

Campus Times

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SA Resolution Denounces Students' Alleged Disrespect Against River Campus Workers



BY MADELEINE MCCURDY
STAFF WRITER

The SA Senate passed the Resolution to Support River Campus Facilities and Environmental Service Workers Monday, Feb. 19 in response to reports that students have acted disrespectfully towards these workers.

“Facilities workers have reported to administrators a sense of feeling ignored, invisible, and unrecognized for all the work that they do

around campus to maintain a comfortable and clean environment,” the resolution states.

According to the resolution, students have spat in front of cleaning environmental service workers, smeared excrement on mirrors, thrown paper towels on the ground instead of in the trash, made racist remarks towards these workers, and walked into bathrooms while they were closed for cleaning.

Students have also made daily cleaning responsibilities

for workers at Todd Union more difficult by misusing the bathrooms on the bottom floor through “discarding packages, wrapping, boxes, and other garbage on the floor,” the resolution states.

In addition to that, students sleeping with lights off in common areas and propping doors open at night have hindered workers from being able to clean and prepare spaces, as well as become security hazards.

In response to the above in-

cidents, the resolution points out the University’s Standards of Student Conduct 2023-2024 and the University’s Policy Against Harassment and Discrimination that prohibit harassment, overnight sleeping in unauthorized places, propping open doors to residence halls, behaviors like derogatory statements and demeaning jokes, interfering with an individual’s ability to perform their job, and more.

‘In a unanimous vote, the SA expressed support and respect for these workers and denounced these incidents.’

In a unanimous vote, the SA expressed support and respect for these workers and denounced these incidents. The resolution puts forth actions that the Campus Life Committee and the Judicial Branch are charged with to better the relationship between students and facilities and environmental service workers.

McCurdy is a member of the Class of 2025.

‘La La Land in Concert’: Not a Waste of a Lovely Night

BY MAHNOOR RAZA
NEWS EDITOR

It’s the first act of “La La Land” (2016). Jazz musician Seb takes aspiring actress Mia to a jazz bar to expose her to the genre’s beauty. “You can’t hear it [...] you have to see it — you have to see what’s at stake,” he insists, gesturing at the jazz band performing on stage. “Every one of these guys is composing, they’re rearranging, they’re writing [...] It’s conflict, and it’s compromise, and it’s just — it’s new every time. It’s brand new every night. It’s very, very exciting.”

Despite having seen the film repeatedly, it wasn’t until I watched “La La Land in Concert” Feb. 16 that I was fully able to grasp what Seb meant.

‘The concert breathed new vitality into Justin Hurwitz’s Oscar-winning score.’

Conducted by six-time Emmy Award-winner Mark Watters and performed by the Empire Film and Media Ensemble (EFaME), the concert breathed new vitality into Justin Hurwitz’s Oscar-winning score and provided extraordinary value for old and new fans alike. As a seasoned “La La Land” enthusiast, the difference was stark. Although the visuals remained the same, the live orchestra and chorus accompanying a scoreless version of the film on the big screen gave it a whole new dimension. And unlike “Harry Potter and the Half Blood Prince in Concert,” which RPO performed at Kodak Hall last semester, this show made full use of every tool at its disposal, including lighting and sound design. Director and writer Damien Chazelle is unparalleled at encapsulating the visceral experience of live music in film, but seeing the musical push and pull — collaboration, competition, even whiplash, some might say — unfold on stage for a sold-out audience at Kodak Hall was an out-of-body experience.

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MAG celebrates Black History Month

BY ALEX HOLLY
CULTURE EDITOR

In the cold of the February winter, the Memorial Art Gallery opened its doors to its Black History Month Celebration Day — a part of the museum’s Celebration Series of culture and identity. Over 15 artists and performance groups, many based in the Rochester area, shared with the community their lovely work, which ranged from painting and poetry to dance and design.

‘A strong emphasis on elevating community resources rang clear throughout the afternoon.’

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UR Roundnet Scores Upsets at Nationals, Seeing Membership ‘Spike’

BY ALYSSA KOH
SENIOR STAFF

In her YouTube sizzle reel titled “ASL Playoffs ‘24 Orlando (2nd place babyyyy),” UR sophomore Jhanaj Quispe leaps, sprints, and dives around a small yellow Spikeball net for nearly nine smashed-together minutes.

Set to the tune of Outkast’s “Roses,” Quispe presents cut after cut of her hurling the ball towards the net, slamming the ball forward hard enough to fling her arm fully across her body. On most of her (many) successful plays, she immediately folds over to pat the ground twice with both palms, just to pop right back up again. All of her competition plays hard, but Quispe finds herself horizontal for an overwhelming amount of the video, hurtling across the chalked-out circle on the field like a bottle rocket.



COURTESY UROUNDNET

‘Quispe finds herself horizontal for an overwhelming amount of the video.’

Quispe, who serves as the UR Roundnet team’s publicity chair, was the team captain for the Rochester women’s squad at the American Spikers League playoffs, which is a national Roundnet (the

non-trademarked term for Spikeball) competition. The team, which consisted of student Roundnet players from northeastern universities such as UConn and RIT as well as the non-collegiate Boston area club, placed second in the Women’s bracket against Quebec after being seeded low going into the tournament.

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Committee for Political Engagement Hosts Vote-By-Mail Event

BY MAYA BROSNICK
NEWS EDITOR

The Committee for Political Engagement (CPE) hosted a vote-by-mail event Feb. 7 in order to inform students of their voting options. Annette Ramos, a representative from the Monroe County Board of Elections, spoke to students about the importance of voting, how they could register to vote, and how to receive mail-in ballots. The last day for the New York State Board of Elections to receive an application for absentee ballots by mail for the primary elections is June 15. The last day to receive them for the general presidential elections is Oct. 26. These dates vary depending on which state you are registered to vote in. While presidential elections are important, Ramos wants students to know that being civically engaged in your district can make the largest impact during municipal and

BY GABRIEL PLATA
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

midterm elections. “We want [UR students] to be civically engaged in our city, in our town, and in the district that they’re living in,” Ramos said. CPE Chair Payge Vukelic agreed. “Midterm elections, local elections, are the most important,” he said, “because that’s when students here can actually really use their voice.” Bridging the gap between awareness and action, the CPE also emphasizes the vital role students can play beyond just casting their votes. Students can also get involved in the voting process by becoming a county poll worker. On presidential election days, poll workers get paid \$270 a day, with additional pay for Spanish interpreters. In order to make the voting experience as easy as possible for students and local community members, Ramos

and CPE have been for the last three years working with Glenn Cerosaletti, the director of the Center for Community Engagement, to bring accessible voting machines to campus. Because the University is situated in the 19th Ward’s voting district, these machines would benefit not only students, but everyone in the district’s bounds. While the implementation of these voting machines is in progress, Ramos and Vukelic remain committed to ensuring maximum voter turnout among UR students. “Students don’t always realize how important their voice and their vote can be,” Vukelic observed, stressing that every vote counts. CPE’s list of future voting events can be found on Instagram @ur_cpe.

Brosnick is a member of the Class of 2027.

Plata is a member of the Class of 2027.

Lunar New Year Kicks off With Cultural Showcases, Dance Show



BY NATALIE OPDAHL
STAFF WRITER

Feb. 10 marked the first day of the Year of the Dragon. The University held several events to celebrate the Lunar New Year, the first of which was the Lunar New Year Kickoff Festival which took place Friday, Feb. 9. The event took place in the May Room, which was decorated for the occasion with the traditionally lucky colors red and gold. Soon, the lights dimmed, and the hosts for the evening, senior Xingyan (Katrina) Kang and junior Munhang (James) Min, welcomed the attendees and the new year to come. Various cultural organizations tabled at the festival, displaying different Lunar New Year traditions present

in their cultures. The Chinese Students’ Association and the Japanese Students’ Association both provided materials for passersby to inscribe their hopes for the new year in calligraphy. The Vietnamese Students Association and the Korean Student Union demonstrated traditional games from each of their cultures, eliciting smiles and laughter from delighted participants. The Asian American Alliance provided brain teasers, asking participants trivia questions about Lunar New Year such as, “What Zodiac animal is the next in line?” In addition to the tables, the festival brought together several performance groups from across the University to showcase dance and music.

The opening act was Phoenix Fire, a classical Chinese dance group. Their dances were graceful and fluid, evoking feelings of serenity. Energetic and confident dances came next when the K-pop group self-titled “Attention” performed said song by NewJeans took to the stage.” These were followed by Rochester Bhangra, who captured the crowd’s attention with their vibrant attire and movement, followed closely by RICE Crew’s sassy and confident dances accompanied by K-pop songs. Grain in Ear, a dance organization from Simon Business School, performed two graceful dances that highlighted Chinese and Mongolian customs. The last of the dance groups to perform, the Vietnamese Students Association, performed a dance with traditional leafhats (called nón lá) as props. Following the dances, the International Music Ensemble performed three pop songs — one in Chinese, one in Korean, and one in Japanese. This concluded the event, paving the way for a bright Lunar New Year.

Opdahl is a member of the Class of 2026.

SA Passes Statement to Support Renaming University Shuttle Lines

BY PAIGE MCCURDY
STAFF WRITER

The SA senate unanimously passed a statement of support for the renaming of several University shuttle lines Feb. 12. The proposal came from e5 students Henry Litsky (who is a managing editor for the Campus Times) and Aaron Weiner, whose joint project focuses on transportation at the University of Rochester. The proposal is intended to clarify current shuttle route names and provide consistency via naming conventions. Litsky and Weiner proposed a system with direct, local, and express lines. Direct routes have exactly two stops, local routes are a standard service with stops along the route, and express routes have less frequent stops than a local service but more than just a starting and ending stop, the statement explained. The proposal also clarifies the difference between a line and a loop. “A ‘loop’ only serves destinations along the route in one direction (thus making a loop back to its origin), while a ‘line’ serves destinations along the route in both directions,” the statement also said. Under the proposal, which is still pending and for which the SA resolution was merely a statement of support, the Silver Line and Blue Line’s names would not change.

The Red Line, however, would change to the Eastman Direct., and the Orange Line and Gold Line would have different variations due to different hours of operation. The Orange Line would become Orange Loop A, Orange Loop B, and Orange Loop C. The Gold Line would become the Riverview Express and the Riverview Local. The Green Line would also have name variations based on end location. Shuttles running on The Green Line would be changed to Marketplace Loop, Public Market Line, and Pittsford Plaza Line. The SA’s statement of support for this plan was sponsored by Weiner and senior Senator Edban Watt ; co-sponsored by sophomore Campus Life Committee Chair Helen Kim, first-year Senator Quinten Denkenberger, and first-year Legislative Advisor Pilar Guido; and endorsed by Litsky, who is not in the SA. The implementation of shuttle route name changes is up to UR’s Transportation department and was discussed at a recent Transportation Advisory Committee meeting. *Editor’s Note (2/25/24): Managing Editor Henry Litsky did not edit this story due to conflicts of interest.* McCurdy is a member of the Class of 2025.

SA Passes Resolution Supporting New York State Suicide Prevention Act

BY MAYA BROSNICK
NEWS EDITOR

BY JUSTIN O’CONNOR
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

The SA senate passed a statement calling for the amendment and passage of the New York State Suicide Prevention Act Feb. 12, joining 26 other college student governments in pushing for the bill to be amended and passed by state politicians. If passed in its current form, the bill would require “the governing board or body of every local educational agency serving students in grades seven to twelve, to adopt policies, procedures and guidelines on student suicide prevention, intervention and postvention for students in such grades.” The group of student governments, organized by the SUNY Stony Brook Undergraduate Student Government and Stony Brook senior Vignesh Subramanian, are calling for the measure to be passed only after it is amended to require universities to adopt similar policies, procedures, and guidelines as well. The SA statement also calls on other student body governments to join in pushing for the legislation. “The Students’ Association Assembled demands the addition of provisions to the SSPA that would uniformly require NYS colleges and universities

to adopt policies on suicide prevention, require their resident assistants to be trained in mental health aid, and require the development of appropriate referral and reporting protocols for staff, outreach strategies, and peer support programs for at-risk students,” the SA’s resolution reads. Despite the push, the bill has been stalled in the education committee since Jan. 2022. According to reporting by Spectrum News 1, lawmakers have raised concerns about how the bill might impose additional unfunded mandates on local school districts. Supporters, particularly the bill’s sponsors, have rejected this criticism as unfounded. “That to me seems like a pretty lame excuse considering we’re talking about the protection of the well-being of our children,” bill sponsor Sen. Brad Hoylman of Manhattan told Spectrum News 1. “That said, if Albany is going to pass measures like this, we need to make sure we have the funding in place.” Brosnick is a member of the Class of 2027. O’Connor is a member of the Class of 2024.

Students for Israel Talk Devolves Into Chaos

BY JUSTIN O’CONNOR
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Editor’s Note: The digital version of this article (on campustimes.org) includes many hyperlinked sources.

The audience in Bausch and Lomb 106 is split almost perfectly down the middle. Protestors with masks, keffiyehs, and signs pack the seats on the left. The seats on the right are taken by non-protestors — many of them members of Students for Israel, the club sponsoring the talk.

Everyone is there to see Shai DeLuca, a Canadian interior designer who immigrated to Israel as a teenager to serve in the Israeli army. He is set to speak about his experience as a gay man in the Israeli army and about LGBTQ+ rights in Israel more broadly. The Feb. 6 event is co-sponsored by Alpha Epsilon Pi, CAMERA on Campus, UR Center for Jewish Studies, and UR Hillel.

About 6,000 miles away is the latest war in Gaza, which has been thundering on since October to immense international controversy. Whether to even call it the “latest war in Gaza” is a matter of contention. Many detractors, including the protesters in the room, allege it to be a genocide against Palestinians rather than a war. Supporters and the press alike prefer the term “Israel-Hamas War,” which centers more on the Israeli government’s stated goal of wiping out Hamas militants in response to the Oct. 7 attacks.

The talk, on its face, has little to do with the war, but it is inevitably and knowingly framed by it.

The protesters had been silently holding signs in the hallways before forming a line, having their CCC QR codes scanned, and marching into the room. They sit down. DeLuca is introduced. Half the room claps.

DeLuca starts by recounting his experience as an 18-year-old heading to basic training in Jerusalem. After getting directions from his host family, DeLuca says he ran to the bus station, narrowly missing the bus he was supposed to catch. He then says he watched as that bus exploded in the Feb. 25, 1996 Jaffa Road bus bombing carried out by Hamas.

“I watched the possibility of my life flash before my eyes — the smell of burnt flesh, the screams of parents and children, the screams of mothers. It was something I won’t soon forget,” he says.

The experience prompted him to reflect on his identity. He knew he was gay, but he hadn’t come out, and no one would have known who he was if he had died on the bus. At the time, the Israeli army had only recently opened service up to out homosexuals, and homosexual service members still faced many unofficial pressures. DeLuca says the Israeli army still, in effect, had a policy akin to “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” in 1996.

DeLuca says he grappled with this dilemma during a week-long vacation the army gave him after the bombing. After weighing who to come out to first — his family, his coworkers, his brigade — he decided to first tell his fellow army unit members.

Upon getting to his base the following Sunday, everybody, as usual, went around telling stories about what they did that weekend and whatnot. It was DeLuca’s chance to speak, and he took the opportunity to come out.

DeLuca says his friends all kind of already knew, and were accepting.

“I built this whole story up in my head that I was going to have this whole — like, I didn’t know what was going to happen,” DeLuca says. “But here we go. 1996, I came out in the Middle East, in the army, and the only thing they had to say was ‘are you ok?’ and ‘I have a guy to introduce you to.’”

The talk then shifts from the personal anecdote to Israel as a whole. DeLuca says the story is meant to highlight how in 1996 Israel was “the most progressive country in the Middle East, certainly when it comes to LGBT rights.” As he makes the claim, protestors laugh and cough loudly.

After coming out, DeLuca says he felt that he needed to help shape LGBTQ+ identity in Israel. He helped organize Israel’s first official Pride Parade in Tel Aviv in 1998, though the parade wasn’t Israel’s first large-scale public LGBTQ+ gathering — a protest in Tel Aviv’s Rabin Square during a 1979 conference of international gay Jewish organizations holds that title. He says the parade’s attendance highlighted how Israel stood apart from surrounding countries on LGBTQ+ acceptance.

He says that Israel was “the only place in the Middle East, certainly at that time, that if you’re gay you’re not getting thrown off a roof, you’re not getting dragged behind a motorcycle, you’re not getting thrown off a building, hung from a crane,” most likely referring to documented instances of ISIS throwing gay men off roofs in Iraq and Syria, and the Iranian government hanging some gay people using cranes.

The mention of motorcycle-dragging is likely a misleading reference to the 2012 killing of Ribhi Badawi in Gaza. Badawi was killed because he said under torture that he was working for Israel, not because he was gay. A senior Hamas official condemned the execution. Images of his body being dragged were made into memes about LGBTQ+ treatment in Palestine after the Oct. 7 attacks.

Discussing Israeli policies, DeLuca centers on same-sex marriage, adoption, and surrogacy.

In Israel, DeLuca says, there is no civil marriage — there is only religious marriage. Same-sex marriages cannot be performed in Israel, but the government has recognized same-sex marriages performed abroad since 2006. DeLuca got married in 2010. He says most people used to fly to Cyprus to get married, but online marriages became more accessible during the COVID-19 pandemic and have stuck around since. DeLuca says legalizing domestic civil unions in Israel is still a needed area of improvement.

Adoption and surrogacy, DeLuca says, have “always been a challenge for us.” Israel’s Supreme Court just ruled in December that adoptions by same-sex couples ought to be treated equally under the country’s 1981 adoption law. In the past, DeLuca says Israelis in same-sex relationships were able to adopt abroad and then have their children recognized as citizens, but the process was costly and hard to navigate. He ends his point with a provocative remark that drew dissent from the crowd.

“Again, none of the other countries around us have those rights. Israel is that island within a sea of problems,” he says. One of the crowd members calls him a “bitch,” which he highlights.

His talk shifts to Israel’s provision of asylum for Palestinian LGBTQ+

people. Since 2022, Israel has granted work permits to LGBTQ+ Palestinians granted asylum in Israel. Palestinians are generally not eligible for asylum status in Israel, but, just before DeLuca’s talk, a Tel Aviv District Court judge ruled LGBTQ+ Palestinians threatened due to their sexual orientation could apply for asylum, Ha’aretz reported — though Moshe Arbel, Israel’s interior minister, denounced the ruling and intends to appeal it.

DeLuca highlights this recent case. He then stamps his point with another provocative question.

“Why would a Palestinian gay man request asylum in a country that is allegedly committing genocide against his own people?” he asks. Protesters in the crowd interject, dissenting to his use of the term “allegedly” and citing the tens of thousands of Palestinians killed by Israel since Oct. 7. He tells them to hold their questions until the end. He asks the question two more times and shuts down an audience member who wants to give an answer.

He then proceeds to his last slide — titled “The Myth of Pinkwashing” — before a protester in the crowd again feigns a loud cough.

“Who wants to define pinkwashing for me?” he asks the crowd.

The coughing protester offers an answer: “It’s the use of gay rights as sort of a crux to justify Western imperialism and colonization. For example, if you get up while 30,000 Palestinians have been bombed and talk about gay rights in Israel—”

“Nope, that’s not the definition,” DeLuca interjects. Another protestor accuses him of shifting his definition of pinkwashing. DeLuca asks for the Google definition, and a non-protester provides it.

“Pinkwashing, also known as rainbow-washing, is the strategy of promoting LGBT rights protections as evidence of liberalism and democracy, especially to distract from or legitimize violence against others,” the attendee says, reading from Wikipedia. The protestors start talking in chorus, mostly accusing him of doing what the definition says.

Everyone quiets down, and DeLuca says accusations of pinkwashing are homophobic and, in cases in which it is ascribed solely to Israel, antisemitic.

“We’re talking about LGBT rights for all peoples in Israel, but when you... put Israel aside or to a different standard — that, my friend, is antisemitism,” DeLuca says.

He then says pinkwashing is a reduction of the fight for LGBTQ+ rights in Israel to being a “smokescreen for what’s happening with the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians.” He calls pinkwashing, in Israel’s case, a fictitious claim. The protesters laugh.

He then opens the talk to questions, at which point the whole event becomes quite chaotic.

One attendee, a non-protestor, asks if his reference to gay men being thrown off buildings is about “how Hamas throws gay people off roofs.”

DeLuca says yes and that the Palestinian Authority (PA) does the same thing. These claims have become widespread recently on social media, accompanied by a 2015 video, but fact-checkers have noted that the video is of the Islamic State committing the atrocity, not Hamas. There are no newspaper-verified cases of Hamas or the PA throwing gay people off roofs.

A protester asks him for a verified source. DeLuca says there are “a ton

of videos.” He then again mentions Hamas “dragging gay people behind their motorcycles,” a reference to the aforementioned murder of Ribhi Badawi, who was not gay and whose killing was condemned by a senior Hamas official. There are no newspaper-verified cases of gay people being dragged behind motorcycles in Palestine.

His statements trigger an eruption of simultaneous counter-claims from the crowd before a break in the unintelligible exchange allows a protester to ask a question, which is met with claps from fellow protesters.

“I grew up in a Zionist household, and I’ve heard all of this before. But since I’ve been involved in anti-Zionist organizing for years, I’ve noticed that a lot of the Jewish people in this organizing are also queer, overwhelmingly queer, and I’ve always found that the reason for that is because these people see that the same systems of patriarchy, colonialism, capitalism that perpetuate homophobia also perpetuate Zionism, and they want to fight those systems together. So why do you think it is that anti-Zionist Jewish spaces are overwhelmingly queer spaces?” the protester asks.

“I don’t think that that’s true,” he responds. “That’s what you have claimed, and I’m here to hear your experience. My experience is not that actually.”

The protester asks how much time he had spent in anti-Zionist spaces, and DeLuca says he works with progressive Palestinian organizations that help LGBTQ+ Palestinians come to Israel.

The exchange then devolves when they can’t come to an agreement on the definition of Zionism, and DeLuca moves on to another question about Israel’s reception of U.S. military and economic aid, to which he erroneously says Israel doesn’t receive billions of dollars of military aid because the terms of these deals require Israel to purchase from U.S. military sources.

U.S. aid accounts for roughly 15% of Israel’s defense budget. According to the Council on Foreign Relations, most of this aid comes in the form of grants, under which Israel must buy U.S. material and services. Thus, the grant money cycles back to the U.S., but Israel does receive, in effect, free military equipment in exchange.

Another protestor asks a question: “If you’re having a nuanced discussion on pinkwashing, shouldn’t you add historic, colonial, you know, cultural phenomena, processes on why those governments in the Middle East are the way they are?”

DeLuca says it is not his duty to add this nuance, as he is there talking about LGBTQ+ rights in Israel, though he commented several times on the homophobia across the entire Middle Eastern region.

For several minutes, the interchange between DeLuca and the protesters becomes almost entirely unproductive, starting and stopping, bouncing between topics, questions, yelling, and interruptions.

At one point, DeLuca denies that Israel had sterilized Ethiopian Jewish women on the grounds that the story had been retracted, which is untrue.

The claim originated from a report by Israeli journalist Gal Gabai featuring interviews with 35 Ethiopian immigrants who said they were “sometimes intimidated or threatened” into taking the shots, Ha’aretz reported.

The reporting prompted an investigation by former Israeli Comptroller Yosef Shapira, who said the investigation found no evidence of the claims. The investigation didn’t include speaking with the women from Gabai’s program and didn’t refute their allegations, Ha’aretz also reported.

Ha’aretz has retracted only one element of their reporting — the claim that the Israeli government has acknowledged the alleged sterilization practice. Gabai’s initial report hasn’t been retracted.

After more yelling, the conversation shifts to the definition of genocide, and the interchange heightens in intensity. On his way out, a protester begins a call-and-response chant and then gives a short speech.

“He’s dancing around these questions without answering them,” the protester says.

“I came here to listen to him, not you,” a non-protesting attendee responds.

Another interchange becomes heated when a protester with Palestinian roots expresses his frustration that his grandmother had been denied medical aid by an Israeli soldier. He reads an excerpt from “Brothers and Others in Arms” by Danny Kaplan, featuring an interview with an Israeli soldier recounting shooting two Palestinian “terrorists” — in the soldier’s words — who were engaged in gay sex during the 1982 Lebanon War.

The protester questions DeLuca about the attitudes expressed by the soldiers, and DeLuca notes repeatedly that he served in the late 1990s, not in the 1980s. The protester then claims that he has been to Nablus, a city in the West Bank, and seen pride flags flying from the houses. DeLuca asks for photos with deep skepticism, but the protester says his phone isn’t charged. DeLuca offers a charger. Non-protesting attendees start laughing.

“What the fuck are you laughing about? My people are being massacred! I cover my face because I’m afraid that my family will be massacred by you monsters! That’s what the IDF is to me. How can you not understand the people here are grieving for this purpose? I have lost so much of my family! Sir, my nephew is five years old!” he exclaims while tearing off his keffiyeh.

The talk comes to a fizzled-out end shortly thereafter. DeLuca turned the lattermost exchange into an Instagram reel, filmed by a woman sitting in a chair who flanked him to his left during the whole event.

Four days later, UR’s Jewish Voice for Peace chapter issued a statement rejecting the talk for being pinkwashing.

“Throughout the event, DeLuca appealed to Twitter and Google as reliable news sources when they fit his narrative, but belittled students for finding information online when it contradicted him,” the statement said in part. “He engaged in certain extended political conversations that had nothing to do with LGBTQ+ rights, but when students asked him questions he did not want to answer, he said they were too political and off topic.”

O’Connor is a member of the Class of 2024.

The Ward Project Is Cataloging Henry Ward’s Taxidermied Specimens, Letters, and More

BY PAIGE MCCURDY
STAFF WRITER

If you’re a scientist looking for how much a duck-billed platypus cost to buy in 1890 or just a student interested in seeing rare taxidermy, then the Ward Project is a great place to start.

The Ward Project is a collection of artifacts and documents associated with Henry Ward and his Natural Science Establishment from the 1800s and 1900s. With around 24 linear feet of letters spanning topics such as family affairs, financial affairs, inquiries about specimens, and a large amount of artifacts — there is a lot of information to sort through.

The Ward Project started in 2013, when Dr. Robert Minckley joined the University’s Biology Department and was promptly shown a closet filled to the brim with specimens. Minckley remembered being shocked at all the interesting and old artifacts that were so stuffed together that some specimens were even interlocked.

‘The Ward Project started in 2013, when Dr. Robert Minckley joined the University’s Biology Department.’

“There was a lot of pretty amazing stuff in there,” he said. “The more I looked at it, the more I realized, ‘Wow! There are actually some weird, kind of rare

stuff in here’ — like who has a gorilla skeleton?”

Those specimens lacked the labels that someone would see in a natural science museum, vital information identifying where and when a specimen was collected and what the specimen even is.

Needing that information, Dr. Minckley called River Campus Libraries in hopes of getting answers, and Melissa Mead, University archives and Rochester special collections librarian, picked up the phone.

“I said, ‘Do you guys have information on these specimens in biology?’ and she had thought everything had gotten thrown away, and didn’t realize anything was left,” he recounted fondly. “She shot over here within minutes, and that was the start.”

“‘She shot over here within minutes, and that was the start.’”

The Ward Project is a mix of natural science artifacts and historical documents. “It’s this wonderful collaboration because he understands the science, he’s got the specimens, and we have the letters here,” Mead said.

‘The Ward Project is a mix of natural science artifacts and historical documents.’

From the beginning the Ward Project has entailed the constant organization and filing of letters and

specimens. The specimens were in rough shape, but still salvageable. “We got everything out of the room and behind glass cabinets so nobody could break it. Everything isn’t out for everyone to see, but it is protected,” Dr. Minckley said.

The question was what to do with all of the taxidermy and letters and how to organize them. Then came the idea to create a website that would contain all of the information. “We decided what we should do is make it like a virtual museum,” Minckley said. “We could use our stuff as like the core of a virtual museum, and then we would hopefully get other collections to deposit their items. We make this growing, gigantic museum that keeps morphing into this larger thing.”

The Ward Project has been going on for over 10 years, and many faculty and students have taken part in it. Each person contributes in different, sometimes evolving ways.

Brenna Ryback, a current business administration manager for the Biology Department, got involved when Dr. Minckley first started to clean out the collection. “I first heard about it when Bob Minckley hired a glassblower to help refurbish the specimen jars,” she said.

Rybak first helped administratively, hiring and paying the people who were cleaning the specimens and glass jars, and publicizing and promoting the collection. Over time her role evolved.

“I help coordinate donations and finances, and now I primarily talk up the collection to the Advancement team, alumni, and any visitors who show interest,” she explained. “Everyone involved in the project is a jack-of-all-trades, and we all help creatively or administratively however we can.”

“‘Everyone involved in the project is a jack-of-all-trades.’”

Ellis Siepel and Jay Kinde, both juniors majoring in History, are two current student employees. Kinde started working in the fall of 2022 after stumbling on the project and reaching out to Minckley.

“He pitched this weird job that’s working not only with the taxidermy in Hutchison but also Rare Books, and scanning documents, and once you got thorough scanning then there would be some research, and finding the lesser known scientists,” Kinde explained.

Kinde and Siepel help with the digitization of the documents in the Department of Rare Books, Special Collections, and Preservation. “There’s like 3 phases, where we scan the material to get it digitized, then we crop so it’s ready to get on the website, and the last thing is a metadata entry for the items,” Siepel explained.

A lot of work is put into having the documents digitized and added to the website, then there is the next step of transcribing

the letters. “It’s this kind of metadata we are adding. Who wrote it, who it was written to, what was the date, and we also have the ability for anybody, anywhere to do transcriptions right on the website,” Mead said.

There are two unexpected helpers with this transcription process.

“Remarkably, we have these two women who are in a retirement home and they love doing this, and they love doing this, and can read cursive. They just sit there and transcribe letters and they love it,” Minckley said.

The Ward Project provides a multitude of different types of information that can be used in a multitude of ways. “An end goal is to have people from all over the world able to do studies on anything from biology to history to geology,” Kinde said.

Henry Ward was an interesting man who collected diverse specimens and was in contact with all kinds of intriguing and sometimes famous people. This is well-reflected in the collection — from his mountain gorilla skeleton to his beautiful minerals or his correspondences with PT Barnum.

The Ward Project is ever-growing and continuously working towards creating a resource that can be used worldwide. You can find the artifacts in Hutchinson Hall and the documents on their website.

McCurdy is a member of the Class of 2025.

CT Eats: Come for the Sandwiches, Stay for the Coffee at Magnolia’s

BY SARAH WOODAMS
PRESENTATIONS CHIEF

One could call Magnolia’s Deli & Cafe President Barack Obama’s favorite Rochester restaurant — if by favorite you mean the only one he’s ever been to.

If you weren’t already aware that he ate lunch at Magnolia’s back in 2013, you’ll learn the second you step into the waiting area. A large plaque decorated with the Democrat & Chronicle article documenting the occasion hangs close to the very chair he sat in, marked with another smaller plaque. There’s even a “Mr. President” menu item with his simple order, a soup and grilled cheese.

We certainly spent a lot of time in the waiting room, with our group of five taking a little over an hour to get a table on a busy Friday afternoon. They don’t take

your phone number, so we had to stay close by if we wanted a chance to snag a table.

Managing Editor Henry Litsky was immediately impressed with his iced chai latte, declaring it was so good that he’d be getting another one after his first couple sips. Two of our other tablemates shared a rich and smoky dark roast iced coffee that, in non-foodie terms, was “baller.” They all said they’d come back here just to get more coffee.

We started off sharing the spinach dip with some chips and pita crackers. The general consensus was that it was good, but a little too watery. I enjoyed it more than I thought I would, as someone who has admittedly avoided spinach dip their whole life, with the cheese balancing out the spinach.

Sandwiches made up the

bulk of the menu, most on slices of sourdough. The group all ordered different sandwiches — the Chicken Basil BLT, the East Ave, the Harvard, the Marion Street, and the Wisconsin. Prices are average for a sit-down sandwich place, hovering around \$15, and the meals come with a side of kettle potato chips and a pickle slice. Henry also added a bowl of French onion soup to his order.

Across the board, the sandwiches were solid, with just a few notes concerning sauce levels and meat generosity. I really enjoyed my Wisconsin grilled cheese, with a mix of two cheese, small apple cubes, and bacon. The colder crispness of the apple goes well with the warmth of the rest of the ingredients. The Marion Street was too heavy on the artichokes for Senior Staff Marla Litsky’s liking.

“You have to really like artichoke,” she noted. “I didn’t expect it to be as much of a presence as it was.”

The cake display at the counter was tempting, so we ended up ordering a slice of carrot cake and a slice of triple chocolate cake to share. The cake was great, but several of us were put off by how sugary the icing was. The triple chocolate cake was

amazing, with a thick layer of mousse on the bottom, and would instantly fulfill anyone’s chocolate cravings.

With their large menu and cozy interior, I can see how Magnolia’s has become a Park Ave staple — even fit for a president.

Woodams is a member of the Class of 2024 (T5).



SARAH WOODAMS / PRESENTATIONS CHIEF

OPINIONS

Blindspots: Ode to Naysayers

BY FINN ABBEY
COLUMNIST

Editor’s Note: The digital version of this article (on [campustimes.org](#)) includes many hyperlinked sources.

Technology startups have become something of a fixture of the American economy. No longer the leading manufacturer of anything other than warheads, Iinternet hegemons like Google and Amazon have become the faces of American innovation and economic opportunity. Alongside these companies is an ecosystem of remora-like media outfits that purport to cover emergent technologies. Breathlessly, they will rush to tell you about upcoming Apple Vision Pro features or interview AI experts who insist the world will never be the same.

It’s not surprising why technology news is this excitable and disorienting. For one, there just aren’t that many media conglomerates in the world, and they’re all in stiff competition with each other, which rewards shallow reporting. As Noam Chomsky and Edward Herman point out in “Manufacturing Consent,” it’s much easier to write about a subject when you have a good ongoing working relationship with people involved and when your information is meted out at preplanned times and places (such as press conferences and trade shows). Media companies also push their journalists to report new announcements as fast as possible to appear high on search results and gain more ad revenue. These factors combine to create a press that is disastrously credulous.

Part of the issue can be found in the “Silicon Valley Mythology” of the 2000s and 2010s. As Internet access increased around the turn of the millennium, online startups like Facebook and PayPal minted billionaires out of arrogant white guys like Mark Zuckerberg and Elon Musk, whose “move fast and break things” mantra, deifies the concept of the hyper-intelligent Silicon Valley entrepreneur who knew more about the future than anyone else and wasn’t going to wait for everyone to catch up. Displays of extravagant wealth and movies like that shitty, revisionist Steve Jobs biopic starring

Ashton “the Kutch” Kutcher further legitimized the exceptionality of these new tech wunderkinds and cemented the idea that Silicon Valley is a bastion of innovation, a chaotic environment from which earthshaking new technologies spring forth. You may not like Zuckerberg, but you really wish you bought Facebook stock in 2012, don’t you?

While these virginal Rockefellers live in the spotlight, another far more important figure is beginning to decline. The naysayer — the negative Nelly, the hater, the buzzkill willing to lash out against the false tech idol of the month — is disappearing, and they are needed now more than ever. As more and more of the national GDP is built out of smoke and mirrors, it becomes more important than ever to legitimize dissent.

Take the explosion **‘As more and more of the national GDP is built out of smoke and mirrors, it becomes more important than ever to legitimize dissent.’**

and implosion of cryptocurrency starting in mid-2021. Crypto, a decentralized payment method that proponents say could replace the current banking system, had been around for years, but in 2021, it rose to never-before-seen prominence as bored, sequestered workers received their stimulus checks and used them to gamble. This influx of cash allowed “crypto exchanges” like FTX and Binance to portray crypto as the next great investment for regular people, and to begin to advocate for integrating crypto in the financial system.

The problem, however, is that crypto is a load of bullshit. As early as the founding of Bitcoin in 2009, problems were obvious. It was slow; it would be extremely expensive to facilitate any transaction if it ever became valuable; it was designed to be deflationary to make it an attractive asset for investors, which makes it a useless currency; it is extremely vulnerable to scams; and theft is impossible to undo. Crypto is not a coming revolution in finance; it is a new type of Ponzi scheme where early buyers try to tell the most exciting tale

about future value they can so they can resell at a high price to newcomers.

This did not, however, prevent major outlets from heaping positive coverage upon the “revolution in digital money.” One explainer in The New York Times from 2021 raves about interest rates “100 times higher” than conventional banks while providing scant discussion of risk other than mentioning the possibility of “cyberattacks, extreme market conditions, or other operational or technical difficulties,” quoted directly from BlockFi’s fine print.. A different NYT piece is chock full of anecdotes of early adopters who put their faith in crypto and were rewarded with millions, with a tagline stating “Bitcoin and other cryptocurrencies have gone from curiosity to punchline to viable investment.” With favorable coverage like this, institutional interest from firms like Morgan Stanley and Goldman Sachs, and ads during the Superbowl, it did really seem like crypto was the future.

That future, however, wasn’t meant to be. After the mainstream was pulled into crypto by flashy headlines about its sometimes staggering returns, the price of almost every cryptocurrency crashed in Jan. 2022 as the Federal Reserve raised interest rates, investment slowed as holiday bonus/gift money dried up, and lending schemes caused a fluctuation in the price

of “stablecoin” Terra, which caused a bank run that wiped hundreds of billions of theoretical value out. With the subsequent bankruptcy of FTX that same year, both private and institutional holders like Ontario’s public teacher’s pensions got taken for billions cumulatively.

Naysayers saw through crypto long before major outlets switched from penning ads to obits. Writing in Current Affairs in April 2021, Nathan J. Robinson, the magazine’s editor-in-chief, called crypto a “giant fraud,” after closely examining the actual technology “all of the grand claims for it fail entirely.”

This same criticism was **‘The problem, however, is that crypto is a load of bullshit.’**

made by Paul Donovan, the chief economist for UBS Global Wealth Management, who said in Jan. 2021 that Bitcoin and other cryptos could never become real currencies because users couldn’t rely on it to hold a consistent value for the purchase of goods and services. “People are unlikely to want to use something as currency if they’ve got absolutely no certainty of what they can buy with that tomorrow,” Business Insider quoted him as saying.

Instead of buying into the hype, these writers and others looked at the

actual usefulness of the technology and pointed out the naked emperor long before everyone else stopped complimenting his robe.

The point of all this is not to say “I told you so” but to perhaps allow you to say so to others. Now that generative AI is the hot new thing, we should all be careful about falling for big promises and pronouncements from companies that desperately want venture capital and unrestrained public excitement. When companies try to brush over generative AI’s problems with hallucination, colossal use of processing power and electricity, encroaching limits on how much more it can improve, and the core problem of what the actual, real life, worth-spending money-on applications of it will be. There are many reasons to be critical of generative AI that aren’t just fear mongering over how it may be too good at things. The future is not brought to bear by Palo Alto Prometheus.

We are in times of tall tales and snake oil. Do not be afraid to listen to the naysayers, and certainly don’t fear becoming one.

Abbey is a member of the Class of 2025.

Campus Times

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Research Shows Self-Censorship More Pervasive Than Formal Censorship

BY ELAINE WU
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Editor's Note: The digital version of this article (on [campustimes.org](#)) includes many hyperlinked sources.

When was the last time you wanted to say something, but couldn't? Why couldn't you say it? Was it because you didn't feel like it? Or was it because you wanted to conform — because you didn't want your friends, family, or peers to judge you?

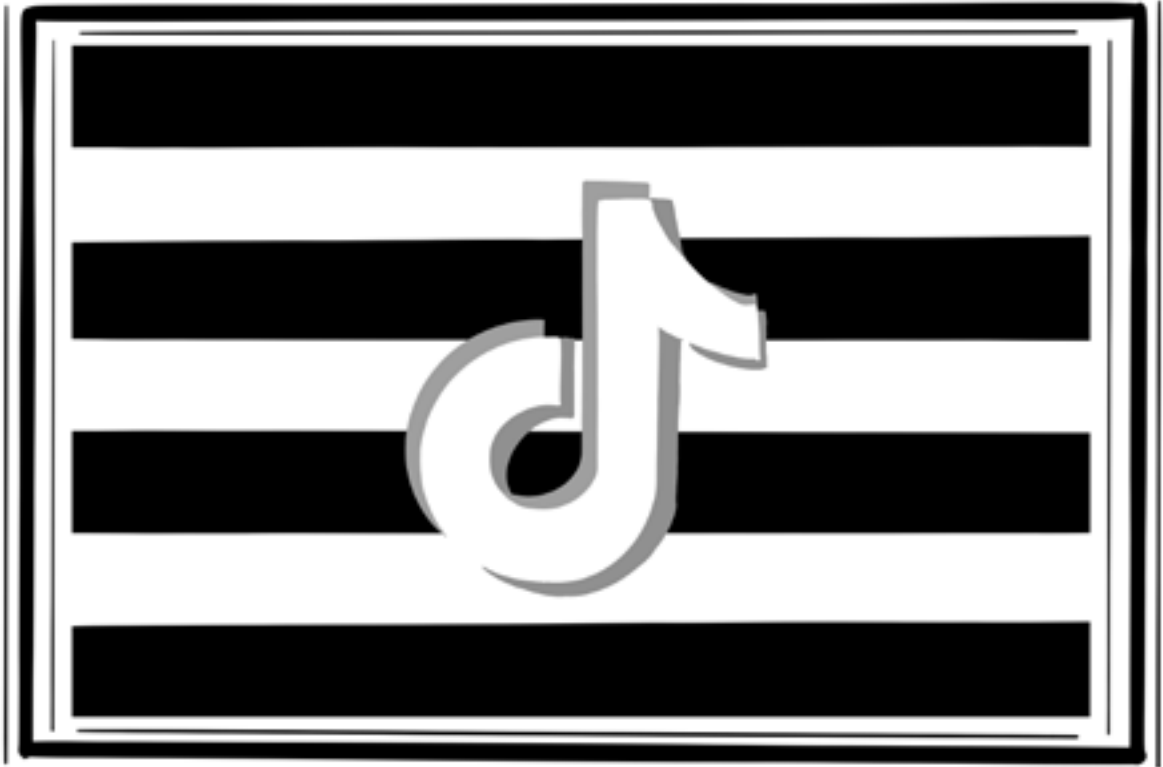
Across the United States, many are lamenting the loss of free speech. In the past few months, this criticism has specifically been launched at college campuses; free speech proponents state that universities, due to their restrictions on speech (ex. "campus codes"), are no longer the bastions for free speech that they used to be.

'Universities, due to their restrictions on speech...are no longer the bastions for free speech that they used to be.'

While these criticisms have weight to them, these rules are not the main problem when it comes to a lack of free speech. Explicit restrictions are not what stop most people from speaking — instead, it's the implicit pressure to conform.

"Explicit restrictions are not what stop most people from speaking — instead, it's the implicit pressure to conform."

According to an article published in Political Science Quarterly, self-censorship in America has more than tripled since the era of McCarthyism in the 1950s (in which people were punished for being suspected Communists), and in 2020, more than four in 10 people engaged in self-censorship. In particular, 46% of Americans in 2020 reported being less free to speak their minds than they used to, according to a nationally representative survey. The researchers attempted to investigate the reasons behind this self-censorship, concluding that



JOY LU / ILLUSTRATIONS EDITOR

the causes are likely not due to systemic reasons such as political repression or explicit restrictions put in place; instead, self-censorship occurs due to "micro-environment sentiments—such as worrying that expressing unpopular views will isolate and alienate people from their friends, family, and neighbors," the researchers argue. In that case, the greatest

threat to free speech in America is a person's loved ones. Conformity, after all, is powerful — it can pressure people to go to war, to kill, to stay silent, or to renege on their beliefs. This is true on both a large-scale and small-scale level. If we want to live in a free and ideologically diverse society where we can discuss important issues without fear, we must first start with our own

relationships. We need to create environments free of pressure for those we care about, to listen to those who are willing to speak, and to keep an open mind. Because if we don't even feel comfortable voicing our thoughts to our loved ones, where else can we do it?

Wu is a member of the Class of 2027.

Kids' Feral Behavior in Sephora Reflects Poorly On Parents, Not Gen Alpha



BY ADYA MOHAPATRA
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

People running around in every direction, absolute chaos unfolding in front of your eyes. Testers abandoned, lying helplessly on their sides after weeks of roughhousing. Bottles flying off the walls, perfumes thrown across the room and shattering on the floor. Employees are taking cover behind shelves as the cash registers ring on endlessly. It takes you a minute to process that you are not in some outlandish parallel universe where shops operate like zoos — you are just at Sephora. This is a dramatization, but plenty of people who frequent Sephora will tell

you that this is pretty much what it feels like. There are various story-times and reports on TikTok from people detailing how swarms of little girls keep coming into Sephora, a popular beauty product and personal care retailer, locations, misusing testers, behaving rudely, and leaving behind a mess.

'Swarms of little girls keep coming into Sephora, a popular beauty product and personal care retailer, misusing testers, behaving rudely, and leaving behind a mess.'

Netizens have been quick to blame the children for their bratty attitudes and lack of manners. To a certain extent, these complaints are valid, but at the end of the day, placing the blame solely on the kids is a bit odd given their age. Many are failing to question the parents who don't correct this kind of behavior, and others have gone as far as to describe this phenomenon of unkempt behavior as a common trait across all of Gen Alpha.

'Many are failing to question the parents who don't correct this kind of behavior.'

Given that children usually cannot easily access money or transportation to maintain regular trips to Sephora, their parents and guardians are clearly enabling them. As for the generational condemnation, Millennials and Gen Z have complained for years about how annoying it is for older generations to look down on them and act like a few egregious individuals define the whole group. Now, it seems like we're doing the same thing to Gen Alpha — as if we've been

waiting for the opportunity to belittle them. Some of us used to be just as feral back in the day (and some of us have remained that way). These kids are being taught to want things, like Sephora's make-up and skincare products, by people outside of their age range. Back in my day, Silly Bandz were all the rage — news of them spread via word of mouth from my classmates or people around my age.

'These kids are being taught to want things, like Sephora's make-up and skincare products, by people outside of their age range.'

But now, influencers and corporations are beginning to target audiences they can manipulate more easily, and they do so by projecting the idea that kids, especially girls, need to grow up faster than they should. Implying that kids who are still losing their baby teeth need an extensive skincare regimen and makeup routine to look good is insane, yet this is how they make their

money. There is nothing wrong with being interested in skincare and makeup products; however, the behavior displayed by these children goes beyond just curiosity, and seems more like a deep desire to acquire these things to fit in.

'But for now, they are only reflecting the world they are growing up in.'

Once these children are older, it is up to them to fix their behavior and world views. But for now, they are only reflecting the world they are growing up in. As a society, we need to do a better job of showing children what to look up to and censoring what they see. This is most relevant for parents, of course, but influencers and general users of the Internet can also take further steps to become aware of what is being actively promoted online to impressionable audiences.

Mohapatra is a member of the Class of 2025.

CULTURE



MAHNOOR RAZA / MANAGING EDITOR

LA LA FROM PAGE 1

This was “La La Land” on steroids. Eastman Ph.D. student and “La La Land In Concert” classical/electrical guitarist Isaac Romagosa attributes the show’s success to the presence of a live orchestra. “I love performing with an orchestra because [...] all the details are super big,” he said, speaking of the show’s larger-than-life scale. The fireworks at the end of “Someone in the Crowd” were a little more dazzling, the confetti blown into Mia’s hair sparkled a little brighter, the s35mm cinematography was just a tad dreamier, and the imitation technicolor felt slightly more saturated.

Throughout the film — particularly during the musical numbers — the onstage lighting morphed to correspond with the dominant colors on screen. They turned green and red during Gosling’s begrudging Christmas Eve performance, a deep blue as Gosling and Stone walked at the planetarium, a twilight purple during Gosling’s solo at the pier, and a summery orange during “Summer Montage/Madeline.” Red and yellow lighting and a live chorus accompanying John Legend’s vocals made “Start a Fire” all the more jarring. Teal lighting to match the curtains behind Mia and Seb welcomed the audience into their apartment and their “City of Stars” duet. The lighting accentuated Mia’s salmon pink and Seb’s midnight blue color palettes, and effortlessly blended them together during their joint scenes, symbolizing their union as well as their separation. Most impressively, during “Epilogue,” the lighting seamlessly cycled through every color featured in the montage, making the fantasy of their alternate life together more vivid — and heartbreaking.

However, the lighting design for the concert went beyond the ambient washes of color behind the screen. As Seb played his and Mia’s theme at his new bar, pianist Dariusz Terefenko played it solo on stage. A single spotlight shone on both Gosling

in the film and Terefenko on stage, and both Mia and the Kodak Hall audience held their breath. And then the lights gently faded up, jolting the audience and the on-screen duo back to reality and separating them once more.

The parallels between what was unfolding on screen and what was happening at Kodak Hall — both on stage and in the audience — expanded the world of the film beyond the screen. There are three things that both Kodak Hall and “La La Land” have an abundance of: live music, impeccable lighting, and applause abound. And so, when the auditorium dimmed and the orchestra performed “Overture,” I saw Mia and Seb’s relationship — real and imagined — play out before my eyes. When the real audience at Kodak burst into applause alongside the fictional audience at Seb’s concert, when the chorus sang Mia’s roommates’ lines from “Someone in the Crowd” while wearing dresses that matched the characters’ jewel-toned outfits, when Terefenko (and Gosling) left the final note incomplete at the end of “Epilogue,” when there were audible sniffles, sighs, and sobs in the theater, it became delightfully difficult to separate fact from fiction.

‘I saw Mia and Seb’s relationship — real and imagined — play out before my eyes.’

My only criticism of this blurring of boundaries is that it was often difficult to discern between the on-stage chorus and the film’s original vocals. For someone less familiar with every earnest crack and breathy exhale in Stone and Gosling’s performances, it might not have been immediately clear whether the chorus was only performing supporting parts or the lead vocals as well. I, for one, did not realize that Mia’s roommates were being played by members of the chorus until one of the vocalist’s British accents seemed slightly off.

Although audiences should not need to have listened to the soundtrack on loop to be able to distinguish where the recorded score ended and the live score began, perhaps the blending of vocal performances was the point. The concert experience preserved what the film’s mix engineer Marius de Vries has called “the integrity and fragility of the vocal performances” by retaining Gosling and Stone’s vocals while elevating the “realness of the instrumental performances.”

This soundtrack’s “realness” was reinforced by the contrast between live and recorded instrumentals in the concert. The orchestra did not perform the parts of the soundtrack that were portrayed as digital recordings within the film, such as the characters listening to the radio or playing vinyl. For example, in comparison to the back of the truck sliding open during “Another Day of Sun” while musicians played timpani drums live on stage, the song Seb was listening to in his car after the opening song immediately and intentionally fell flat. It was also clear that the orchestra was improvising and collaborating in real-time, further demonstrating the “realness” of the performance.

“We were following the conductor, but even if you want to play what’s written, if there’s different musicians playing it, it’ll never sound the same — and that’s the cool thing about music,” Romagosa said. For a movie about bringing jazz back to life, the concert felt like a testament to the power of live music.

I am envious of anyone whose first experience watching the film was in concert. Having live orchestration accompany the film brought its visual, thematic, and, of course, musical direction to life. And, although making every track a front-and-center spectacle sacrificed the relative invisibility of the background score, it amplified an otherwise overlooked theme of the film: the magic of live performance. It reminded me that “La La Land” is not just an homage to Hollywood and jazz but also to the very experience of witnessing musicians performing in front of you and the collective effervescence of being part of an audience.

If the medium is the message, this remediation of the film with a live orchestra was the best possible love letter to live music. “La La Land” has never shined so brightly.

Raza is a member of the Class of 2024.

‘The Underdoggs’ Review: An Underwhelming Sports Story

BY BRENNAN PRICE
STAFF WRITER

“The Underdoggs” was about as predictable as “The Mighty Ducks” or “Air Bud,” except without a unique twist — another generic sports film teetering between satire and genuineness.

Written by Danny Segal and Isaac Schamis, the film was inspired by Snoop Dogg’s nonprofit youth football league, which supports inner-city kids across southern California getting involved in football. The idea was there for a cute family film, but we instead got a poorly-executed, R-rated sports movie targeted towards the wrong audience. It was just like every other generic sports film, only making me occasionally laugh — and not because of the galore of weed jokes.

Jacyen Jennings (Snoop Dogg) was a high school football prodigy and NFL receiver before he let his temper hinder his fame. After learning that he is now “unpopular,” he crashes his car in a fit of road rage. Sentenced to community service in his old neighborhood after the crash, Jennings learns that the local youth football team needs a new coach. Seizing the oppor-

tunity, he coaches the team to rebrand himself and learns what being a good coach, and person, is all about.

Although the film was endearing, it was mediocre. It doesn’t add anything to the sports genre, but it knows this and makes it abundantly clear from the start that it’s okay with this. I mean, the film opens up with a disclaimer about how children will be swearing and to just relax and enjoy the movie. It wants you to turn off your brain, which, for this film, was definitely needed.

The jokes tended to be repetitive and boring, and the kids’ swearing got old pretty quickly. If they’d taken out all of the f-bombs, they could have had a solid PG-13 movie. It started to feel like they were just shoving the “kids swear too” punchline for the 1 hour and 37 minutes of its runtime, though the solid chemistry and comedic timing of the kids on the team helped ground the film a bit.

Although the film is a good time, it misses its goal and leaves the audience wishing they were watching a real football game instead.

Price is a member of the Class of 2027.

MAG FROM PAGE 1

Open to all ages, the event received a wide and diverse audience — ranging from young families to college-age students — and catered well to all. Performers from Garth Fagan Dance led visitors through a series of Afro-Caribbean dances, welcoming chants and laughter that echoed throughout the space. For individuals interested in exploring the museum’s work, a tour of the galleries was hosted by outreach specialist Delores Jackson Radney. Representatives from the Seneca Waterways Boy Scouts also led craft events for families that fostered play and connection through the arts.

‘A strong emphasis on elevating community resources rang clear throughout the afternoon.’

Along with professional performers such as singer Cinnamon Jones and storyteller Angela Water

Bamford, the event celebrated Rochester youth. Frederick Douglass R-Center’s Freedom Steppers, a dance group, performed in the museum’s ballroom — following a showcase of artwork from The Prestigious Gems.

‘At its core, the event was truly a day of celebration.’

While the event’s primary focus lay on highlighting Black culture, creation, and performance, a strong emphasis on elevating community resources rang clear throughout the afternoon. Booths from Rochester-based organizations promoting wellness, health, and education lined the museum, and representatives from the community spoke alongside artists as the event progressed.

At its core, the event was truly a day of celebration, and a wonderful showcase of Black community, history, and joy in Rochester and beyond.

Holly is a member of the Class of 2026.

Revisiting Paramore’s Self-Titled Album Ten Years Later

BY MARIAH LANSING
STAFF WRITER

Paramore released their self-titled album worldwide on April 9, 2013, and it immediately received praise. The song “Ain’t It Fun” earned the group their first Grammy, with the whole album receiving Platinum status.

Looking back over ten years later, it’s obvious the release was the beginning of the Paramore we now know today.

‘A sound which we now know to be quintessentially Paramore’.

In an interview with Rolling Stone, lead singer Hayley Williams described the monumental changes the band went through between the release of “Brand New Eyes” and the recording of “Paramore.” Josh Farro and Zac Farro had recently left the band and released a scathing letter making vicious claims about the band’s creativity and insinuating the

labels were taking over the songwriting process. Josh Farro had been an important band member, not just because he and the other members were all childhood friends, but also because Williams and Farro often shared the responsibility of songwriting.

For these reasons, Williams said they chose to self-title this album as a reintroduction of the band.

“Paramore” is a 64-minute-long rebirth of the pop-punk icons, showcasing Taylor Young and Hayley Williams’ ‘80s music and modern pop influences to create a sound which we now know to be quintessentially Paramore.

Wedge between pop-punk bangers like “Anklebiters” and funk-fueled dance tunes like the insanely popular “Still Into You” are the iconic “Interlude” tracks which feature Williams’ raw vocals over a single ukulele. The album is quite eclectic, also featuring the ballad “Hate to See Your Heart Break,” which exudes the

energy of an older sister aiding her younger sibling through heartache and the loss of friendships.

Lyrical, “Paramore” sets the stage for their massive growth, and for their members’ self-expression. The band has existed since the members were teenagers, and at the time they recorded their self-titled album, they had already spent eight developmental years in the limelight. This is evident in many of the tracks on this album, like the lyrics from “Interlude: Holiday”: “Now I can move on to facing/Big girl problems/No more high school drama. The band obviously reached a level of maturity in 2013, coinciding with their mid-twenties.

What can we take away from “Paramore” in the year 2024?

‘Now more than ever, “Paramore” is a universal soundtrack for navigating adulthood’

Firstly, that there is always room to grow into ourselves. Williams divulged that after the drama following “Brand New Eyes,” there were many days when it seemed easier to simply end Paramore. However, by experimenting with new riffs with Taylor York, a new sound began to emerge which inspired them to hit the recording studio.

Now more than ever,

“Paramore” is a universal soundtrack for navigating adulthood and the struggles that come with it. When we were kids in the 2010s, Paramore was sowing the seeds of valuable coming-of-age lessons, which still hit close to home today as we revisit their self-titled album for nostalgia’s sake.

Lansing is a member of the Class of 2025.



SUBAAH SAYED / ILLUSTRATIONH EDITOR

“SCRAPYARD” by Quadeca Review: A Strange, Beautiful, Unique Must-Listen



BY COLIN JAMES
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

SUBAAH SAYED / ILLUSTRATIONH EDITOR

Benjamin Lasky, also known as Quadeca, has had one of the most interesting artistic trajectories I’ve ever seen. Many bands and artists are known for innovation within the context of their own work, genre, or music in general — The Beatles, Radiohead, and Björk come to mind — but the shift that Quadeca has made from the beginning of his musical career is truly inspiring.

Lasky began in the YouTube rap scene and was known for his impressions of mainstream rappers and his fast flow. While he certainly had a knack for rapping, much of what he was doing was nothing new, and generally felt pretty derivative of rappers like Eminem or Logic. However, things changed on his 2021 album “From Me to You,” which saw

Lasky making massive production improvements that made his work stand out from his contemporaries.

The following year, he released “I Didn’t Mean To Haunt You,” an ambitious concept record that kept some of his hip-hop roots but incorporated influences from folktronica, indie rock, shoegaze, art pop, and other wildly varied genres. The leap in quality from the beginning of his career to this album was remarkable. “I Didn’t Mean To Haunt You” was praised heavily in online music circles and received some positive attention from critics as well.

Now, in 2024, he has released “SCRAPYARD,” a mixtape of songs that weren’t quite fit for “I Didn’t Mean To Haunt You” and also don’t match with whatever future releases he has planned. The rollout for this project was a bit tumultuous, but the

reception to the released singles was incredibly positive, and after listening to the record multiple times, it’s easy to see why.

Considering that this is a mixtape of odds and ends and not a formal album, it’s incredible just how high-quality and interesting all of these songs are. However, a gripe I have with the album is that there are a few tracks that feel a bit unpolished or underdeveloped; given the nature of the project, it’s not the most cohesive listen. That said, this is easily one of the most creatively-produced and unique-sounding albums I’ve listened to in a long time.

Describing the sound of “SCRAPYARD” is a bit difficult, not only because of the sonic variety throughout the album but also because of the varied influences Lasky incorporates. The production is lush and evokes feelings of nature and isolation, with busy electronic textures supporting lilting guitars and hits of distorted bass on numerous tracks. The production is cluttered, but Lasky knows what he’s doing — these songs don’t feel needlessly overdone, but intricately layered with strong attention to detail. Some songs have a more traditional vocal rap delivery, while others have a shaking emotional delivery (similar to Bright Eyes’

Conner Oberst) or heavy autotune that is fitting for a hyperpop project.

Choosing highlights is also difficult, given that this project is, for the most part, wall-to-wall amazing songs. “A LA CARTE” sports a busy instrumental and a wavering vocal on the chorus, as well as a strong feature from fellow experimental pop artist brakence. “WAY TOO MANY FRIENDS” is more of a traditional rap song, but with strangely melancholic instrumentals, including chiming keyboards and touches of ambience. “UNDER MY SKIN” has massive, atmospheric bursts of instrumentation on the choruses that evoke textures reminiscent of shoegaze, while “TEXAS BLUE” (featuring Kevin Abstract of Brockhampton fame) has layered vocal refrains, making for a powerful and emotional conclusion to the project.

The lyrics are strong throughout “SCRAPYARD” as well. Lasky laments common Gen Z anxieties with self-awareness and a knack for metaphor. Many of the tracks seem to deal with feelings of heartbreak as well, and Lasky manages to stray away from clichés while still getting his message across.

Some notable moments for me included the aforementioned “A LA CARTE” where the opening lines of

“My favorite poem was the one I read to you/From the teleprompter on the tongue of my shoe/My flashbacks are a touch more resolute/Declaring thumb wars in the pocket of my suit,” which makes for great imagery and feels straight out of the Death Cab for Cutie playbook.

On “GUESS WHO,” Lasky gets a bit more tongue-in-cheek and braggadocious as he raps, “All these years still here, they said I was naive / Meetings where they pushing buttons but never rewind me / Cause they couldn’t tell a masterpiece from a ‘type beat’ / Bunch of glorified interns in assigned seats.” The tonal variety in the lyrics, as well as their consistent quality, prove that Lasky’s pen game matches up with his production and vocal delivery.

All in all, “SCRAPYARD” is a strange but beautiful mixtape from Quadeca. It’s not going to be for everyone given its eclecticism, but I highly recommend you give it a listen. It’s a record that will stick with you long after it’s done playing, and one of the most unique listens you’ll likely ever have.

For fans of 100 Gecs, JPEGMafia, Bright Eyes

Overall rating: 9/10

James is a member of the Class of 2026.

Declan McKenna’s “What Happened to the Beach?” Blends Summery Pop With Social Commentary

BY KAYLIN HAN
PRESENTATIONS CHIEF

Imagine you are spending a warm summer day in LA, the sun beaming down on your face, almost toxically green grass under your feet. What kind of music is playing in the background? Now, imagine that same music, except this time it is by a 25-year-old, mullet-sporting, Tottenham Spurs fan from London who is typically known for making electric guitar and drums-laden music about society’s problems. This is the case with Declan McKenna’s newest album, “What Happened to the Beach?”, released Feb. 9. His third album is inspired by his experiences in California and is the best proof yet of his artistic versatility.

McKenna’s first album, “What Do You Think About the Car?” (2017), is rife with social commentary. Most notable is his viral song “Brazil,” which is a criticism of the politics of FIFA and the 2014 FIFA World Cup. Bare vocals and instrumentals marked this first album — he had a lot of room to grow.

And grow he did. His next album “Zeros” was released in 2020, in the midst of the pandemic. While still echoing themes of rebellion from his past albums, it is a big leap from his previous music. It is a more fantastical, rage-filled, ‘70s-rock-inspired foray where McKenna tests his technical limits. Taking place in a dystopian space age, he addresses capitalism and climate change while telling the story of a fictional character named Daniel who has to deal with the impact of humans on a ruined Earth and run away to space. “Zeros” includes heavier instrumentals, heavier vocals, and amore

futuristic vibe overall, reflecting his growth.

However, this seemingly new era for McKenna ended almost as soon as it began. “My House,” his 2021 single released after “Zeros,” hinted at another musical tone shift. As he continued to release singles — such as “Sympathy,” “Nothing Works,” “Elevator Hum,” and “Mulholland’s Dinner and Wine,” all of which are included on “What Happened to the Beach?” — this tone shift became clearer and clearer — and this time he was moving in a completely different direction, and three times as far.

‘It is evident that McKenna is about to take us on an entirely different journey from his first two albums

From the first guitar strum on “WOBBLE,” the opening track off “What Happened to the Beach?”, it is evident that McKenna is about to take us on an entirely different journey from his first two albums. While “Isombard” from his first album makes me want to sprint, “Mulholland’s Dinner and Wine” makes me want to dance, specifically in an elevator with headphones on and where I have to abruptly stop when the doors open and someone walks in. While “Twice Your Size” and “Rapture” make me want to run around and destroy things, “Sympathy” and “Elevator Hum” are for driving through a golf course in a golf cart while wreckage burns in the distance. It is clearly a West Coast, ‘60s-inspired album with more groovy and psychedelic vibes.

One thing that remains



KEVIN HU / PHOTO EDITOR

consistent throughout McKenna’s discography is his brilliant lyricism that is often metaphorical and almost nonsensical at times. This album’s social commentary is done more subtly than usual, giving a window into McKenna’s own experiences. For example, in “Nothing Works,” he reflects on controlling music executives and never being able to please everyone with your art; “Mulholland’s Dinner and Wine” is about a made-up convenience store which McKenna says references “the darker underbelly of LA and the search for the dream lifestyle”; and in “I Write the News,” he comments on the current state of discourse, especially in the news, as well as London’s rent prices.

‘It is clearly a West Coast, ‘60s-inspired album with more groovy and psychedelic vibes.’

In regards to the music itself, he makes ample use of synths and returns to raw

vocals and guitar while still including songs reminiscent of “Zeros” with their heavier sounds, such as “The Phantom Buzz (Kick In).” Each song is distinct, while also being well put together into a cohesive whole.

‘I enjoy the sunny, cheerful air that he has introduced to his discography.’

Another big difference is McKenna’s vocals. I saw him live in July 2023, not long after the release of “Sympathy,” and despite the smaller music venue, McKenna and his band played with enough power to fuel a music festival. During some of the songs from his setlist, the instrumentals were so loud that you couldn’t hear McKenna’s vocals. In contrast, for songs he performed like “Be An Astronaut,” “My House,” and “Sympathy,” McKenna shifted from screaming to serenading, from striking his guitar to strumming it, or plucking at his piano. It was like he was taking us through his own musical

journey in real time, preparing us for the change he was about to hit us with once “What Happened to the Beach?” released.

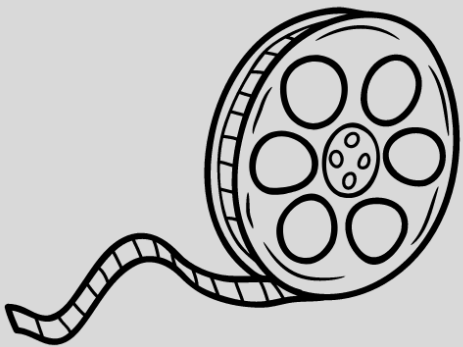
Admittedly, it took me until the second listen of “What Happened to the Beach?” to really get on board with his new sound. I mourned the loss of the empowerment I got from his older music, where I could curse out the world through his songs. And while I still prefer McKenna’s first two albums, I have now come to like this new one. I enjoy the sunny, cheerful air that he has introduced to his discography. It doesn’t matter if I understand the ultimate reason behind his musical shift; I still vibe to it, just in a different way. I welcome any future eras and question-titled albums that McKenna has yet to bring us as he starts to make music more for himself.

Han is a member of the class of 2027.

Like movies and music? Hate them?



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“Madame Web” Review: A Web of Confusion

BY BRENNAN PRICE
STAFF WRITER

“Madame Web,” directed by S. J. Clarkson, was better than “Morbius” but still laughably bad, which made it a fun watch in its own right. This film can only be described as taking what didn’t work with “Morbius” — an extremely confusing and generic plot — and giving it to an all-star cast whose character interactions barely salvage a confusing and disappointing plot. Despite the disappointment, however, I don’t agree with the extremely negative reviews it has received. The movie wasn’t bad; it was just average — it doesn’t add anything to the massive, pre-established catalog of superhero movies.

‘The movie wasn’t bad; it was just average.’

Cassandra Webb (Dakota Johnson), an antisocial EMT who lives in the Big Apple, is dedicated to saving lives. After almost dying on a job with her partner Ben Parker (Adam Scott), she finds herself with strange abilities that give her glimpses into the future. Using these visions, Webb saves the lives of three teenage girls who are being hunted by Ezekiel Sims (Tahar Rahim) because of the visions he has seen of them eventually killing him when they become Spider-Women. Webb and the girls must work together to uncover what lies in their pasts and futures before Sims kills them first.

The overwhelmingly glaring issue with the film was its plot. Most of the character decisions, which were only made to move the plot forward, made me laugh out of pure confusion, even in moments meant to be heartfelt. The villain, who started off as one of the more interesting ones in recent Marvel films, ended up being another forgettable villain in Marvel’s long lineup.

‘The overwhelmingly glaring issue with the film was its plot.’

The transitions between Webb seeing into the future and staying in the present worked, but more often than not the editing fell flat. It not only led to perplexing moments, but it was at times nauseating and weird to get adjusted to; they were quick flashes that felt oddly pieced together, just like the rest of the film.

The dialogue felt like the writers had never heard of the phrase “show, don’t tell” — it was as though they didn’t trust the audience to grasp the plot. Many scenes felt forced or awkward; one of the more jarring examples is in its second act, during a scene meant to be heartfelt. Johnson’s lines and delivery were so bad and inappropriate for the moment that it was incredibly hard not to laugh.

‘The dialogue felt like the writers had never heard of the phrase “show, don’t tell.”’

For all of its faults, the cast was by far the most enjoyable part of the movie. Celeste O’Connor, Isabela Merced, and Sydney Sweeney have great chemistry with Johnson, which made the film somewhat endearing. The standout moments were the interactions between the leads and supporting actor Scott which occasionally grounded the film. The trio played their parts perfectly, but it was disappointing that they didn’t get the chance to play superheroes for most of the movie.

After this film, Sony needs to stop with their “Spider-Man-less” superhero franchise, even if this film barely steps above “Morbius.” I do hope, however, that we see some of the cast reprise their roles in the Marvel Cinematic Universe going forward. If you’re looking for the next date-night movie, you might want to stay out of the spider’s web.

Price is a member of the Class of 2027.

Winterfest Weekend with Rachel Sennott and Ziwe: Serving Comedy and Class



EMILY ENGLISH / CULTURE EDITOR

BY EMILY ENGLISH
CULTURE EDITOR

BY ALEX HOLLY
CULTURE EDITOR

Good comedy is hard to find — notoriously even harder to find at Winterfest Weekend. Yet Rachel Sennott, Ziwe, and all-talented moderator Cat Crawford quickly disproved this, bringing sass, class, and show-stopping red tights to the Kodak Hall stage.

While both comedians have risen to main-stage fame through their recent projects, Sennott and Ziwe aren’t exactly new to the craft of comedy. Sennott is known for her work in films such as “Shiva Baby,” “Bodies Bodies Bodies,” and “Bottoms,” (the mention of which garnered one of the largest applause of the night). Ziwe is known for her self-titled Showtime talk show and preceding web series “Baited with Ziwe.” Though they haven’t worked together, the pair stated that they’ve known each other for a long time. “We were in the gutter of Brooklyn, New York,” Sennott stated of their humble beginnings — an era of performing stand-up comedy at one star restaurants and sobbing at parties between sniffs of poppers. “[Sennott] was into poppers before any straight woman was,” Ziwe joked. They then reminisced about Sennott’s short-lived Twitter addiction, which acted as a cautionary tale to take a step back from the internet before you end up with a stalker as Sennott

unfortunately did (as she stated, a girl remembers her first).

Although the girls’ humor, wit, and admiration of “Shrek 2” was a through line in the conversation,, it was entertaining to hear about the growth both of them went through to reach where they are now. They discussed further the pitfalls of the internet, the importance of taking 30 seconds for oneself before making decisions, and, of course, why they should’ve gotten married in college.

Ziwe used her trademark word-twisting charisma, and Sennott her indulging humor. They portrayed their personas and demonstrated why they are so beloved. They even came up with a few inside jokes within the short hour-long show, like Ziwe proclaiming that “‘Shrek 2’ is the best American comedy,” or Sennott joking about “George Bush, my least favorite nepo baby.”

‘Ziwe used her trademark word-twisting charisma, and Sennott her indulging humor.’

Ziwe and Rachel Sennott, when asked about their respective college experiences at Northwestern and NYU, described surviving the growths and pains of college, and gave the audience of college students advice from past experiences. Both of their separate lives taught them lessons on networking, success, and

failure. Rachel Sennott divulged her experiences acting in student films, sending awkward emails, and the realities of modern-day networking. Both Sennott and Ziwe gave stirring speeches about how the people who matter most career-wise are the ones who surround you every day.

‘Both of their separate lives taught them lessons on networking, success, and failure.’

They then talked about the projects they had coming up. Sennott mentioned a movie currently in the works that takes place in the 70s (although she did not specify, it is presumably “SNL 1975,” a depiction of the birth of Saturday Night Live in which she will portray comedian and first-season cast member Rosie Shuster), and Ziwe discussed her recently released book “Black Friend: Essays,” soon to be out in paperback. Despite the funny, lighthearted atmosphere, they managed to give genuinely good advice — especially Ziwe’s about how to best communicate with a certain recently-expelled member of Congress (hint: not via FaceTime from Kodak Hall on a random Friday night).

English is a member of the Class of 2027.

Holly is a member of the Class of 2026.



HUMOR

The Rantings of a Bills Fan

BY TREVOR SHOOSHAN
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Another year, another seventeen games, and another devastating playoff loss for the Bills. Us true fans pour hours and hours of our time into season after season, just to see the same result every time. Our depressing fandom conversations start with us tricking ourselves into thinking this is our year. “No for real this time, like the Chiefs are so much worse now, and Brady finally retired.” But there’s always a new way to get punched in the gut. If the NFL really is scripted, then they have Bills fans reliving the last scene of “Titanic” as we sink into the depths of mediocrity. Every. Single. Year.

I mean come on, I’ve been watching ever since I was born, and I can’t think of a single good Bills memory. It’s just been a bunch of bottom ten quarterbacks auditioning for the XFL, wondering how much money they’ll make playing in Canada next year. The announcer’s voice from an uncountable number of devastating losses rings in my ears like the screech from a 6-year-old’s first violin note.

‘I don’t know why we get called the Bills Mafia, ‘cause we’ve done nothing resembling organized crime and planned destruction.’

The only part that makes us a mafia is how we stick together like a Great Depression-era family. But instead of getting revenge, we just sing wedding songs from the ‘80s, tricking ourselves into a moment of happiness amid another devastating year. Yeah of course the Bills make me want to shout, but mostly obscenities at the terrible fourth quarter coaching and defensive miscues.

All they do is get your hopes up just to trample them again, knowing that these tortured fans will somehow get back up, just to find out where we end up next year. Are the rest of our lives really that boring? It’s like reading a children’s book for the 70th time and being surprised at the ending. “No way the Chiefs beat us again! Who saw that one coming?” Oh, but this time it will be different, the optimists among us say. Really, the aging team with a terrible cap situation, one good receiver, and the most turnover prone QB in the league is going undefeated?

‘Just admit it — we missed our 13 second window to Taylor Swift’s boyfriend and Mahomes’s Kermit the Frog face two years ago. It’s over.’

The loss was so bad, the NFL retroactively changed its



ANGELINA YANG / CONTRIBUTING ILLUSTRATOR
even made a documentary called “The 4 Falls of Buffalo,” depicting each loss in excruciating detail.

overtime rules, just in time for Mahomes to win another Super Bowl using it. Sprinkle in about 8 season ending injuries right before the wild card round and you have a recipe for the saddest franchise in league history.

I’m sick of pretending anyone will beat Mahomes. His team wasn’t even good, yet time and time again he elevated his subpar supporting cast with his impeccable timing and perfect accuracy. And he gets to play the hero, lighting up every stadium with his annoying mannerisms and 59th State Farm ad, each cockier than the last. I hate how good he is.

I think Bills fandom and depression symptoms are so closely related, people are getting misdiagnosed in Buffalo. At this point, they should hold group therapy and reminisce about the 4 Super bowls that we lost in the 90s. ESPN

‘How is the best show about our fandom more depressing than “The Whale”?’

Seriously, I think most of the fans there for the first wide-right kick were prescribed opioids to deal with that loss. Mix that with the fact that half of all football fans over 35 are alcoholics (totally real stat definitely not made up), and you end up with a horde of people that think breaking tables is more entertaining than actually watching football.

Seriously, how many times can you watch a team hit every checkpoint, convincing you that their time is now, just to watch the drunk, snow covered fans shove their way

out to their cars, all of them thinking how it wouldn’t be too terrible if they slipped on the ice and hit their head. At least they might forget how the ball changed directions mid air, just to miss the goal post again.

But maybe Bills fans are proof of the good in the world, proof that humanity doesn’t give up. No matter how pointless it is, they keep fighting to see the next play. They are loyal and fierce defenders of a flawed team, talking up a nonexistent defense and Josh Allen’s reckless decisions.

‘Our delusions are what power society — without them, our country would be lost.’

We are the boxer who never gives up, no matter how many times the Patriots and Chiefs bite our ear off like Mike Tyson. The countless concussive blows we’ve been given let us press on like we don’t even remember getting hit at all. So next time you see a wild Bills fan, and trust me they’re tough to miss, think a bit about how each playoff disappointment is burned deeper in their brain than their own kids’ faces. And of course we’ll waste away again on our couch next season. Cause for real this time, it’s finally our year.

Shooshan is a member of the Class of 2027.

The Waldo In Our Hearts

BY BRIAN LY
STAFF WRITER



BRIAN LY / STAFF WRITER

Earlier this week, I found a “Where’s Waldo?” book hidden in my drawers.

For the first time in years, I scanned each page for the presence of the elusive Waldo.

The first few pages were easy — I could instinctively find the target within a minute.

‘Waldo was no match for my eagle eyes and powerful observational skills.’

Empowered by my success, I flipped to the next page.

Upon spending more than a minute searching for Waldo, though, I realized that the difficulty had increased. There were more people on these pages.

After 3 minutes, I finally found him. He might’ve eluded me at first, but I was still able to find him. The increased difficulty posed little challenge.

Flipping through the next few pages, I spent even less time finding Waldo. It was only when they added red herrings that I was once again thrown off. To my surprise, there were actually multiple people wearing red and white striped clothing!

‘But even this couldn’t hold me back for long. I pulled out my secret weapon — my reading glasses.’

After putting them on and squinting my eyes, I quickly found the real Waldo and

stared into his cold dead eyes.

“You can try to hide, but I will find you soon enough,” I said to him. And then I flipped to the next page. In an instant, I knew that the difficulty had increased tenfold. Not only were there more people on the page, but all of them had also greatly shrunk in size.

Despite staring at the page for an hour, I still couldn’t find Waldo. For the first time in my short professional “Where’s Waldo?” career, I was faced with a seemingly insurmountable challenge.

I shut my eyes and reminisced over the highs and lows of my career, and then, with poise and grace, I closed the book.

After years of searching for Waldo, I realized that, perhaps, the real Waldo was the friends we made along the way.

Ly is a member of the Class of 2027.

Gotta Go

BY BUG CARTWRIGHT
STAFF WRITER



SPORTS

NET FROM PAGE 1

While their prize was only \$800 (which ended up being split by the seven members evenly) and Quispe had to pay to attend the playoffs out of pocket, the caliber of play made it worth it. Her highlight of the weekend: defeating top seed California in the semifinal 7–6.

“We were definitely the underdogs throughout the whole tournament,” Quispe said. “When we beat [California] I was beyond ecstatic, I couldn’t stop smiling.”

This year, the playoffs were hosted in Orlando, Florida Feb. 2 and Feb. 3. Alongside Quispe, senior and UR Roundnet President Seth Cutler competed with the Syracuse team in the Premier League bracket, which boasted the highest cash prize amount.

Roundnet’s appeal for Cutler was jump-started by a tournament in his sophomore year of high school, which pushed him to get others involved. As an e-board member on the team, he’s helped the group organize practices, get involved in competitions, and travel to Spikeball FC’s College Nationals tournament in Raleigh, N.C. last year. On the Syracuse team, Cutler played mainly with both current and former RIT students, with the captain of the team, Josh Hutko, being a recent graduate of RIT.

In the Premier bracket,

Syracuse scored upset wins against Salt Lake City, Chicago, and Boston after being seeded 23rd in the 32-team division.

‘However, on the second day of play, the team exited the first round of bracket play after a loss against Livonia, Mich., the eventual winners of the bracket.’

“Many of the members of the Livonia team have won world and national titles, are Spikeball College National Champions, and have significant sponsorships funding their spikeball careers,” Cutler said. “I enjoyed the opportunity to compete against the highest caliber of player, as it provided me with the opportunity to learn and reflect on what improvements need to be made to my training in order to help myself and other members of UR Roundnet compete at this level.”

Both Quispe and Cutler are multifaceted student athletes — Quispe is a double major in Marketing and Dance with a minor in Computer Science, and Cutler triple-majors in Brain and Cognitive Sciences, Linguistics, and Spanish — but being on the club Roundnet team has become



COURTESY UR ROUNDNET

an equally big investment for the both of them.

According to Cutler, the past year has resulted in the team’s “biggest membership spike (no pun intended)” in his two years as the club’s president, with the team having grown since his start in sophomore year from five members — and no budget or e-board — to 25 dues-paying members and a six-person e-board. On the time-commitment side, members are able to attend open practices twice a week as well as regional tournaments, which can rack up to over four days a week of Roundnet involvement.

While Cutler has been playing the sport for six years, most students come into the sport in college — including Quispe. A varsity soccer player in high school, Quispe’s brother Josef (who now plays with her in Roundnet tourna-

ments under the aptly-picked team name JQ^2) pushed her to join the team when she went off to college due to his own penchant for the sport.

“I ended up saying okay just to get him to stop bothering me,” she said.’

“I showed up to the UR Roundnet table at the activities fair and they were so welcoming. After the first couple practices, I couldn’t stay away.”

After her experience at the League Playoffs, Quispe hopes to build a stronger Women’s Roundnet community, specifically in the Rochester area. As team captain, she reached out to players she had seen at collegiate sectionals games to cultivate a team, since she currently serves as the only woman on the UR

Roundnet eboard.

‘Cutler, who’s seen most of the competitive members of the team start their Roundnet journeys, takes pride in the inclusive culture that the club has created to foster growth and camaraderie in new players.’

“Through regular practice and instruction, we’ve committed to meeting each member where they’re at, and providing feedback and instruction for them on how to improve,” he said. “ [...] Even with an extensive athletic background, Roundnet is still difficult! Heck, there are days — after six years of playing — when I stand at the seven-foot serving line and can’t hit the net for my life. So, UR Roundnet has developed a culture that is all-inclusive, kind, and ultimately based around forming friendship through the sport of Roundnet. No matter your skill level, there is a place for you and members committed to helping you learn.”

Koh is a member of the Class of 2024.

People Should Watch Baseball

BY FINN ABBEY
COLUMNIST
BY MAYA BROSNICK
STAFF WRITER

Are you the type of person who says they watch the Superbowl "only for the commercials"? Can you name more US senators than basketball players? Would you only recognize an NFL stadium because Taylor Swift played there?

Baseball awaits. Come and watch the best sport in America (until NASCAR answers our emails about Mario Kart Wii).

‘There is no better time than now to get into the most bizarre and hilarious institution of American life.’

Where other sports often require a strong understanding of rules to enjoy, baseball is much simpler. When the guy hits the ball really hard you know it's time to be ex-

cited. When someone makes a diving catch you know it was cool. When everyone is yelling at the umpire, why not yell with them?

It is the story of man's struggle against himself. No

‘Baseball is so special because it is a sport precision-engineered to create funny and horrifying moments.’

wonder it makes our Little Leaguers cry. No other sport leaves fans doubting that even the most routine of plays will be made, and no other sport has so many ways to screw up and leave an entire city wanting someone dead. From Bill Buckner missing a grounder to cost the Red Sox a historic World Series, to a fan who grabbed a foul ball that may have cost the Cubs a chance to break a century-long drought, a moment known primarily as "the Steve

Bartman incident," baseball has highs and lows that other sports can't dream of.

Baseball also has a wonderful culture, with the crushing pressure of trying to hit a rock sailing by you at 100 mph yielding to some truly wacko superstitions like the Yankees sharing a golden thong that they would wear when one of them was in a slump, or players refusing to talk to a pitcher who has a no-hitter going.

‘You can't not love a sport where it's considered a necessary and strategic move for a manager to intentionally get himself ejected by fighting with the umpire, proving his commitment to the team and firing them up.’

The next great thing about baseball is that there is so

damn much of it. Baseball players get million dollar contracts but the league works them like high school McDonald's employees, scheduling 162 games per team, per season, plus pre and post season.

February to November, 12 hours a day, there's baseball. Procrastinating your homework at midnight? Watch the end of a west coast game. Got a free hour between classes? There are probably three games to choose from. Team bonding evening? Baseball's got you there too. Find something more uniting than yelling at Angel Hernandez's stupidity. We'll wait.

There's drama during the off season too. Shohei Ohtani recently signed with the Dodgers for a record 700 million dollar contract. That's enough to buy the entire city of Rochester (admittedly cheap) Brazilian butt lifts. From speculating about trades (don't bother; everyone's going to the Dodgers),

to wondering how the hell the Angels are so bad, there's enough baseball around to consume your every waking (and sleeping) hour.

And none of it is predictable in the least. Last year the Oakland A's, a team so cheap and bad that their highest attendance was a protest against ownership, shut out the Houston Astros, the defending World Series champs. The embarrassingly bad Rockies grabbed two late season games from the Cubs to effectively knock them out of the postseason. WHY DOES GOD HATE ME?

All this is to say, the first game of the preseason is Feb. 22, so now's the time to acknowledge the superiority of baseball, and cave to the obsession it will soon inspire.

Abbey is a member of the Class of 2025.

Brosnick is a member of the Class of 2027.