE and swag eras of the early 2010s. For them, the good old days of streetwear were Supreme Box Logos and Yeezy 350s. Their style is now intentionally more lowkey. After all, the only way to stand out is to look like the rest, at least for them. For your information, their New Balances are entirely unlike your dad has. Carhartt, Dickies, and single-stitch tees- a formula unmatched for these vintage connoisseurs. Sporting only the comfiest JJJound collabs or Adidas Sambas, they scoff at your Air Force 1s- the ones they were wearing in 2020. A glimpse at their Pinterest folder will show you "grails" and items at the surface level of arthouse designer fashion. Regardless, they maintain the elevated, or what they would call curated, 90s look almost entirely from Grailed.

The next look, almost a unicorn on campus, is that of the "Full Archive." Margiela, Number (N)ine, and Kapital are all household names to this person. Nike Techs? Doc Martens? They'll refer you to vague fashion shows from 1988 to 2006, throwing around phrases like "Homme Plissé" or "distressed." Rick Owens Ramones are their go-to, although the Geobaskets are still on their wishlist. These funny-looking Converse happen to cost about seven times the Chuck 70s. Sometimes these individuals genuinely pull off the collage of designers' outfits, just as intended by the elite fashion institutions that exist beyond our view. Other times, the outfits are questionable.

The unifier between these individuals is that they share the common goal of elevating their closet. For many, myself included, purchasing the essentials with the occasional splurge on good sneakers or a graphic hoodie is satisfactory. But social media implores us to be different, and for some, this results in complete wardrobe changes. Who's to say the last individual I discussed wasn't wearing Air Force 1s and Adidas soccer pants before Whole Lotta Red dropped? Or that the guy who promises he has the best luck at "the bins" ends up picking up most of his stuff from his granddad's old closet?

Are Honors Worth the **STRESS?**



Do you have a friend, neighbor, or sibling who's been accepted into a school-based Honors Program or College at Rutgers? Have you received the unexpected email that made you jump for joy upon first opening the confetti-filled link? The wondrous pride and prestige associated with the title "honors" is a mark of achievement for every high-achieving (or professional bs-ing) student. Yet by proxy, does that mean in comparison every non-honors student is a non-achiever?

No, of course not! Whether you graduate as an Honors Scholar or not, your merit is never based on your academic achievements or any pompous title attached to your name. Still, sometimes it is nice to hear "honors" when you go up to collect your degree during graduation. The award does not come without hardship though; the path of honors is a grueling, anxiety-inducing one. Thus, we come here today to settle the eternal question of whether honors are worth the stress or not.



Let's get the worst part out of the way: honors requirements. There are six undergraduate schools at Rutgers, all with different base academic and service requirements. However, there is only one joint Honors Program with the same honors requirements between the School of Arts and Sciences and the Business School. In comparison, there is only one Honors College that all six schools send their "best" to. For the SAS/Business Honors Program (SASHP), admittees must take two Honors Colloquia (i.e. honors student only classes), including an Interdisciplinary Honors Seminar, four departmental honors courses (which are honors sections of regular classes), two to four classes to achieve intermediate proficiency in a global language, and finally a two-semester senior capstone project/course. That's six to eight plus extra classes, almost all of which must be completed by junior year! The Honors College has all these requirements (if you're in the SAS/Business division) in addition to two more freshman-year classes and 30 hours of mandated community service. Oh, and did I mention that in order to stay in good standing for both programs, you must have a 3.25 GPA freshman year and a 3.5 GPA for the rest of college? Yikes.



Honors are stressful; there's no avoiding this fact. The copious amount of classes you must take, ranging from cumbersome and unnecessary to unexpectedly difficult and time consuming, dampen the pristine glow of the "honors" accolade. Going higher up the "honors" ladder to the Honors College entails even more required courses as well as compulsory community service, which as a college student, you don't usually feel inclined to nor have the time to deal with. In comparison, non-honors students have much more freedom to pursue their interests without added degree requirements curtailing their options. A non-honors student can add an extra minor to their resume, or even double major.

Additionally, they could still pursue a less intensive form of honors by applying to be in a Departmental Honors Program. Moreover, non-honors students can take classes for fun, an unheard concept in a busy honors student's life. They also have the chance to only take four 3 credit classes per semester if they want to chill things down, something most honors students won't have the ability to do. However, despite all this hating on honors work, honors requirements are a trial worth undergoing if you 1) adopt an open mindset when taking honors courses and truly make an effort to learn something new, 2) find it useful or will enjoy using your new language skills, 3) find pride and pleasure in making a difference in the world and helping others through community service, 4) will go on to a grad school in the future, in which case the capstone project will come in handy for applications, and 5) believe you're capable of achieving and strategically managing your GPA. With an honors degree, you will obtain the full college scholar experience.



Furthermore, being an honors student comes with the perks of a close community through special living areas and social institutions. For the SAS/Business Honors Program, there are honors housing in residence halls across all four campuses except Cook in which Honors Program students can find friends and build bonds early through close living with one another. Additionally, Honors Program students have the opportunity to meet and grow closer to each other through honors only classes, outside events for either the Honors Colloquium, Peer Mentor Program, Artists' Collective, and/or a random event hosted by the Honors Peer Leaders, and through Phi Beta Kappa (an honors society only open to invited juniors and seniors).



Honors College students can intermingle with their own in honors only courses as well, in addition to living in the Honors College building on College Avenue, though it's required for all first years and available to them only. However, the building is so nice in comparison to the rest of College Ave, it almost makes up for the residence under compulsion. Presidential Scholars also accepted into the Honors College are required to live on campus their first two years too. After freshman year, students can live in select locations on Busch, Douglass, and a portion of the Sojourner Truth Apartments at the Yard (these are only available for participants in the Active Allyship for Social & Racial Justice Changemaking Community, the rest thankfully have no participation requirements). Changemaking Communities are a type of living-learning community, though most of them are virtual. The program supplies Changemaking student mentors as a convenient way to fulfill community service requirements. So, the Honors College students create a strong, tight-knit community for themselves too.

As for what makes honors truly worth it-the opportunities-the SASHP and Honors College overlap in many categories. They promote leadership growth through Honors Student Advisory Boards, Peer Mentoring and Tutoring, Honors Ambassadors, leadership teams, and student led initiatives, and academic/career growth through summer shadowing programs, honors specific advisors, Alumni Networking Directories and Societies, Faculty Mentors, embedded trips across the world in Interdisciplinary Honors Seminars, and easy access to the Aresty Undergraduate Research Center. Moreover, both honors institutions allow their students to share their voices and develop creative talent through program specific blog, newsletter, and social media teams. The wide variety of opportunities with limited competition, in comparison to non-honors equivalents, is what makes the Honors Program and College special and truly a standout part of Rutgers.

So, we circle back to our original question. Is the trade-off between the opportunities for personalized attention and development and insular communities worth the limiting and stressful nature of honors requirements? In my opinion, it depends on your personality and goals for college and beyond. If you want the comfort of an intellectual, active student body close to you and don't mind the work and pressure involved to graduate with the Honors Scholar title, then honors could be worth it. Likewise, if you want to get ahead in life in terms of developing your leadership skills, creative voice, and career aspirations, the opportunities provided to you may be what you're looking for. Thus, between SASHP and the Honors College, you may get more bang for your buck (and less stress) choosing the former. However, if you'd rather pursue a more non-stressful version of college, or aren't looking to do grad school, or are planning to take a lot of credits for a double major/multiple minors and/or going to join a Departmental Honors Program anyways, then honors will likely not be worth it for you. Of course, if you're still hankering to do it for that sweet, sweet honors degree, then I won't stop you. Instead, I'll wish you the best of luck as an eventual SASHP alum. :)



'S NIFTY LISTY

New Jersey Edition

SECOND REFORM CHURCH

100 College Ave, New Brunswick, NJ 08901



MYUNIQUE

698 Oak Tree Ave, South Plainfield, NJ 07080



RED, WHITE & BLUE

25 McLean Blvd, Paterson, NJ 07514



31 THREADS

432 NJ-31, Washington, NJ 07882



2ND AVE.

2661 Morris Ave, Union, NJ 07083



OUR MISSION:

At RU Thrifty, we look to educate the Rutgers University community & greater New Brunswick area about the dangers of textile waste and their contribution to climate change. We address clothing disparities in our community by donating to local organizations for those in need. RU Thrifty works to promote inclusivity & self expression through sustainable fashion choices.





ART
ARTISTS
TO
TOGETHER
TOGETHER
&
ART

Mosaic by Jiamni Gonzalez

Collage by Yazmin Omana



Sreekar Vishwanathan

No, it's not Disney, or Universal, or Sony, but a measly, three-man startup group that has arguably influenced contemporary filmmaking and film culture most popularly over the last decade. Now employing over 200 members and producing/distributing over 100 films to date, A24 has caught the film industry by storm and has not looked back once as their popularity continues to rise throughout the film world. Otherwise known as the infrastructure for any modern cinema buff, A24 has gained the reputation of being overtly pretentious, insisting, and for 'Oscar-baiting' (films that are made in a particular way with the sole purpose of winning awards). Still, awards are awards, and the critical response to their movies speak for themselves: A24, whether you like it or not, is in the driver's seat of independent filmmaking now and for years to come.

During the 2000s and early 2010s, independent filmmaking has taken a severe downturn as most popular films had been streamlined through big-budgets or the support of major studios. Independent films saw a rise during the 70s, 80s, and 90s, with directors such as Martin Scorsese, Quentin Tarantino, Christopher Nolan, and John Carpenter making their names heard with low-budgets and more makeshift, surreal filmmaking tactics. The popularity of their movies was felt all around the film industry, but only led to studios adopting their film techniques rather than making room for more independent films. The 2000s saw very little growth in the independent film industry as movies were marketed heavily towards families and children with the surge of Adam Sandler comedies and superhero flicks (whether or not this has been good for the film industry is debatable).

However in the early 2010s, a group of three friends came together and concluded that enough was enough. Independent films have been culturally sucked dry for the last two decades. The visual and stylistic draw of these films had been missing, and they thought it was time for the people to be exposed to it once again. With whatever sum of money they had, they founded the company, named it A24 after an Italian highway, and sought the means to change the film industry forever by producing independent filmmakers. Somehow garnering enough cash and support from friends, family, and investment partners, A24 distributed a Roman Coppola (not to be confused by his father, the great Francis Ford Coppola) movie in 2013. While it earned little-to-no money and received largely negative reviews, the important thing was that viewers and critics noticed this little studio. Gaining more and more recognition, they put together three more films in 2013 - Spring Breakers, The Bling Ring, The Spectacular Now - all reaching a wider audience and selling more tickets. By now, heads had started to turn.

After years of producing and distributing films, A24 became a mainstream independent studio heavily recognized by popular magazines, critics, and even the Academy of Motion Pictures Arts and Sciences. Films such as Moonlight, Lady Bird, and The Lighthouse have famously been nominated for plenty of awards; even taking home the grand trophy of Best Picture (see Moonlight-La La Land Oscars fiasco). This past year, A24 came out with likely their most ambitious movie yet, Everything Everywhere All At Once, a science-fiction feel-good film raking in nearly \$100 million in the box office. Probable that it will earn a number of awards and nominations, this cinematic masterpiece is bound to keep A24 in the limelight for the foreseeable future.

Moreover, A24 has dove into facilitating the distribution of movies along with the production aspect. The studio has three films they had a hand in producing and/or distributing release at the end of this year. *Causeway*, opening on November 4th, is a drama led by Jennifer Lawrence and Brian Tyree Henry featuring the directorial debut of Lila Neugabauer. Two weeks later on November 18th, *The Inspection* -- written and directed by Elegance Bratton, is being played. In the much-anticipated return of Brendan Fraser, which you may know from the original *Mummy* franchise as well as *Journey to the Center of the Earth*, he gains over 300 pounds in the father-daughter drama, *The Whale*, directed by Darren Aronofsky. Aronofsky has developed popular psychological thrillers such as *Requiem for a Dream* and *Black Swan*, so keep in mind that this 2022 drama may touch a bit more under the skin.

Rutgers Review's Top 3 (IN NO PARTICULAR ORDER)

1. EX MACHINA (2014)
2. LADY BIRD (2017)
3. MOONLIGHT (2016)

THE TRUE HORROR OF

BY AMBER SAFEER

Don't Worry Darling

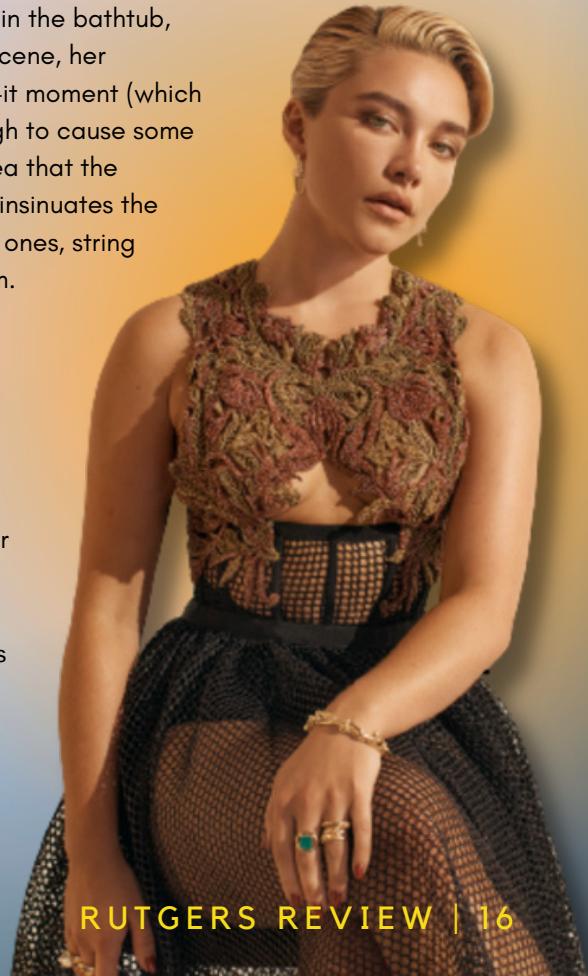
From the horrendous 38% on Rotten Tomatoes to the drama happening behind the scenes, Olivia Wilde's controversial thriller *Don't Worry Darling* has been circulating headlines for months.

After finally seeing the film for myself when it began streaming on HBO Max, I can wholeheartedly agree that it does indeed "feel like a movie" (Harry Styles) - however I'd like to focus on some key aspects of the film that I found particularly interesting.

Despite the fact that critics labeled the movie a "thriller" and "horror", there is an unexpected lack of jumpscares. Instead of this cheap tactic, director Olivia Wilde employed unsettling imagery of uniformity and isolation to capture viewers' attention. Although this kind of approach has been visited before by many creators, Wilde's usage emphasizes the core themes of the film and foreshadows important lore.

For example, in a clip where the protagonist Alice (portrayed by Florence Pugh) is in the bathtub, she is surrounded by mirrors behind her. As she slowly sinks down to close off the scene, her reflection can be seen turning to stare straight at her: a true blink-and-you'll-miss-it moment (which I did miss until a friend pointed it out). Not quite a jumpscare, but disturbing enough to cause some rising anxiety and make the audience ponder. This moment also plays upon the idea that the people in charge of the Victory Project are watching Alice's every move, and also insinuates the idea that she is not her true self. Subtle moments like this, as well as more obvious ones, string together a cohesive storyline that fully reveals itself in the final moments of the film.

Further into the movie, the audience sees Olivia Wilde juxtapose real life abuse with fictional abuse. In the town of Victory, Alice Chambers (along with many other women) are being held trapped; when Alice begins to wonder what exactly the Victory Project is and what their husbands are doing when they go to work, she is consistently shut down. Even worse, when Alice disobeys orders and goes out into the desert, she begins to see things that others claim never happened. For example, her fellow neighbor Margaret (who was going "crazy" before her) bashing her head into the mirror of the dance studio, or the same woman intentionally falling off the roof of her house. When Alice brings up these instances to her husband Jack, he denies all of it and continually gaslights her. The irony behind this mental abuse is that Jack is equally as toxic in the real world, outside of the simulation of the Victory Project - as a nurse in reality, Alice loves her job, despite how demanding it can be. Jack becomes frustrated and insists that Alice doesn't truly love her job, because he wants her all to himself.





On the same note as this, the villainization of Jack Chambers (aka Harry Styles) flabbergasted me. First of all: How did they successfully make Harry Styles ugly??? (with a thin, balding wig, apparently).

But more than that - the beginning of the film paints Jack to be a loyal, loving, and selfless husband to Alice. Everything he does, the life he lives, it is all for her. And yet, as the film progresses, we start to see the cracks in his personality. Even when Jack has admitted to everything he had done to Alice, he still views it as selfless - that he has to go to work everyday to provide a flawless life for Alice, to make them both happy. But the truth is, Alice never consented to this life, and this is the most important takeaway from the film. As much as Jack thinks that Alice hated her job, or wanted to be happier, he simply was projecting onto her, and never once asked what she wanted. He put her into this virtual world without her consent, ultimately leading her to lose the life she originally had.

Critics and viewers have not entirely praised the twisted psychology and underlying message of this film, as the drama surrounding the movie's director, Olivia Wilde, completely overshadowed any positive reviews. And yet, the same thing happens to Alice in the film; society around her is dismissing her opinions and actions, instead focusing on her husband's success. This irony brings up an important question in gossip culture: why are the talents of female creators constantly dominated by drama, or their male counterparts? As *Don't Worry Darling* is her sophomore film, Wilde's efforts should be empowered by other women, and yet the press chooses to focus on all the celebrity drama. Instead of celebrating the admirable aspects of Wilde's film, people actively pin her and Florence Pugh (the lead actress) against each other, deep dive into the nuances of the relationships between Wilde, Styles, and Sudeikis (Wilde's ex-fiance), and find the inconsistencies in the reason Shia LaBeouf left the film. Because of all of this, the themes and commentary behind the film are left forgotten, even though they can spark a huge conversation about misogyny, gender roles, and oppression.

Overall, *Don't Worry Darling* was gorgeous stylistically and thematically, and the acting from Florence Pugh served as a key element for the high reviews it received from many audience members. However, a lot of the main ideas that Wilde implemented have been used before (in fact, the film as a whole can be likened to the iconic movie *The Truman Show*.) and her different approach to horror also isn't new; this is the reason that critics rated the movie so poorly. Nevertheless, the combinations of concepts and imagery Wilde chose to utilize made the film very cohesive, consistently keeping the audience engaged and yearning for answers.

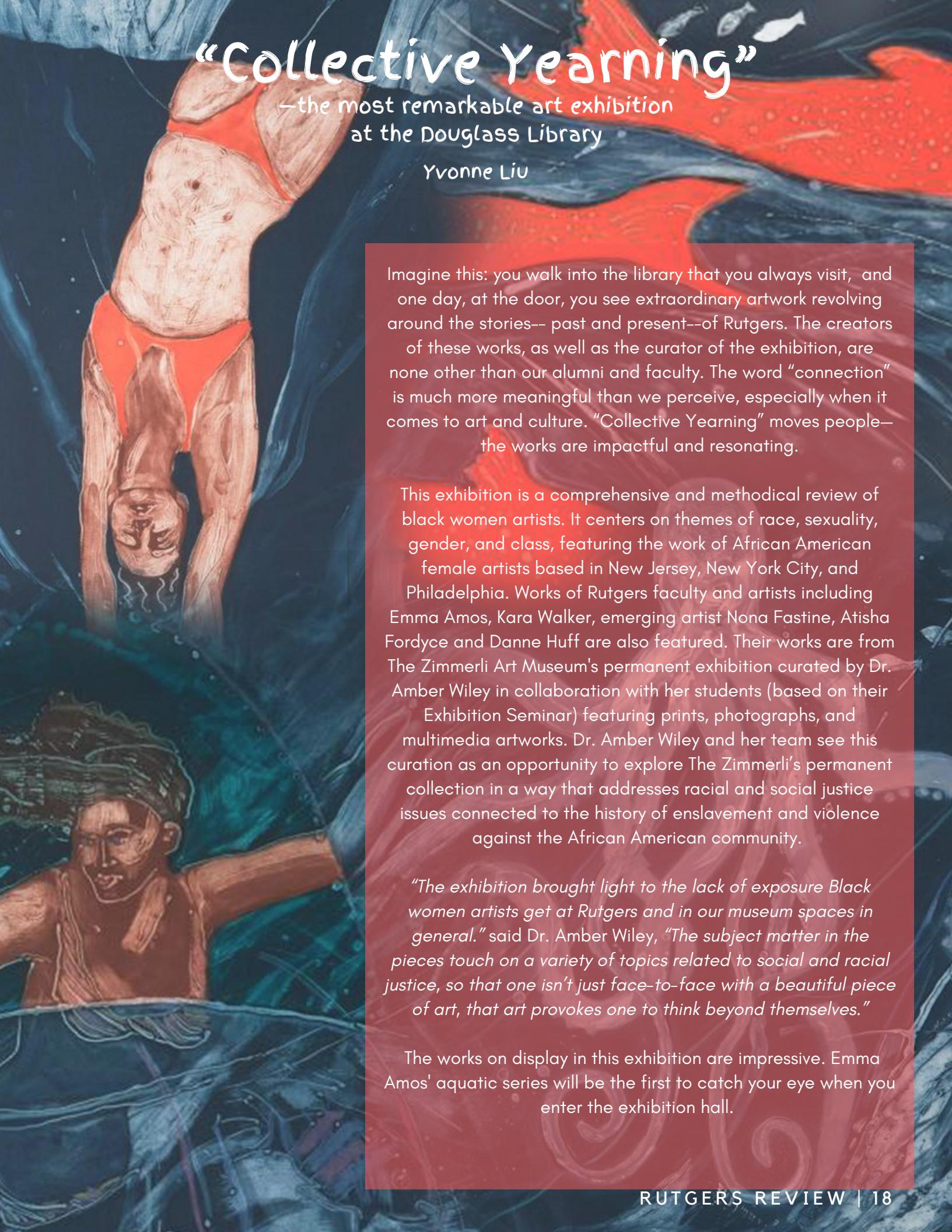
In terms of the Rotten Tomatoes score, I would have to side with the audience, at 74%. In the words of Harry Styles, *Don't Worry Darling* really did "feel like a movie."



“Collective Yearning”

—the most remarkable art exhibition
at the Douglass Library

Yvonne Liu

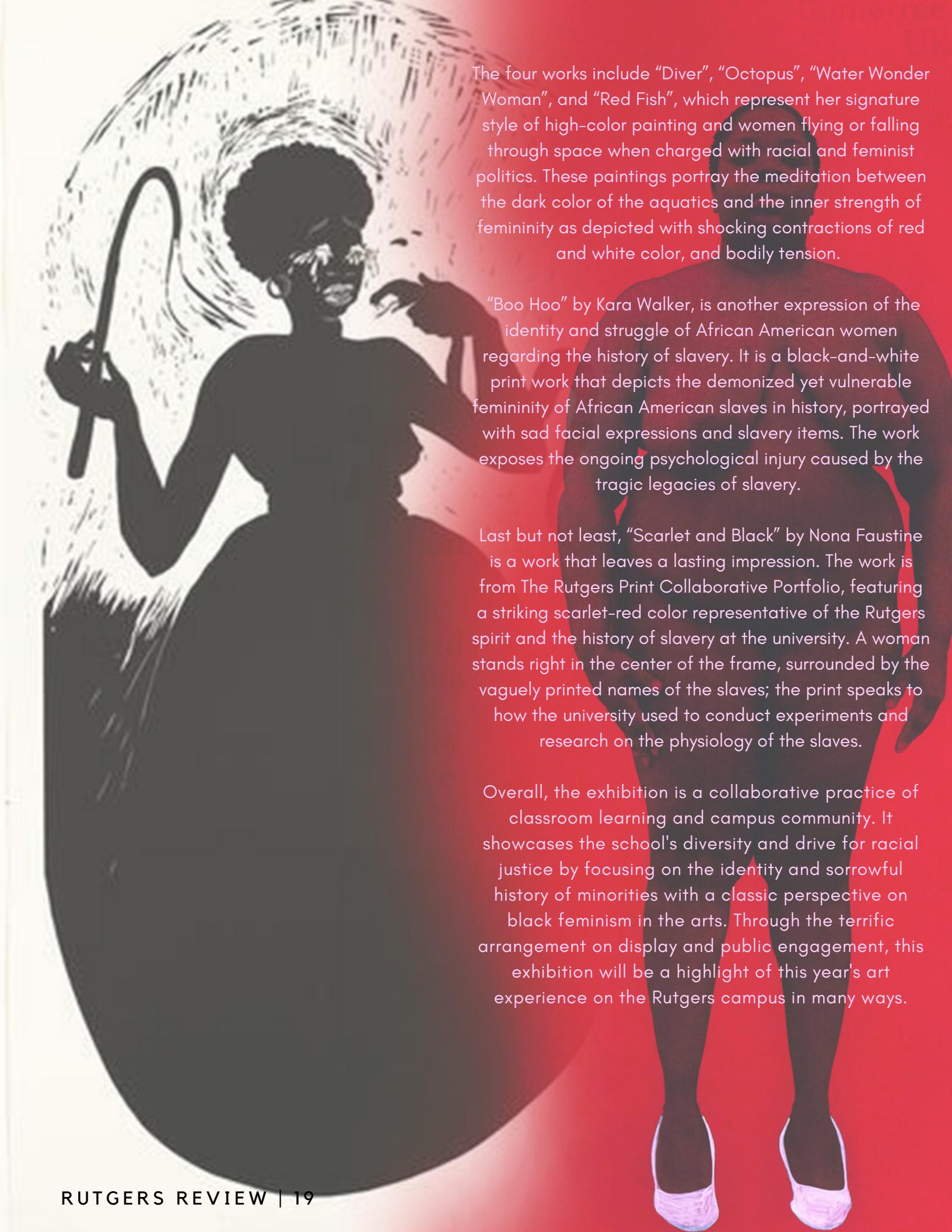


Imagine this: you walk into the library that you always visit, and one day, at the door, you see extraordinary artwork revolving around the stories—past and present—of Rutgers. The creators of these works, as well as the curator of the exhibition, are none other than our alumni and faculty. The word “connection” is much more meaningful than we perceive, especially when it comes to art and culture. “Collective Yearning” moves people—the works are impactful and resonating.

This exhibition is a comprehensive and methodical review of black women artists. It centers on themes of race, sexuality, gender, and class, featuring the work of African American female artists based in New Jersey, New York City, and Philadelphia. Works of Rutgers faculty and artists including Emma Amos, Kara Walker, emerging artist Nona Fastine, Atisha Fordyce and Danne Huff are also featured. Their works are from The Zimmerli Art Museum's permanent exhibition curated by Dr. Amber Wiley in collaboration with her students (based on their Exhibition Seminar) featuring prints, photographs, and multimedia artworks. Dr. Amber Wiley and her team see this curation as an opportunity to explore The Zimmerli's permanent collection in a way that addresses racial and social justice issues connected to the history of enslavement and violence against the African American community.

“The exhibition brought light to the lack of exposure Black women artists get at Rutgers and in our museum spaces in general.” said Dr. Amber Wiley, *“The subject matter in the pieces touch on a variety of topics related to social and racial justice, so that one isn’t just face-to-face with a beautiful piece of art, that art provokes one to think beyond themselves.”*

The works on display in this exhibition are impressive. Emma Amos' aquatic series will be the first to catch your eye when you enter the exhibition hall.



The four works include "Diver", "Octopus", "Water Wonder Woman", and "Red Fish", which represent her signature style of high-color painting and women flying or falling through space when charged with racial and feminist politics. These paintings portray the meditation between the dark color of the aquatics and the inner strength of femininity as depicted with shocking contractions of red and white color, and bodily tension.

"Boo Hoo" by Kara Walker, is another expression of the identity and struggle of African American women regarding the history of slavery. It is a black-and-white print work that depicts the demonized yet vulnerable femininity of African American slaves in history, portrayed with sad facial expressions and slavery items. The work exposes the ongoing psychological injury caused by the tragic legacies of slavery.

Last but not least, "Scarlet and Black" by Nona Faustine is a work that leaves a lasting impression. The work is from The Rutgers Print Collaborative Portfolio, featuring a striking scarlet-red color representative of the Rutgers spirit and the history of slavery at the university. A woman stands right in the center of the frame, surrounded by the vaguely printed names of the slaves; the print speaks to how the university used to conduct experiments and research on the physiology of the slaves.

Overall, the exhibition is a collaborative practice of classroom learning and campus community. It showcases the school's diversity and drive for racial justice by focusing on the identity and sorrowful history of minorities with a classic perspective on black feminism in the arts. Through the terrific arrangement on display and public engagement, this exhibition will be a highlight of this year's art experience on the Rutgers campus in many ways.

THE LITTLE MERMAID CASTING – A TALE OF RACIAL DIVERSITY

AND WHY YOU SHOULDN'T FEEL "CRABBY" ABOUT IT

By Sophie D'Errico



The classic story of the 1989 movie, *The Little Mermaid*, follows the journey of a mermaid named Ariel who becomes fascinated with humans and their world out of the sea. This story of determination and love has held a soft spot in the hearts of many children and families for decades and is one of the most classic fairy tales we hear in childhood.

However, the highly-anticipated live-action version of the classic tale set to release in theaters in May 2023 is facing heavy backlash.

Halle Bailey, the singer, songwriter, and *Grown-ish* star, has been casted to play the iconic sea princess. When Disney officially released the announcement that Bailey, an African-American woman, would be the actress for the lead, she and Disney faced hateful reactions from fans who argued that the casting would be an inaccurate representation of the story based on race. They felt that it was a disservice to the recognizable depiction of Ariel with fair skin.

This argument lacks information about the original description of the little mermaid.

The original story of *The Little Mermaid* written by Hans Christian Andersen describes the mermaid as having skin "as clear and delicate as a rose-leaf, and her eyes as blue as the deepest sea..."



Although fair-skinned people are more likely to have blue eyes, this description does not point to any specific skin color. Additionally, Andersen's description of the titular mermaid does not mention the red hair commonly associated with the character or even the name we all know her by, Ariel. The depiction of the character "Ariel" with red hair and fair skin was a creation by Disney. Therefore, if Disney's decision in 1989 to adopt characteristics that were not explicitly stated in

the original story was acceptable then it should also be acceptable for them to alter these characteristics in 2023.

Those who have contributed to the 1.5 million dislikes on the video for the first trailer of the film and claim that Disney is using "forced diversity" are hiding behind buzzwords to conceal their ultimate fear of representation and change. Those who argue that this is an issue of "artificial wokeness" fail to see the positive impact that has resulted.

There is much to be said about how this casting will benefit current and future generations of young children.

Diverse role models show young children of all backgrounds that heroes do not discriminate. This diversity reduces stigmas about certain peoples and exemplifies how anyone can be a hero and anyone can be a princess.

Following the release of the first trailer, Twitter was flooded with videos released by parents who recorded their Black children's reactions towards seeing Bailey as Ariel for the first time. The videos were full of gleeful faces and young girls sitting up in their seats with bright smiles and exclamations of "She looks like me!" as they looked at a face they identify with.

Every child wants a character to dress up as for Halloween, to play-pretend as, and to color in their coloring books. Most importantly, children need to have a hero who is a positive role model that they can identify with.

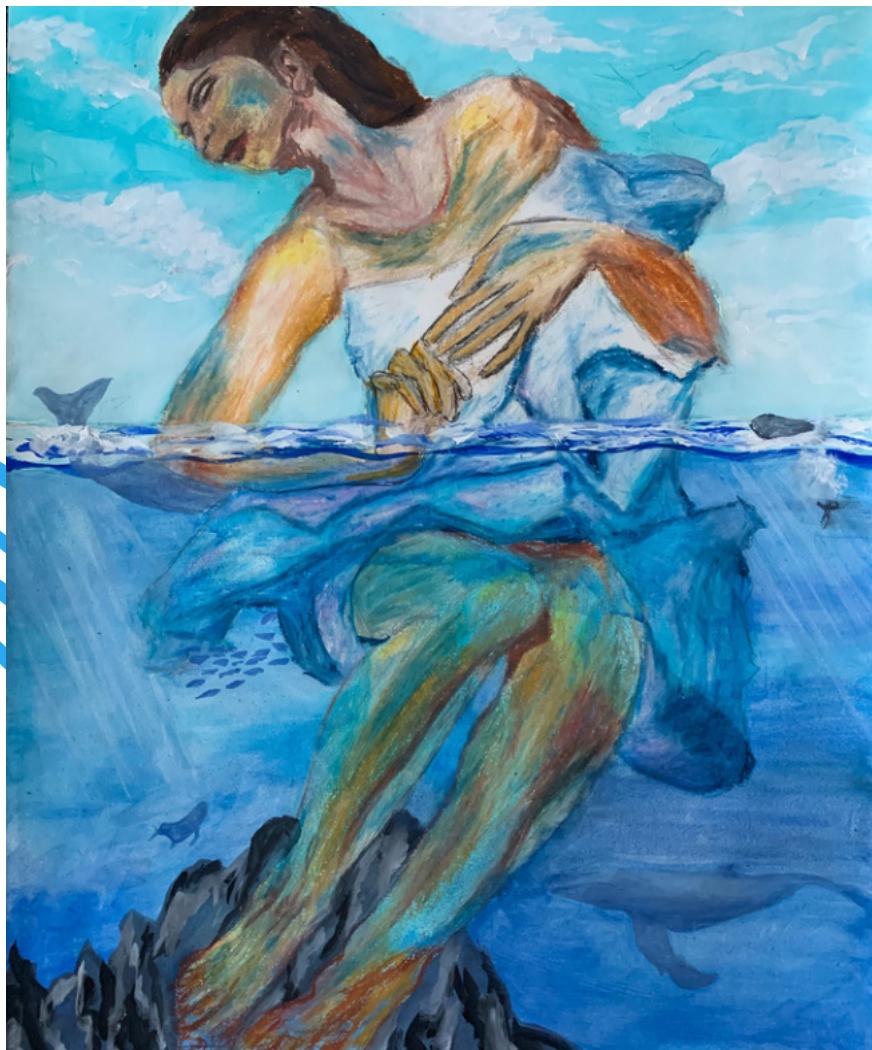
There is power in being able to see a piece of yourself in a strong character. As a passionate, kind-hearted, and ambitious dreamer who is not afraid to take risks – Ariel is a perfect example.

"SHE LOOKS LIKE ME!"

Artwork by Yvonne Liu

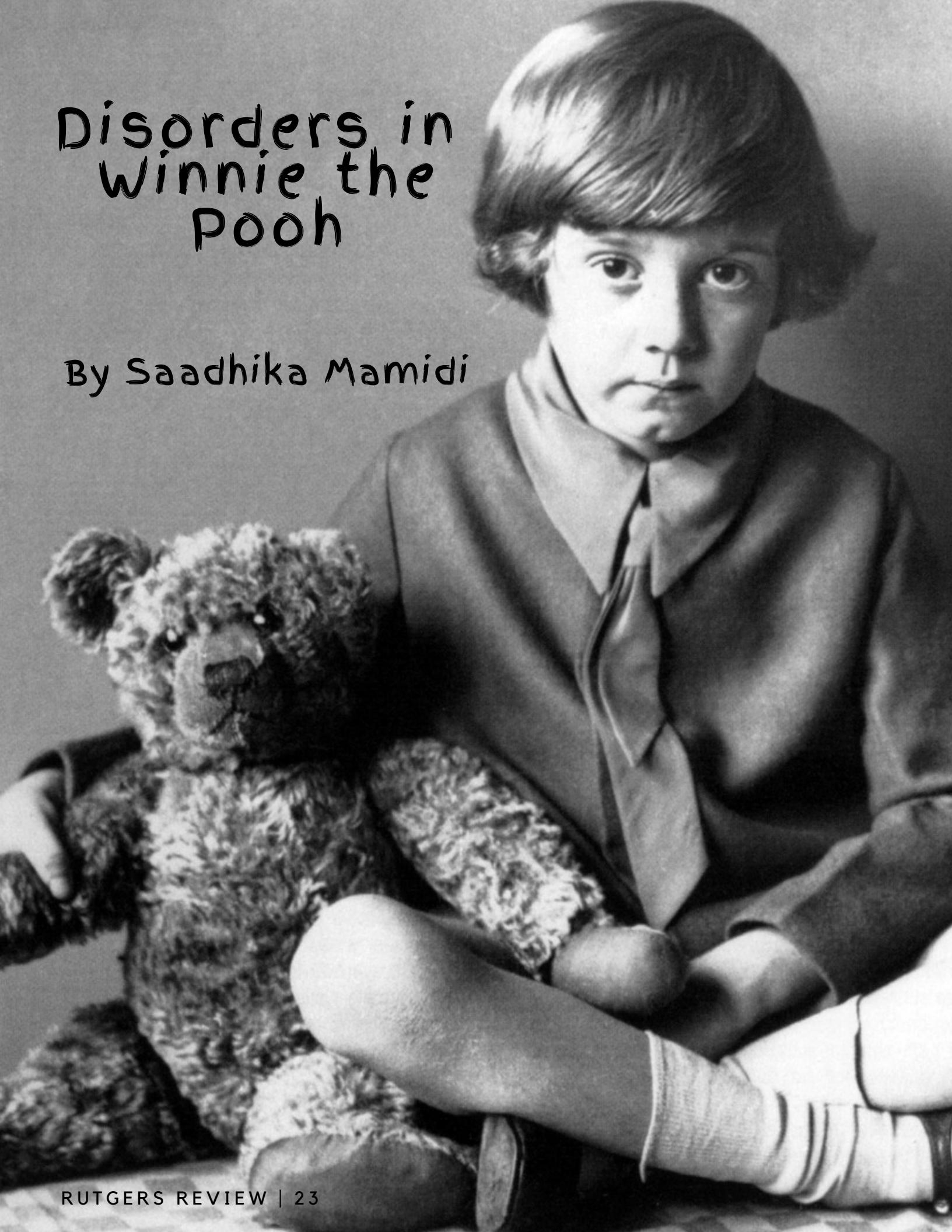


Artwork by Anastasia Codjebas



Disorders in Winnie the Pooh

By Saadhika Mamidi





A collection of vintage-style stuffed animals.

The DSM-V. The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition. What is this you may ask? It's an instruction booklet for therapists and psychiatrists to follow when they make a diagnosis about a patient. Now, if we take this information and apply it to the well-known, cute animated children's TV show "Christopher Robin" with different animals as characters and their best human friend, we perceive the show in a completely different light.

Do you believe that a children's show could have real-world problems? Real-world mental health disorders? Winnie the Pooh does. We all know and love this furry character. A yellow bear who loves to eat (honey above all else). He has a binge-eating disorder. With the constant need to snack on honey, the hiding and stockpiling of honey, and not having specific meal times, he displays the symptoms of an eating disorder. Many can assume that he eats due to the lack of attention. When he does not have companionship he seeks food, which scientifically stimulates the pleasure center in the brain. What makes us feel better when we are depressed or anxious?? Sugar.

Now, what about Piglet? He's always scared and nervous. Piglet twitches and shakes. Piglet exhibits indications of autonomic hyperarousal, such as a quick heartbeat and shortness of breath, as well as increased startle reactions to items that frighten him. What could he have? Generalized anxiety disorder. Piglet's anxiousness tends to increase and worsen under stressful situations. When he knows that there is something to be frightened about, he becomes more distressed.

It's easy to guess what the slow-moving donkey, Eeyore, could be facing. One might say depression, but he exhibits signs of dysthymia to be more specific. It is also known as mild and chronic depression, which is less severe and has fewer symptoms than a major depressive disorder. Eeyore's in a constant state of sadness and you can never see any positive emotions in his life. He's in a depressed mood most of the day, he never evidently shows interest in going on adventures, and never has an optimistic outlook on life.

What about Tigger who can't ever sit still? He is always hopping around from one place to another and can't pay attention to one thing, always getting distracted. He has attention deficit hyperactivity disorder or ADHD. Tigger is impatient, behaves impulsively, and does not understand the concept of self-accountability. He also interrupts people and invades their privacy.

We see Rabbit, friendly yet very irritable. He wants things done his way, and everything has to be neat and in order. Though he loses his temper with his friends, he still cares about them, but still gets upset when it's not his way. He is very much into cleaning and planning and organizing, and cares so much about his garden. If someone messes it up, it greatly affects his mental health. What does this indicate? Obsessive-compulsive disorder, OCD. His symptoms include a persistent need to wash and/or clean items, a fear of filth, and maintaining order and symmetry. Due to his OCD, Rabbit may be quite stern and even harsh to his friends.



Finally, we reach the diagnosis of the star of the show. The reason all these animals exist is Christopher Robin's world. What animals do we know of that can talk and communicate with us? There aren't any so how does Christopher do it? He hallucinates them, he imagines them into his life, and all of his "friends" appear depending on his mood. The feelings he has about the outside world may be portrayed through these animals. According to the DSM-5 you have to see two or more symptoms for you to be diagnosed with this, and Robin's hallucinations and delusions say a lot.

It is unbelievable to see that characters in a children's show suffer from mental disorders. It definitely makes the show less PG than it originally seemed.

THE **BARBIE CINEMATIC UNIVERSE: CLASSIFIED**

BY SREEJA PAVULURI



I grew up watching the Barbie Cinematic Universe (BCU), which is the name I (?) came up with for the forty-one Barbie movies that have come out between 2001 and present day. There is much lore and many theories associated with the films. In some, Barbie is the title character and the film is of her life (Barbie: A Fashion Fairytale, Barbie: Epic Road Trip) while in others, she is playing the role of the main character (Barbie in A Mermaid Tale, Barbie and the Magic of the Pegasus). A general rule of thumb to follow to understand this distinction is that in films where the title is “Barbie: ...”, the main character herself is Barbie, but in the films where the title uses in or as and where the title character’s name isn’t Barbie, then Barbie is the actress within the film. But, I digress.

I think each individual Barbie movie is a part of a larger movie genre, meaning it follows certain genre conventions. I watched (and rewatched) the 41 BCU movies and categorized them into specific genres that exist past the traditionally assigned animated and family-friendly genres. All categorizations are final, no suggestions accepted (joking, but not really).

Fairytale films are pretty easy to classify and make up most of the early BCU releases. They are based on classic fairy tales, familiar to most audiences. The BCU films in this genre are

BARBIE IN THE NUTCRACKER (2001)
BARBIE AS RAPUNZEL (2002)
BARBIE OF SWAN LAKE (2003)
BARBIE AS THE PRINCESS AND THE PAUPER (2004)
BARBIE IN THE 12 DANCING PRINCESSES (2006)
BARBIE: THUMBELINA (2009)
BARBIE: THE PRINCESS & THE POPSTAR (2012)

Coming of age is another classic genre in film, and one that quite a few of the Barbie movies fall under. It focuses on a child/teen’s transition from childhood to young adulthood, as they lose some aspect of their childhood innocence. The coming-of-age BCU films are:

THE BARBIE DIARIES (2006)
BARBIE: A FASHION FAIRYTALE (2010)
BARBIE: PRINCESS CHARM SCHOOL (2011)
BARBIE: EPIC ROAD TRIP (2022)

The BCU loves musicals, and there are many that can be filed into this much-loved genre. These include:

BARBIE AS THE ISLAND PRINCESS (2007)
BARBIE & THE DIAMOND CASTLE (2008)
BARBIE IN ROCK 'N ROYALS (2015)
BARBIE: PRINCESS ADVENTURE (2020)
BARBIE: BIG CITY, BIG DREAMS (2021)

I categorized the films that focus more on the action than any other theme into the action genre, which are:

BARBIE AND THE THREE MUSKETEERS (2009)
BARBIE: SPY SQUAD (2016)
Horses are a preternatural obsession of many, many young girls everywhere so it’s no wonder the BCU has TWO horse films:

BARBIE AND THE MAGIC OF THE PEGASUS (2005)
BARBIE & HER SISTERS IN A PONY TALE (2013)

Following the animal film trend and in the vein of classics like Marley and Me, the BCU’s dog films, starring Barbie’s dogs, include:

BARBIE & HER SISTERS IN THE GREAT PUPPY ADVENTURE (2015)
BARBIE & HER SISTERS IN A PUPPY CHASE (2016)



Photos by Anastasia Codjebas

Christmas movies are a classic movie genre that have exploded in popularity with the Hallmark made-for-TV films. The BCU is no stranger to these:

BARBIE IN A CHRISTMAS CAROL (2008)
BARBIE: A PERFECT CHRISTMAS (2011)

Science fiction is an interesting genre for the BCU to venture into, and a recent phenomenon. Both films happened within months of each other. These were:

BARBIE: STAR LIGHT ADVENTURE (2016)
BARBIE: VIDEO GAME HERO (2017)

Fairies and mermaids are major players in the BCU. There is a Fairytopia film franchise within the BCU that has mermaids (and Bibble, my favorite Barbie sidekick), a mermaid filled duology, and these don't even encompass all the fairy and mermaid movies.

Only in the BCU will more than 25% of the movies include fairies or mermaids as pivotal plot points. These films include:

BARBIE: FAIRYTOPIA (2005)
BARBIE FAIRYTOPIA: MERMAIDIA (2006)
BARBIE FAIRYTOPIA: MAGIC OF THE RAINBOW (2007)
BARBIE: MARIPOSA (2008)
BARBIE IN A MERMAID TALE (2010)
BARBIE: A FAIRY SECRET (2011)
BARBIE IN A MERMAID TALE 2 (2012)
BARBIE: MARIPOSA & THE FAIRY PRINCESS (2013)
BARBIE: THE PEARL PRINCESS (2014)
BARBIE AND THE SECRET DOOR (2014)
BARBIE: DOLPHIN MAGIC (2017)
BARBIE: MERMAID POWER (2022)

There are three films remaining. I would categorize **Barbie in the Pink Shoes (2013)** as a dance film that follows in the tradition of classics like Flashdance, Footloose, and Dirty dancing. **Barbie in Princess Power (2015)** is a superhero film, like the films of the Marvel Cinematic Universe (MCU). Finally, and most interestingly, is the BCU's only out-and-out kid's film, **Barbie & Chelsea: The Lost Birthday (2021)**. This was truly the most G rated movie I have ever seen in my entire life.

THE LOVEMAKING OF EROTICA AND HORROR, THE TERROR OF AGING



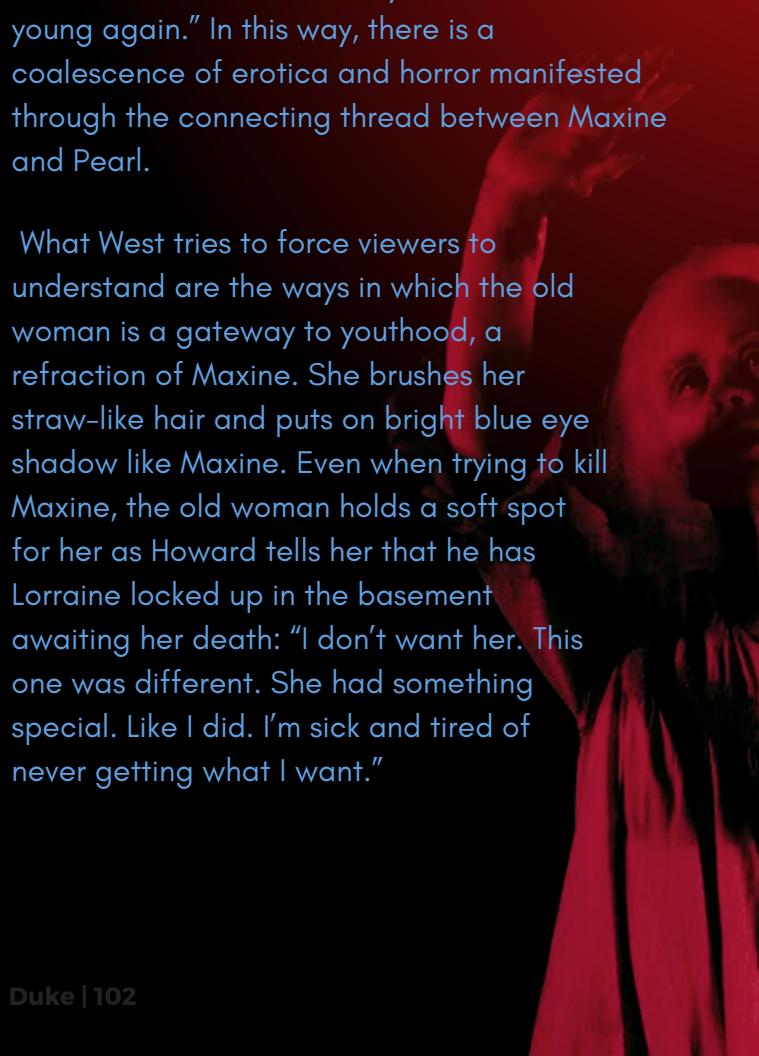
By Yazmin Omana

Ti West, prolific horror filmmaker, has made a name for himself in 2022's lineup of outstanding films with his great work, *X*. Just like most A24 films, after *X*'s release the movie quickly boomed – for good reason too. West chooses the 70s timescape in which the erotica-turned-slasher film is set. Even more perfect is the remote Texan setting where nothing but cows, barley fields, and overgrown grass can be seen for miles. Here lie the conditions for Maxine, Bobby-Lynne, Lorraine, RJ, Wayne, and Jackson – a group of young aspiring "actors" – to shoot a film that will catapult them to Hollywood stardom – a porno.

When ringleader, or pimp, Wayne guides the crew to a desolate farm owned by a quiet elderly couple in the countryside the film shifts from blatant erotica to intense horror. The elderly couple are the most pertinent exemplars of supernaturally disturbing, and horrific, movie villains. They do not just look old, but exceptionally old and withering; as if they are walking corpses. Character physicality is important in the world of *X* in which the elders' extreme physical aging, more so than the average grandparent, visually haunts the film in juxtaposition to the vivacious and beautiful film stars.



"It's not real life, it's just a movie"

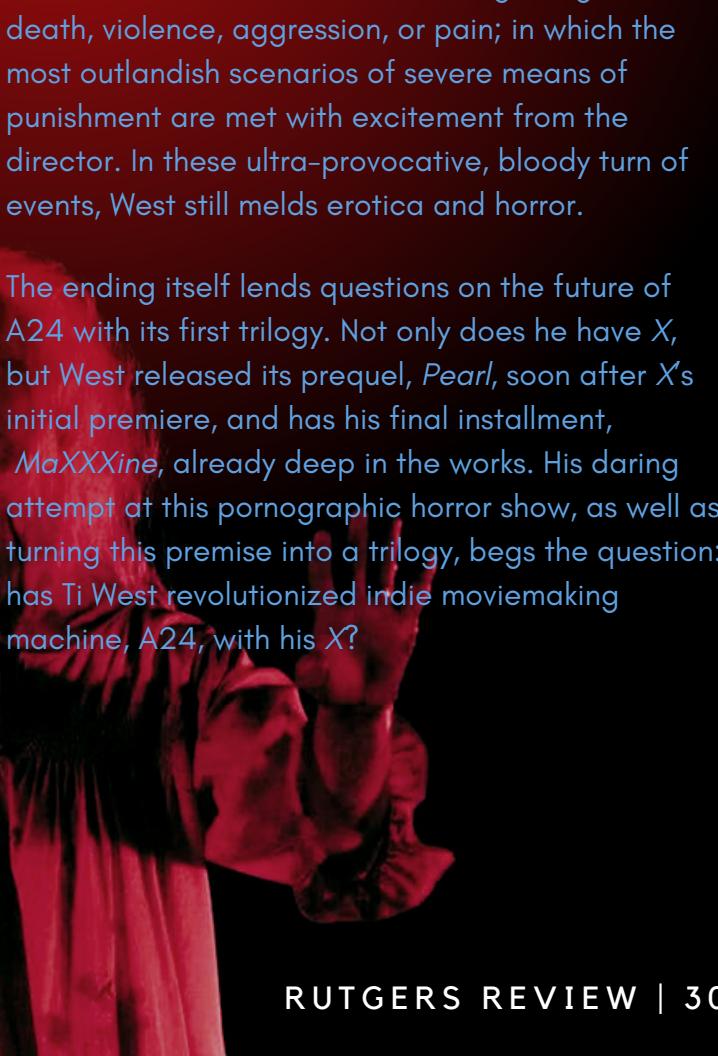


The husband, the brooding Howard, although balding, has long wispy hair on his head of dark spots. He has sunken eye sockets and yellow, jagged teeth that make him look like a humanoid rat. The woman, Pearl, walks around almost with her eyes closed, barely utters a word, and has long stringy hair comparable to the Texan hay. Over the course of the film, we see Pearl contrast the young and beautiful budding film star, Maxine. Whose carefree attitude and vibrant blue eyeshadow strikes an envious chord with Pearl. We see this most notably after nudist loving, sex hungry Pearl takes a break from her killing tirade, and, still covered in fresh, wet blood, undresses and caresses sleeping Maxine in bed. Eventually, Maxine awakens in a blood curdling scream after realizing Pearl is in her bed: "That woman was in my bed touching me!" she yells to the only remaining survivor, Bobby-Lynne. Pearl's obsession with Maxine perfectly melds the spirit of *X* as she is on a quest to kill the young and have sex, or, more succinctly, to "make me feel young again." In this way, there is a coalescence of erotica and horror manifested through the connecting thread between Maxine and Pearl.

What West tries to force viewers to understand are the ways in which the old woman is a gateway to youthhood, a refraction of Maxine. She brushes her straw-like hair and puts on bright blue eye shadow like Maxine. Even when trying to kill Maxine, the old woman holds a soft spot for her as Howard tells her that he has Lorraine locked up in the basement awaiting her death: "I don't want her. This one was different. She had something special. Like I did. I'm sick and tired of never getting what I want."

Her last words echo a critical sentiment to the film; a sentiment Maxine had been hammering at all along. They mirror each other whether Maxine wants to see it or not. What is explicitly made clear to Maxine is Pearl's obsession with youth, and all the implications associated with being young, full of vitality, and with every opportunity made possible to you. In this way, West compares ideas of youthhood in the backdrop of rotting, or the act of fading away, and stardom – through the means of sex – to maintain that liveliness associated with youth.

Moreover, death scenes and violent punishments in *X* is where the couple shines the most as otherworldly villains. If not for their terrifying look and eerie demeanor then for their apathetic violence. The elderly couple distinguish the first instances of the gory, disturbing horror associated with A24 – think *Hereditary* or *Midsommar* – marked by Pearl's silent killing of RJ, Wayne, Jackson, Bobby-Lynne, and Lorraine. Slowly but surely, the husband and wife duo isolate the gang and kill them off one by one. These scenes are excruciating. Yet West seems to adore these eccentric, disgusting visions of death, violence, aggression, or pain; in which the most outlandish scenarios of severe means of punishment are met with excitement from the director. In these ultra-provocative, bloody turn of events, West still melds erotica and horror.



The ending itself lends questions on the future of A24 with its first trilogy. Not only does he have *X*, but West released its prequel, *Pearl*, soon after *X*'s initial premiere, and has his final installment, *MaXXXine*, already deep in the works. His daring attempt at this pornographic horror show, as well as turning this premise into a trilogy, begs the question: has Ti West revolutionized indie moviemaking machine, A24, with his *X*?

Ranking TV Boyfriends

By Akansha Singh

Growing up watching heartthrobs take over the screen with their brooding eyes, irresistible charm, and smooth talk has resulted in many of us getting caught in the epidemic that is romance on TV.

Maybe you wanted to be like Blair Waldorf getting swept up in Paris, or maybe you imagined that you were Summer Roberts and had a boat named after you. Whoever you wanted to be and whoever you hoped to have as a boyfriend, here is a list of famous TV boyfriends ranked based on how good they were.

Seth Cohen, The OC

He named a boat after Summer, he spent years pining after her, and he eventually got her. At the very least, he had undeniable charm, he was funny, and he cared for those around him. Young Seth Cohen would have been very proud of himself by the end. Maybe I'm a little biased toward Seth though because he was the continuation of what

Dave Ryggsaki from Gilmore Girls could have been. Regardless of any biases though, Seth knew what to do and he won Summer over.



Nick Miller, New Girl

He needed time to get his act together and he did. He got it together. He got it together for Jess. Jess and Nick were eccentric squared in their entire relationship. Sure he was a little clueless sometimes, but his heart was always in the right place.



Lucas Scott, One Tree Hill

Without a doubt, he was not the better brother. He dated Peyton, then he dated Brooke, then he cheated on Brooke with Peyton, and then he left and got married to Peyton. Sheesh. Talk about not knowing what you want. Not only did he cause rifts between best friends, but he also was inconsiderate and selfish.



Marshall Eriksen, How I Met Your Mother

Truly. Nobody does it like Marshall Eriksen. His devotion to Lily throughout the show is admirable and puts him on the very top. At heart, he was always the little boy from Minnesota looking to receive and give love. A teddy bear in human form if I do say so.



Jess Mariano, Gilmore Girls

If this list was only ranked by potential heartthrob-ness then Jess would be much higher. Discussing boyfriend material though, Jess is not up there.



He was flaky, mean, and he abandoned his girlfriend, Rory, on his quest to find himself.



Ross Geller, Friends

He was the worst. Okay, so objectively he wasn't the worst of the entire lot of TV boyfriends, but who likes Ross Geller? He cheated on multiple girlfriends, he was a true gaslighter with 'we were on a break,' and he was so incredibly whiny all the time.



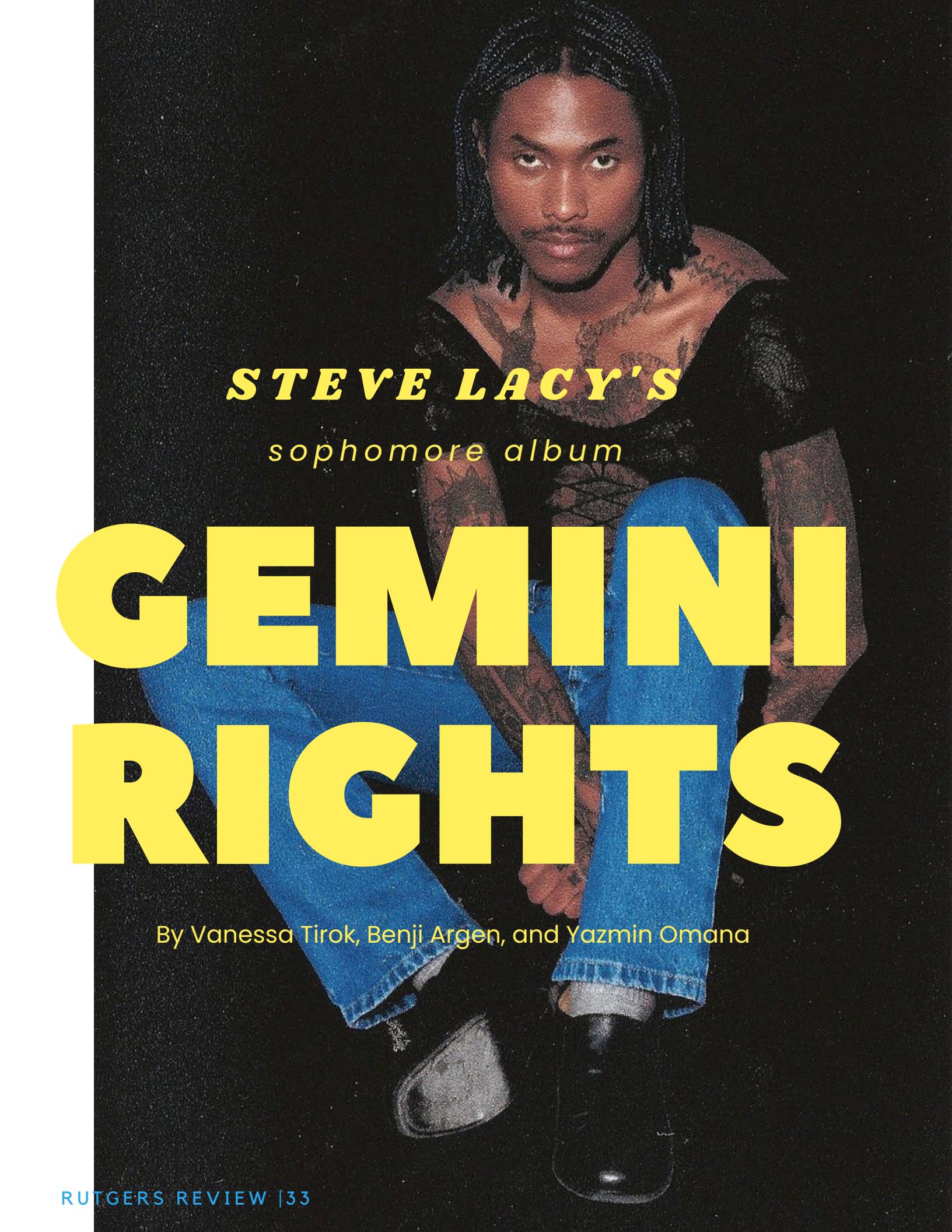
Chuck Bass, Gossip Girl

Chuck and Blair had a grand romance, Chuck and Blair found their way back to each other, and Chuck and Blair understood passionate love. No, No, and No. Younger me loved the idea of Chuck Bass, probably because of his chronic brooding. Let's face reality though, Chuck was horrible -- he was mean, he took advantage of others, and he 'sold' Blair for a hotel deal. He and Blair were toxic. Also, he did not change and he did not deserve Blair's commitment.

MUSIC

FKJ photographed by Vanessa Tirok

Dianna Lopez photographed by Anastasia Codiebas



STEVE LACY'S

sophomore album

GEMINI RIGHTS

By Vanessa Tirok, Benji Argen, and Yazmin Omaha

Overview

On July 15, 2022 “Bad Habit” singer Steve Lacy, released his sophomore, sad-core album “Gemini Rights,” and no one could have prepared for the cultural impact, as well as the emotional resonance, it would have on all listeners. Lacy, now 24, made a name for himself in the music industry with his underground hit, “C U Girl” - a sappy, sentimental indie song detailing how much he misses his girlfriend in college. A lot of Lacy’s older songs carry themes of deep love, passion, devotion, and adoration (think “Dark Red,” “Some,” “Infrunami,” “Uuuu” etc.). But with the inception of “Gemini Rights”, long gone are his days of funky guitar-laden love, or lust, songs. Here, he introduces the ultimate heartbreak, Gemini-approved album so entrenched in bitterness and fuckboy-ery that has not only become the Gen Z zeitgeist of 2022 but encapsulates the ethos of Gen Z relationships. Lacy’s album has possibly ushered in a new analysis of love entirely - when loving someone consumes your whole being, and when loving someone is the same as hating them.

He begins his masterpiece with “Static”, a brooding 2-minute song whose haunting piano and reverberating bass serve as the backdrop to an elegy of sorts to an ex-lover. His blunt lyricism - often provocative and putting music to the rage of heartbrokenness - perfectly sets up the entirety of the album. Notably, each song reflects a different fraction of emotion when going through a breakup. “Buttons” does not deny the unfairness in his past relationship, but



rather, it affirms both the animosity and undying love Lacy will have for the one who treated him like a dog. Funnily enough, Gemini Right’s intermission is marked by “2Gether (Enterlude)”- a short song that plays like a mantra of sorts; replaying “together, forever” over and over again almost as an ironic intercession to the resentfulness inundated in the rest of the album. The interlude plays up this dichotomy even more as it is slated right before track 7, “Cody Freestyle”. In “Cody Freestyle”, the album’s decisive fuckboy anthem, Lacy allows himself full control to seem like an asshole. Just a few lyrics - “Don’t depend on me, no/Unless you’re swallowing/I could use your deep throat/We don’t gotta be together forever/’Cause I could do better” - highlight Lacy’s lack of concern for morals and ethics (classic Gemini). Even the dark synth and bass backings perfectly reflect the “Said ‘I love you,’ never meant it” theme of the song; making for the album’s bitterest song through the lens of the enraged player. Interestingly enough, “Amber,” “Sunshine,” and “Give You the World” bookend the album with impassioned love songs. Two of which - “Amber” and “Give You the World” - feature wispy falsettos and romantic piano.



BENJI:

Steve Lacy has pioneered an auditory safe space for the zodiac's most problematic fave. Yes, in a brief 35 minutes, the RCA recording artist pleads his case in defense of the two-faced persona. He explains the detrimental freewill spirit encapsulated the spirit of the Gemini--- the duplexity, the back & forth, wishy-washy, here-today, gone-tomorrow. This album release was timed perfectly with my foundational early-twenties relationship falling apart! "Gemini Rights" is an ode to the villain era, the healing era, and, of course, the goblin-mode era. From my perspective, this record is about one's acknowledgement of self-worth, as well as their flaws, how those concepts intersect, and their inability to take away from one another. Aside from these themes, in my opinion, Lacy offers one of the most sonically interesting records of the decade by far. It's sooooo 2020's! With ease, he is able to fully replicate the feeling of mental stagnation, or feeling static, with a singular synth throughout his opening track. "Gemini Rights" is an experience I would recommend to everyone who encounters this article to try at least once (or twice. Honestly please do not stop listening to this album, it is so important!). The question is not whether Geminis deserve rights, but how one should go about interacting with them. A guideline to Geminis, if you will; in the way the United States Constitution is a guideline (yes I just did that).



VANESSA:

I wasn't that much in love with "Gemini Rights". While I always enjoy seeing the artists that I like evolve in their sound, a huge part of me is still stuck in Steve Lacy's Demo/Apollo XXI era. It has less to do with "Gemini Rights" itself, and more so my problem with nostalgia and hesitance toward change. But I will give Lacy his flowers for a few things. I think the production on this album is well-done, but since it's a Steve Lacy album that's kind of a given (like c'mon, this is the guy who's made hits using only his phone and Garageband). I also enjoyed Lacy's singing style, specifically that signature singing accent he takes on which is most reminiscent of 90s punk rock bands (it's giving Billie Joe Armstrong). There's just something about that particular singing style that makes a song memorable, and so even though I think "Static" is overplayed, I can't help but sing it at the most random moments (at this point it's a bad habit). I admired his use of vocal layering and complex harmonies; in terms of vocal abilities, I think Lacy really outdid himself here.

YAZMIN:

I truly loved "Gemini Rights." It was the soundtrack to my summer...and fall and winter. Somehow Lacy was able to crack open a facet of emotion with each song; whether it made me laugh, - Cody Freestyle - cry, - Sunshine - or scream - Static - each song lent itself to relatability one way or another. Apart from how the album made me feel (which was a lot), the technical arrangement was also exquisite. I felt as if Gemini Rights masterfully weaved a thematic thread of hating and loving; forcing the question if they are one in the same? Again, Lacy plays up the art of the Gemini. The way in which duality and polarity of emotion are a cornerstone of both the Gemini, and the heartbreak. Although I still don't think Geminis deserve rights, I think Lacy earned himself at least one right with his album.



FRENCH KIWI JUICE



If you have yet to discover the wonder of FKJ (French Kiwi Juice)--- multi-instrumentalist extraordinaire, live-looping god--- here's a little something you should know: **one doesn't merely listen to FKJ's music, but envelops themselves in it, lets it in, and evaporates into bliss.** Similarly, one doesn't merely go to an FKJ concert, but trudges through several blocks in heeled platforms and stands for 3 hours in the Avant Gardner general admission line--- or at least that's what I did. This tour marked the French artist's first time playing in front of a live audience in two years, so being in the front row of his sold-out November 5th show in NYC was a must, and the blisters I endured that night were absolutely worth it.

With a flip of a light switch, FKJ revealed to us a set design modeled after his living space in South East Asia where he spent most of quarantine creating his latest album "VINCENT." Behind the comfy couches and the shelves of books and records, three large panel screens behind him revealed imagery of tropical rainforests. He started us off by paying tribute to the city with a remix of Ella Fitzgerald's "Autumn in New York." Just when I thought the jazz classic was untouchable, he managed to remix it in a way that was completely original and dripping in [neo] funk? Electronic? Nu jazz? Who knows how to categorize this man's sound? The addition of synths, the wild saxophone solo, coupled with the voice of Ella was the perfect blend of old and new, all while remaining distinctly FKJ. He ended the song by waving his arm across the stage and beckoning to the audience, "Welcome to my home." The crowd went crazy; we certainly felt at home, and we knew we were in for greatness.

CONCERT REVIEW BY VANESSA TIROK

FKJ spent the rest of the nearly three-hour concert performing a mixture of songs from his newest album, older works, and improvised instrumentals. It's one thing to have FKJ playing on the car stereo while driving to class, or through earbuds on a sleepless night; but to see the man in the flesh, running from instrument to instrument while barely breaking a sweat, tickling the ivory piano keys, going ham on the sax, was a whole different experience. Watching him perform "Losing My Way" (sans Tom Misch, but still electrifying nonetheless) just a few feet away from me felt like a full-circle moment, as this is the first song of his that I had ever listened to.

Another thing you should know about FKJ is that each of his songs take on a life form of its own. "Let's Live" felt like being lifted into the air. "Lying Together" was vibrant in every sense of the word, not just musically, but visually--- the colorful swirls of the panels and the warm, pulsating stage lights gave the impression of being immersed in psychedelia. "Different Masks for Different Days" was a chill to the spine, starting off with a slow but haunting sax solo, then intensifying with every instrumental layer added. With the flashing lights and the imagery of lightning and rain in the background, we were caught in a musical storm. Eventually, a single beam of light shone down on FKJ as he worked his magic on the piano, and just when we thought the storm had subsided, he whipped out the sax and went wild--- as did the lights, as did the bass which pounded its way into our souls.



Of course he played a number of his hits, like the emotive "Ylang Ylang" which blew up on TikTok this past year, making for a nice come-down from the more high-energy songs played beforehand. "Vibin' Out", another FKJ essential, was just mesmerizing. (((O))), the artist who lent her smooth vocals to the song, also FKJ's wife, wasn't there to perform it. She, instead, appeared in the form of golden pixels on the panels, which FKJ was staring at intently as he played away on the synth. The visuals, the added strings section, and the expression of pure love and admiration on FKJ's face as he played made for an enthralling performance. And who could forget "Tadow"? Though the viral YouTube hit was performed without Masego, FKJ was able to play both his glorious guitar licks and Masego's sax solo effortlessly. But not all of his collab-related hits were left to be played solo--- FKJ surprised us by bringing out Bas, who got the crowd rapping "Risk" word for word.

Among the number of other songs performed that night, one thing I still can't shake is that improvised jam session. Though FKJ could totally hold down a show on his own if he wanted to, bringing out bassist Seth Tackaberry and drummer Arjun Dube highlighted the magic that collaboration brings to FKJ's work. Both musicians shared the spotlight with him, each having their own solos at certain points. What I loved about this improv performance was how it demonstrated the instinctual nature of music in skilled musicians. Only masters can create music on-the-spot that is both technical and highly expressive.

There was not one moment throughout the concert where musical expression was lost. I think I felt it most during his performance of "Sundays," a medley from his "Just Piano" EP. Though originally an exclusively-piano song, the live performance welcomed a strings section, adding more dramatic depth to it than had already existed. Even the security guard in front of me, this burly man with face tats, put his hand over his heart because he couldn't take the beauty of it all.

I came to this concert as an FKJ superfan, and I left an FKJ megafan with the emptiness of knowing that I'll probably never witness anything that incredible ever again. Perhaps it's the deep personal connection I already had to his music prior to the concert. FKJ has been in my life since the beginning of college. His music has carried me through my scary first days as a freshman, the isolation of COVID during my sophomore year, countless essay writing sessions in my junior year. His music had been my travel companion during my study abroad days this past summer, and on bad days I've held onto "VINCENT" like a close friend. I've been to other concerts since this one (artists who are much more commercially known), but nothing can quite match what I experienced that night. There's truly a rare quality of comfort and healing that comes with music like FKJ's, and I feel so lucky to have been a witness to something so beautiful.



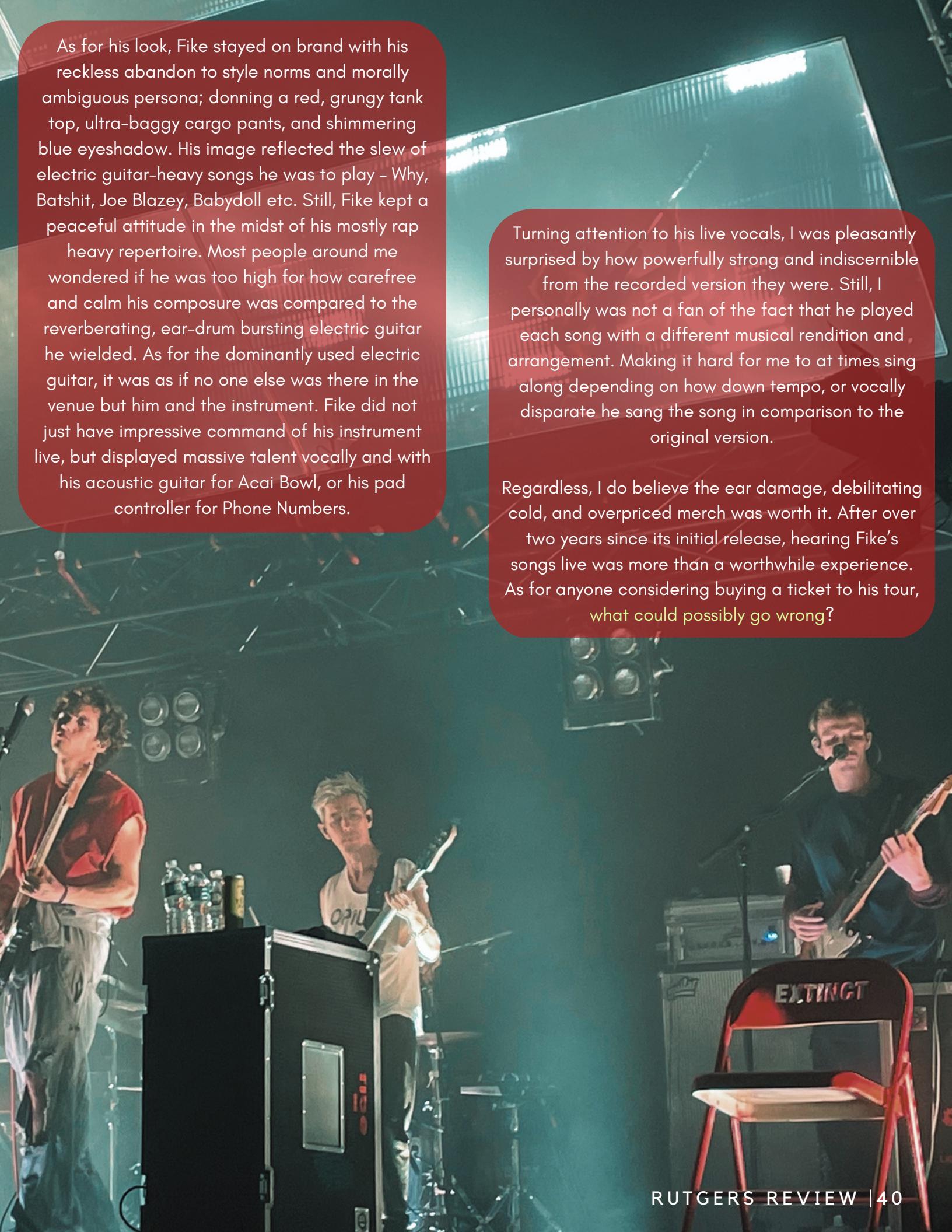
DOMINIC FIKE

Concert Review: Yazmin Omana



26-year-old Naples native, ex-prisoner, and current Euphoria heartthrob, Dominic Fike, has been busy. Now on tour for *What Could Possibly Go Wrong* – his long-awaited debut album following the ever-popular *Don't Forget About Me, Demos* – Fike is as busy as ever. Superfans have been waiting to hear the hits they first heard on Spotify when his album first dropped on July 31st, 2020. Now, more than two years later, Fike has been able to tour the archive of songs that people have loved. Lucky for me, I was able to witness Fike's great comeback after Covid postponed *What Could Possibly Go Wrong*'s subsequent tour.

NYC's Terminal 5 was my venue of choice on December 1st. I truly could not have anticipated the amount of fans lined outside that cold December night, and inside proved to show me the power of Fike's up-and-coming stardom. Looking back now, I should have considered that my GA ticket would not provide the most comfortable physical experience at the concert as I was constantly pushed, blocked, and squished by those around me. There were a few people who passed out (in which he stopped singing) and even a fight. Yet this is the price to pay when seeing someone as famous as Fike. Not only that, but I suppose this is the true Fike concert experience; keeping in line with his rockstar-esque nature. At one point – after the faintees were either given water or escorted out – Fike even blared that he was done being safe. He wanted to "get crazy."



As for his look, Fike stayed on brand with his reckless abandon to style norms and morally ambiguous persona; donning a red, grungy tank top, ultra-baggy cargo pants, and shimmering blue eyeshadow. His image reflected the slew of electric guitar-heavy songs he was to play – Why, Batshit, Joe Blazey, Babydoll etc. Still, Fike kept a peaceful attitude in the midst of his mostly rap heavy repertoire. Most people around me wondered if he was too high for how carefree and calm his composure was compared to the reverberating, ear-drum bursting electric guitar he wielded. As for the dominantly used electric guitar, it was as if no one else was there in the venue but him and the instrument. Fike did not just have impressive command of his instrument live, but displayed massive talent vocally and with his acoustic guitar for Acai Bowl, or his pad controller for Phone Numbers.

Turning attention to his live vocals, I was pleasantly surprised by how powerfully strong and indiscernible from the recorded version they were. Still, I personally was not a fan of the fact that he played each song with a different musical rendition and arrangement. Making it hard for me to at times sing along depending on how down tempo, or vocally disparate he sang the song in comparison to the original version.

Regardless, I do believe the ear damage, debilitating cold, and overpriced merch was worth it. After over two years since its initial release, hearing Fike's songs live was more than a worthwhile experience. As for anyone considering buying a ticket to his tour, what could possibly go wrong?

Taken by Stephanie Wang



Eric Nam



DEAN'S LIST

Destroy Lonely

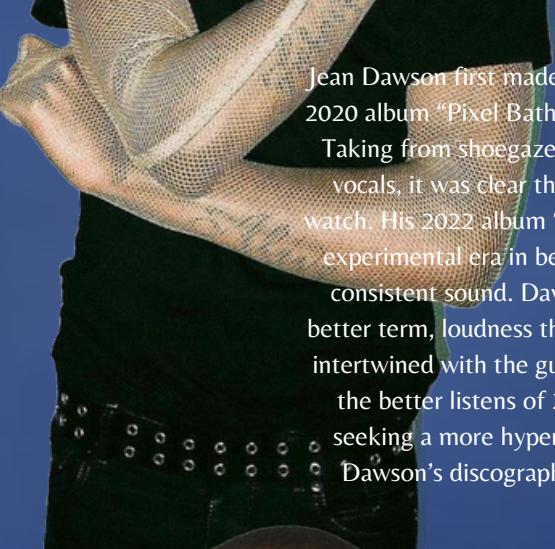
by: Ishaan Chakravorty and
Vanessa Tirok



The aftermath of Playboi Carti's impact on rap music has manifested itself beyond the Soundcloud scene. With a notoriety to his name after releasing 3 hit albums, Carti has spent the latest part of his career developing an image and label that of which combines punk elements of the 1980s, new wave trap music, and even influence from Yung Lean's Sad Boys. Of Playboi Carti's "Opium" label, Ken Carson, Destroy Lonely, and Homicide Gang stand out. Rising in 2021 thanks to various social media platforms, all eyes were on "Opium" as Ken Carson and Destroy Lonely were set to release major studio albums.

While Ken Carson's "X" was disappointing after the underground hit "Project X", Destroy Lonely met and exceeded expectations with "No Stylist". A project teased for 2 years, with countless leaks and stoppages, features tracks with grimy production, signature flow, and a clear image that has largely influenced the culture. Keeping with the aesthetic of Rick Owens and brutalism, Destroy Lonely has influenced a new age of Soundcloud kid. Whereas A\$AP Rocky or Travis Scott introduced Supreme, SB Dunks, or cargo pants to the scene, Destroy Lonely and co. utilize the counterculture, bringing in Rick Owens, Raf Simons, and other European designers to overtake the zeitgeist previously dominated by skate culture.

Jean Dawson



Jean Dawson first made waves in the alternative genre with his 2020 album "Pixel Bath", with the break-out single "Starface".

Taking from shoegaze's fusion of whining guitar and aching vocals, it was clear that Dawson's next release was one to watch. His 2022 album "Chaos Now" follows in the wake of an experimental era in bedroom pop, with a more transparent, consistent sound. Dawson retains the unique, for lack of a better term, loudness throughout tracks with rough vocals, but intertwined with the guitar instrumentals, it makes for one of the better listens of 2022. For fans of LCD Soundsystem seeking a more hyperpop-esque, contemporary spin, Jean Dawson's discography is easily one of the more exciting releases.



Kaelin Ellis



This year, producer Kaelin Ellis came out with "THE FUNK WILL PREVAIL" and "Vignette" both short, primarily instrumental albums that showcase Ellis' versatile production style. At 22 minutes long, "THE FUNK WILL PREVAIL" definitely leans into a more retro side, incorporating elements of jazz and funk while still being electronic; its most popular track "CATS GROOVE" is the perfect example of this melange with its jazz flute instrumentals, funky synths, and contemporary beats. "Vignette," an album made in collaboration with artist The Kount, is shorter in comparison at only 17 minutes, honing more into electronic hip-hop with moments of lo-fi and drill. Both albums have their own distinct vibe, "THE FUNK WILL PREVAIL" being more groovy and bright, and "Vignette" containing more of a dark edge to it. What both albums succeed at is having each track lead into each other seamlessly, giving one the experience of listening to one continuous song that never loses momentum. Ellis truly knows how to make music that gets listeners moving.

DEAN'S LIST

OHMA

With only one album under their belt that came out just this year ("Between All Things"), multi-instrumentalists Hailey Niswanger and Mia Garcia have been carving their own unique path into the music world, mesmerizing audiences with their ethereal music style along the way. OHMA's music is chiefly experimental, a mixture of instruments including winds, synths, strings, bells, anything that helps produce that meditative, otherworldly sound that they've so achieved. With the addition of vocalizations as well as spoken poetry, their music carries a sense of artistic expression that transcends genre.



The duo joined FKJ as a supporting act on his 2022 North American tour; I (Vanessa) had the privilege of seeing them live and have been hooked ever since. As live performers, the two were seen juggling instruments as they live-looped and layered over each other. I had never seen a performance so serene, nor an audience so entranced and still. They didn't just play—they radiated music. I'll never forget watching Niswanger attack the sax, or Garcia sway with closed eyes as she picked on the bass.

It was a real treat watching such a fresh act in their element, and in an age where people are looking for healing, I have no doubt that OHMA will be the musical conduit.



Tobe Nwigwe

Hailing from Houston, Texas, Tobe Nwigwe has brought new lenses to the contemporary American experience and their relationship with Christianity. Being raised religiously, hints of a church choir can be found in his instrumentals, but his tracks are just as hard-hitting as that of an artist such as Injury Reserve. His 2022 project "moMints" brought him to a more public eye, with the notable track "LORD FORGIVE ME" featuring the extremely talented EARTHGANG and the music mogul Pharrell Williams. Coming up on the more lowkey end of Houston's music scene, Tobe is an artist to watch in the future with numerous cosigns and an experimental track record. Fans of Kota the Friend, Saba, and Smino will find a familiar essence to Nwigwe's tracks, with the kind of funky instrumentation Brockhampton established in their Saturation series.

CLASS OF 2022



THE RUTGERS REVIEW: 2022 WRAPPED

BY YOURS TRULY, THE E-BOARD



ANASTASIA

THE SNAKE by Lana Lubany

I am not familiar with Lana but I often gravitate towards middle Eastern vocals, which she incorporates into this catchy song. The instrumentals make me want to move my body along to the rhythm every time I play it. I am also obsessed with her English parts seamlessly transitioning into Arabic (I think?). I would assume the song talks about your darker impulses taking over you, but how would I know? Maybe it really is just about a 'slimy and thick' snake.



VANESSA

PURE/HONEY by Beyoncé

Split into two parts, "PURE/HONEY" is probably the most dynamic song off of Beyoncé's "RENAISSANCE," the high-charting 2022 album which introduced us to a whole different side to Queen Bey and reintroduced us to a sound reminiscent of 80s ballroom culture. PURE will make you want to dip, HONEY will turn you into a disco queen. Both songs blend together in celebration of feminine sensuality. It's the perfect dance song, ego booster, and having Beyoncé tell you to "get your money, money, cunty hunty" will motivate you like no other.



SREEJA

Oh Caroline by The 1975

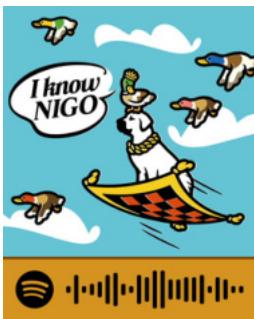
From their new album, "Being Funny in a Foreign Language," which is all great but the 13 year old inside was screaming listening to this because it's the most perfect indie romcom song. A kind-of-sad, Tumblr-esque, and vibey cousin to Sweet Caroline by Neil Diamond in the best way possible.



BENJI

Jodie by SZA

Summer '22, SZA released the deluxe edition of her 2017 cultural reset, CTRL. If you're reading the review, you're already familiar with the themes of CTRL. This is the closing track on the rerelease. Describing the feeling of thinking you're able to send that, "I hope you are well!," text, Jodie encapsulates the end of the aftermath after the end. It is the precipice of living the life you envisioned for yourself while healing. The glance back through the door right before you close it for good. SZA, we are ready for SOS!

**VIRAJ****Lost and Found Freestyle 2019 (A\$AP Rocky & Tyler, The Creator) by Nigo**

Nigo, the Japanese designer, producer, and founder of popular brands Human Made and A Bathing Ape, finally ventured back into music with his second album, *I Know NIGO!* This song is the first one on the album, beginning with Rocky rapping about his lavish lifestyle, with Tyler coming in after the beat switch talking about how he is doing better than his competition. This song was the first collaboration between Tyler and Rocky in over two years and featured an excellent sampling of Slim Thug's "3 Kings" and "Like a Boss."

**ISHAAN****KAPITOL DENIM feat. Future by Lucki**

One of the fathers of the underground, Lucki returned to familiar trap elements with his album "FLAWLESS LIKE ME". From tagging Future in tweets as far back as 2013 to finally getting a feature with him, Lucki's growth and development of his persona is solidified in this track. Lucki, admittedly, is addicted to designer jeans (among other things), a fault he exploits going bar for bar with Future Hendrix himself. Maybachs, percocet, and money are all the ingredients Lucki and Future need to make one of the catchiest tracks of 2022.

**YAZMIN****Better Distractions by Faye Webster**

"Better Distraction" starts off the album, "I Know I'm Funny haha," that skyrocketed Faye Webster's popularity to new heights. Although her most popular songs are "Right Side of My Neck" or "Kingston," "Better Distractions," in my opinion, greatly outshines its predecessors. Both for her vulnerable lyricism about not being able to see someone you miss (a nod to Covid-19's quarantine restrictions) and for Webster's insane instrumental capability, the song has been on replay since it was released. Weirdly enough, my favorite part of the song is the instrumental outro -- a jazzy, twangy, dreamlike rhythm that keeps me humming "will ya, will ya, will ya, will ya, will ya, will ya be with me?"

**SAHANA****Take What You Want by Def Leppard**

Take What You Want feels like a trip down memory lane. The song incorporates memorable riffs and vocal arrangement from *Hysteria*, Def Leppard's album from the 80s. If you listen to rock or even alt-rock, then this is the song for you. The heavy guitar voices and core reminiscent melody makes it a perfect blend of irresistible rock.



"Cry Me a River" by Anastasia Codjebas

"Worms" by Paris Yee

BY ADUGO OKAFOR

FREEDOM V S BONDAGE



ARTWORK BY ANASTASIA CODJEBAS

Human beings have a fascination with the concept of freedom. To spread one's wings in defiance of the restrictions of this world. Many consider it a right, a necessity to life. The United States was founded as an independent nation from Britain to salute an eagle that hails life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. The Civil Rights Movement propelled a societal shift in the treatment of African Americans and minorities, marching vigorously to let freedom ring. The court decision of Obergefell v. Hodges affirmed one of the leading agendas for the LGBT Movement, legalizing the freedom of one's sexuality.

Human beings have a fascination with the concept of bondage. To bind one's wings from flapping against the restrictions of this world. Many today look down upon the phrase 'bondage,' yet it's more prominent throughout the stretches of history. For millennia, slavery, or the process of owning another human being, has been used across the globe from the Egyptian Sahara to the dense forests of Virginia. For example, the Nazi regime dedicated itself to hindering the lives of Jewish citizens and indoctrinating German youth with their ideals.

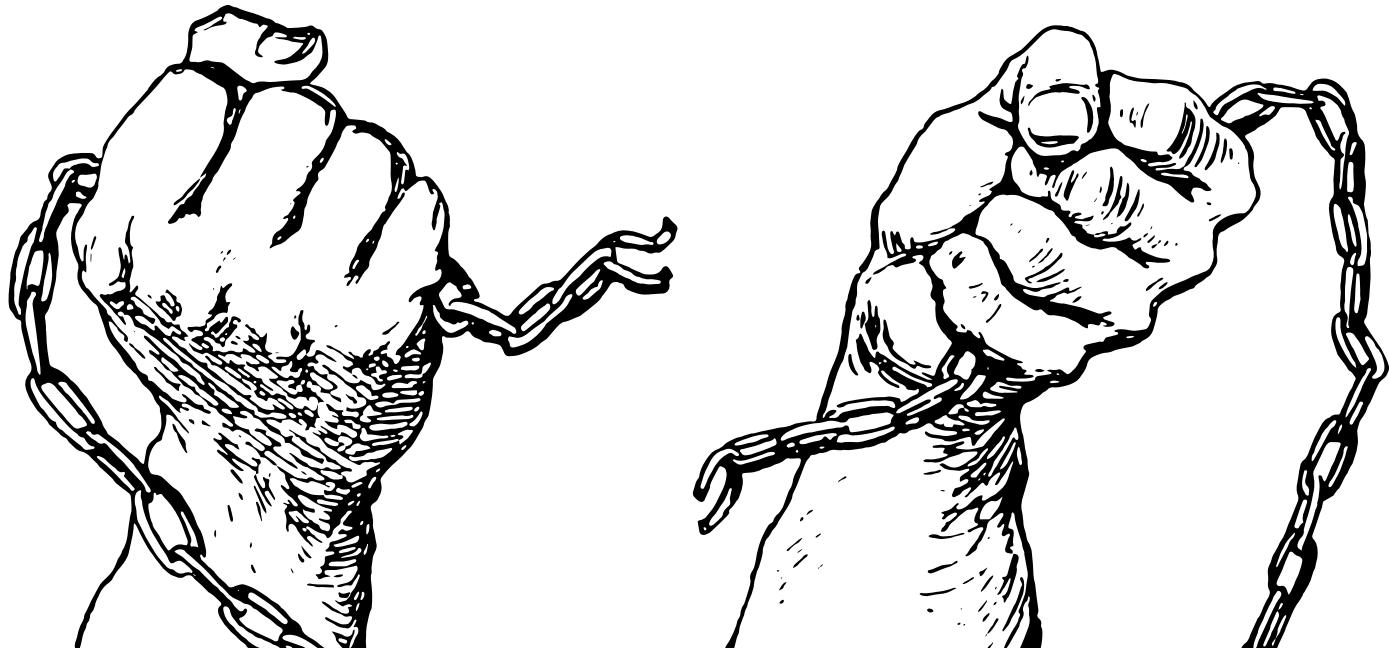
What is freedom? What is bondage? And can these two dichotomies co-exist? First of all, let's proceed to define these abstract terms. Merriam-Webster defines freedom as "the quality or state of being free; the absence of necessity, coercion, or constraint in choice or action." Sounds reasonable enough until you re-evaluate the countless decisions that have been enforced in your life. When parents, devoted to giving you a nutritious dinner, would add broccoli to your meatloaf at the age of six, you were likely not eager to digest them. Annoyed by your temper tantrum, they would say, "If you don't eat your vegetables, no ice cream for dessert." Well, they've made eating vegetables seem like a necessity, coercing you by threatening to strip away the desired reward, and constraining you into the mindset that you have no choice but to obey. If adhering to the accepted definition of freedom, in such a casual situation, this child is not free. Yet, we view this scenario much differently than segregation, for example. This is because freedom is measured, weighed on the scale of circumstance, purpose, and intent. The less restrictions there are, the more 'free' someone is.

Let's put a pin in that thread of thought and return later. The word 'bondage' can be defined as "the state of being bound by or subjected to some external power or control." Some may interpret this as being a slave, but that word can manifest itself in a literal sense, as something more figurative, or even ambiguous. An external power can refer to a fascist regime or the grief that racks an individual to avenge their lover's murder.

Driven by emotions that are still difficult to summarize in sufficient detail, both consider their actions justified. Yet we condemn one slave and empathize with the other. Because bondage too, is weighed on a scale of circumstance, purpose and/or intent. The line can be clear cut or incredibly blurry. So, does that mean the idea of bondage falls into one's perspective? A minimalist views the lifestyle as loosening their dependence on material things, thus being more 'free'. But perhaps a pampered adult living in a million-dollar mansion cannot comprehend someone restraining themselves to such a degree.

Here is where that pinned thread comes into play. Everyone is a slave to something. A need, want, goal that drives their actions. Everyone has their own restrictions either placed by themselves or society. You cannot speed past a red light, cheating during an exam is a violation of school policy, at a certain time your body needs to sleep, the list goes on for eternity. Therefore, following the code that fewer restrictions equal more freedom, can this supposed meter ever reach 100%? And if freedom is the absence of a necessity or constraint in choice or action, can anyone truly be free? Or do you have to lose your humanity, detach yourself completely from earthly desires, and eliminate the very fabrics of your conscience to achieve true freedom? Are you willing to pay such a toll?

Or instead, do we understand that human beings need to spread their wings without flying too close to the sun? That overstepping the very autonomy of another person is inexcusable but one cannot leave others to go astray for the sake of 'free will'. That a world where everyone is entirely free is equally terrifying as a world where everyone is in chains. That we must have these juxtaposing concepts co-exist in a practical fashion for our everyday lives to have worth, reason, and beauty.



Ben Stiller's

Severance:

A Reminder of Post-Covid Polarities

Written by Sreekar Vishwanathan

For hundreds of years, humans have done the same thing every day. Wake up, go to work, come home, spend time with family, sleep. Wake up, go to work, come home, spend time with family, sleep. Like clockwork. They rarely bring their work to home and vice-versa. The ones who do often end up like Al Pacino's character in 1995's Heat (two words: dead and beat).

Then 2020 happened.



In March 2020, people worldwide became magnetized to their homes. Scared to breathe the polluted public air and interact face-to-face, everyone resided with their friends, families, or by themselves in solitude for months upon months. People found new hobbies, relationships, education, and work simply from the computer on their desks. As a result, the barrier between one's existence in their own quarters and life outside of the home had become temporarily severed, making work life and home life inseparable.

There is a clear distinction between one's experience at home and their workplace: the home is where you can open your heart to

new possibilities, where you can reveal your true self free of judgment and retribution, where you can grow with the ones closest to you in life one opens their heart to new possibilities, reveals their true self free of judgement and retribution, and grows alongside their loved ones.

The workplace is rigid and cyclical, largely expressionless, technical, and potentially typically unfulfilling. Although it is encouraged to form relationships in the workplace as well as to work at home, overlapping home life and work life can lead to undesired anxiety. It can also be seen as a chore for most; a job is a job and nothing

more for some individuals, not a lifestyle or a personality trait. This can have an effect on one's ability to properly lead their home life and work life. To blend the two contradictions would be like throwing a football in a basketball hoop- it's possible but it doesn't really make a whole lot of sense.

For the last two and a half years, people's lives have been jumbled and put out of sorts, with only one constant: everything is at home. People needed a reminder of what it means to compartmentalize their habits, behavior, and interests at home versus their work functionality. In February of 2022, Apple TV+ released the limited series *Severance*, a psychological science-fiction thriller pitting the two dichotomies of home life and work life against each other in an introspective and borderline haunting fashion. The story revolves around Mark (Adam Scott), a depressed middle-aged man who is tied to his questionable and ambiguous work at Lumon HQ each and every day with one caveat: his brain is completely severed. Mark, along with several co-workers, had an irreversible neurological operation performed on them which separates home life and work life into two distinct, separate, impermeable identities — otherwise known as being severed.

Severed individuals form memories, relationships, and ideas and have no recollection whenever they enter the workplace, and vice-versa. They are two irrevocable minds formed for the sole purpose of being an adjusted member of society and a productive worker, without fail, free of distractions. This all changes when one of the co-workers, Helly (Britt Lower), has an immediate aversion to her severed mind in the workplace, prompting a series of questions among the rest of her co-workers. What is it they actually do at Lumon? What does permanently separating the two polarities of your life philosophically accomplish? What is so spectacularly or depressingly unique about their life that they are willingly erasing eight hours a day from their memory? Digging deeper and deeper into their home lives, Mark, Helly, and the Lumon workers come to the realization that their existence in the world is far more terrifying and significant than anticipated.

Actor and comedian Ben Stiller, whom you may know from *Madagascar* and *Zoolander*, came across the script in 2017 and began developing a workplace comedy à la *The Office*. After the pandemic began in 2020, development halted. However, the notions around its central theme and connotation

shifted towards its brooding social commentary, proving to be a succ-

shifted towards its brooding social commentary, proving to be a succ- essful change.

After a critically acclaimed first season, it has been renewed for a second season which is expected for release on Apple TV+ in 2023.





Can men and women truly just be friends?

BY MICHELE COHEN

"... men and women can't be friends because the sex part always gets in the way." - Harry Burns

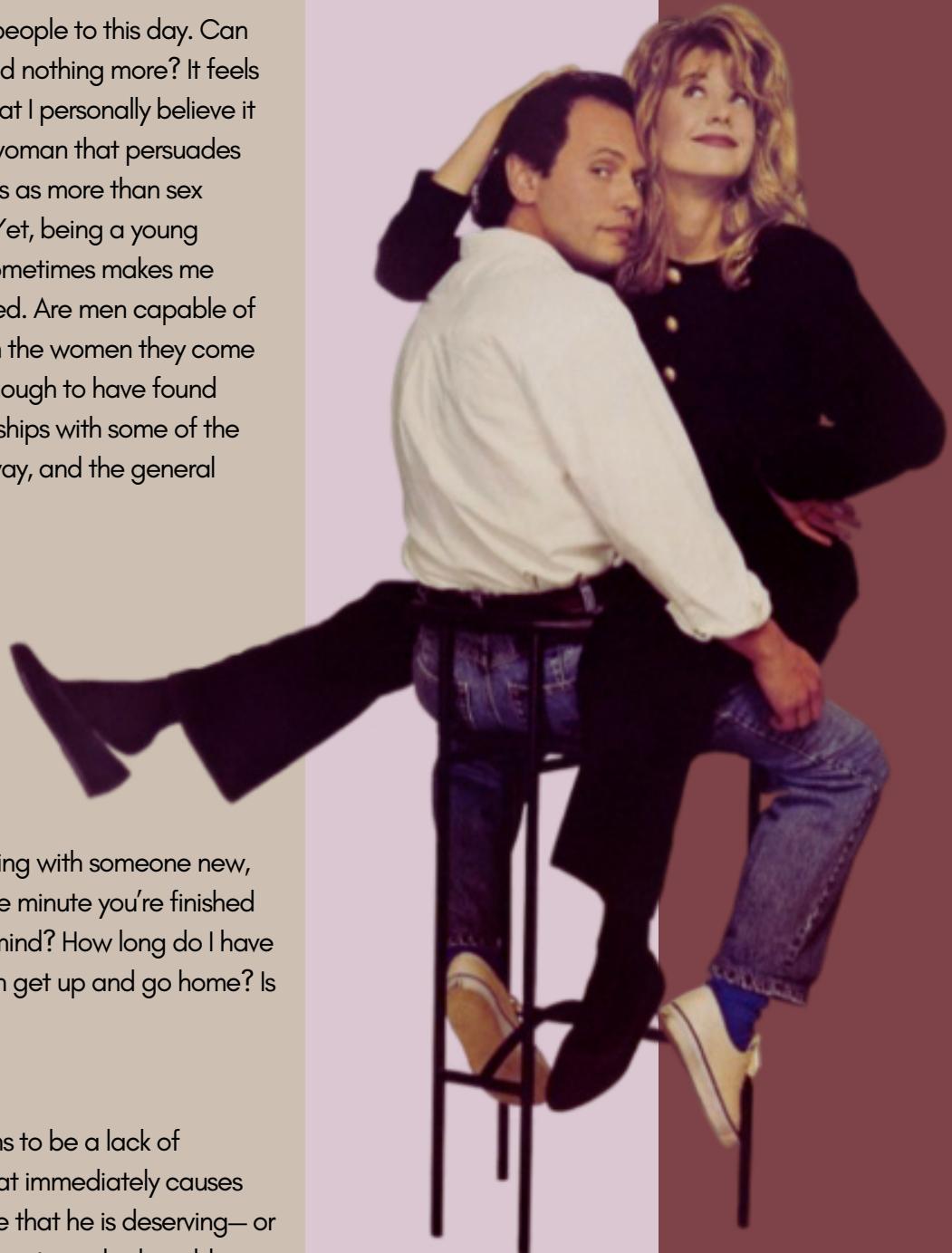
Rob Reiner's 1989 classic romantic comedy "When Harry Met Sally" gives an unexpected perspective on the complexity of men and women, as well as the age-old debate over the possibility of genuine platonic relationships. The entire film surrounds the complicated friendship between Harry Burns and Sally Albright, two people who at first glance could not be more opposite of one another. Brought together as an unlikely duo, the two spend over a decade bickering, laughing, and loving, all the while breaking down the fundamental differences between their individual sexes.

When the film begins, Harry and Sally are freshly graduated from college, road-tripping to New York together. There is an immediate distaste for one another, as they find out over the course of the ride how much their values differ. In a discussion of male and female friendship, Harry brings up the frequently asked question of whether or not that kind of relationship can survive. He says the aforementioned quote, "...men and women can't be friends because the sex part always gets in the way." This lays way for the theme of the movie, as Sally is certain that it can't be true.

This debate is one that still wracks people to this day. Can men and women truly be friends and nothing more? It feels naive to say yes, despite the fact that I personally believe it to be true. Maybe it is my being a woman that persuades me to believe that men could see us as more than sex objects, as something to conquer. Yet, being a young woman in a college environment sometimes makes me question what I have always believed. Are men capable of separating their sexual desires from the women they come in contact with? While I am lucky enough to have found companionship and genuine friendships with some of the men in my life, it is not always this way, and the general consensus finds this to be a rarity.

As the movie progresses, Harry's banter about the realities of men's thoughts unsurprisingly leaves Sally pessimistic about her own future in love. In a discussion of dating and the beginnings of sleeping with someone new, Harry says, "... you have sex, and the minute you're finished you know what goes through your mind? How long do I have to lie here and hold her before I can get up and go home? Is thirty seconds enough?"

Herein lies the problem. There seems to be a lack of emotional intelligence from men that immediately causes dishonesty. Does a man truly believe that he is deserving—or dare I say, entitled to—the most intimate and vulnerable parts of a woman? Does he actually think that there is nothing sentimental or personal about sex, so much so that he is bored at the thought of spending quality affectionate time outside of it?





I would like to believe that this isn't true, as the rest of the movie shows an emotionally evolved Harry, someone who recognizes the importance of commitment and love. It shows him recognizing the significance of a relationship with a woman that doesn't involve sex, and letting something bloom naturally, through trust and devotion.



Harry's growth however is only possible because of Sally's as a woman. It is her presence and fervent determination that allows Harry to see the other side of what he always perceived as a one-way street. To quote Sally, Harry is "a human affront to all women. And I am a woman."



Her brutal response leads to possibly the best scene in the movie, one whose cultural ramifications are still felt to this day. Sally goes on to fake an orgasm in the middle of a restaurant, shattering Harry's fragile world and the notion that he knows better than the women around him.

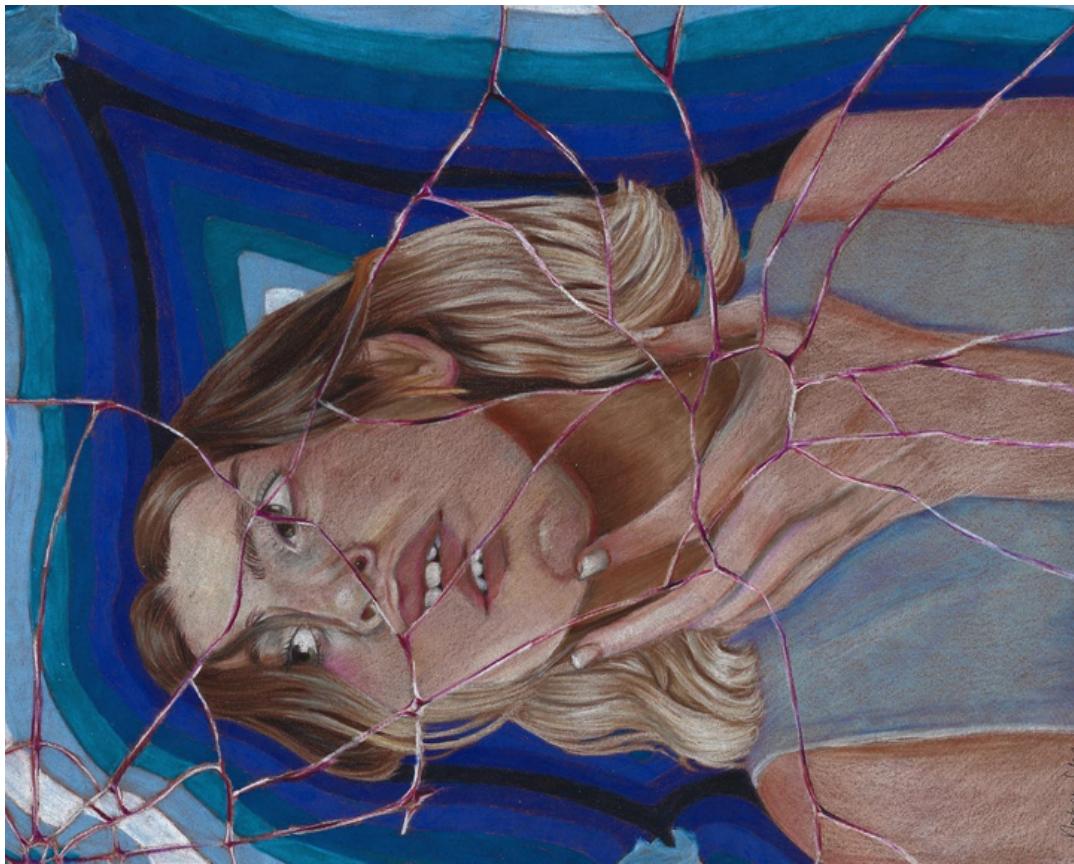
This movie should be mandatory viewing for all, especially young straight men. Not only is it hilarious and well-written, but it portrays the differences between men and women in a way that hasn't been replicated since. While Harry and Sally do end up together, it is crucial to remember the changes and steps that it took to get them there.



"Blue Barricade" by Carleigh DiPasquale

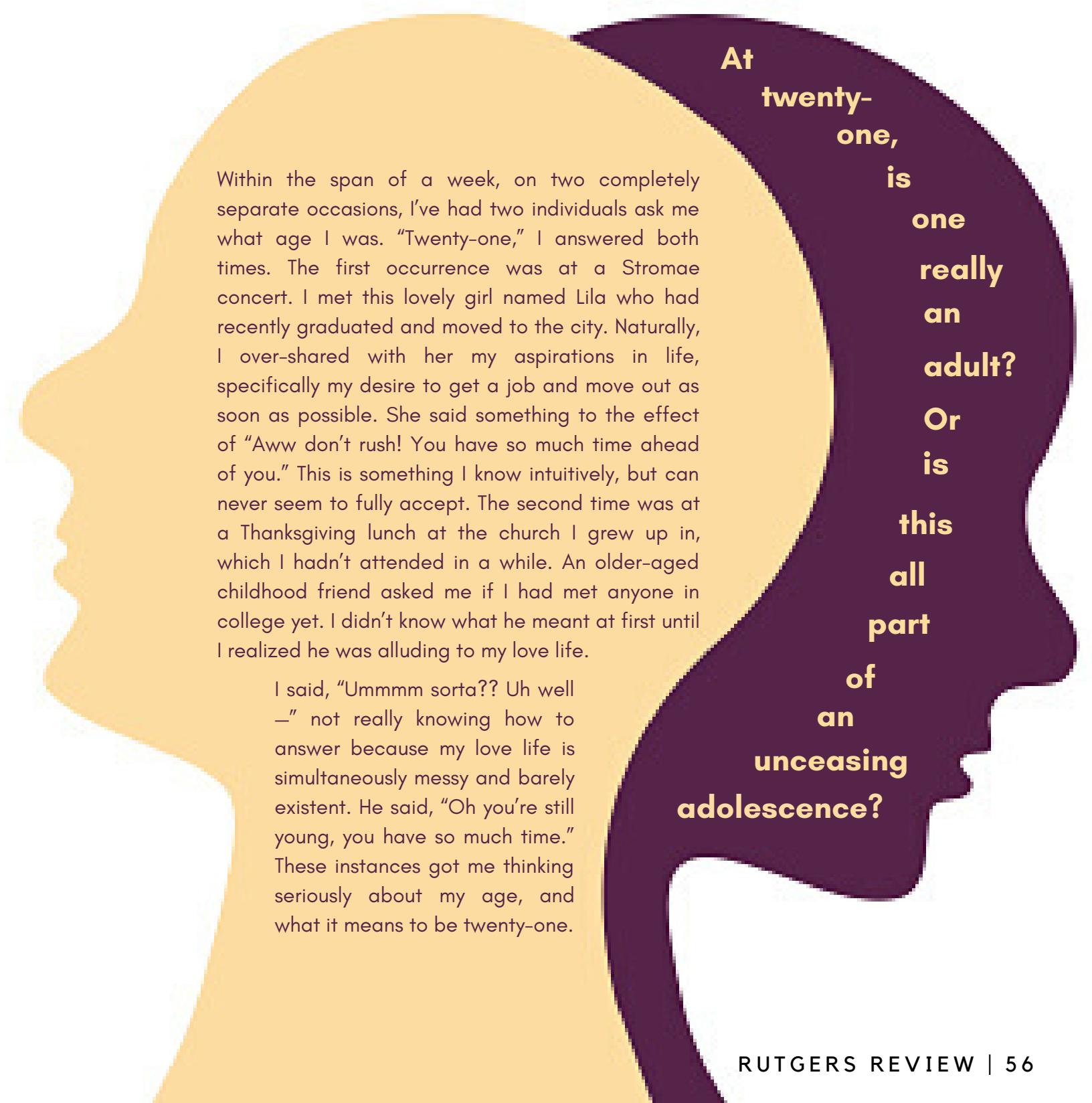


"Shattered Self" by Amber Safeer



21: TWO ENTITIES IN ONE

By Vanessa Tirok



Within the span of a week, on two completely separate occasions, I've had two individuals ask me what age I was. "Twenty-one," I answered both times. The first occurrence was at a Stromae concert. I met this lovely girl named Lila who had recently graduated and moved to the city. Naturally, I over-shared with her my aspirations in life, specifically my desire to get a job and move out as soon as possible. She said something to the effect of "Aww don't rush! You have so much time ahead of you." This is something I know intuitively, but can never seem to fully accept. The second time was at a Thanksgiving lunch at the church I grew up in, which I hadn't attended in a while. An older-aged childhood friend asked me if I had met anyone in college yet. I didn't know what he meant at first until I realized he was alluding to my love life.

I said, "Ummmm sorta?? Uh well —" not really knowing how to answer because my love life is simultaneously messy and barely existent. He said, "Oh you're still young, you have so much time." These instances got me thinking seriously about my age, and what it means to be twenty-one.

At twenty-one, is one really an adult? Or is this all part of an unceasing adolescence?



At twenty-one, it's only now that I feel like my life is getting started—now that I've come to recognize that my life is purely my own and not anyone else's. Some people reach the age of mental independence a little earlier, but being the eldest daughter of immigrants, and growing up in a community-centered culture, it's very easy to feel like you live to please others. And yet, despite this new mindset I'm slowly adopting, I still sometimes feel like a child. I still live at home, still obliged to tell my parents where I'm going whenever I leave the house (though now I don't ask for permission, I just go. I still feel the guilt, nonetheless). I'm twenty-one, but despite my slight glow-up over the years, sometimes find myself in front of the mirror picking at the same insecurities I had at fourteen. Twenty-one, but still feel weird when people call me "ma'am", unable to process that I'm capable of being perceived as a "ma'am". The good thing about twenty-one is that one is usually more experienced than at, say, eighteen. Though I can definitely say that I've experienced much over the past few years and, as a result of those experiences, have changed/grown, there's so much of me that has remained the same.



And despite feeling so young at twenty-one, I find myself asking important life questions because, apparently, I have to have a clear plan for my future after graduation. And don't hit me with the *don't-worry-you-don't-have-it-all-figured-out-now* BS because the pressure to have it all together at this age is real. Oscillating between the various possible options for the future, I ask myself questions like: *Should I plant my roots in one place, or spend my twenties exploring abroad? Should I jump right into my creative pursuits, or play it practical for now? Do I want to be in a relationship, or is now still not the time? Will there ever be time? Is life short or long? Grad school, or no? Do I want kids, or should I be the cool, child-free auntie? Do I believe in a higher being, or no? What do I want, and what do I need? And do I really need what I want?*



At twenty-one, you're split in two. Not quite here, not quite there. Not quite anything (yet).

Just a ball of potential, quite possibly an anxious, clueless ball of potential. You want to live on your own, but you also want the comfort of your mother's cooking every day. You want a meaningful romantic relationship, but your emotional intelligence is on the floor. You want to see the world, but your bank account says otherwise. You want your dreams to manifest already, but you're likely nowhere near ready for the responsibility that comes with that.

I still don't quite understand what twenty-one means. Yeah, I'm old enough to legally go to a nightclub, but does that really say anything about my maturity when I still get sweaty over the thought of having to be around strangers? I think twenty-one is one of those things that's best understood once it's over, once one finds the answers to those life questions that so press them. I realize that it's possible that I won't find the answer to some of those aforementioned questions, maybe not right away. It's also very possible that the essence of twenty-one will follow me to age thirty-one, fifty-two, etc. But who would we be without the different ages of ourselves who've stuck with us along the way? The different ages that have split us open, each time revealing something new, and eventually converging us back together to create a self that's more complete than before? Yeah, twenty-one is confusing, but I hope she stays with me.



Get an EARFUL OF THE CORN KID

BY AMBER SAFEER



On August 4th, 2022, TikTok account @recesstherapy posted a video of the now-dubbed “Corn Kid” – a little boy named Tariq who is obsessed with the starchy, yet juicy, vegetable – during a food festival at Brooklyn’s Prospect Park. Tariq was just one of many kids interviewed on @recesstherapy; in fact, the account itself is completely dedicated to asking the advice and opinions of elementary school-aged children. Despite other kids being on this account, Tariq’s video managed to garner over 28 million views and 6 million likes. Users seemed to deeply resonate with the Corn Kid and his genuine, heartfelt reaction to the tasty snack.

However, this was not the end of trending video, as 2 weeks later popular TikTok creator @eschmoyoho released a video “songifying” the Corn Kid video – and with this audio, Tariq and his corn-loving nature blew up everywhere. With over 80 million views and 1.3 million uses of the song, @eschmoyoho’s song introduced the rest of TikTok to Tariq. Since this viral video, the corn fanatic has gotten to attend the premiere of Pinocchio, sampled corn-based foods on The Drew Barrymore Show, and even had the entire state of South Dakota name him their official corn-bassador.



So, it seems that Tariq, like many other viral kids on the internet, has had his “15 minutes of fame.”

But, what happens now? Does Tariq return to a normal life, or does he continue trying to pursue fame?



For other kids in a similar situation, like the Walmart Yodel Kid Mason Ramsey, Tariq may try to hold onto his fame for however long he stays “relevant” in the media, and later return to a normal life. For Mason Ramsey, he still has a passion for music, but took a break from social media to focus on school and working at a sub shop. Despite how well things are working out for Mason, Tariq may not endure the same fate. If you look at pop icons like Justin Bieber or Lindsey Lohan, you see that as a result of their childhood fame, they turned to drugs to manage their addiction to fame. Moreover, once thrust into the spotlight, these kids have immense pressure placed on them to be or act a certain way. As silly as it sounds, Tariq may one day grow out of loving corn, or perhaps be bullied for that very interview. Child stars begin to crave validation because of the way the public idealizes them, which can have immense ramifications on their development and what habits they may begin to pick up.



So, now that it's gotten this far, what can we do about it?

Well, for starters, it pays to be careful about exposing kids to social media from such an early age. Although the Recess Therapy segment is adorable and the kids can give great advice, it poses a risk to the children. Especially in the case of Tariq, it may not have been wise to offer him opportunities like being on a talk show, being named a corn-bassador, and much more. It pushes a distance not only between his regular life and his internet fame, but also may make other kids wonder why they did not receive the same recognition he did. In this way, it hurts both Tariq and his friends, who are at an extremely vulnerable stage in their lives and subject to emotional trauma. Although I do not think we can or should eradicate kids from social media altogether, I think they can be monitored in a better way so as not to damage their psyches. The world loves Tariq and the way that he loves corn, but that is as far as it should go.

Collages by Ishaan Chakravorty and Gabrielle Cecelia Carmella

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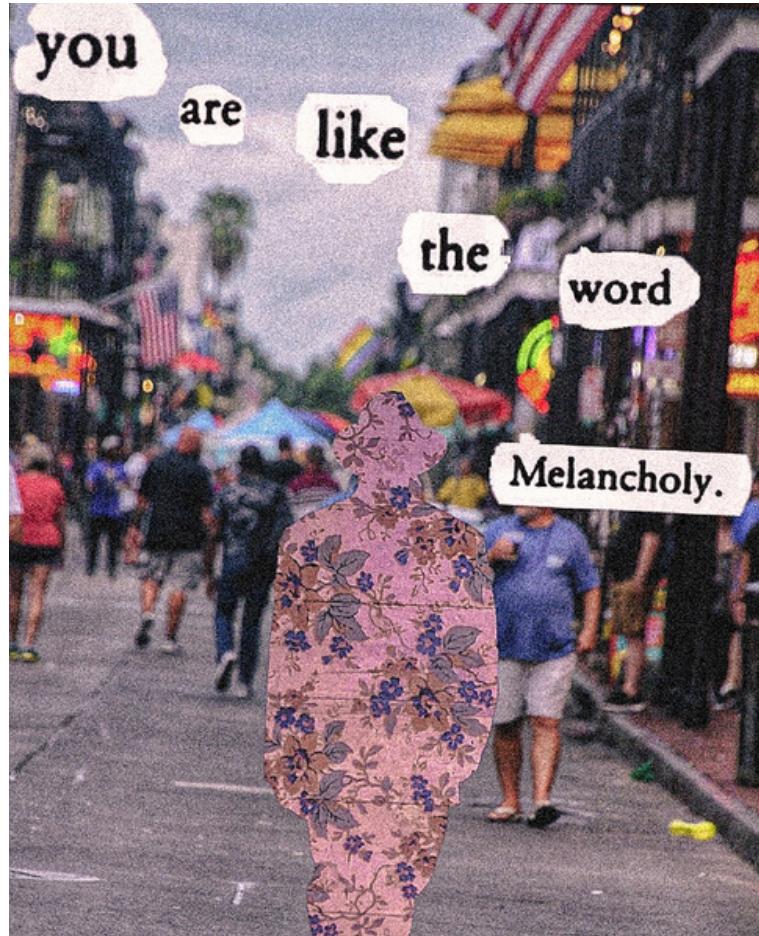
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Collages

by



Kyle

Handojo



Photo by Rish Li



Photo by Yvonne Liu



A Letter to You

By Saadhika Mamidi

Dear friend,

I don't know you and you don't know me, but we have something in common. We're alone.

Last year I was going through it. Freshman year everything was new, a fresh start, yet I had nothing. I was alone.

I saw people joining clubs, fraternities, sororities, anything. I had a variety of opportunities to pursue, but I stayed in my room. A place that offered me the most comfort. I did not have to reach out; I could hide beneath my blanket and stay safe.

In my small dorm room, with the led lights on and AirPods in, it felt like I was okay. I only went to the dining hall once a day because it was too far a walk. I thought I was okay. On the outside, I appeared normal, but on the inside, I felt alone.

I had everyone around me, my roommate was nice, and I had friends I would visit once in a while, but why did the feeling of loneliness pervade me?

I believed it was me against the world.

My professor once encouraged me to join clubs. To put myself out there. But I wanted to feel safe in a world full of the unknown. So, I stayed back.

I didn't go out as much; I did my work, ate, and slept. A monotonous cycle. On occasion, I would put on a mask and meet up with friends at the dining hall, but I came back, and it started all over again.

I guess I needed someone to tell me that it was okay to feel that way. It was okay to feel like I was walking in a straight line every day. No one told me, so I'm telling you.

It's okay. It's okay to not feel okay. No matter how cheesy you might think this expression is..

It's okay to compare yourself to others when you hear how much they're doing. It's okay to stay in your dorm and not go out. It's okay. You don't have to believe it, but at least someone is telling you that it's okay.

It'll get better, eventually. You will find the motivation and pick yourself back up. I don't know when, because I'm not there yet. But I am certain it will.

This is my letter to you, from one lonely friend to another.

Photo by Anastasia Codjebas

"Ghost" by Paris Yee



"Place of Unrest" by Halle McNabb

Hills Like White LX's

*A Rutgers-ified twist on Ernest Hemingway's short story
"Hills Like White Elephants"*

By Mia Freeman

The buses on the roads of Livingston campus were long and white. On this side, there was no shade and no trees and the bus stop was between the Plaza and Henry's Diner in the sun. The New Jerseyan and the girl with him sat at a table in the shade, outside the building. It was very hot and the LX would come in forty minutes.

"What should we drink?" the girl asked. She had taken off her hat and put it on the table.

"It's pretty hot," the man said.

"Let's drink matcha."

"Yes. Two big ones."

They mobile ordered the refreshments for their long wait, and entered the Student Center's Dunkin' Donuts. After a long and quiet walk back with the sweating green cups in their hands, they sat at the same little table. The girl was looking off at the line of various buses. They were white in the sun and the country was brown and dry.

"They look like white elephants," she said.

"I've never seen one," the man sipped his matcha.

"No, you wouldn't have."

"I might have," the man said, "Just because you say I wouldn't have doesn't prove anything."

The girl looked away at the tall apartments and the cinema.

"Midterms are killing me," she said.

"That's because you're stuck with STEM courses."

"It's what I like. I'd like to be a doctor."

The man stayed quiet.

"I wanted to try this iced matcha. That's all we do, isn't it— look at things and try new drinks?"

"I guess so."

The girl looked across at the crowded buses. The warm wind blew his mask across the table and it fell away to the ground.

"It's really an awfully simple operation, Jig," the man said. "A simple BBL is not really an operation at all."

The girl looked at the ground the table legs rested on.

"I know you wouldn't mind having a nicer butt, Jig. It's really not anything. It's just to let the air in. And to make me proud when I show pictures of you to the boys when we're official."

The girl did not say anything.

"You don't have to be afraid. I've known lots of people that have done it."

"So have I," said the girl, "And afterward they were all so happy. Emma from high school got one, and she became like, a huge influencer just a couple months later. She took off so quickly it was insane..."

"Well," the man said, "if you don't want to, you don't have to. I wouldn't have you do it if you didn't want to. But I know it's perfectly simple and not a big deal."

"And you really want me to? We could go to Crunch together instead, and if you taught me how to properly hit legs I could just do that."

"I think it's the best thing to do. But I don't want you to do it if you don't really want to."

"And if I do it you'll be happy and things will be like they were and you'll love me?"

"I love you now. You know I vibe with you so hard."

"I know. But if I do it, then it will be nice again if I say things are like white elephants, and you'll like it?"

"I'll love it. I love it now but I just can't think about it. You know how I get when I worry."

The bus was arriving in <1 minute.

He picked up their two heavy backpacks while she stayed to finish her drink, and also because her BeReal had just gone off, and carried them around the table to the Plaza stop. He looked at the road but could not see the LX. Coming back, he walked through the crowded sidewalk, where people waited in clusters and scrolled on their phones. He gulped down the last, watery portion of the matcha latte and looked at the people. They were all waiting reasonably for the bus. He pushed past the crowd. She was sitting at the table and smiled at him, fastening her baseball cap on.

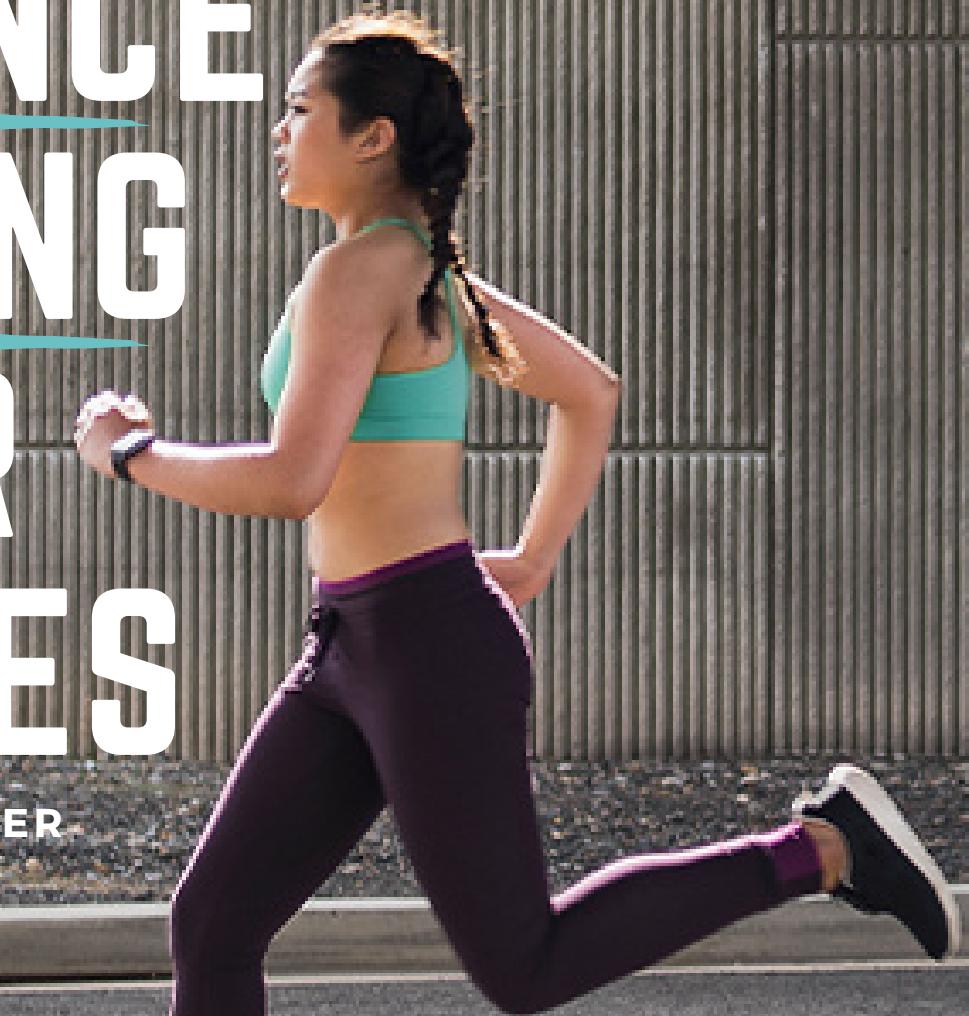
"Do you feel better?" he asked.

"I feel fine," she said. "There's nothing wrong with me. I feel fine."

Photos by Aryan Sharma

LONG DISTANCE RUNNING FOR NEWBIES

BY SAHANA IYER





First, I would like to start by dispelling long-distance running myths. Athleticism and talent is not a prerequisite for long-distance running; hard work is the key ingredient. All other sports- including other track and field events- require a modicum of aptitude. However, anyone is capable of becoming a great long-distance runner with consistent practice. Long-distance running can seem mundane and futile and those that frequently race marathons are labeled insane. In fact, when I told some of my friends that I was training for a half-marathon, their response was: "Girl, you are crazy!"

Yes. Long-distance running is hard. Physically, but more so mentally. I would argue "the mental" is what makes or breaks a runner. Running is a feat that demands a positive mentality and strong will power. It teaches you to exercise discipline, commitment, and courage. Long-distance running is about the journey; the journey, not the race, makes you proud. I know many of you scoffed at your school's gym mile time trial or believe running beyond a mile to be an insurmountable task. But if you want to take on the challenge and test your limits, I urge you to keep reading.

To start your long-distance running journey, you need just two pieces of equipment: a good pair of running shoes and a watch to time your runs (a phone does this job as well). There are fantastic running shoe companies near the NB area- Road Runner Sports, Runner's High, Sneakers Factory Running Center, and Fleet Feet Westfield. Fair warning: good running shoes are usually priced over \$120 with the exception of discounts. A good pair of running shoes is a preventive measure against injuries. Running shoes last about 400-500 miles (a professional runner will probably buy new shoes every two months) which can be almost an entire year for non-professional athletes.

FUNDAMENTALS OF RUNNING

Warm Ups- It is crucial to warm-up 10 to 15 minutes before you begin running. Warm-ups increase blood circulation and loosen up your muscles. Two types of stretches are static stretches (where you sit, stand, or lie still and hold a position for 20 seconds or longer) and dynamic stretches (active movements where joints and muscles go through a full range of motion). Ideally, it is beneficial to do both types of stretching as warm-ups; but always do dynamic stretches before a run. Some examples of static stretches are toe touches or calf stretches. Some examples of dynamic stretches are high knees, lunges with twists, and jumping jacks.

Cool Downs- Do not sit down immediately after your run. Continue walking and transition into static stretches in order to prevent injuries. Furthermore, you want to gradually reduce your heart rate and breathing rate; cool-downs allow for that. Cool-downs also help regulate blood flow.

Good running form- Keep your arms and shoulders relaxed. Let your arms swing naturally and do not let them cross over the centerline of your body. Keep your upper body upright with a slight lean forward so you have better momentum (do not hunch your back or bend from your hips). Always land with your feet centered and directly under your body.

Breathing – The goal is to deliver oxygen to your muscles. Thus, be intentional about taking slow, deep breaths as it is more optimal than taking quick, short breaths. Some individuals breathe through their mouth while others breathe through their nose. Some do a combination of both. Experiment with different breathing techniques to see what works best for you.

Goals – Having a goal is the main motivator. When you are outside, by yourself, just running, a goal can provide a sense of direction and purpose. Maybe you want to increase your pace or run longer distances. Maybe you have signed up for 5ks or marathons and you are training for them. Maybe you want to be more healthy and increase your cardiovascular health. Whatever it may be, goals are a reminder that your daily effort leads to something bigger. With no goal in mind, there is truly no point.



As you start your initial running routine, you should do a combination of both running and walking. Do a five minute walking warm-up, and then alternate between running for one minute and walking for two minutes (repeat this for about 30 minutes). You will feel discomfort when you first start; as you get comfortable with running, increase the amount of time you run for. For example, run for two minutes and walk for two minutes. Eventually, you will be able to run for 30 minutes continuously. Moreover, do not force yourself to run seven days a week the first couple of weeks. Run 3-5 days a week; the other days should be spent cross-training.

Cross training is an alternative activity that provides your running muscles a break; this could be swimming, dancing, biking, upper body weight training, etc. Incorporating strength training on your cross training days is propitious; you can either go to the gym or simply do squats, lunges, and other exercises that target your glutes, hamstrings, quads, and abdominal muscles.

As a beginner, you should only focus on increasing the time you can run continuously. Once you are able to run for 20-30 minutes without stopping to walk, you can focus on elements like stamina, pace, and mileage. If you want to increase your weekly mileage, do not increase it by more than 5-10% each week. For example, if you ran 10 miles in total your first week, do not run more than 10.5-11 miles your second week. This ensures that you have a proper base-training so as to not lead to burnout or injuries. Your pace will naturally increase. The first couple of weeks, 10 minute per mile pace may be arduous. Do not be discouraged. It will become comfortable and you will start running at a 9 minute per mile pace (and the process continues).

The most important thing to remember as you start running is this: listen to your body. It is okay to take extra rest/recovery days. And while it totally is normal to feel discomfort when running (burning lungs, muscle soreness, muscle tightness, and general fatigue), there is a difference between pain and discomfort. Pain is a localized ache or sharp sensation; it will be felt in specific areas of your body like shin, knees, or hamstring. Pain can cause you to run differently and it does not stop when you stop running. Pain is a sign of an injury. Discomfort is temporary and is usually only felt on the actual run. If your legs hurt the first couple days of running, it is most likely just muscle soreness (if it keeps continuing after the first two weeks, then you should be concerned). Otherwise, do not be intimidated.

Running is a task that needs to be performed consistently in order for it to become fun. Many lose spirit after the first few days, but the first few days are meant to suck. You just have to push through the hump. So, I wish you the best of luck on your running journey and I hope you become an insane marathoner by the end of it!

Mother and Daughter

By Michele Cohen

Daughter grows against Mother's shoulder
Taking in her pain and promise as she gets older
What was once nurture that was bestowed on Mother's descendant
Has become an instinct for total dependence
The strength and maturity that carried Mother through
Is now instilled in Daughter, who is put to constant use
The torch has passed, the expectation of care furthering on
Now the Mother that Daughter once knew is gone
Roles reversed, who once was young is now old
For the story of Mother and Daughter is one that is repeatedly told

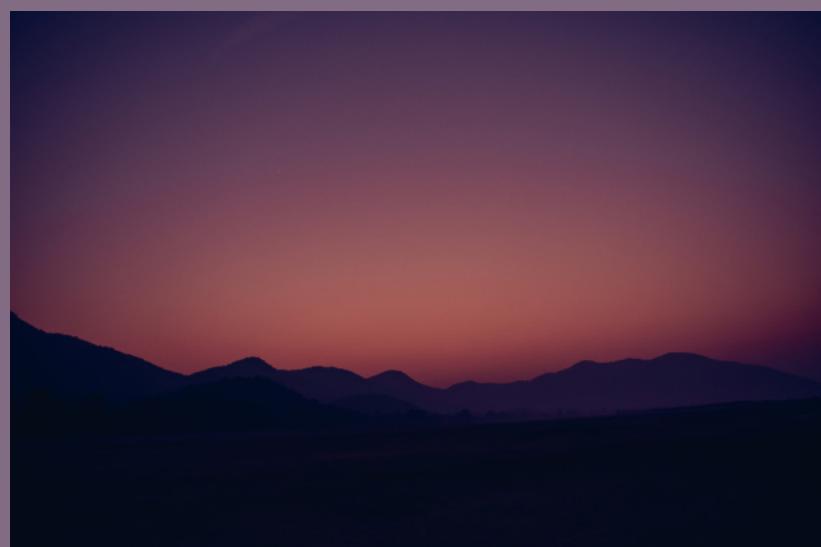
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