

Blue Colt

Vibe

Journal of Thought

Is
Caitlyn Jenner
a Hero?

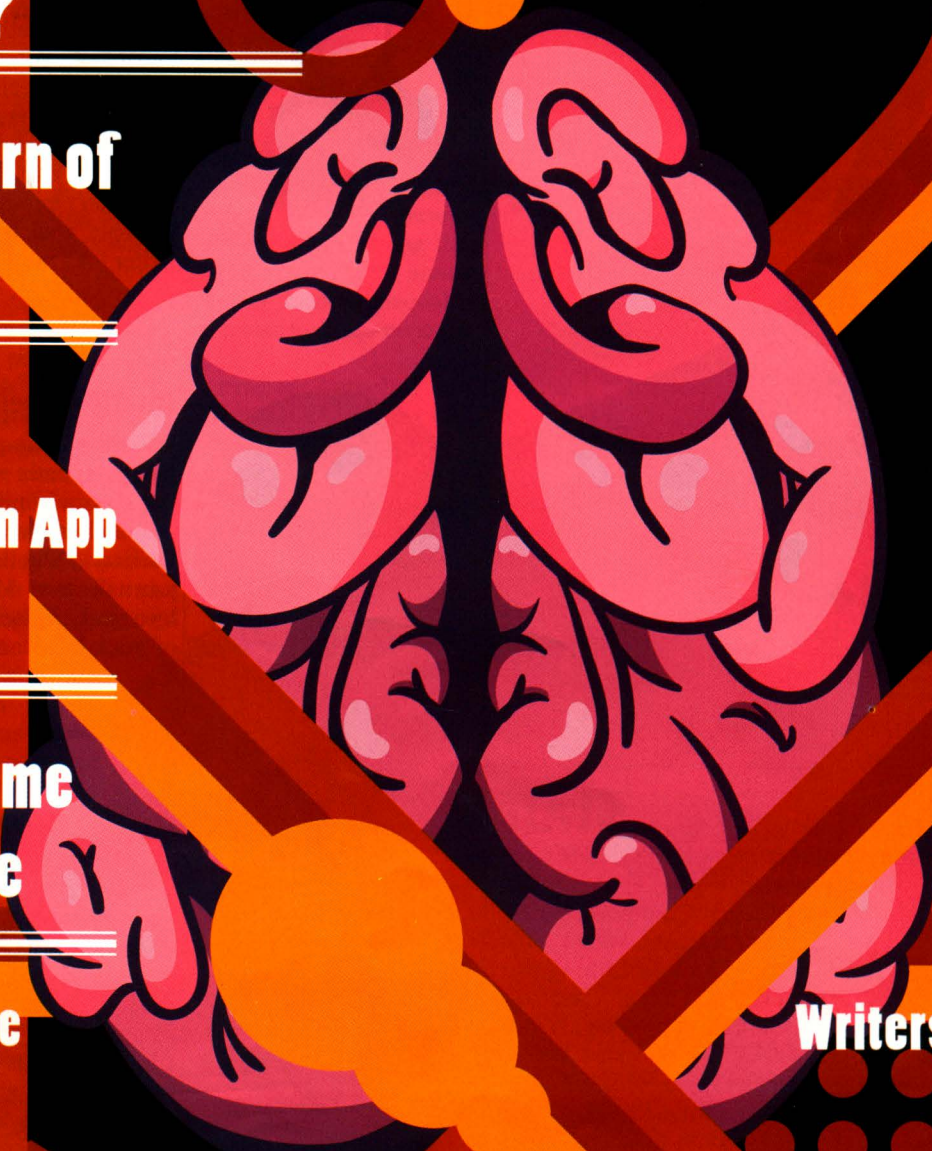
The Return of
Bieber

Consent:
"Theres an App
for that"

What a Time
to be Alive

The Essence
of Hair

Writers' Reflections
On Love
Travel and
Life



Content

Politics

Pope Francis Visits
Crisis in Syria
Welcome, Caitlyn Jenner

Celebrity

Taylor Swift's #Squad
Is Bieber Fever back?

Technology

iPhone 6s Arrives
Revolutionary Apps

Music

Hip-Hop's Evolution
Miley Cyrus's Dead Pets(/z)
Apple Music's Debut

Health

Battling Mental Illness
Dangers of Smoking
Viewing Body Image

Campus+

Local Travels
Writers' Thoughts
Middlesex Dance Recital

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Paige has always been fascinated by the beauty of written language. Studying English at Middlesex County College is the first step in her long journey to challenge her ambitions to become a powerful writer. She has been working on her college's newspaper, Quo Vadis, as a staff member for the past three years, where she became a co-editor-in-chief in her last semester. She aspires to become an English teacher as well as create her own publications and blogs.



Mallory Nathan

Mallory has been writing her whole life, but only recently found a passion for journalism. After taking an introductory class, she realized that she could incorporate her fascination with pop culture and social dynamics into writing, and share these ideas with the world. She hasn't looked back since. Mallory's ultimate goal is to become a feature writer for a publication like Vanity Fair.



Imani Wheeler

Dabbling into poetry, spoken word, blogging, news writing, and copy editing, Imani continues molding herself into a chameleon, and broadening her horizons. She is a student studying journalism at Middlesex County College and aspires to be the new face of your local news channel someday.



Eddie Fu

Post-bachelor's degree, Eddie spent his 20s—and some of his 30s—trying to figure out his calling. After running a technology news blog and a brief freelance news writing stint, he decided to take an introductory journalism class at MCC for professional advancement purposes. The confidence he earned from the encouragement of his professor, as well as working on the school paper, allowed him to pursue a career as a music writer, a dream he never knew he wanted.

Papal Visit

by Zack Jellison

I have not seen anything like what I have been seeing in the news these past few weeks. The preparation, the anticipation and the excitement for the Papal visit to the U. S. was the talk of all the major media outlets. It is as if it was the first time a pope has ever come to visit the U.S. It worth mentioning that Pope Francis' past two predecessors, Benedict XVI and John Paul II, both visited the U.S. during their tenure as pontiff with fanfare and excitement among the faithful. This visit, however, was different from all the others.

Ever since he was elected as pope in March 2013, Pope Francis has shaken the Catholic Church and the world with his rhetoric on political and social issues that we face in our time. He has spoken out on climate change, calling us to combat it as it poses a grave threat to everyone on this planet. Another hot topic he has spoken out on is homosexuality, a taboo in the Catholic Church. He has given a softer tone towards the topic compared to his predecessor, Benedict XVI. Pope Francis played a key role in reestablishing diplomatic relations between the U. S. and Cuba; the U.S ceased relations with Cuba following the Cuban Revolution five decades ago. Pope Francis has also spoken out on capitalism, saying that capitalism leads to greed if it's left unchecked. Some people accuse the pope of being a left-winger, but as we see income inequality grow more and more in the U. S., we must pause for a moment and tell ourselves he has a point.

Pope Francis' message has attracted Catholics and non-Catholics all around the world. I, a non-Catholic, agree with some aspects of his message; we should take care of the poor, take action on climate change and lighten the tone towards homosexuality despite it being a taboo for many religions. While I don't expect the 2000- year-old Catholic Church to allow for gay priests, open up to ending the taboo on same-sex marriage or any other radical belief in the near future, it's clear that the current pope is making waves in other fields, and people are paying attention. During his visit, he addressed both houses of Congress, calling them on to take action on issues affecting the U.S. because the world looks to us as an example. His speech has received praise from many people, regardless of what beliefs they have.

In the age of partisan gridlock, it seems that

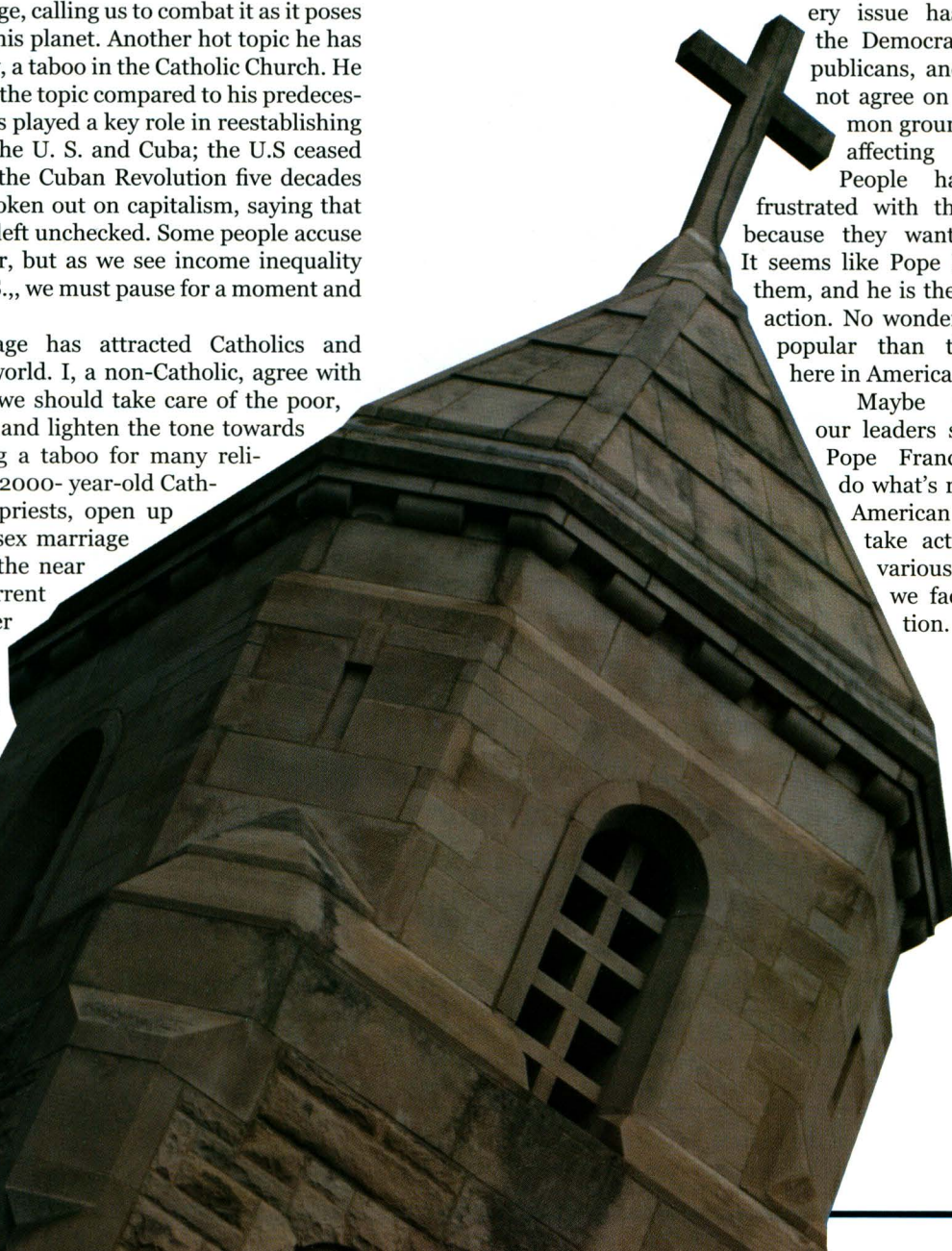
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Courtesy of Martin Alonso

ery issue has polarized the Democrats and Republicans, and they cannot agree on some common ground on issues affecting Americans. People have grown frustrated with the deadlock because they want solutions. It seems like Pope Francis has them, and he is the one taking action. No wonder he's more popular than the leaders here in America.

Maybe for once our leaders should take Pope Francis' advice, do what's right for the American people and take action on the various issues that we face as a nation.



Courtesy of Martin Alonso

Caitlyn: American Hero

by Mallory Nathan

When Caitlyn Jenner made her debut earlier this year, officially reintroducing herself to Hollywood as a transgender woman, she seemed to be welcomed with open arms. Fellow celebrities and the general public alike voiced support for Caitlyn, commending her for her bravery. Of course bigots didn't miss a beat, but their noise felt like a dull roar in comparison.

That is, until it was announced that Caitlyn was chosen to receive the Arthur Ashe Courage Award at the 2015 ESPYs.

Overnight, photos of disabled soldiers and cancer patients went viral, each one attached to an indignant caption: "THIS is courage!" and "Where are THEIR awards?" Even those who manage to quietly pass through political climates were suddenly under the impression that this was an injustice; that a transgender woman could not possibly be the most deserving of recognition; that there had to be a more deserving candidate somewhere--anywhere. And although the awards have since come and gone, the debate is still a prominent, often polarizing, thread in our culture: Should Caitlyn Jenner really be heroized?

"For the transgender community, this representation is crucial.

As we keep them in our peripheral, Trans women live with a 1 in 12 chance of being murdered, and more than 50% of Trans youth will have had at least one suicide attempt by their 20th birthday. Because of Caitlyn Jenner, that reality has come into conversation more than ever before."

There was a time when the same question sought no discussion—but at that time, we only knew Bruce. As a record-breaking athlete,

Jenner catapulted into the heart of American history and heroism with ease. There was no one more worthy of the title in 1976, when she took the gold medal at the Olympic Games and the slot as Associated Press's Male Athlete of the Year. The image of Jenner's victory lap, muscles bulging beneath a red, white and blue track suit, was hung as honorably as the flag itself across every front page. She was the very embodiment of masculinity.

Fast-forward to 2015, and Jenner is gracing the cover of *Vanity Fair* in a silk corset, full makeup, and asking that America "Call me Caitlyn."

There are a multitude of reasons why people would have trouble accepting Caitlyn. To most of us, being transgender is a foreign concept, and it's natural to reject what we don't understand. It's also possible that if Caitlyn had not been who she was in the 70s, her identity

would be easier, or at least less pertinent, to grasp. But since we now must learn to understand why Bruce, one of the most beloved male icons, was never actually Bruce at all, our perspective on gender as a whole must shift.

For the transgender community, this representation is crucial. As we keep them in our peripheral, Trans women live with a 1 in 12 chance of being murdered, and more than 50% of Trans youth will have had at least one suicide attempt by their 20th birthday. Because of Caitlyn Jenner, that reality has come into conversation more than ever before. And as long as we are having that conversation, invisibility isn't an option.

This impact is far more important to consider than Caitlyn Jenner as an individual, or how she stacks up against other idols. In such an especially connected, progressive age, our public figures should be as diverse as our people, and there is certainly room for more than one kind of hero. You may never personally identify with Caitlyn—but if there is a kid out there who can, how much of a debate is really necessary?



Courtesy of Megan Thompson

Caitlyn Jenner is Not a Hero

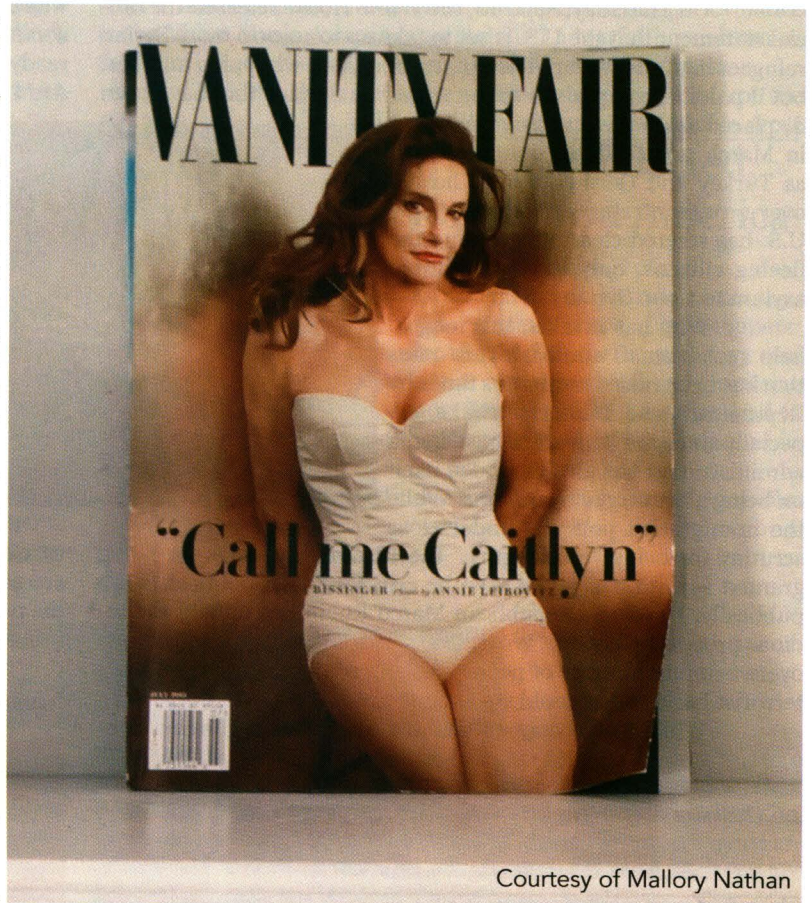
by Megan Thompson

Caitlyn Jenner has been a huge topic so far in 2015. She first revealed her new identity as a transgender woman in April during an interview on “20/20” with Diane Sawyer. Jenner revealed her name change in the July issue of *Vanity Fair* and made her name and gender changes official by September. Over that short period of time, she has become one of the most talked about openly transgender individuals in the world. I have always been a huge supporter of the LGBT community and support Jenner’s decision to finally be who she truly is; however, I question the decision of the media and *Glamour* magazine for naming her one of the *Glamour* Women of the Year and calling her a “Trans Champion.” I also wonder when Jenner will stop allowing the media to exploit her new identity as a woman as a way to gain views, make money and, ultimately, take away from those who should be considered heroes.

Many celebrities have identified as transgender in the past. Yvonne Buschbaum, now known as Balian Buschbaum, competed for Germany in the 2000 Summer Olympics as a female pole vaulter. In 2007, Buschbaum announced her retirement from pole vaulting due to her desire to start her gender transitioning process. Both Jenner and Buschbaum are Olympic athletes who are transgender individuals, but Jenner is the only one of the two who is recognized as “brave” for coming out as transgender after years of being a public figure in the athletic world. Where is Buschbaum’s award for courage as an Olympic athlete and transgender individual? Fallon Fox, formerly Boyd Burton, is an American mixed martial artist who underwent gender reassignment surgery in 2006 after struggling with her unresolved gender issues. She won most of her fights and was inducted into the National Gay and Lesbian Sports Hall of Fame. Why is this talented athlete who struggled for years with issues regarding her gender identity not given the same attention as Jenner? Why are the media and *Glamour* magazine giving so much attention to Jenner and her transition story as if she is the only athlete or celebrity who has ever been courageous enough to be who they truly are both physically and mentally despite what the public thinks?

Jenner revealed her new identity after over 60 years of remaining known as Bruce Jenner and having multiple heterosexual marriages and six children. However, 2015 has already proven to be more accepting of the LGBT community with the Supreme Court’s legalization of gay marriage in all 50 states, and people, in general, are becoming more accepting of the transgender community. How is Jenner anymore courageous than individuals, such as Buschbaum and Fox, who also had to deal with the controversy of being transgender?

Many women throughout history are considered to be heroes for the right reasons because they improved rights for women, education, and even peace. Why is *Glamour* magazine, which claims to celebrate and honor women’s achievements, focusing more on celebrities who can boost magazine sales and not honoring women who are actually doing things to improve the lives of other women? While Jenner has verbally expressed to help important issues involving the transgender community, I have not seen much



Courtesy of Mallory Nathan

done toward improving transgender lives other than touching on them every so often. Her reality show, “I am Cait,” mainly focuses on her transition and how it personally affects the relationships she has with her family and friends.

I do not see Jenner as a hero to women or the transgender community. Although she has the potential to become a hero in the future, I do not believe she has done enough to be considered a hero right now. The media and *Glamour* magazine should be more focused on women who are actually making a difference in the world and have already proven their intentions; impacting the world doesn’t just include blowing up social media and posing on the covers of various magazines, like Jenner has done. A real impact on the world is improving rights for women, like Malala Yousafzai, who is fighting for women’s education in Pakistan, has done. When it comes to labeling someone as a hero and giving them an award for “women’s achievements,” I believe it should be for the right reasons. Ultimately, Jenner is not a real hero. She may be a well-known and much talked about public figure spreading controversy and debate about her decision, but she has not done enough, in the short time that she has been a woman, to truly make a positive and life-changing impact on the world to earn the title “hero.”

Helping Refugees Helps Everyone

by Alexandra Burger

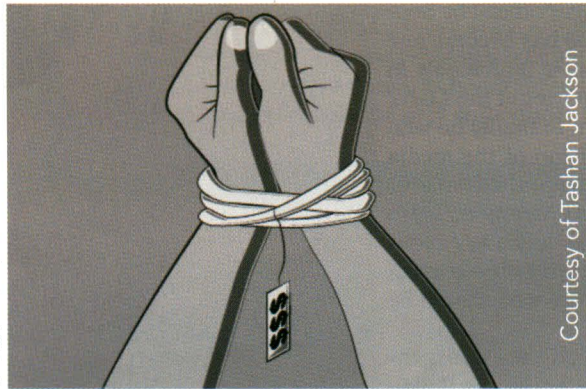
On Thursday, Sept. 10, the White House released the official statement that the U.S. is set to take up to 10,000 more Syrian refugees in the next year. Alone that seems like a whopping number, but it pales in comparison to the 11 million Syrians that have been displaced since the war first broke out in March 2011. While countries, such as Turkey and Germany, have hosted over 2 million refugees combined, the U.S. has steered clear of accepting the fleeing citizens, only having admitted asylum to 1,500 Syrians so far.

Why has it taken this long to help such a small number? This question has been raised numerous times by Republicans and Democrats alike, especially since the long-standing Obama administration has always prided itself on being a country of open arms. While the immigration policy is under close scrutiny for being “too lengthy,” the 18 month process for being granted asylum has yet to even be criticized by a political figure publicly. However, Republican Marco Rubio has upheld the tedious process by saying, “We’d always be concerned that within the overwhelming number of people seeking refugee, someone with a terrorist background could sneak in.”

While Rubio may not stand alone in his argument as to

why the U.S. has the right to deny being overly welcoming, a more common argument is what the influx of refugees will do to our already precarious economy. A study done by Kalena Cartes, a Texas A&M Professor, followed both refugees and non-refugees in the late 1970s to see the difference in economic situations. Cartes’ study concluded that although it took the refugees time to get on their feet, they soon out-earned the average American citizen and even added tremendous value to the economy, making it more beneficial for both parties to allow refugees to resettle here rather than pour millions of dollars into refugee camps.

The real culprit behind the delay in humanitarian services is mostly found to be Congress. Although the president himself can set the number of accepted refugees to whatever he pleases, Congress must also agree with such a number. If recent events are any indicator, the country has a long road ahead of it before the two parties can agree on anything, let alone the immigration of thousands of Middle Easterners.



Courtesy of Tashan Jackson

Evil is the Culprit

by Zack Jellison

I was not planning on writing about this, but how can we plan to? I am talking about what happened at Umpqua Community College in Roseburg, Ore. on Oct. 1 where nine people were murdered in cold blood and several others wounded by a mentally-ill gunman. Another school and community forever altered by malice and evil. Once again, America must wrestle with what happened and how to move ahead from another mass shooting.

“There have been 142 school shootings in the U.S. since 20 children and six adults were killed at Sandy Hook Elementary School on Dec. 14, 2012” according to a recent LA Times; that shooting struck a chord in the nation’s conciseness and sparked a debate about gun control and mental illness in this country. Since then, we had mass shootings at the Washington Naval Yard, at Charleston, at Isla Vista and now Roseburg now being added to a long list of schools and communities that were the grounds of unspeakable malice and of bloodshed. Yet, we are trying to wipe away a permanent stain.

We have talked about solutions and there have been little results. One can go and look to Connecticut and see the tough gun legislation that were passed under Governor Malloy in the months after the Sandy Hook massacre.

6 We can also say that we removed the Confederate Battle Flag that

was raised to resist the civil rights movement in front of South Carolina state capital building in Charleston following a horrible mass shooting in a historic-black church this past June. Yet, why does it seem in America that we are having these massacres frequently?

We can turn to a quote from Mahatma Gandhi about evil, “I object to violence because it appears to do good, the good is only temporary; the evil is permanent.”

Gandhi’s quote does apply to every tragedy’s aftermath. We mourn, pray, and give a hand to strangers and those pictures taken appear on the news. However, that’s only for a short amount of time and then we go back to our old habits. Gandhi could have turned his pacifist movement to end colonial rule in India into a violent crusade; it would justify doing what he did. But, likely it will be marred by the permeant stain of lost and malice. The survivors and the victim’s families of Charleston, Sandy Hook and now Roseburg all have a permanently marked that evil left on them as a constant reminder of what happened and what was lost on that day.

The problem of evil is it leaves a permanent mark, and there are people with malice who know that.

Bieber's Back

by Mallory Nathan

By 2009, the teen scene had already bred a large share of interchangeable crooners. Behind the Aaron Carters, Jesse McCartneys, and Jonas Brothers that come in and out of the spotlight stands an insatiable, swoopy-haired silhouette—a cog in the Hollywood machine that even Drake Bell was able to milk for a short while. So when “One Time” smashed that summer, sending a 15-year-old Justin Bieber straight to the highest peak of heartthrob status, it seemed like he was just the next pretty face in line.

Then came another hit song. And another. And by the time Justin released “My World,” we were all just living in his. While his predecessors rarely graduated from the older generations’ peripheral—the reach of their it-boy stints only making it to Tiger Beat and J-14—there were ‘Beliebers’ in tweens and moms alike. Modern pop music finally had a solid, all-encompassing identity and “Bieber Fever” was as very real an infection as any.

But his first mistake became his biggest mistake, because mistake is to media as blood is to shark.

Right on the heels of his third studio album’s success, Bieber was caught in a whirlwind of one scandal after the other. The narrative seemed to change overnight: small-town sweetheart is now our resident jerk. Although he certainly wasn’t the first of his pack to get into trouble, for some reason he was the least forgivable. What would translate to frat boy behavior in the real world was enough for a character assassination in Hollywood, and the general public was buying it.

After countless hate campaigns, many of them propos-

ing deportation, someone on the Bieb Team woke up. 2015 subsequently became a cool, collected, and calculated effort to win America back, beginning with “The Roast of Justin Bieber”, where he graciously allowed himself to be torn to shreds in front of 4.4 million viewers, and ending with a number one album, three platinum singles, and a Grammy nomination. His big comeback performance at the Video Music Awards even included a tearful breakdown as the crowd cheered—any good protagonist’s *pièce de résistance*.

And the more momentum Bieber’s reign picks up, the more he defies Hollywood logic. It was a sure-fire formula from

“2015... became a cool, collected,
and calculated effort to win America
back...”

a technical standpoint (Character repair: check. Chart-toppers: check. Memorable performance: check), but there was a very real possibility that it was too late—that America was already immune to another Bieber Fever. For most derailed child stars, the road to redemption is grueling, and they have often long been replaced in the industry psyche.

Thankfully for Justin, he’s never been quite as disposable.

Gaga for Gaga

by Christopher Bohorquez

When some people think of Lady Gaga, they think of her crazy outfits, her famous, unconventional music videos and the over the top theatrics of her performances. Sometimes these things can actually make people forget that she is extremely talented. Some still say that she is a Madonna imitator, but Gaga is much more than that and has proven herself many times.

All the albums that Gaga has released, including her duet album with Tony Bennett, have sold well over a million copies. Her debut album, “The Fame,” has sold over 16 million copies worldwide, and “Born This Way” sold over a million copies in one week. Not many artists sell that many albums these days, especially with the Internet. Her last solo album, “Artpop,” which is considered her weakest effort to date, still sold over 2.5 million copies. “Cheek to Cheek,” a jazz album of covers with Tony Bennett, also sold over a million albums.

She has a tremendous voice. If you don’t believe me, go to YouTube and look up any performance she has done with Bennett within the last year. Better yet, search her performance at the 2015 Academy Awards, when she sang a beautiful rendition of music from “The Sound of Music” that even I was blown away by. She received a standing ovation from the whole crowd because it really was that good.

Gaga writes her own music. You would think that artists writing their own music wouldn’t be a big deal. Unfortunately, we live in an age when a big artist writing music is rare. When you look at the writing credits in all of her albums, her name is on almost all of her songs. She’s also involved in the production process of these songs. If you look up the people who produce her songs, you will see

her name on most of them.

She is also one of the most versatile singers ever. She sings everything from dance pop, rock, jazz and hip-hop, to ballads on the piano and songs from “The Sound of Music.” If you can name an artist who has done all that and actually sounded good, then you argue with me. She has covered a lot of topics in her songs. She sings about just having fun in a club in “Just Dance,” bad relationships in “Bad Romance” and embracing everything that you are in “Born this Way.” She recently released a song called “Till it Happens to You,” which is about someone going through a trauma or loss.

None of her music videos are similar. Her music videos have been viewed over a billion times and are entertaining to watch. At times, her music videos may be a bit too unorthodox for the average person, but there is always some purpose behind them. In her most famous music video, “Bad Romance,” she’s auctioned as a sex slave. In the music video for “Judas,” she is portrayed as being in love with Judas, who is bad for her, rather than being in love with Jesus, who would be good for her. In the music video for “Till it Happens to You,” students go through sexual assault on college campuses.

She can also put on a great show. I went to her last solo tour, The Artrave: The Artpop Ball, and enjoyed it. She sang and danced the whole time in heels, was always energetic and interacted with the crowd. She had an elaborate set design and really unique costumes. At the 2009 MTV Video Music Awards, she performed her song “Paparazzi.” During this performance, she sang live, played the piano, used fake blood to make it seem like she was bleeding and “hung” herself to make it seem like she died on stage.

The Little Monsters, which is the nickname of her fan base, is probably one of the most diverse fan bases because a lot

of them are a part of the LGBT community. She is one of the most well known LGBT rights activists in music today. She actually cares about her fans and goes out of her way for them by dedicating parts of her concerts to meeting them and reading their letters.

She also created the Born this Way Foundation, which allows people to freely embrace who they are.

There's really no artist who compares to Gaga. Even

though she has only been around since 2008, she has made an impact on the music industry. Give it some time and she'll be considered a legend. Her next album is due out in 2016 but the release date hasn't been announced yet.

Swift has a Strategy Not a Squad

by Eddie Fu

Taylor Swift has been impossible to avoid in 2015. Her most recent album, "1989," sold 1.5 million copies in the U.S. this year alone and the music video for her song "Blank Space" became the most viewed in Vevo history. High profile feuds with Katy Perry, Nicki Minaj and Miley Cyrus have dominated headlines, and Swift may have singlehandedly caused Apple to change direction during its Apple Music streaming service rollout. Ryan Adams even released a "1989" covers album.

Of course, the "1989" tour gave Swift even more opportunity to extend her personal brand. During each stop, the pop singer allowed at least one of her famous "friends" to join her so-called "squad" by performing on stage. In return, they could bask in her spotlight. But while the squad movement may seem like Swift promoting the power of friendships and unity, it really was part of a calculated shift in strategy to control her own public image.

According to her GQ magazine cover story, she became overwhelmed by the media and avoided using the Internet for about a year and half before recognizing "if enough people say the same thing about [her], it becomes fact in the general public's mind." As a result, she took charge of the narrative, telling Vanity Fair that she made a conscious decision to not "be seen around any men for years." Instead, she went into a "mode where [her] friends are everything to [her]."

And so, the original incarnation of Swift's "squad" was born. It is a clique of popular women, ranging from Victoria's Secret models to actresses to musicians, who allegedly do everything together. Conveniently, they can be seen appearing on red carpets and celebrating major holidays on their respective Twitter and Instagram accounts.

After the carefully curated social media posts provided a window into the group, there was a coming-out party during the Kill Bill-inspired "Bad Blood" music video. Debuting at the Billboard Music Awards, it featured more than a dozen stars, including actress Jessica Alba, singer Ellie Goulding and Victoria's Secret models Cara Delevingne, Lily Aldridge and Karlie Kloss.

This air of female empowerment and sisterhood seemed

to have given Swift the ability to fully embrace her new brand: the "benevolent" pop princess. According a New York Magazine concert review, she shared "motivational speeches about self-confidence, heartbreak and the pitfalls of comparing yourself to others on Instagram." Ironic, considering how Instagram is such a vital part of her branding strategy.

She also opened up the squad to anyone willing to join on her own stage. The World Cup-winning U.S. Women's National Soccer team paraded down the catwalk during the same weekend Swift was joined by...The Weeknd. Fetty Wap, who crowned her his "Trap Queen," while Wiz Khalifa performed his smash hit, "See You Again" and Justin Timberlake came on stage to sing "Mirrors." Those are just some of the highlights before her squad became a parody of itself with out of place acts like Mick Jagger and Steven Tyler.

Admittedly, the Taylor Swift co-sign did give many artists social media and sales bumps, but videos of the performances reveal the singer's true motivation. Whether Swift is sharing vocal duties, or dancing alongside the artist, she does not actually give the spotlight to her "friends." The attention is still focused on her, allowing her to maintain control of her brand. On one hand, this makes sense; it is still a Taylor Swift concert, still Taylor Swift the ticket-buyers paid to see. And that is fine, but it then

becomes disingenuous to claim that the spotlight is on the bonds Swift has formed with these people.

In the end, all that matters to Swift is controlling public perception and enhancing her brand. Just ask Nicki Minaj. When the Queens rapper took to Twitter to complain about the 2015 MTV Video Music Awards (VMA) nominations being biased against her "Anaconda" music video, Swift just had to join the conversation and make it about her. Even after the feud was squashed, the narrative did not truly end until Minaj was joined by Swift to perform "Bad Blood" at the VMAs. While it was a change of pace to see Swift join an artist on stage instead of the other way around, of course the performance ended with one of her songs. If the music thing doesn't work out, Swift has a bright future in marketing.



Consent Goes Digital

by Martin Alonso

In an effort to reduce false allegations of rape, We-Consent™, a new app, allows users to video record their consent to sex. The app works by asking the first user for their name then asks the name of the suitor in interest. The suitor is informed that the original user is asking for consent, as the back camera of the phone is pointed toward them. That partner can then decide to say “yes” or “no”.

The videos are encrypted and kept for seven years. These records are only accessible to law enforcement through the proper legal process to be used as evidence in a sexual assault case.

How feasible is this app? Rape is a serious issue, especially living in a time some claim, to hold a rape culture. In spite of this, there are some who will be falsely accused of rape, which in turn allows an on-going battle of the legitimacy of some rape accusations.

Being publicly branded as a rapist has severe consequences for the perpetrator. They can go to prison, register as a sex offender for life and are subjected to many social sanctions including unemployment and being estranged from loved ones. But— what happens when one is falsely accused and convicted?

This app, at best, provides a channel for discussion of

Snap App

by Imani J. Wheeler

The concept of quick flicks and post for likes quickly evolved into today’s growing epidemic, Snapchat. Snapchat is a free photo sharing smart phone application service with a few tricks up their sleeves separating itself from all the rest of the social outlets with “its debut in September of 2011 to today, the service has amassed 100 million users. In June of this year, its users sent 200 million photos per day. By September, two years after launch, friends were sending each other 350 million photos per day”, reports The Atlantic writer, Alexis C Madrigal.

Similar in more ways than one to other social applications, Snap chat has picture, video and messaging but the key element that distinguishes it from the rest is that the photo disappears. After a set number of seconds- one to ten, after being viewed, the “snaps” is completely erased from the company servers and no longer accessible unless one of two things or both go as followed: you can hold down for a single replay or screenshot. In either case, the sender is notified of both or either action the receiver does. Also an unread snap disappears after thirty days.

The sign up process is a lot easier and smoother as opposed to Facebook, Twitter, and or Instagram. Like most social network applications, to find friends they import previous friends and followers but Snapchat uses the contact list in your phone so that if you have a phone number then you can find out if that person has a Snapchat. That in itself gives three benefits, one being “it provides a clean slate without all the cruft

these sensitive issues. Who is going to pause their romantic evening, whip out their phone and ask their partner to give their consent while being video recorded? Or— maybe it’s just a casual encounter; “We had a great day. I need to have your consent on video before making a move. You know, just in case you decide to make false accusations of rape against me.” No, it just does not fit into any social narrative.

The makers of this app may be opening up themselves to potential lawsuits. How can the app tell if the users are sober enough to give consent? What if the user decides to give consent at first then later changes their mind? Consensual sex can turn to rape at any time after a “Yes” is given on this app. It seems it may have a counterintuitive application as well.

Men and Women endure real abuse and many, if not most, cases of real rape may never get a conviction. This app does little good and has a misunderstanding of what consent is, and maybe it is society as well that has this misunderstanding. During a press conference at the White House, President Barack Obama, when questioned about Bill Cosby’s accusations of rape, said, “[T]his country, any civilized country, should have no tolerance for rape.”

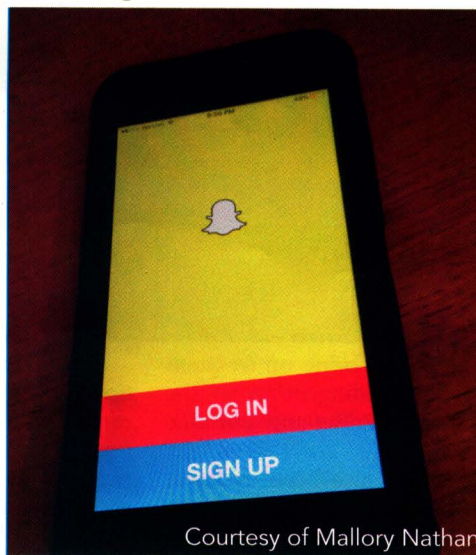
of previous social networks. Two, it creates a different and more intimate kind of social network than you’d find elsewhere. These are people you know-know, most likely from the physical world. Three, giving someone a phone number opens up the possibility of later Snapchatting. Once you’ve found your friends on Snapchat,

you can simply start taking pictures and sending them out to as many friends as you want.” Putting the icing on the cake “for Snapchat, it means they’ve got novel social webs. In other words, users don’t have to share any data with any established social network (Madrigal).” Unless the user wants to in what is called “My Story”, sharing a compilation of “spur of the moment” videos and picture posts.

“I really like the fact that when I post videos in my story that it only lasts for 24 hours and then they can never see it again,” says Amina R. Gary completing her last semester at The College. “I also love that snapchat allows me to send a photo and set it to how ever long I want my snapchatters to view it. Snap

does have a variety of filters and now they’re doing this new thing with animated filters which can be pretty funny.”

This eliminates the idea of public wall posts, timelines, retweets, and likes. The upside to all this is that snapchat informs the user if the snap sent was opened, screenshotted, and who



Courtesy of Mallory Nathan

viewed your story maintaining a sense of security.

With the remarkable growth, snapchat just may be onto something a lot bigger than we thought. Besides the fact that Snapchat is an open range for sexting, one of the company's cofounder Evan Siegel realized that they've landed a social network where people didn't spend so much time wondering what they looked like,

"We're building a photo app that doesn't conform to unrealistic notions of beauty or perfection," he blogged, "but rather

creates a space to be funny, honest or whatever else you might feel like at the moment you take and share a Snap."

New iPhone is Improved, but Not a Must-buy

by Eddie Fu

It has become an annual tradition. In September, Apple announces a new iPhone and calls it the best iPhone yet: better, faster, stronger. And starting with the iPhone 4 and 4s, the company started a pattern of following a new design with an "s" model the next year, which improves on the original. It's an "s" year, which means Apple is touting a few new features, but the iPhone 6s and 6s Plus are mostly similar to the 6 and 6 Plus.

The 6s' new, stronger, more durable display glass is designed to showcase 3D Touch, which is similar to right-clicking on a computer mouse or trackpad. Users press down harder on the screen to bring up certain actions for supported apps. There is a definite learning curve and few apps which take advantage of 3D Touch, but the feature has potential — especially when more apps start implementing it.

Examples include long pressing on the Messages app to bring up frequent contacts and new message options, while holding down on the Camera icon allows users to jump directly into the app and take photos, videos and most importantly, selfies.

Speaking of selfies, the camera has also been updated. There is now a 5-megapixel front camera, which means higher quality selfies. The 12-megapixel rear camera is improved as well. In short, the iPhone 6s shoots better photos than last year's model and is still among one of the best smartphone cameras.

Another noticeable improvement is Touch ID. The fingerprint reader is so fast, many users are noticing they don't even see their lock screens. This makes unlocking the iPhone easier and more secure, but it remains to be seen whether this new sensor will

stop recognizing fingerprints over time, as with previous models.

Finally, there are small changes in design and speed advancements. The iPhone 6s is made out of a new aluminum alloy which is supposed to be stronger than previous models. Indeed, it feels heavier and more durable in hand, and should withstand scratches, scuffs and drops better. As for speed, LTE and Wi-Fi downloads are twice as fast, while a new A9 chip powers the phone. Again, the iPhone 6s is noticeably faster than the previous model, as is to be expected.

Owners of last year's model don't have too many reasons to upgrade unless they absolutely must have the new, gorgeous Rose Gold color option, or want 3D Touch and faster Touch ID.

On the other hand, purchasing the 6s or 6s Plus are a no-brainer for iPhone users with earlier models. They're faster, take better photos, and have bigger and better displays. The only hard decision is deciding which model to buy.

The 6s has a 4.7-inch screen that's large enough for most people, but the 6s Plus' 5.5-inch display is more inline with the most popular Android phones. The former is recommended for most users, but those who watch a lot of video and want better battery life might want to consider the latter.

Finally, this was the first year Apple offered a leasing option for the iPhone, which includes its AppleCare+ extended warranty and allows for yearly upgrades. Monthly payments start at \$32.45 per month and \$37.45 per month for the 6s and 6s Plus, respectively. Potential buyers should consider this option against each of the four major carriers' lease options, which are confusing enough to warrant an entirely different article.



Courtesy of Paige Bollman

Apple Music Needs Work

by Eddie Fu

After ruling the headlines for weeks, Apple Music finally made its debut. First, Taylor Swift wrote Apple an open letter, which caused the company to reverse course and pay artists during the initial three-month free trial period. Naturally, she followed up by gifting them 1989. Exclusives such as Pharrell's single, "Freedom," and Dr. Dre's classic album, *The Chronic*, have been announced, while Beats 1 Radio programming was revealed to include various celebrity hosts and exclusive interviews.

None of this matters, however, if Apple Music can't deliver on its initial promises:

1. Better recommendations for artists and playlists
2. Highlighting new artists and releases
3. Compelling live programming, featuring Beats 1 Radio
4. Seamless integration of ripped / purchased music with 30 million tracks available for streaming

Let's tackle each feature individually.

Better recommendations

Apple Music is built atop Beats Music, which claimed its human curation would result in better playlist and album suggestions. Based on the setup process, which involves selecting favorite genres and artists, it looks like Apple has this feature well covered.

Highlighting new artists and releases

At first glance, it looks like the "New" tab merely duplicates the "Music" tab of the iTunes Store app. Scrolling down reveals more curated music by Apple Music Editors, as well as activity-specific playlists, but it's not immediately obvious to find. Bad job by Apple here.

Compelling live programming

Beats 1 Radio was featured heavily during the Apple Music announcement, and the hype hasn't let up: There's an exclusive Eminem interview, and a slew of celebrity hosts, including Elton John, Drake, Pharrell Williams, Jaden Smith, St. Vincent, Josh Homme of Queens of the Stone Age, and Disclosure.

Day 1 lived up to the hype, though, despite some bugs — liking one song means every song after is automatically liked — and a half-hour outage. Zane Lowe, Julie Adenuga and Ebro Darden each put their stamp on the "always on" radio station, and St. Vincent even showed up for her weekly "Mixtape Delivery Service" segment.

Bugs aside, there were a few surprises. First, Beats 1 is technically "always on," but it isn't actually airing original programming 24/7: Lowe, Adenuga and Darden's shows air twice per day. Second, it plays the clean versions of songs.

Overall, we can call Beats 1 a success... for now. Perhaps live radio isn't dead.

Seamless integration of iTunes library with Apple Music streaming catalog

Apple Music allows users to store 100,000 songs online in the iCloud Music Library. Theoretically, this feature fills in the gaps of music unavailable for streaming, like *The Beatles* or mixtapes. In practice, Apple has never gotten iCloud to work properly since its initial launch. Indeed, many users have found that many of their albums aren't uploading properly.

Hopefully this will change in the future, but don't count on it.

Meghan Trainor is All About Growing

by Paige Bollman

Meghan Trainor released her album, "Title," on Jan. 15. However, the viral and controversial song "All About That Bass" seemed to be the only well-known song from the release. While this pop song brought controversy, it seems that people have not yet listened to the other singles released until now.

"All About That Bass" caused feminists around the world to be furious because Trainor sings, "Boys like a little more booty to hold at night," which caused a large uproar that women are required to please the visual perception of men. Rightfully so, these individuals spoke out.

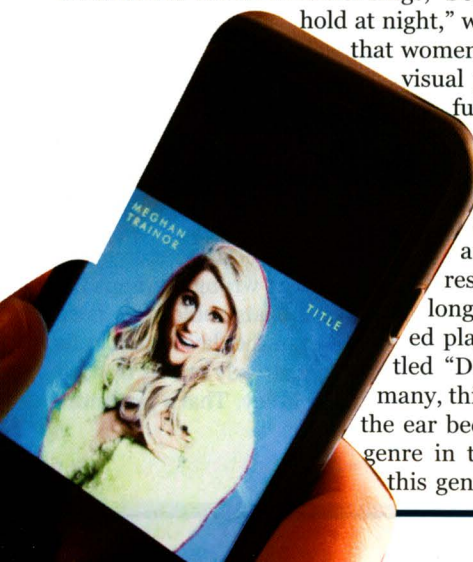
Many took a step back from the album after this song became popular, and people discarded the rest of the album—but not for long. Radio stations soon started playing the Doo-wop song titled "Dear Future Husband." For many, this song sounded pleasing to the ear because this is not a popular genre in the 21st Century. Bringing this genre back from the Doo-wop

era opened the minds of many skeptical Trainor fans. Yet, controversy quickly followed this song after its popularity quelled. "Tell me I'm beautiful each and every night," is one of the lines used in this song making women feel they need to, again, please the eyes of their soon to be husbands. If that lyric isn't enough to get a feminists blood boiling, try the lyrical line, "I'll be the perfect wife ... Buying groceries ... Buy-buying what you need," that blatantly states that women should be homemakers. When is Trainor going realize she is fighting an impossible battle with these songs?

The recently popular, blue-eyed-soul song, "Like I'm Gonna Lose You," which features John Legend, has started to play through the speakers of our radios with lyrics that say, "In the blink of an eye ... Just a whisper of smoke ... You could lose everything ... The truth is you never know." Has Trainor finally gotten it right? Finally, she is starting to speak of real, raw emotions that people can relate to.

Legend is a soulful artist that exhibits real emotions in all of his songs. Recently, he added raw emotion to Big Sean's "One Man Can Change The World." Legend's mega hit, "All of Me," despite being released in 2013, is still a chart-topper.

With this in mind, one must question: Is Trainor's new, greatest hit only acceptable because of the help of Legend? I guess we will have to wait for her rumored 2016 album to be released to know.



Like another Canadian pop singer, Alessia Cara got her start by uploading covers of popular songs on YouTube. In 2013, her version of The Neighbourhood's "Sweater Weather" got her signed to a company called EP Entertainment, who paired her with writing partner Sebastian Kole. A year later, she landed on Def Jam and began working on her debut full-length album, "Know-It-All."

After Cara hit the studio with Kole and producers Pop and Oak, she released her first single, "Here," which is based on "quite a strange experience" at a friend's party. The 19-year-old singer said on her Tumblr that she felt "nothing but uncomfortable" the entire night, and her main thought was, "If I don't feel like doing any of these things, why am I even here?"

Naturally, Cara had a studio session the next day, and recorded the appropriately titled "Here," which features an "anti-social pessimist" expressing those very thoughts over a laidback, soulful beat sampling "Ike's Rap II" by Isaac Hayes. The song became an introvert anthem for people around the world, picking up enough steam to hit the Billboard Top 15.

Following the success of "Here," Cara is set to debut "Know-It-All," her first full-length release. The album continues to expand upon the singer's personality, first expressed by the introvert anthem that burst her upon the scene. Songs like "I'm Yours" openly express the singer's feelings for a crush, while "Wild Things" and "Scars To Your Beautiful" stand out as empowerment anthems.

New Kid on the Block

by Eddie Fu

"Make statements and be proud to exist," Cara said when describing "Wild Things," while challenging listeners of "Scars" to "give a nice middle finger to anyone who thinks they have the authority to tell you that you shouldn't love yourself."

Unfortunately, "Know-It-All" may be overlooked by many potential listeners because of its shared release date with Justin Bieber's "Purpose" and One Direction's first post-Zayn album. But that would be a mistake. Cara's powerful, smoky voice is paired with production ranging from the sultry R&B of "Here" to the anthemic, hip hop influenced pop of "I'm Yours" and "Wild Things." And while the lyrics may skew toward younger audiences, heart-break and alienation are universal themes.

Dead Petz Brings Life Back Into Music

by Mallory Nathan

The 'surprise album' move is typically a quiet one. A long-awaited project suddenly appears online and the artist sits back as the frenzy of social media spheres generates all of the buzz it needs to stay afloat. Even Beyonce slipped one of her biggest works to date into iTunes without making a sound. But when Miley Cyrus releases a surprise album, she announces it on live television, while surrounded by drag queens, and with a confetti cannon between her legs.

Of course any less would have been disingenuous, because Miley Cyrus isn't most artists, and Miley Cyrus & Her Dead Petz is hardly an album at all. Rather, it is a stream of consciousness, fascinatingly lucid for one so laden with references to space, skateboards and David Bowie. Purposely under-produced, and overstuffed with experimental tracks, this is a project that is entirely human—which is a gamble in Miley's case, because where you stand with it de-

pends on where you stand with her.

In the most creative control of her career, Cyrus ditched the Hot 100 teams for scribble onto notebook pieces, and no style of songwriting has ever suited her more. Floating from eco-friendly chants to husky bedroom provocations to love and loss, Dead Petz plays like conversation, and the ample profanity is just an element of its honesty.

Whether it's cringing at relationship "goo" in the understatedly brilliant "BB Talk" or opting for Zen over revenge in "I Forgive Yiew", Cyrus's candor is not only adroit but amusing, proving that there is still a sense of humor left in the industry. Pop music can rarely avoid banal romance tropes, and hearing her tell an ex-lover "You're lucky I'm doing my yoga, or you might be dead" is like a breath of fresh air.

When Dead Petz does wind down, from madcap professions to heartbreak, the result is often gutting. "Since you've left I've started to drink/ Sometimes when I do drugs I'll start to overthink/And I start crying" she spills over a cosmic-pop beat in "Space Boots". Cyrus visits this vulnerability again in "The Twinkle Song" and "I Get So Scared", a weeping, front porch guitar melody that hints her mega-hit "Wrecking Ball" was only the surface.

With a record so raw, and vocals to match, it's hard to tell where it finally does go wrong. Perhaps the cluttered interludes or recycled beats could have been left on the cutting board, but even the flaws seem to be part of its statement. Dead Petz already knows it won't fare well with most, much like Miley. That's just more our problem than hers.



Courtesy of Mallory Nathan

HIP HOP NOW

by Eddie Fu

Wu-Tang Clan's classic debut, "Enter The Wu-Tang (36 Chambers)," drastically changed my music listening habits when I bought it during my senior year of high school. The combination of the group's unique sound, use of kung fu movie skits and tag-team rhyming hooked me on an era of hip-hop during which there was an unprecedented stream of groundbreaking albums.

It gave me a voracious appetite for hip-hop releases of the same quality, and those albums were easy to find. With the Notorious B.I.G., 2Pac, Nas, Big Pun, Jay Z, DMX, Snoop Dogg, Dr. Dre, Mobb Deep, Outkast and Eminem at the peak of their careers, there was no shortage of classic material. And when I needed more, I could go back in history with N.W.A., Public Enemy, A Tribe Called Quest, Gang Starr, Run DMC, Eric B. & Rakim, and Boogie Down Productions.

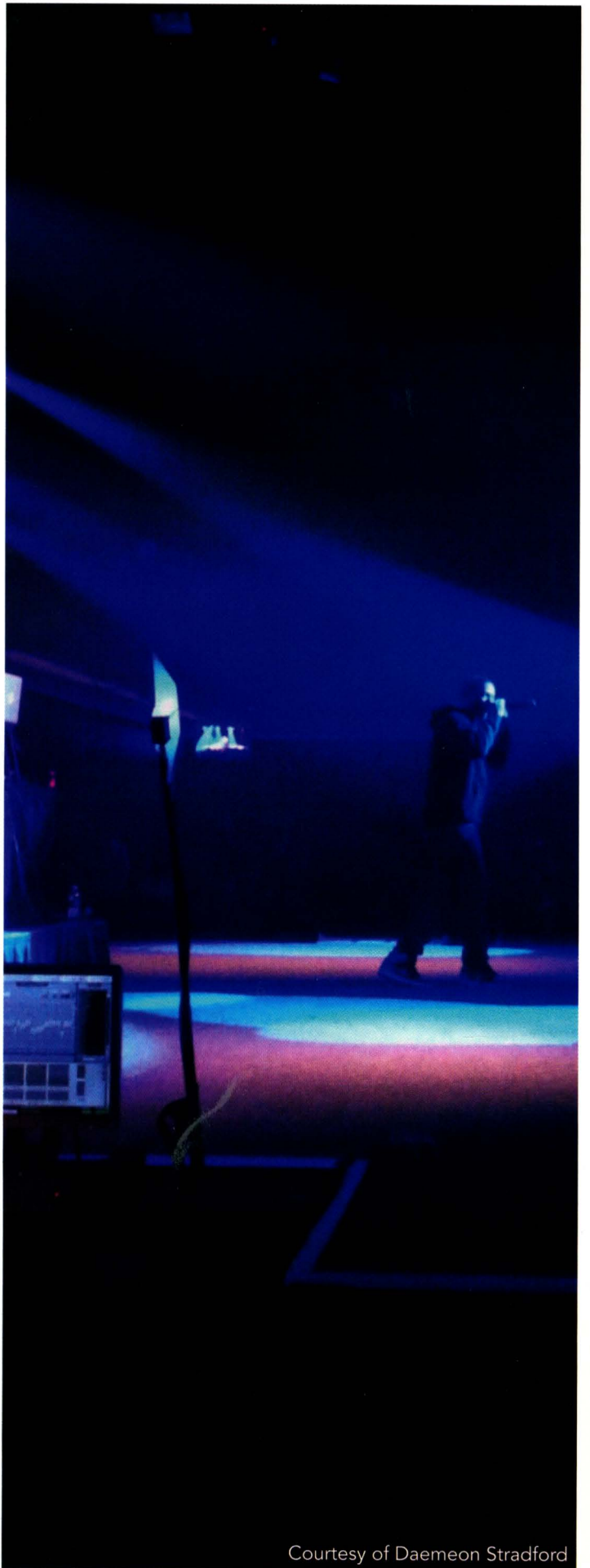
Sometime during the mid 2000s, however, my love for the genre began to wane. Jay Z retired (temporarily, of course), Eminem was releasing subpar albums like "Encore" and artists like Young Jeezy, T.I., Fabolous and Juelz Santana were not quite on the same level as their forebears.

As a result, I lost the passion I once had for the genre—and the culture. I never stopped listening to hip-hop completely, but no longer kept up with blogs and stopped reading the magazines. The music started moving further and further away from the sound which appealed to me in the first place, which made me feel left behind.

Take Future, for example. His combination of singing and rapping emphasizes style over substance, which is fine—I understand the appeal of songs like "You Deserve It" and "I Won"—but I will never connect with his music the same way I did with "Enter The Wu-Tang." It's too different from the sample heavy, lyric focused hip-hop which I fell in love with.

However, I have come to realize that while most hip-hop no longer strikes a chord with me, it is important that the genre continues to evolve through disparate styles—in a way which continues to make it the predominant sound of the mainstream. All that matters is hip-hop continues to thrive, regardless of how I feel about it.

Thankfully, there are still artists who are doing new things which I am still able to appreciate. Run The Jewels has found tremendous success by combining the indie cred of rapper-producer El-P and pedigree of former Dungeon Family artist Killer Mike. At 40, both artists are more popular than ever because El-P's signature futuristic, Bomb Squad-inspired production and rapid-fire flow somehow meshes with Killer Mike's powerful, bombastic rhymes. They are hip-hop's Odd Couple, and the perfect example of why I will never fall completely out of love with the genre; there will always be a hip-hop artist somewhere making music I love.



Courtesy of Daameon Stradford

Drake and Future: Time to Stream

by Eddie Fu

Drake and Future's joint album, "What A Time To Be Alive," was a major event in the music industry. Rumors and hype on social media stoked anticipation for the project, which debuted on a special episode of Drake's Beats 1 radio show, OVO Sound Radio. After the free preview, the album was only available for \$9.99 on Apple's iTunes store and exclusively on Apple Music streaming service — for the first week, at least — which costs \$9.99 per month. The question is, should they have charged for what even Drake has called a mixtape?

Admittedly, the sales of "What A Time To Be Alive" reveal this strategy worked. According to Billboard, its first week of 375,000 equivalent album units (combined traditional sales and streaming units) places it as the third-largest debut in 2015, behind The Weeknd's "Beauty Behind the Madness" and Drake's own "If You're Reading This It's Too Late."

However, "What A Time To Be Alive" was allegedly completed in less than a week, which is reflected by the mediocre quality of the final product. It sounds more like Drake hopped on some throwaway tracks left over from Future's recent album, "DS2," rather than a true collaboration. The mixtape is executive produced by the Future affiliate, Metro Boomin, while only two songs are produced by frequent Drake collaborators, "Live From The Gutter" (co-produced by Boi-1da with Metro Boomin) and "30 for 30 Freestyle" (produced by Noah "40" Shebib).

Admittedly, both Drake and Future have set a precedent of charging for mixtapes disguised as albums. In particular, Drake's "If You're Reading This It's Too Late," which the Canadian rapper himself called a mixtape, has been one of the biggest albums of the year, while Future's "56 Nights" was initially a free download, but is now available for purchase on iTunes.

But the truth is, both Drake and Future can afford to give away albums. Not only is Drake a best selling artist, he has his own radio program as a promotional tool and even his own festival, OVOFest. Future is one of the most sought after performers, with audiences reciting lyrics from his mixtape and album tracks alike.

"What A Time Alive" could have been a gift for Drake and Future's biggest fans. Instead, it comes off as a money grab which was put together just to raise both artist's profiles even further. Rather than taking their time to release a high quality joint-album, they took the easy route. Rumors have long persisted about rappers Kendrick Lamar and J. Cole working together on an album. Hopefully, they will take their time if the project actually materializes.

Courtesy of Daameon Stradford

Protect Thy Hair

by Imani J. Wheeler

Natural hair is virgin hair; hair untouched by chemicals that may alter, disturb or damage the natural state and oils your hair normally reproduces

Hair is everywhere in all sorts of shapes, sizes, lengths, colors, and textures. Its more than just what's growing out of your head, but an extension of yourself and what makes you, you. Hair is an important asset to anyone, whether they're male or female. As said by Jill Scott, three time Grammy award winning singer, songwriter, actress and model, "For me, Hair is accoutrement. Hair is jewelry. It's an accessory." And it is one of the best accessories because it is so versatile with so many different ways of expression. But how important is your hair?

"I love my hair because it's a reflection of my soul. It's dense, it's kinky, it's soft, it's textured, it's difficult, it's easy and it's fun. That's why I love my hair," said by a woman of many talents and daughter of the phenomenal Diana Ross, Tracey Ellis Ross, but she's not alone. As individuals, we all have our own personalities; however it would also seem that our hair has a mind of its own as well.

Business management student at Kean University, Joa-nuel Veras describes how his hair "is a cute mess of nappy corkscrew curls with a lot of shrinkage. Its dark brown and is brighter when it gets longer. My dad always wanted me to keep it short, so I did. I never grew it out successfully until the past year and a half. I wouldn't say it was my rebellious thing to do against my parents will like getting a tattoo but it was me doing what I want and actually forming my identity. That's why I'm so against cutting it no matter how unruly it gets."

Booming in the trending light are protective hairstyles with a strong culture backing it up becoming a lifestyle.

Marymount Manhattan College student, Emani Combs, dance and Business major has been natural for four years now and counting. "I began this journey when I moved out to New Jersey from VA to start my first years in college. The transition was a part

of me becoming myself. I was tired of the constant unhealthy hair and burning scalp from the chemicals since I was six years old. I took a step out of my comfort zone and decided that I was no longer going to care what others thought of the way I looked. I began my journey to find the beauty within myself, being natural. I hold head a little higher because I am proud to love myself. I could never go back. If I could describe my hair with one word I'd say, thick. My hair is very tightly coiled but soft to the touch."

Protective hairstyles are the umbrella and all the many different ways you can style your hair falls underneath. Protective



Courtesy of Paige Bollman

hairstyles are exactly what it implies; hairstyles that help protect your hair. Although the definition tends to vary, protective styling is hair styles that shield your hair from harm through physical, chemical and environmental influences.

Constantly combing, brushing, twisting, braiding, pinning and clipping are all that apply to physical influences. And all that involves heat like straighteners, blow dryers, and curling irons are chemical influences as well as the use of relaxers, perms and hair coloring treatments. Weathering such as rain or humidity and the pollutants in the air are examples of the environmental. Whichever the case may be, they are all collectively detrimental to the health and growth of our hair. Although environmental elements cannot be so much as altered, there are ways that the others can be prevented, avoided or kept to a minimum.

It may be easier said than done but sometimes you learn to find out yourself through trial and error like when Combs was torn up by the time she decided to explore the world of color. “The time I first decided to dye my hair. I went about it all wrong. I went to a salon who didn’t really understand my texture. However, I wanted the color so bad that I insisted they go through with it. When the finished product came out, my hair was in different shades of blonde, red, and brown. My ends looked very rigged, and the hair was dry making the texture feel very crisp. I thought this was it. I both have to cut everything off or perm it and go about the look. It was comforting to have such great friends that helped me within the same day to deep condition and style my hair so that I can get a second chance at love.” It can get real crucial handling with chemicals especially hair dye when not used correctly. Hair dying is what it says; your hair dies.

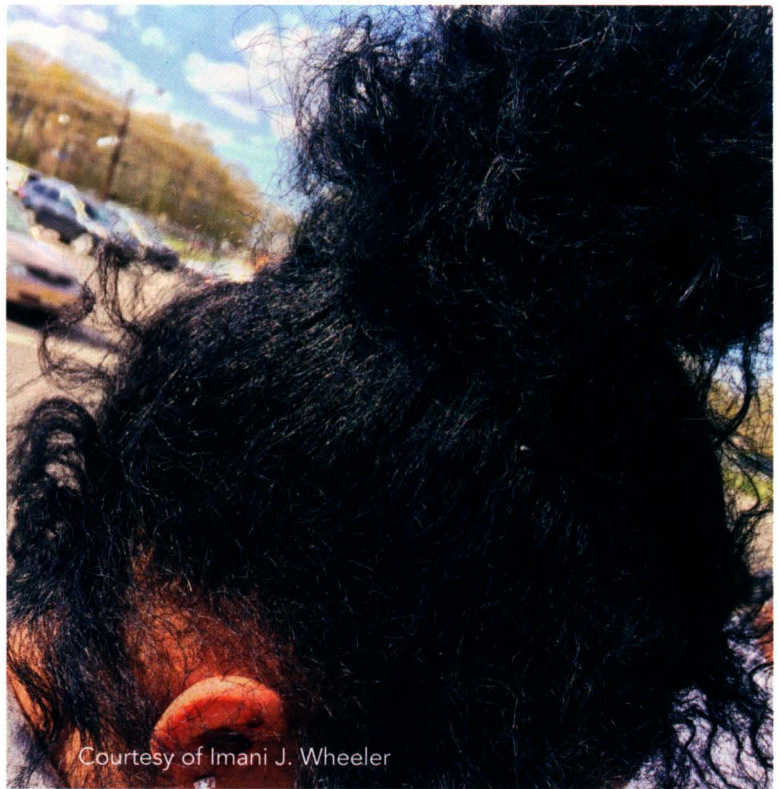
Those with fine hair, too tight on schedule to do much of anything else, not comfortable with experimenting yet, or do too much to their hair are the perfect candidates to start your protective styling lifestyle.

Moreover the sole purpose is maintaining hair health, replenishing its natural state in a safe manner. Protective hairstyles achieve that by keeping the hair ends safely tucked and put away, preventing split ends and easy breakage. This provides a greater fighting chance for your hair to maintain strength and prevail, continuously growing for achieving greater lengths.

Veras strongly recommends to “learn your hair! Play with the different products – shampoos, conditioners, co-washes, moisturizers, oils, whatever! Your hair has personality. Find out what makes your hair behave the way you want and form a routine. It takes time and asking around but when you find the routine that works, you’ll be happy over time when the results show.”

The practice of natural protective hairstyles is not as easy as you may think. In fact, the natural journey is a long process; frustrating and daunting but thanks to the effective impact of the World Wide Web and social networks, there’s much encouragement from YouTube bloggers, web tutorials, Instagram, Facebook etc.

Patience is vital, “this journey takes time to find your own natural beauty. But, you must learn to appreciate yourself no matter what anyone thinks. The beauty is in your confidence and the way you carry yourself,” says Combs.



Courtesy of Imani J. Wheeler



Courtesy of Imani J. Wheeler

End Fat Shame

by Megan Thompson

Recently, body weight has been a huge focus on our society. Body weight has been argued about on many popular websites such as Facebook, Instagram, and Tumblr as well as in person between friends and family numerous times.

Famous celebrities such as, Meghan Trainor and YouTube sensation and star of her own reality TV series, My Big Fat Fabulous Life, Whitney Way Thore have been a target of such a controversial topic.

Should body weight be such an issue? It appears that many people view a larger set person mainly on their outward appearance.

According to medicaldaily.com, as a society we spew out a range of labels that moralize a person's weight

and stereotype them as being either lazy or foolish. The site also reveals that when not only do we get a snapshot of a person's current health by evaluating their body weight, but we also gather enough visual information to assume what type of person they are fundamentally. When it comes to another person's weight, we focus more on their outward appearance than their personality.

Body weight does not just affect the way one views another, but also the way they may treat them. Many individuals who

are heavier have been victim to teasing and seclusion from others their age countless times. An event such as this has been displayed in many major motion pictures such as To Be Fat like Me.

The main character, Aly, decides to take a summer course wearing a fat suit after she is convinced that her overweight mother and younger brother use their

weight as an excuse. She uses a video camera to document her entire experience and prove that one's personality can outshine their

physical appearance. However, she begins to be shunned by the other students in her class despite her efforts to maintain the personality she has always had and she realizes how difficult life can be as someone who is overweight.

"Fat Shaming" is a common term for the negative assumptions that come along with being heavier. Personally, I am not considered overweight myself, but I have grown up surrounded by loved ones who would be considered such a thing as this by society. I have never seen them through the eyes of someone who judges them negatively, but for the person that they truly are because of the love that they give me. I have witnessed the stares that they get and the way others treat them from time to time. The humiliated expression that comes over their face when an event like this happens has not gone by unnoticed and every time it has fueled me with anger. It has never been understood by me why someone with an amazing personality can be judged before they utter a word simply for their physical appearance. Although I may not experience being judged for my weight first hand, I have seen it fill the eyes of those I hold close with pain and cause them to be too embarrassed to go out and enjoy life.

Body weight has been a recurring argument for many years and has caused many stereotypes to be made about those who are heavier as well as cause a lot of difficulty and pain in such lives as these. In other words, body weight should not be focused on as much as it is in our society today.

People come in all shapes and sizes and judging one another on that just causes many unneeded issues. If society focused more on who a person is and not the way they physically appear, there would be less conflict and unhappiness in the world. Despite what standards the media has set for the ideal physical appearance, everyone should strive to treat one another with the same respect they wish to be treated with and eliminate the huge focus on one small physical feature. If there was no focus on one another's body weight, the world just may be a happier, friendlier place.

Courtesy of JM Productions



Courtesy of JM Productions



Courtesy of JM Productions

Family Disease

by Mallory Nathan

“Where do you wanna interview me about being a junkie?”

We stood at opposite ends of the kitchen table. The cloud he blew out from his vape pen waned above his head and his dogs circled at his feet. I motioned to the living room with my free hand, gripping my notebook with the other, while he moved and sat as coolly as his candor.

I asked him where he would like to begin, and for a moment there was an equal silence of thought. My brother never began anywhere but the very beginning.

“Well, when I was five, my father took me to Disney World.

It was the popcorn story. I had heard it before—at holiday dinners, while flipping through photo albums, just because—that John spent his trip to the Greatest Place on Earth so fixated on getting popcorn that he harped and pleaded and chipped away at our dad’s patience until popcorn was given to him. They didn’t go on a single ride.

“That day has me convinced that I was born with the disease of addiction.”

In society’s narrative, John wasn’t an addict until he was 18. The night he tried his first Percocet was the first night of a spiral from pills down to heroin, mirroring every TV drama trope so methodically that for a while our family felt scripted. Each of us took turns playing the interventionist, and each of us truly believed that all he needed was the right words. We were only equipped with the idea that addiction starts and ends someplace—swallows people whole and, if you stop it in time, spits them back out.

In reality, drug use was only a symptom. John was always an addict.

“Having the disease of addiction means that I have total self-obsession, total self-centeredness, which means that I want what I feel that I need, at anyone’s expense,” he said artlessly, like he was talking about someone else. “When I’m putting a drug in my body, that’s a high. When I’m gambling, that’s a high. When I’m arguing, making you feel less than, that’s a high. My total self-centeredness is through the roof.”

There was a constant shift between normal and what seemed like deafening narcissism, and the slightest inflection could trigger it. It drove him out of school, through relationships that couldn’t withstand the whiplash, and eventually to jail.

As if on cue, his dachshund leapt up and nuzzled into his lap. John lovingly rubbed his back, and again as he recalled rummaging through the house for things he could sell to feed his addiction, moving to stores and apartment buildings once it was cleaned out. And as a result, he found himself with charges of 3rd degree theft.

He was arrested on October 20th, 2010, and the 21st could have been the bag that killed him. He adopted this perspective within those following two years, after becoming institutionalized almost immediately. Adapting to routines and rations wasn’t enough to break him when his whole life had been rooted in survival. John brushed off those aspects as he chronicled his sentence, only wavering from indifference at one pivotal experience.

During his last year, he was moved to a prison in a section of New Jersey that was overwhelmed with racism. He recounted the day he watched a group of guards cuff a Black inmate who had been late getting back to his cell by his wrists and ankles, then throw him face first down a flight of stairs. They pro-

ceeded to beat him until he was airlifted to Trenton Trauma.

“At that moment, I made a promise to myself that I’d never do anything to put me back there again. Everything after that was just a fast-paced blur towards getting clean and getting out.” John had his very last mind-altering substance behind bars—a shot of hooch on May 26th, 2012, as I celebrated my 17th birthday on the outside.

He’s no less of an addict today than he was then. While today there are far greater things on the line—the love for his dogs, his responsibility as a husband, the feeling of being fully self-supporting—autonomy is just as liable of a factor in recovery as it is in addiction.

“There’s nothing ingrained in my body that makes me put a needle in my arm,” he said. “But there is a thought process that still exists that tells me it’s okay. I make the daily decision to not do it, and I’m the only one who can do that for me.”

He made it a point to stress the day-to-day concept quite a few times; so much so that when I asked where he sees himself in 20 years, he simply drew from his vape pen, looked at me and shrugged.

“I don’t know where I’ll be tomorrow.”

He blew out the cloud.

“I’ll always be a cynical prick, though. I don’t think I could ever change that.”

“Do you want to change that?” I asked him.

“No, not at all.”



Courtesy of Mallory Nathan

On Being Bipolar

by Eddie Fu

“Here’s an interesting thing you don’t know about me. I am clinically depressed.”

These are the words spoken by Gretchen, a thirty-something music PR executive, to her boyfriend, Jimmy, a self-absorbed writer, on the critically acclaimed FXX television show, “You’re The Worst.”

Gretchen goes on to tell him, “It’s been going on my whole life... It strikes me whenever, but I have no idea why,” before adding, “the only thing I need from you is to not make a big deal of it and be okay with how I am and the fact that you can’t fix me.”

I have been watching the dark comedy, “You’re The Worst,” since it first debuted because it ignores conventions of romantic comedies and portrays love as the messy thing it really is. Halfway through the current season, it really struck home when Gretchen reveals to Jimmy that she lives with clinical depression.

Like Gretchen, I am a thirty-something who struggles to keep it together. I have learned to fake my way through work and social situations because of the stigma which surrounds mental illness, and more specifically, bi-polar disorder. Her character’s description of what it is like is more eloquent and relatable than I could ever describe it. Actress Aya Cash’s Emmy-caliber performance as Gretchen, combined with BuzzFeed’s Mental Health Week coverage, has motivated me to tell my story.

Everyone has different experiences with mental illness, and different coping mechanisms, but one thing is clear: There needs to be more discussion about mental health. Talking about it brings understanding and could help people realize that they are dealing with mental illness themselves.

I have bipolar I disorder. This diagnosis means the patient has had at least one manic episode, but I am more prone to major depressive episodes.

When someone is clinically depressed, it does not mean they are just sad and can easily “snap out of it.” They are not in bed all day because they are lazy. Rather, because of a chemical imbalance in their brain, they are mentally and physically unable to take care of routine, everyday things like personal hygiene, eating and getting dressed.

When I am depressed, getting out of bed feels like—and often is—an impossible task. Waking up, brushing my teeth, taking a shower, getting dressed and then eating breakfast becomes the most difficult thing in the world. Sleeping all day becomes the norm. This can go on for days or even weeks until I muster the energy to do at least some of these things, and most importantly, see my psychiatrist.

I take mood stabilizers to treat my disorder and am in regular therapy. However, there are times when, just like Gretchen, depression “strikes me whenever.” After seeking treatment, and recovering from it—a process which can take

a few weeks or even longer—it is always easy to look back and recognize signs I missed. While I have lived with a mental illness since first being diagnosed over 15 years ago and have learned to control it for the most part, I will deal with it for the rest of my life—and that is okay.

And that is my story. Since I am so good at hiding my mental illness, I have not told many people about it. Obviously, my family knows about it, but there are still close friends who do not know about what I am going through on a daily basis. While they are doing the best things possible by being there and giving me reasons to leave the house, I often wonder how much better my life would be if they knew. This is a start.



Courtesy of Daameon Stradford

Quit Smoking

by Chris Nalwasky

On October 12, 2003, and on July 10, 2011, I lost my beloved grandfather and grandmother respectively from Emphysema and Pancreatic Cancer. The two of them had smoked for numerous years and it was the cause of death for both of them. Smoking is no joke, yet, many teens for example smoke “for fun”. According to cdc.gov, in the United States alone, “cigarette smoking an exposure to secondhand smoke causes 443,000-or 1 in 5 deaths” per year. “Smoking-caused diseases result in \$96 billion in health care costs annually.” Both those numbers are incredibly high and show the non-rewarding outcomes of cigarette smoking. “More deaths are caused each year by tobacco use than by human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), illegal drug use, alcohol use, motor vehicle injuries, suicides, and murders combined.” Smoking causes damage to your body externally as well as internally in addition to the suffering of loved family members.

Why would anybody want to put anything that is made from nicotine and a poisonous plant, tobacco in their mouth? Beats me.

Visibly, smoking causes extensive damage to your physical appearance. “Smoking leads to oxidative stress within the skin” says livestrong.com. “Specifically, substances like carbon monoxide and arsenic in cigarette smoke interferes with reparative features of collagen and elastic.” This leads to lines and wrinkles in their skin, hair loss, and premature aging. In addition, I am sure you are aware that smoking caused your teeth to become stained a yellowish color. Don’t forget about the disgusting “smoke” smell people get a whiff of walking past you.

According to cdc.gov, when you smoke that cigarette, your risk of getting coronary heart disease is increased by two to four times, as well as getting a stroke. You also increase your chances by about 12 times of dying from chronic lung diseases (such as emphysema). It also reduces the circulation of blood which puts smokers at risk of having blocked arteries in their bodies. Why would you want and go through any of this.

In addition, smoking puts you at risk of several cancers such as bladder, lung, pancreatic, kidney etc. It can cause infertility, preterm delivery, and much more.

When my grandparents died, it hit me hard. My grandfather had this machine that helped him breath. I was younger at the time and he called it “his toy” to keep me from worrying. I had my Game-boy, he had his

breathing machine. It was really sad. My grandmother quit on my birthday a few years before she passed, but her years of smoking still took her life. It was never the same. My parents still smoke and my sisters and I all talk to them every day about it. We feel my dad has increased his smoking, while my mom has cut down significantly. However, they did not quit.

If you smoke now, I advise you to quit. If you don’t smoke, that’s even better. Do not start! When you quit you save money by not purchasing cartons and packs of cigarettes where the money totals add up. It helps your appearance return to normal. You have more energy to play with your kids and have less stress. Whyquit.com mentions that within twenty minutes, “your blood pressure, pulse rate and temperature of your hands and feet have returned to normal.” Within one year, “your excess risk of coronary heart disease, heart attack, and stroke have dropped to less than half that of a smoker.” Stop and quit while you can. Don’t make life shorter than it already is.

Smoking kills! It is not a joke and needs to be taken in a serious matter. Don’t start just because you think it’s cool. Smoking is a huge turn off and I most likely won’t even talk to you if you smoke. I will never smoke a single cigarette in my life knowing all of the damage it could cause to myself, others, and family. Quit while you’re ahead. Grab a support system and put that cigarette down.



Courtesy of Martin Alonso

Writers' Inner Thoughts

Laying on the Floor

by Imani J. Wheeler

As I lay on my bare floor, a cloud of thoughts smother me, gradually accumulating weight.

"Get up off the floor..."

I roll over to my side, adjusting my uncomfortable body alignment, but the thoughts weighing heavier and heavier defeated my purpose of achieving anything near comfort. I ignore what she says, fading out everything that followed after. My mind juggling the thoughts is instantly swept away by this awkwardly cold spot under my thigh, sending a tingling sensation to my toes.

Suddenly cold, little goose bumps rises on my now chilled skin and my thin little blonde arm hairs stand tall. Once again attempting to reach a comfortable position, I settled flat on my back. I place my hands by my side with my palms faced up and close my eyes to imagine the sun beaming its rays of "happy" shine.

At peace and with warmth, she disturbs, "Did you hear what I said? Get off the floor, I'm not gonna tell you again."

A Learning Experience

by Martin Alonso

One of the hardest obstacles I have had growing up is figuring out how things work. I was raised in a household where Spanish was the only language we spoke. Both my parents came here from Mexico. I shared the experience of entering an unknown world with my parents. There have been many instances where I have felt my parents were as clueless as I.

The most essential skill for me to learn was the English language. I took ESL classes all the way through second grade. I remember everyone around me in class spoke it so well, so I was always hesitant to speak up. I did not speak it in school nor at home so from where else would I get my practice? Even the television programming I watched was mostly Spanish, for the years we had cable. Eventually there was a point where I finally got comfortable speaking and writing but it was definitely a process.

High school became a particular struggle I've gone through. It wasn't because I wasn't getting passing grades. I've been at least an A, B student with the occasional straight A, honor-roll title. The problem once again was, not knowing how the school system worked. The problem was, not envisioning life after high school. I didn't know who to go to for advice. My father only had a middle school education and my mother never got the chance to go to college because she made the choice to move to the U.S. They didn't have the answers I was looking for. I honestly just didn't think there were resources out there to help people. I was only 16 when I dropped out of high school, regretfully so.

I now know what that "guidance counselor" in high school was for. Now I know there are people who care. Although my circumstance has left me somewhat marginalized, I know it is a blessing full of lessons.

Chicken Noodle Soup

by Paige Bollman

When I was little, my favorite food was soup. I was an odd child. Even on the hottest day, relaxing at the beach with my family, I would request soup. My mother would fill my Campbell's soup container with the yummiest chicken soup, and star shaped noodles to satisfy my odd craving.

Being an avid soup-eater, my father always blew on my soup to make sure it was just right so I didn't burn my childish tongue. When he would leave me to finish the hot contents, he taught me to be very careful, and always take from the edges of the bowl.

This morning, I wasn't feeling well. My mom took some time to heat up chicken broth with drill noodles. When she delivered me the hot contents, I reminded myself to take from the edges.

Today, I wonder, was this a lesson larger than not burning my tongue? Was this all a metaphor to not get myself burned by life? To always take from the edges, and be careful with what I was getting myself into?

Procrastination

by Roque Cabrera

Procrastination can be the ultimate source of stress for some. To a student, such as myself, there is nothing more frustrating than knowing that you will be late with something and having to race against time to finish it. The anxiety that rises from knowing you did not finish something, hinders your everyday actions and puts a weight on your mind. Yet we still procrastinate. Most of us know what the consequences for procrastination are yet we still choose to put it off until later, I am no exception. We have to learn to finish what we start and continue to work on finishing our assignments long before they are do.

Making Lemonade

by Imani Wheeler

When life hands you lemons, it goes to say, you make lemonade. Only, I really despise lemonade. Not even on the hottest of days have I ever craved lemonade nor has it ever quenched my thirst. I figure it's one of those things I'd never come to truly understand. Some have too much sugar and others not enough, some are bitter and then there are others that are so watered down. Although I hate lemonade, I could definitely find contentment in a cup of cold water with fresh lemon slices floating about, dancing around the rim of my cup. Who's to tell me that I have to make lemonade?

Over Coffee

by Paige Bollman

I clutch the red coffee mug that fills my hands with warmth. I blow delicately on the steam rising from the inside, again and again. I hear the pitter patter of my mother's footsteps coming from her bedroom. Soon, her arm graces my back and she rubs gently while whispering a soft good morning.

I return the good morning wishes and ask if she would like me to pour her a cup. After all, she does brew the coffee late at night so it is ready when the alarm clock sings. She takes a seat on the wooden stool and gazes out of the kitchen's bay window. I rise from my seat and procure a cup filled with the strongest coffee blend. The sweetness of the coffee is always added though, with a

whom I was interested in. My mom had already gone to bed by the time I'd arrived home. I knew she wanted me to convey all of the details from this night and I'm glad we have an open relationship to discuss matters like these.

My mother sits back down and leads a conversation with a smirk, "How was the date?"

"It was awesome. I didn't think he was going to kiss me when he drove me home. So, I asked him, 'Are you going to kiss me or what?' He smirked at me and we kissed for a while."

"Paige Marie!" my mother shrieked, "Was he a good kisser?"



Courtesy of Paige Bollman

simple touch of Bailey's nonalcoholic, chocolate creamer. Kind of like our relationship, it can be bitter like the strongest coffee but always sweetened in the end—which is what really matters.

I deliver the stained-white mug, and she thanks me as her first sip graces her lips. We listen to Carley lapping at her food. She then takes an immense belch and we know it's time to take her outside for the bathroom. My mother hooks the leash, opens the gate and heads for the door. I watch the interaction through the bay window.

Stepping outside, Carley charges to the longest, nearest blade of grass and squats. She finishes, kicks at the dirt on the ground and heads back for the house. Seconds later, Carley charges back for the kitchen and my mother follows shortly after.

The night before, I went out on a first date with a man

I reply and add all the juicy details of the night; conversations we exchanged in the car ride to the bowling alley to the way he caressed the side of my face when we had our good night kiss.

My mother continues to smile, witnessing the happiness written all over my face while pouring us two more cups of bitter-sweet coffee.

Rear View

by Mallory Nathan

You'll be broken up by summer.

I laughed to myself as I came to a stop near a young couple on the sidewalk. The boy wore his hat backwards and his jeans low, and the girl looked like a Hollister mannequin. They walked in synchronized steps alongside my idled car, his hand wrapped tight around her waist.

My hands hung over the steering wheel listlessly. Rush hour was building, the sun was setting, and I had already been bumper to bumper for three shades of sky.

I followed the couple with my eyes, as they moved in silence past the church and the old bus stop, keeping myself entertained with commentary—from his single diamond earring to the way her UGG boots hit the concrete like there were bricks in their soles. They never broke unison in their pace, and his hand never loosened from her hip.

The horizon of my sight was right along the Women's Services Center. It's just what its name suggests, but we all call it the abortion clinic. Perhaps if the religious zealots, with their picket signs and holy vitriol, weren't always out front, we wouldn't have even known; the building would just blend in with the rest of Main Street.

and about to be face to face with a poster of a bloody, unborn child.

By the time they hit the Dora tree, the car in front of me was almost a full other car ahead. I made it to the first red light—close enough to hold them in my rear view, far enough to begin losing interest. I yawned, flipped through radio channels, switched on my front lights, and when I had looked up into my mirror again, they were turning up the walkway to the clinic. I froze as they stepped heads down and in harmony past the faces of the protestors that dropped and recoiled. The man in the shorts thrust his sign. The woman called out to them. The rest congregated in whispers.

It wasn't long before the light was green. A million plays—turning around, getting out, waiting for them outside the building so I could shield them from the signs—looped through my head before the car behind me beeped. I stalled until they beeped again, until the couple made it to the front door. All I could do then was drive ahead, and pray they stay together.



Today was no different, and the usual pack manned the strip of grass by the curb, their signs screaming to be seen from miles away. "PRAY TO END ABORTION" was the loudest, and the elderly man holding it stood like the sovereign of the group. I forgot about the couple for a moment as I laughed again, scanning his fluorescent green shorts and the white socks that stopped mid-calf. A Dora the Explorer doll was tethered to the tree beside him, with a sign of her own hanging from her plush neck.

Traffic began to shift and I inched forward. A woman next to the neon deliverer, the one assigned to championing graphic imagery over her head, came into view, and the couple came back into the frame. I anticipated the short interruption in their awkward bliss as they passed and almost felt sorry for them, waist to waist

Courtesy of Mallory Nathan

Perth Amboy Dinner Cruise

by Martin Alonso & Paige Bollman

Anyone in the mood for a casual or formal date will enjoy themselves for a lunch or dinner aboard one of the ships of the Cornucopia Cruise Line. The cruise line offers brunch, lunch and dinner while sailing for four hours through the bay from the Perth Amboy port to the New York City skyline and back.

We are big Grouponers and snatch a good deal when we see one. Using our Groupon, we made a reservation for two for a lunch cruise on the Princess. Boarding began at 11:30 a.m., and we shipped sail at noon.

Entertainment on the ship includes a DJ playing a variety of music from pop, salsa, hip-hop, electronic, to a fast pace conga line and electric slide. There were many enjoying themselves and making moves on the dancefloor.

After we shipped, we were greeted by a waiter who took our drink order. We ordered a pitcher of white sangria. An announcer then started calling up tables for the buffet. Soft drinks are complimentary with the price of the cruise. Alcoholic beverages are additional fees of \$10 per drink.

The lunch buffet included four salads, consisting of caesar salad, tomato salad, mixed greens and fruit salad. Sides included rice, roasted potatoes, penne in vodka sauce, dinner bread and string beans. The main courses included chicken in a lemon sauce, cod in a lemon sauce, salmon in a creamy spinach sauce, beef and a carving station. Everything was freshly prepared.

After we ate our meals, we explored the rest of the ship. The Princess has four decks; one of them was a sun deck. We had views of the Jersey Shore lines and then the New York City skyline. We were there on a rather breezy day and got a beautiful view of many sailboats.

Dessert was later offered. This included a choice of dark chocolate cake, tiramisu or cheesecake. We picked dark chocolate cake with two glasses of milk. The cake was served cold, rich and sweet.

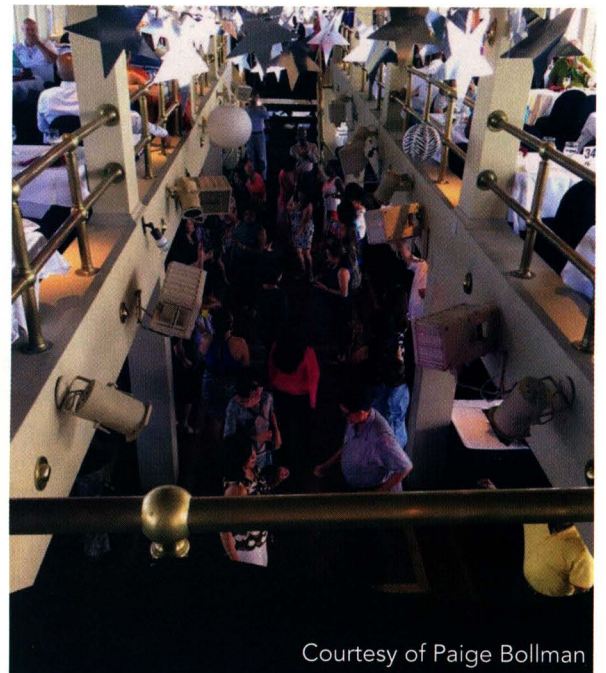
Overall, it was a great experience, especially considering the reasonable price. The music set the mood and everyone on board looked pleased with their time. We would definitely go here again.

The Cornucopia Cruise Line offered a Groupon for two with brunch, dinner buffet, lunch or four-course dinner. The brunch is priced at \$49 for two on Sunday; dinner is priced at \$59 for two Wednesday through Thursday; lunch is priced at \$59 for two on Saturday; and a four-course dinner for two is priced at \$89 Friday through Sunday. Tax and gratuity is not included in the Groupon pricing.

Cornucopia Cruise Line is located at 401 Riverview Drive, Perth Amboy, NJ, 08861. To make reservations or for questions, one can call (732) 697-9500.



Courtesy of Paige Bollman



Courtesy of Paige Bollman

While in Mexico

by Paige Bollman

It's incredible, you know, the fact that people can get on a plane, travel four mere hours, and land in another country filled with opportunities. I was on my way to Cancun, Mexico, where the land would be my playground and I would be nothing but one individual soaking up all of what the land had to offer me.

Traveling to another country can be a little intimidating, especially if you don't know the language of the people. But, my travel agent was very helpful when making arrangements with my hotel and excursions so my mind was easily at rest.

I hopped onto the plane, snoozed, drank coffee, and read a new book from the "Rose Gardener Mysteries" series. I then landed, and was taken in awe of the beauty with which Mexico embraced me

Cancun. Here, I was able to see the oceanic animals native to Mexico. They also offered swimming with dolphins and going in a shark tank. I passed up on those opportunities; I'm not one for that type of adventure. Unfortunately, the sea lion show was closed down during the time I visited, but was said to be coming back in the near future.

On the last day of my adventures, I attended Selvatica. Here, a shuttle bus picked me up at the front door of my hotel, and brought me to the site. Here, I went through a training process of the different activities my peers and I were going to endure. First, we went down a series of 12 zip-line circuits. Later, we swam in a cenote, followed by a trip on the Polaris ATV bikes where we went through the Jungle Circuit, my personal favorite experience of the trip. This all ended with a lunch and non-alcoholic beverages.



Courtesy of Paige Bollman

as I took my first steps out of the airport. Palm trees danced in the slight winds and the heat from the sun kissed my face. I met with the shuttle bus attendant that was transporting me to my hotel. He spoke of the highways and the speeds the natives drive. When we finally reached the immaculate hotel, I read the name "Riu Palace Peninsula". I had arrived to my all-inclusive resort. I hopped out of the car, tipped the attendant, and began my journey in Mexico.

On the first adventurous day, I went shopping at the La Isla Shopping Center where I made purchases from Pandora and little boutiques for souvenirs. I thought it was odd when the boutique stores offered shots of complimentary tequila, but I quickly found this common practice.

On the second day, I visited the Interactive Aquarium

Luckily my travel agent arranged all this. The price of the Selvatica trip was a mere \$121, not bad when compared to others that are double the price.

Between the days of adventure, I soaked up the sun at the beach, enjoyed my all-inclusive accommodations including the all-you-can-eat buffet, a choice of five different on-site restaurants, alcoholic beverages, and nightly entertainment including fire dancers and magicians.

I was more adventurous than I ever had been on a vacation. I thank Mexico and its people for treating me well during my trip. I cannot wait to go back and see the beauty of the resorts, the beaches, and the adventure of the lifestyle.

Forever

by Imani J. Wheeler

Forever did she live
now in a life where pain has no desire to hurt and tears never fall
salty in the palm of her hands.
She grew too fast
thrown into the harsh flames that subsided her young trust, hope,
and faith
Too tired to forgive the same mistakes that faulted
over and over again until sorry became just a word she became used
to hearing.
But happy did she live,
after all, mistakes were only lessons learned and sorry was excuses
she never made.
Sure enough she grew old
with hope to share, love to spread and forgiveness to pass
Leaving behind a piece that'll never be forgotten.
Forever will she live

My Sister Told Me

by Cameron Levins

Now that I'm twenty-one, I can do everything.
My sister told me that in my cracked Chrysler,
I thought it was ironic, cuz I haven't done anything.

I've learned things though, does that count?
I have ideas, but the cracked Chrysler's wheels
are the only wheels spinning.

If you can't hold it in your hands,
you're not gonna hold their attention.
No one said life is fair it's more of a circus.

There are clowns, lions, elephants, and goats.
The crowds gasp at their feats,
money gets thrown at their feet.

The lights are kinda bright, and the signs take up air space,
maybe in another year I can be a part of the show,
my cracked Chrysler and I can't find a parking spot yet.

Stranger

by Jeannee Auguste

I step outside and see this stranger
He's tall, dark and mysterious
I'm just so curious
Maybe he could be a Power Ranger?

Just looking at him, he looks so lonely.
So silent and mute
Well he is clean-cut dressed to boot
Could he be my one and only?

I see him staring at me
I can't help but to feel so shy
There's more than just eye to eye
Should I smile with glee?

Looking at me, I see him smile
His gorgeous jawline
It's like fine wine
It can go on for over a mile.

And yet, I ask myself, 'Why?'
But let's not stay
Let us fly somewhere today
No one but you and I.

You're nothing but a ray of delight
Flaw to flaw
Everything about you is just so raw
Let's meet at midnight.

If you go, I will deeply miss you
Could it be the time?
To leave you in your prime
But if you go forever, may I please just kiss you?

Anxiety

by Paige Bollman

The frustration builds deep in my bones,
A slight tear trickles down my right cheek,
The sounds of cries penetrate the room.

His hand reaches for my back,
A slight, comforting rub starts to put me at ease,
The slight whispers of "I love you" caress my ear.

A breath of fresh air fills my lungs,
The tears dry and I regain my composure.

Oh, how his simple touch brings me back.

Claire Condie

by Paige Bollman

Between hustling around campus from a copier, to a classroom, to her office to Arts and Science Division Council Meetings, Dr. Claire Condie is a down-to-earth, go-getting professor at The College.

A desk covered with notebooks, textbooks, rubber bands from a green house effect lessons and food shows off her personality. Included in this madness is a wall full of decor ranging from a GEOLOGY license plate, "Stop and Smile" stop sign and a dinosaur hat.

Learning any of the sciences can be overwhelming. There are many components of the sciences that some students may not have retained from high school, but Condie makes the learning of these difficult concepts easy. She does this by sharing YouTube videos to help students better understand intricate concepts and drawing doodles on how to draw specimens seen in a microscope lens.

She scarfs down her vegetable-packed meals and, every so often, a package of Pringles. One of her personal favorites is vegetarian chili even though she is not a vegetarian; she believes that vegetables and fruit are the most important food groups to keep energy levels high. With a busy work schedule at The College, her mini fridge and microwave come in handy with her constant need to fuel her body with energy.

"Food is fuel," Condie said.

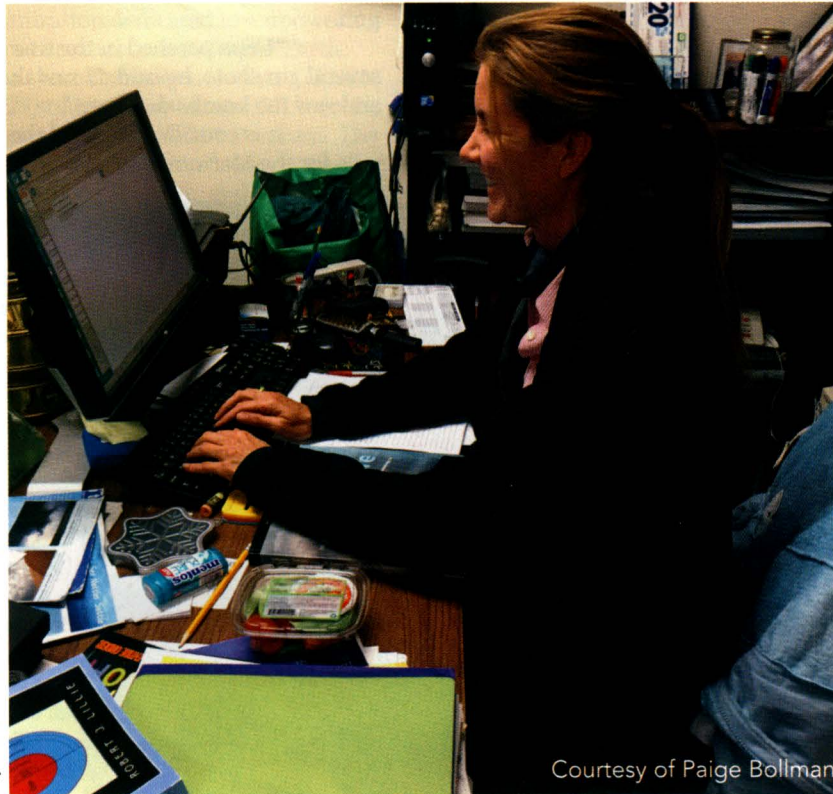
She is also sure to use old Chinese-food containers because recycling is important for the environment.

Her favorite way of engaging her students in the sciences is bringing them on trips, which include the Sterling Mine and the American Museum of Natural History. Recently, her Historical Geology class has taken a trip to go Shark Tooth Hunting in Holmdel, N.J.

This trip led her to tears on her way home from work. She said, "The class was so sweet helping each other. I couldn't help but cry

on my way home."

She truly cares about her students' education and their bonding experiences at The College.



Courtesy of Paige Bollman

She goes above and beyond in all areas at The College. However, in her personal life, she does not back down from a challenge, either.

She said, "I have been taking karate lessons since I was 16 years old. I need to stay active, and I always enjoyed karate."

In a 2014 interview for The College's Profiles of Success, she said how she enjoys working at a community college because she can relate to the students' work ethics and their experiences of finding where they are in life.

While she is a charismatic professor at The College, she is also the advisor for the Earth Science Club. Here, she takes a step back and lets the students run the club. However, whenever she is needed, she takes the lead, guiding students to accomplish what they plan for the semester. She is sure to provide the club with a coffee maker, which will help them stay awake, and wire and beads for their shark-teeth necklaces and mineral jewelry.

She continues to take lessons every Monday from 6-8 p.m. She also enjoys paddle boarding on the weekends and occasionally competing.



Courtesy of Paige Bollman

A Father's Memories

by Amri Clowers

"I'm more of a blue collar worker," Erick Clowers said recalling his short stint at Livingstone College in North Carolina, as we sat casually around the dinner table. As the youngest of his four children, I've heard all of this before but hearing him reminisce about his experiences when he was my age decades ago always brings a smile to my face.

He admitted to enjoying the perks of being one of the wrestling stars on campus, which included the parties and the girls, but said that's all he liked about college.

"I just didn't have the patience to do the school work every day," he said with a chuckle. "I wasn't into it and I really only did it for my mom."

With a lack of nothing to do, after leaving college in his second semester and the fact that he considered himself adventurous, he decided to join the navy with his friend Chip on the buddy-buddy system. He was eventually placed in the amphibious navy. The amphibious navy sails toward war-time situations and the boot camp that he graduated from prepared him to deal with the difficulty of that.

After his two day furlough, during which he jokingly talks about seeing E.T. for the first time and partying in Chicago, he set sail and began his schooling for the position of ship storeman and worked his way up from there.

"After I got out of school and did what I had to do as a ship storeman," he said. "I soon became an E5, which is a second class petty officer."

Even with a few setbacks, like his friend Chip leaving which put him in breach of contract because without his friend he couldn't fulfill the requirements of being on the buddy-buddy system, he was demoted to custodian of the ship. He described this situation as one that still "stings" but something he's definitely over today.

"It was a tough situation but I ended up working my way back up to an E5 and I made other friends."

For the most part, the navy experience is one that my father considers to be "once in a lifetime," especially when he references the time he drove the ship through the Straits of Gibraltar, but whenever he begins discussing the day of Oct. 23, 1983, the air

always becomes gloomy and his face goes from lively to sorrowful.

"I wasn't hurt physically during the bombings, but my feelings definitely were hurt," he said pondering back to the day the suicide bombers drove trucks into the marine barracks and detonated the bombs killing 241 American servicemen in Lebanon.

"I was perched in the tree standing watch when I heard several gunshots, he said. "I saw the tail end of one of the trucks and saw the bombs detonate."

It is considered one of the deadliest single-day death tolls for the Marines since the World War II battle of Iwo Jima,

according to, James Phillips, writer of, "The 1983 Marine Barracks Bombings: Connecting the Dots," and to my father it was the day he lost most of his friends.

"Every marine that died or was injured that day was either someone I knew or a friend of mine," he said.

Eight to nine hours after the event, the bodies that were found were lined up. He saw the people he laughed and shared his navy days with, lifeless, some missing limbs; a scene he says no one should have to witness.

Several days after the bombings occurred, he was sent back in with a search party to recover any dead bodies that were unaccounted for. He described the smell as "putrid" and "indescribable". When the barracks were bombed, the building collapsed so they had to search through the rubble to look for the bodies.

"I remember one body that I found looked like cardboard with hair sticking out of it," he said. "Most of the bodies found that day looked like that because they were underneath the building."

In order to brush off the painful memories he adds, "This all happened so long ago though."

He left the navy in 1985 and resumed a normal life. Even though the navy days are long behind him, he still keeps in contact with some of his fellow navy men.

"The anniversary of that day is coming soon so I'll probably spend that day with T-Bone reminiscing," he says with a laugh.



Courtesy of Amri Clowers

Going GREEN

by Paige Bollman

Sustainability can be a difficult concept to appreciate. Leaders Stephen Amoroso and Barbara Hroncova have the passion for this topic and have honed the ability to resonate this passion around anyone in their presence. They are current ambassadors, of The GREEN Program, an organization dedicated to empowering students who are passionate about creating a sustainable Earth.

Amoroso and Hroncova share their experience as GREEN students along with other GREEN students from around the world, who have made the commitment with The GREEN Program. The GREEN Program accepts a limited amount of students each year. The program initially took students to Iceland, and it has now expanded to a clean-water program in Peru, as well as the urban regeneration program in Philadelphia. These students get an in-depth, learning experience with professionals from the respected areas who share a passion for sustainability. GREEN students come from more than 70 different countries and 470 Universities.

Amoroso and Hroncova have been informing students of the opportunities that would allow them to explore their creativity to see what they can bring to the table in the effort to make the world we live in more sustainable.

As ambassadors for the program at Rutgers, Amoroso and Hroncova's job is to share their passion by telling stories of their experiences throughout the program. They described their experience as a determinant force that has helped them pave the path of their careers and futures.

Hroncova originally went into green architecture, employing sustainability practices with green buildings. After realizing she was more interested in the sustainability aspect of her studies than the architecture itself she switched her major to environmental science and has since pursued this passion.

"I've always been passionate about nature and the environment from a young age," Amoroso explains, reminiscing on his childhood ambitions.

When he first applied for the Iceland program, he didn't think he would get accepted, but he did. After completing the program, Amoroso learned that sustainability is a way of life and a concept that anyone can apply to anything.

"The experiential model of learning is unparalleled...It was very inspiring when I came back. I was an entirely new student," Amoroso reflects on his experience.

The program doesn't let the students know what they will be doing next to keep them focused on the moment and to add an element of surprise.

Hroncova illustrates how exciting it was when she was instructed to bring a pencil, a notebook and a bathing suit on her first day. This was the only information she was given, and she later found out the adventure lined up for her group. Her group was scheduled to go hiking to the Reykjadalur Hot Springs, where the outside temperature was 32 degrees Fahrenheit, but the boiling water was at 100 degrees.

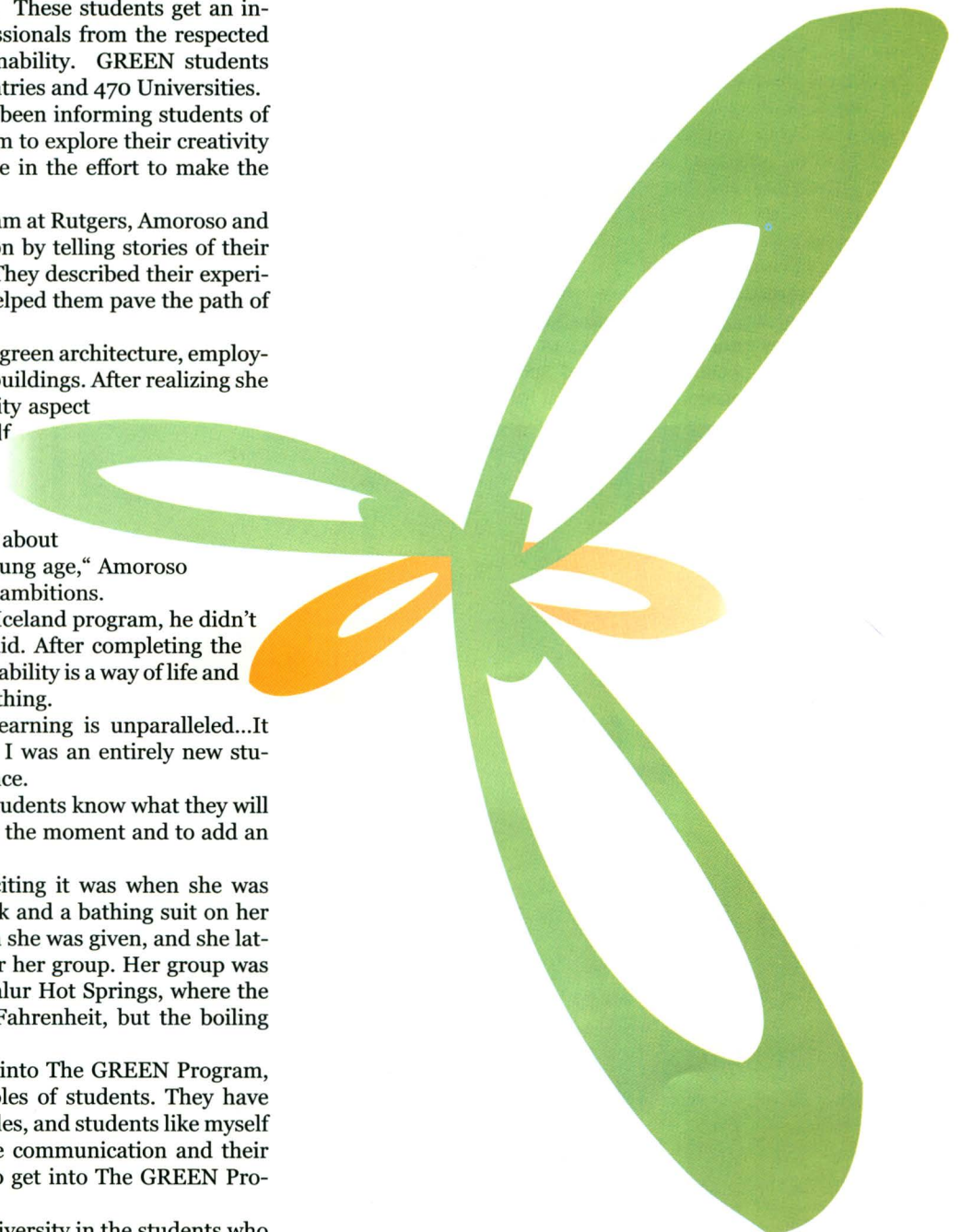
When they first got accepted into The GREEN Program, Amoroso and Hroncova played the roles of students. They have now flourished and taken leadership roles, and students like myself can look up to them. Their supportive communication and their passion have motivated me to apply to get into The GREEN Program.

They've showed me how the diversity in the students who come together from all around the world add tremendous value as

they work on their capstone projects. At the end, they achieve goals through their own dynamic. They leave with more than they could have ever imagined.

Amoroso reveals some wisdom from one of his counselors at the program, "My counselor told me that the most important thing to take with you is to be patient. You are going to be so emphatic when you tell [everyone] your experience, but they're not going to necessarily understand."

As leaders, Amoroso and Hroncova have a responsibility to those that look up to them. In this case, their job is to share their passion from this experience and to motivate other students to do the same—as they motivated me.



Courtesy of Daameon Stradford

Dance Ensemble Artistry in Motion

by Imani J. Wheeler

The Colleges Dance Ensemble performed at their 15th Annual Fall Dance Concert "Artistry in Motion" Friday and Saturday, Dec. 4 and 5 around 7 p.m. in the Performing Arts Center. Art is the expression or application of human creative skill and imagination producing works to be admired for its beauty, structure and emotional power. Dance is an art form that is displayed through the human body using the medium of movement, evoking responses and the power of communication. Combining the two, the dance pieces were inspired by a variety of different paintings that were displayed in the lobby.

The dance Writers Block, choreographed by Shannon Garahan, opened up act one with the majority of the dancers center stage, doing a lot of leg movements and extensions, and one dancer standing dancing to a rather slow instrumental.

Moreno was choreographed with four dancers by Corrine Hughes. Throughout the dance number there was a lot of focus on hand movement and level change, where one minute they would be on the ground and then in the air the next. The dancers executed multiple uses of cannons and body fluidity.

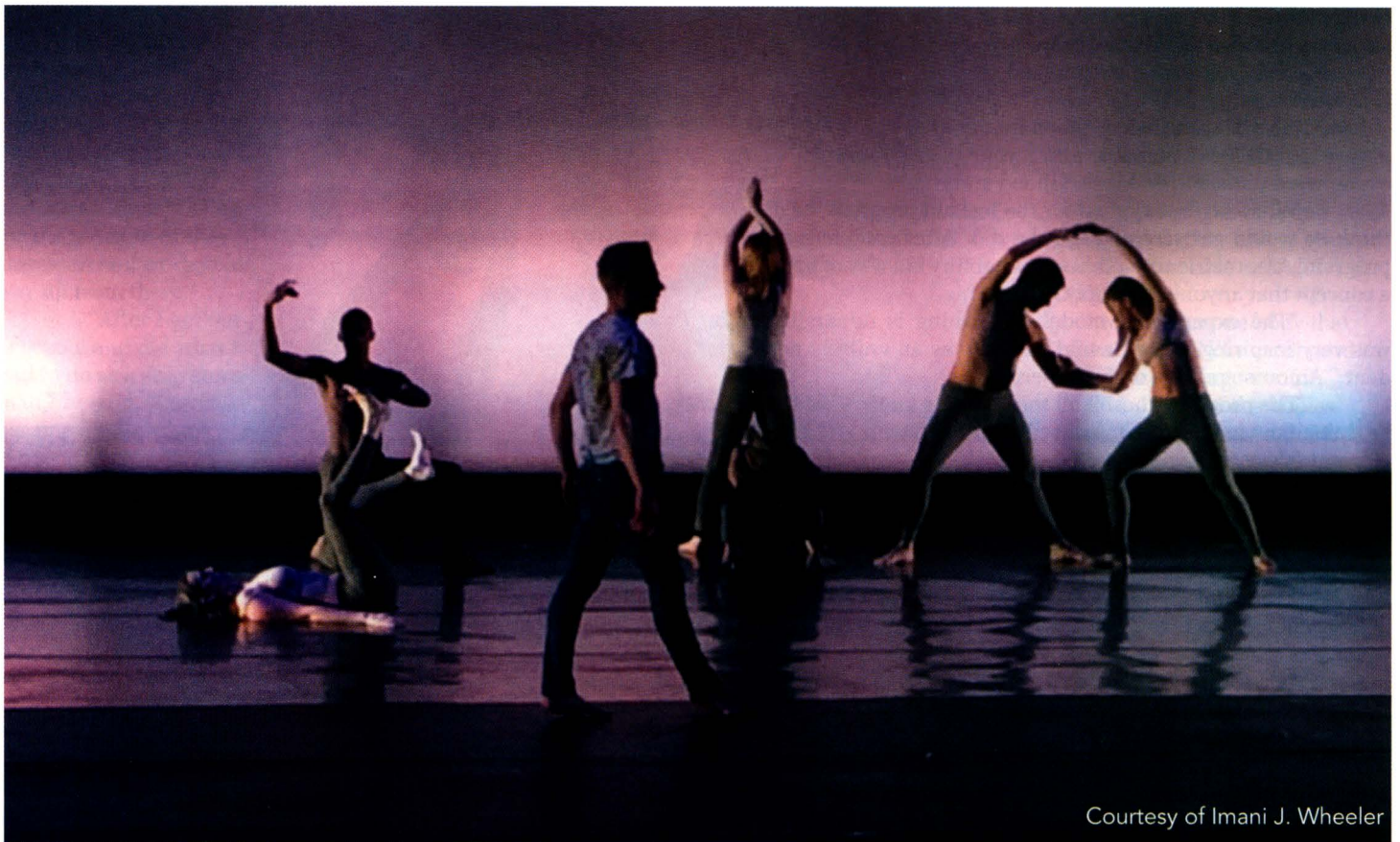
The third dance, Four Seasons, choreographed by Nella Laccarino, whom has studied at Center Stage Dance and Theatre School for 16 years under the guidance of George Warren, opened her routine using special lighting and spotlight, as her dancers moved to a hand percussion instrumental followed by Anna Nicole

Garcia's dance, The Wanderer.

The Wanderer began with no music and four dancers emerge wearing dark colors. The dancers utilize the floor, making way to the ground beating the stage floor on their knees with their hands adding on extra musical beats and hopping on one leg kicking repeatedly with a slight bent knee, known as an attitude. Although the Dance Ensemble traditionally is modern dance based, "Thumb" Thing to Dance About added a jazzy spice with and upbeat tap number. This dance broke up the slow paced music of the previous performances, getting the audiences involved in jittery clapping and tapping along with the click clack of the dancer's tap shoes as they looked into the audience with big smiles. The dancers had fun performing this number because of the high tempo and silliness of the dance, where they'd repeatedly put their thumb to their nose as their remaining four fingers wiggle dispersed upright.

Sarah Hussain's Prisoners of War had sharp movements to go along with the war-like tempo feel of the music. The cyclorama was red which usually represents death, love, anger, fire and, in this case, war as the dancers wore all black and flowy skirts. Salt in the Snow had majority of the dancers on the floor taking up the whole stage and changing formations from a circle within a bigger circle to rows and lines ending act one.

Artistic director Professor Aimee Mitacchione's Quick-sand ballet opened act two with grace as a selected number of danc-



Courtesy of Imani J. Wheeler

ers wore pointe shoes and the others were bare footed. Pointe shoes gave the essential idea for dancers to appear weightless and sylph-like, being on the tips of their toes for periods of time nearly similar to following dance with refinement, Temptation. Though the dancers did not wear pointe shoes, their movements had a hint of sweetness and innocence as they too wore white and light material. Until another tall dancer appeared in gray, standing out like a sore thumb with an attempt to blend with the other angelic dancers one by one plucking them off, poisoning and manipulating them.

Michael Korner's Oakenshield dancers were divided into two groups. One group wore white and tended to be more full of life, with bursting movements consisting of jumps, leaps, sprints and flips, meanwhile the other group wore green seemingly moving slower in movement with more ground motions. But when the music tempo slightly changes, the two groups joined into one.

The next dance, choreographed by Tabitha Edwards, entitled exactly what the piece was called: Embrace. There were a lot of emotionS in the body movements and partnering as the dancers would hold each other and make formations where'd they overlap one other.

The last two dance pieces were the ones that stood out most to me, aside from Professor Aimee's Quicksand. A Matter of Context began with two women, Kelli Kranick and Katelyn McGillivray, dancing as they tended to gravitate upstage right and between downstage right and center. Seemingly incomplete, the stage fades to black and the audience applauds, assuming the dance is over, only to open again to the exact same song but a single dancer, Michael Korner, on the floor downstage left, serving so much emotion in his facial expression and body movements as he reaches and attempts to pull what's not being seen. He continues to move and give the audience dynamics with his fulfilled and completed rolls, turns and floor flips. His movements seemed almost improvisational yet organic, ending as the stage fades to black once again and the audience applauds, assuming the piece was over. Instead, all three dancers come back on stage, repeating the same dance number and song but all together filling in the gaps that appeared incomplete which made complete sense the third time around. In turn, it was pretty clever on the behalf on choreographer, Nikola Palivoda, and left a greater appreciation for the different sections separated to make it whole in the end.

Returning graduate, Rodney Greene, after seven semesters with the Dance Ensemble, choreographed dance piece, Through it All. It was most relatable and told a story with a clear beginning, middle, and end. There was a couple wearing burgundy separating themselves from the many dancers on the stage wearing a skin toned tan color. The couple danced together gradually moving apart individually going through the many obstacles (the other dancers) showcasing athletics, strength, dedication and creativity. In the end, the couple reunites embracing each other tightly.

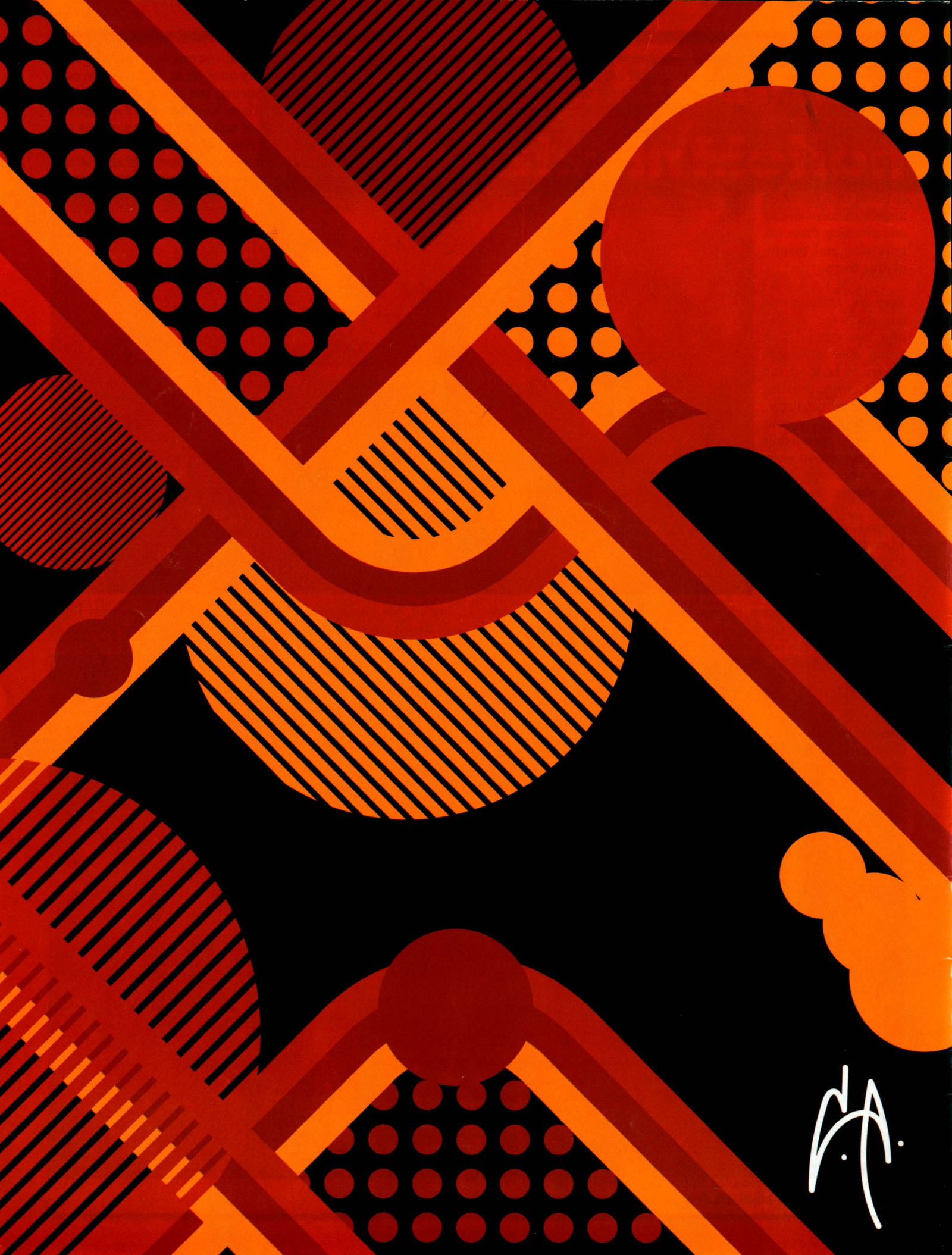
Artistry in Motion was a well put together showcase of

art and dance. The dancers had great control and balance. They gave passion and confidence in every movement. Individually, each dancer had their own style of dancing, but it pulled together as some showed off their flexibility. There wasn't much of a stage set-up besides the use of the cyclorama and other lighting effects and no use of props. Each dance had a clear beginning, middle and end, although A matter of Context's clarity didn't come until afterwards.



Courtesy of Imani J. Wheeler

However, the music should've been slightly louder because there were dance pieces that had the music too low, making it easier to hear the heavy breathing of the dancers.



NA.