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A GENERATION WITHOUT JANET

Written by Jimmy Hawkin III, Design by Stacey Ramirez

On February 1st, 2004, 37-year-old pop phenomenon Janet Jackson headlined the Super Bowl XXXIX halftime show at the height of her career. Jessica Simpson, P. Diddy, Nelly and Kid Rock assisted in the MTV-produced performance before Jackson's final act—a duet with newly solo N-Sync singer

Justin Timberlake. Strutting together through a

coupled rendition of Timberlake's "Rock Your Body," the

23-year-old closes his set ripping

Jackson's bustier and

exposing her

nipple-shielded breast live to an audience of 140 million. The shot, albeit displayed for nine-sixteenths of a second, prompted 540,000 complaints to the Federal Communications Commission and later cost CBS's parent company Viacom over \$3.5 million in court settlements and broadcasting fines.

Jackson's commodification of sexuality, ironically in the era of promoting her most sex-centric project, became synonymous with cheap shock value to media heads demanding remorse for their financial losses. Viacom, launching an internal campaign to regulate suggestive content and adopt conservative censorship, hired another production company for the halftime show and booked (white) classic rock acts of the '70s and '80s to headline until 2011. In the midst of the controversial Iraq War, *Nipplegate's* national backlash evoked dialogue about America's morale and commitment to "family values" ahead of the 2004 presidential election (Republican George W. Bush was re-elected with said platform). Timberlake effectively distanced himself from the incident by reverting the blame onto the headliner, stating that the "wardrobe malfunction" was inspired by her last-minute decision to reveal a hidden bra. Jackson, despite



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apologizing and later resisting questions about the event, was unable to evade scrutiny about her breast's non-consensual exposure.

Her eighth studio album *Damita Jo* was set to be released the following month, but Viacom CEO Les Moonves had already sought vengeance in derailing the artist's promotion. The media conglomerate's subsidiaries, such as MTV or Infinity Broadcasting radio stations, were obliged to not support her subsequent singles and music videos.

Damita Jo generated three singles which failed to crack the Hot 100 chart's top 40, in spite of her tenth (and final)

number-one "All For You" breaking radio play records three years prior. She was disinited from that year's Grammy Awards ceremony (Timberlake won two awards and apologized during his acceptance speech), movie roles offered were reversed, and a statue dedicated to the artist at Walt Disney World was dismantled amid the controversy.

This marked the beginning of the end to the star's 18-year reign in the pop world. Although she continued to produce multi-platinum records by way of her captive fanbase, her innovative contributions to the visual and sonic soundscape were since subdued by the powers that once embraced her.

To understand the magnitude of Jackson's blacklisting requires literacy about her career accomplishments and relevant fantasies. In 1986, she released her breakthrough third studio album *Control*, marking the artist's independence from her father's failed creative control and spawning five top-five singles. The success continued onto her 1989 follow-up *Janet Jackson's Rhythm Nation 1814*, a conceptual visual project depicting a utopia driven by sociopolitical change, becoming the best-selling album of 1990. Her self-titled



Janet, released in 1993, explored themes of feminine sexuality with Jackson as the album's primary songwriter and producer, and garnered six top-ten hits amidst going seven-times platinum domestically. 1997's *The Velvet Rope*, a moodier departure, tackled topics of depression, domestic violence, sadomasochism, and homophobia to further critical and commercial acclaim. *Damita Jo*'s 2001 predecessor *All For You* saw the largest first-week sales of the new divorcee's career and inspired accolades to formally declare her an icon.

Aside from her ability to mirror her King of Pop brother's international successes and artistic feats, Jackson was rare in her representation of a black woman reclaiming both her autonomy and bodily integrity. The liberation established during *Control* carried into each detail of her choreography, music production, unabashed sexuality, and image curation for the next two decades. Her signature pop singer/dancer/sex symbol archetype influenced the likes of Britney Spears, Christina Aguilera, Ciara, and Tinashe, who all cite Jackson as an inspiration. Visual and content parallels can also be

established within the discographies of other successive acts, such as Rihanna's *Good Girl Gone Bad* to *Control*, Lady Gaga's *Born This Way* to *Rhythm Nation*, and Beyoncé's 2013 self-titled album to *Janet*.

At this year's MTV Video Music Awards, Normani paid homage to Jackson's "Would You Mind" stage show, climbing and grinding on top of a bonded Teyana Taylor. Luckily, remnants of Janet's star text were able to outlast her induced demise, but it was to her loss of the generation that followed.

I was 4 when Nipplegate occurred. No, I do not remember the media frenzy and incessant primetime coverage on the incident, but I do recall misunderstanding her prominence. My first conscious encounter with Jackson was her 2008 video for "Feedback," the singer's highest peaking single since 2001. The following year on June 25th, an international mourning for her brother Michael's death commenced. For me, his popularity juxtaposed Janet's stardom, considering that he debuted before her and sold four times her amount of records. I assumed that she operated within her sibling's shadow while retaining some success for herself, and it was not until I read of her career as an adult when I learned that this was far from the truth. The aspect that unsettled me most was that her blacklisting worked.

Misogynoir stifled Jackson's pop stardom before a decline in demand could. In fact, the musician's commercial acclaim continued without chart-topping single performances, but this would only disillusion the younger "Gen Z" audience introduced to her during this era. A generational gap in Janet's perceived eminence is formed, orchestrated by Viacom's attempt to censor her sexuality.



In 2006, Justin Timberlake proclaimed that he was “bringing sexy back” on his first lead single since the incident. Its meteoric success atop the Hot 100 chart for seven consecutive weeks is riddled in irony and privilege. Timberlake, despite initiating the breast exposure, was able to capitalize on the taboo that shrouded Jackson and surpass her in popular fixation.

In the same regard that The Beatles or Elvis Presley are cross-generational in their cultural prestige, Janet Jackson deserves her flowers from us as the quintessential pop star we were nearly robbed of. With eleven studio albums, dozens of music videos, and countless live performances across four decades, celebrating her musicianship resists the powers that sought to quell the autonomy she represents. Jackson’s multifaceted expressions of femininity are necessary in an age where Cardi B and Megan Thee Stallion’s WAP duet is met with controversy upon its success in the mainstream. Thirty-five years removed from the release of *Control*, we owe ourselves the reminder of a legacy inaugurated by a 19-year-old woman’s angst to reclaim her voice to the world: “It’s Janet; Miss Jackson, if you’re nasty.”



JAZZ, DJANGO, AND THE MUSICAL POLITICS OF RACIAL FETISHIZATION

Written by Lily Ramus
Design by Avik Samanta



"There's this g*psy in France, and he's the most beautiful thing I ever heard"
-Emmet Ray, Sweet and Lowdown (1999)

While Woody Allen films hardly stand as a pillar of progressive politics, *Sweet and Lowdown* aptly illustrates the extent to which Django Reinhardt, his music, and his legacy, are shrouded in racial stereotypes.

Django Reinhardt was a Romani-French guitar player popular in the 1930s and 40s. Descending from Northern India, the Roma or Romani are the largest ethnic minority in Europe, with an estimated population between ten and twelve million. Reinhardt belonged to a Romani community native to the Alsace region commonly referred to by the French as Gitans, Tsiges, or Manouches.

Reinhardt is considered one of the first widely successful European jazz musicians and still remains one of its most significant exports. His style and repertoire are remembered today in the genre jazz manouche (commonly known as gypsy jazz) which celebrates the small-group, all-string, style of the Quintette du Hot Club de France, Reinhardt's most famous group where he played in conjunction with the French-Italian violinist Stephane Grappelli.

Projections of ethnic/racial qualities onto Reinhardt's music by fans and critics alike have shaped the way his music is imagined. However, these projections are largely inaccurate and the influence of American jazz and French popular music is often understated in favor of building a French and/or Romani centered narrative.

In *Sweet and Lowdown* and countless biographies, the ethno-racialization of Reinhardt is essential to the plot, depicting his musical style as governed by his Romani heritage. Crippled in a caravan fire and illiterate well into adulthood, stories of Reinhardt's life precede him. The line between fact and fiction hardly exists; accounts of Reinhardt's habit for stealing chickens while on tour and craving for niggos, wild hedgehogs spit-roasted with the quills still intact, find their way into descriptions of his music.

Born in 1910, Reinhardt grew up playing bal-musette, a French genre popularized in the 1880s that was frequently performed by Romani musicians. A dance genre including a variety of styles such as waltzes and polkas, bal-musette emerged from a marriage between Auvergnat bagpipes (locally called 'musettes'), Italian accordions, and Romani guitars. Jazz manouche scholar Siv B. Lie asserts that Reinhardt grew up in a community without an ethno-racially distinct musical tradition. Reinhardt's father, Jean-Eugène Reinhard (the 't' was added to Django's birth certificate to correlate with the French pronunciation), was a band leader for a dance orchestra and taught Django bal-musette tunes via call-and-response, a typical Romani teaching style.

Django was a successful bal-musette musician and in 1928 he played his first studio session with the accordionist Jean Vaissade. The recordings from this session illustrate the similarities between bal-musette and Reinhardt's later style, specifically in the lilting minor melodies, triplet ornamentations, and perhaps most obviously in Reinhardt's virtuosic runs. Raised playing bal-musette with his father's orchestra, Reinhardt's early influence did not come from a racially distinct Manouche music but from French popular music of the late 19th century.

During World War II, with nationalism running rampant, French intellectuals and jazz aficionados used Reinhardt to contradict the typical narrative that jazz was an American, and specifically African American, form of music. In these accounts Reinhardt is paradoxically evoked as both a dark-skinned, "primitive" Romani and as the epitome of French jazz musicianship.

¹ Quite literally a marriage. The prominent Italian accordionist Charles Péguri married the popular (bag)piper Antoine "Bousca" Bouscatel's daughter

In the mid-1930s, Reinhardt rose to widespread fame playing with the house band of the Hot Club of France. Despite the widespread persecution Romanies faced during WWII, Reinhardt chose to stay in Paris where his popularity continued to grow during Nazi occupation. Hot Club of France co-founders Charles Delaunay and Hugues Panassie painted French-centric narratives during the war and while Reinhardt was essential to both of their cases, his racial/ethnic identity was characterized differently in each of them.

In the magazine *Jazz Hot*, Delaunay tried to prove that “French jazz existed, that with Django Reinhardt, for example, we [France] possessed an incomparable artist who truly represented French grace and genius.”

Here Reinhardt is characterized as the unequivocal French genius. His Romani heritage is ignored in favor of building a French-centric narrative.

However, Panassie takes a different approach. In the publication *Real Jazz*, he states:

“Django, one of the rare white jazz musicians comparable to the Negroes, belongs to a race which has remained very primitive, for in truth the gypsies’ lives and customs are closer to those of the Negroes than those of the whites.”

Panassie describes Reinhardt as both white and as Romani. He then uses these ethnoracial projections to compare Reinhardt’s musical abilities with those of African American musicians. The comparison is noteworthy because both have historically been seen as talented because of their race. The French jazz manouche scholar Alain Antonietto sums it up well writing,

“We have been told ad nauseam that [Reinhardt] was born a musician, and for many this explanation suffices: after all, do not Tsiganes have music “in the blood”? As blacks have rhythm?”

This is an obviously problematic narrative that ignores the individual talent of Reinhardt and black musicians in favor of building an racialized projection where one’s musicianship becomes a matter of genetics.

The influence of African American jazz on Reinhardt cannot be understated. In 1930 Reinhardt heard a record by Louis Armstrong in what is remembered as a near religious experience. Much of his repertoire, and the jazz manouche standards today, consist of American swing from the 1930s and 40s.

A notable example from Reinhardt’s repertoire that illustrates the influence of American jazz is “Festival Swing,” a concert finale recorded in 1942 in which Reinhardt and his quintet trade solos with a big band. The recording sounds very much like an American big band and essentially proved that French jazz musicians were as good as their American counterparts.

However, in my opinion, the most interesting aspect of “Festival Swing,” is Reinhardt’s solo because, while characteristic of Reinhardt’s style, it is an outlier in the big band context. This unique individual style is precisely why Reinhardt remains an influential musician to this day, but is also likely the reason behind the ethno-racialization of his music: it doesn’t sound quite like French bal-musette or American jazz, but something in between, something stylistically new and crafted out of Reinhardt’s particular influences and experiences.

Refutation of popular ethnic projections onto the music of Django Reinhardt is necessary, as they served to exoticize his music for consumers and dismiss his talent along racial binaries. However, in the decades following Reinhardt’s death, jazz manouche has been re-appropriated by the Manouche

community and many consider jazz manouche the most representative music of their people.

It wasn't until after Reinhardt's death in 1953 that Manouche musicians started drawing from his repertoire. This adoption largely came from interactions with Spanish Gitan Roma and their West German Sinti counterparts who were familiar with Reinhardt's music and wished to learn it from Manouche musicians. This exchange eventually evolved into the tradition that today is called jazz manouche.

The spread of Reinhardt's music among Western European Romani communities was furthered by Roma advocacy groups in the late sixties and seventies. In 1912, legislation passed in France that placed heavy restrictions on the rights of a new category of citizens: nomades, a group primarily consisting of Roma. The status of nomad was hereditary and applied to any children born from 'nomads' regardless of whether they travelled or not. Such legislation promoting systemic discrimination of French Roma still exists today.

In the spirit of late sixties activism, APPONA, the Association pour la promotion des population d'origine nomade d'Alsace, was founded. Until 2002, APPONA helped facilitate Manouche access to adequate housing, education, healthcare, and employment, and boosted public opinion and engagement with Manouches through the promotion of Manouche arts.

Due to the success of Django Reinhardt, APPONA saw jazz manouche as a way to build Manouche/Gadje (non-Roma) solidarity and open up a niche market for Roma musicians. For Manouche musicians, jazz manouche offered an opportunity to be taken seriously as musicians and escape demeaning stereotypes.

However, many Manouche musicians also feel constrained by jazz manouche and that, despite their ability to play other musical styles, their ethno-racial identity determines their genre classification.

While APPONA had good intentions, their promotion of jazz manouche among Western European Roma communities furthered the perception that Reinhardt's music has an ethnically distinct sound. In the jazz manouche community, this has created an interesting division between Manouche and Gadje musicians. Many jazz manouche musicians and fans claim to hear ethnoracial differences in music played by Manouche versus Gadje performers.

Manouche accordionist Marcel Loeffler describes the difference in terms of expressivity, stating,

“when a Manouche plays this music, you hear the soul. You hear the soul of this music, which was invented by Django, who himself was Manouche. So when we play it today, we try to reproduce it, as best as possible, the way Django composed it. But not everyone has this soul that we Manouches have.”

Another jazz manouche musician who wished to remain anonymous claims that,

“Anyone can play this music. Except when you hear musicians who aren't Manouche, you still hear a difference. This is because we were raised with this music, but the others, they haven't been steeped in it like us.”

These quotes illustrate the extent to which jazz manouche has been reclaimed by Manouche communities and transformed into music that is deeply shaped by the Manouche experience. Perhaps jazz manouche has come full circle. Despite his influence from French musette and American jazz, Django's son Babik Reinhardt writes, “above all, my father was a Tsigane.” It is the shared Manouche experience that links Reinhardt's music with his Manouche contemporaries and, for that, perhaps Reinhardt's music truly is jazz Manouche.

The Women Who Built Jazz

& THE ONES
KEEPING IT
ALIVE



Written By: Daniella Ivanir
Designed By: Natalie Kemper

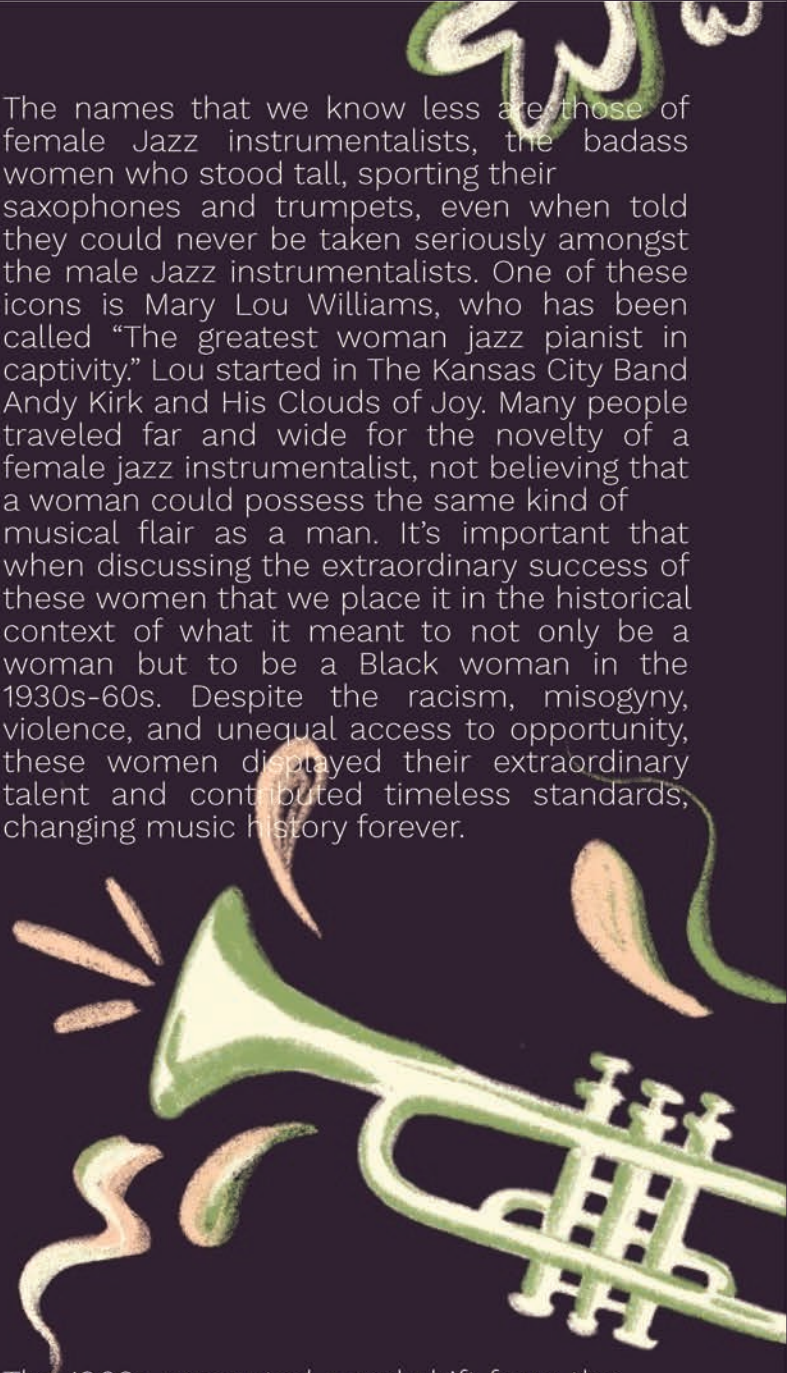
It's no secret that Jazz is not considered the freshest genre among our generation; Gen-Z has mostly strayed towards bedroom pop, alternative R&B, and rap music. There's a deeply ingrained association with Jazz and elevator/dinner party music; music to play while cooking bolognese and hosting friends, not something on your daily Spotify playlist or to put on when you're handed the aux. What this misconception excludes is the rich history, fresh and evolving present, and improvisational magic of Jazz. In this article, we will explore the brilliant legends who built this genre as well as the work that is being done to energize new generations about Jazz. Specifically, we will focus on the labor of the talented women of color who wrote the bible on Jazz and those that are reinventing it; all in a historically male-dominated space.

Ella Fitzgerald, Nina Simone, Billie Holiday: names that first come to mind to many when they think about women in Jazz. These vocalists broke into a genre that was seen as one that only men could excel in and their rich voices and improvisational genius brought copious amounts of soulfulness to the genre. Billie Holiday was one of the first to become an Internationally-recognized standard in the 1930s. Holiday was originally named Eleanora Fagan, renaming herself after silent movie star Billie Dove. In a remarkable fashion, Holiday used the tools of her mesmerizing voice and the fluidness of this genre to speak on race, feminism, and misogyny. Her courageousness in voicing opinions on these topics was not only beyond her time but also highly dangerous. *Strange Fruit* is a great example of the risk Holiday took, with lyrics originating from Abel Meeropol's poem, the song puts into music the deeply dark and disturbing realities of Black lynching in the South. Billie Holiday's cover received wide recognition and became an important part of protest, its power illuminated by the constant attempts to ban it.

Ella Fitzgerald, dubbed "The First Lady of Song," was my personal introduction to the beautiful world of female jazz vocalists. Fitzgerald is one of America's most timeless figures, far beyond just the music world. As my sister and I lay in our small shared room as children, our dad would play her music, every night we fell asleep off to her expert scats and warm tone. Her music ignited my deeply rooted love for Jazz. Of course, I am not alone in this. Fitzgerald was considered the most popular US female Jazz singer for half a century.

The names that we know less are those of female Jazz instrumentalists, the badass women who stood tall, sporting their saxophones and trumpets, even when told they could never be taken seriously amongst the male Jazz instrumentalists. One of these icons is Mary Lou Williams, who has been called "The greatest woman jazz pianist in captivity." Lou started in The Kansas City Band Andy Kirk and His Clouds of Joy. Many people traveled far and wide for the novelty of a female jazz instrumentalist, not believing that a woman could possess the same kind of musical flair as a man. It's important that when discussing the extraordinary success of these women that we place it in the historical context of what it meant to not only be a woman but to be a Black woman in the 1930s-60s. Despite the racism, misogyny, violence, and unequal access to opportunity, these women displayed their extraordinary talent and contributed timeless standards, changing music history forever.

The 1960s presented a real shift from the popularity of Jazz and its perception as a fresh and 'cool' to the popularization of Rock as the new and young genre. Photos from the 1960 Monterey Jazz festival show a racially integrated audience of hip, well-dressed festivalgoers clad in stylish sunglasses and eager to listen to a lineup of Miles Davis and Helen Humes. Six years later, the Monterey Pop Festival would present Jimi Hendrix and the Grateful Dead, attracting a more bearded and long-haired audience, effectively pushing out Jazz as a youthful and sexy genre. Arguably, Jazz has not quite recovered from their defeat to Rock, and in some ways remains in the box of being old-fashioned music. That said, the genre of contemporary Jazz is alive and well, buzzing with young talent, reinventing and reimagining.





Melanie Charles, born in Brooklyn, is an amazing example of a woman grabbing from the technical skill, improvisation, and rich history of Jazz and “Jazzing it up”; no pun intended.

On her album, Y’all Don’t (Really) Care About Black Women Charles features a series called “Reimagined”, where she takes standards from female Jazz vocalists in the 1930s and remixes/samples them. Each of these begins with the original song, allowing about 50 seconds to play before bits of Melanie creep in, whether it’s the distortion on “What a Difference - Reimagined”, the psychedelic vocals on “Beginning to See the Light-Reimagined” or the improvisational scatting on “Jazz (Ain’t Nothing But Soul - Reimagined.” In a way, I feel that Charles manages, with this series, to put into music what I am trying to put into words: honoring the legacy of the women who built the foundation of this genre and the political significance of this music, all the while adding an experimental and contemporary twist. These reimagined covers are also a reminder that the society that we live in now is horrifyingly parallel to that in which these women sang. There is darkness and power to this message, that years have passed by, but there is still so much that must change in regard to Racial equality in this country.

Charlotte Dos Santos, a Norwegian musician with Brazilian roots, takes a slightly more technical and traditional approach. Her Jazz vocals are hypnotic and her composition is extremely expert. “Red Clay” is my personal favorite, her voice is like butter on this track and captures both the warmth and the unexpectedness of Jazz; you can’t quite anticipate what note is coming next. Similarly, we see flawless improvisation in Jazz harpist Brandee Younger, who steps in the footsteps of Jazz harpists such as Dorothy Ashby and Alice Coltrane and has created simply breathtaking pieces. My personal favorite, “Reclamation” has completely reshaped my perception of what is possible from the harp. Younger has put a spotlight on a specific subset of Jazz instrumentalists that many, including myself, had not previously been familiar with,

There is something extremely moving about the way these musicians seamlessly preserve, pay respect to, and reawaken the art that came before them. When creating new genres, and paving the future of music, we must remember what came before us and hold ourselves accountable to achieve the goals of those legends. All that said, I don’t anticipate that contemporary Jazz will be played at UC Berkeley frat parties or even on the aux chord when all the windows are down, but I do hope that we will be the generation to invigorate the love and appreciation for this form of art and recognize its flair and edge.



A Lesson I Learned By Unbecoming a Stan

Written by Maya Banuelos,
Design by Stacey Ramirez

Within any music scene you are likely to find a number of artists with cult-like followings. From the first notable case of the boy-band phenomenon in the 1960s with The Beatles' Apple Scruffs, or the Deadheads of the '80s following the Grateful Dead across the United States for the community and freely documenting the band's live performances and improvisations, to today with the perhaps the biggest following of any band ever — One Direction and the Directioners, the culture of the musicians and their crazed fan bases has withstood the test of time.



While these bands have earned a reputation in modern history for their devoted followings and influence in popular culture, they are not an anomaly. Any fan of artists worldwide most likely find themselves looking toward their favorite musician as a figure of inspiration and idyllic persona. But at what point does the boundaries between fan and super-fan, or "stan" become detrimental to the wellbeing of the audience and musician? And on what basis do we choose artists to devote our time and energy into by supporting through unconditional defense and consumption? From personal experience in being the stan who would shamelessly promote my favorite band across all socials, thus engraving their presence into my identity, I have grown increasingly frustrated and uncomfortable with the power imbalance between audience and musician — especially the dedication by young audiences being exploited by such musicians as social media exacerbates the increased community and power imbalances

between the two.

Growing up within the first generation to have modern technology and the Internet at our full disposal, I had my fair share of time running fan pages online for my favorite artists. From multiple Instagram accounts archiving every My Chemical Romance photoshoot I could find from the age of 12, to involving myself with the pop-punk community through becoming SWMRS stan in 2016, I devoted my teenage years obsessed with the idea of my favorites "noticing" me. I documented every time I had my Instagram posts liked, or got a Tweet in response, buying as much merchandise as I could to dedicate my all.



In the case of SWMRS, myself and many other teenage girls and nonbinary fans fed into their shouts of inclusivity and creating a new culture within the punk scene — one where more BIPOC artists and fans can reclaim their rightful space within a scene that they created; where fans of all gendered identities can be in a pit without fear of harassment. As a longtime stan at an impressionable age hearing those words only furthered my incentive to act as a defender of this band — to act as if these words constituted their morale. That I knew enough about this band with a predominantly female fanbase to know that what we were being told was their golden truth.

However, any fan reading this who followed the Uncool and Burger Records scenes in 2020 knows of SWMRS' fall from grace. Lydia Knight of The Regrettes' statement of alleged sexual abuse against Joey Armstrong, drummer of SWMRS and son of Green Day's Billie Joe Armstrong, was the point at which the rose-colored glasses fell off and my naivety and gullible state of mind was revealed. In the wake of Knight's statement I felt like something shattered within me.

Music had been an important part of my life for as long as I could remember, and I shaped my personality and free time around whichever artist I was obsessed with at the time. My actions and immaturity proved how unhealthy it was for me to be in a state of complete disillusionment with music because of the deep hurt I felt by this band.

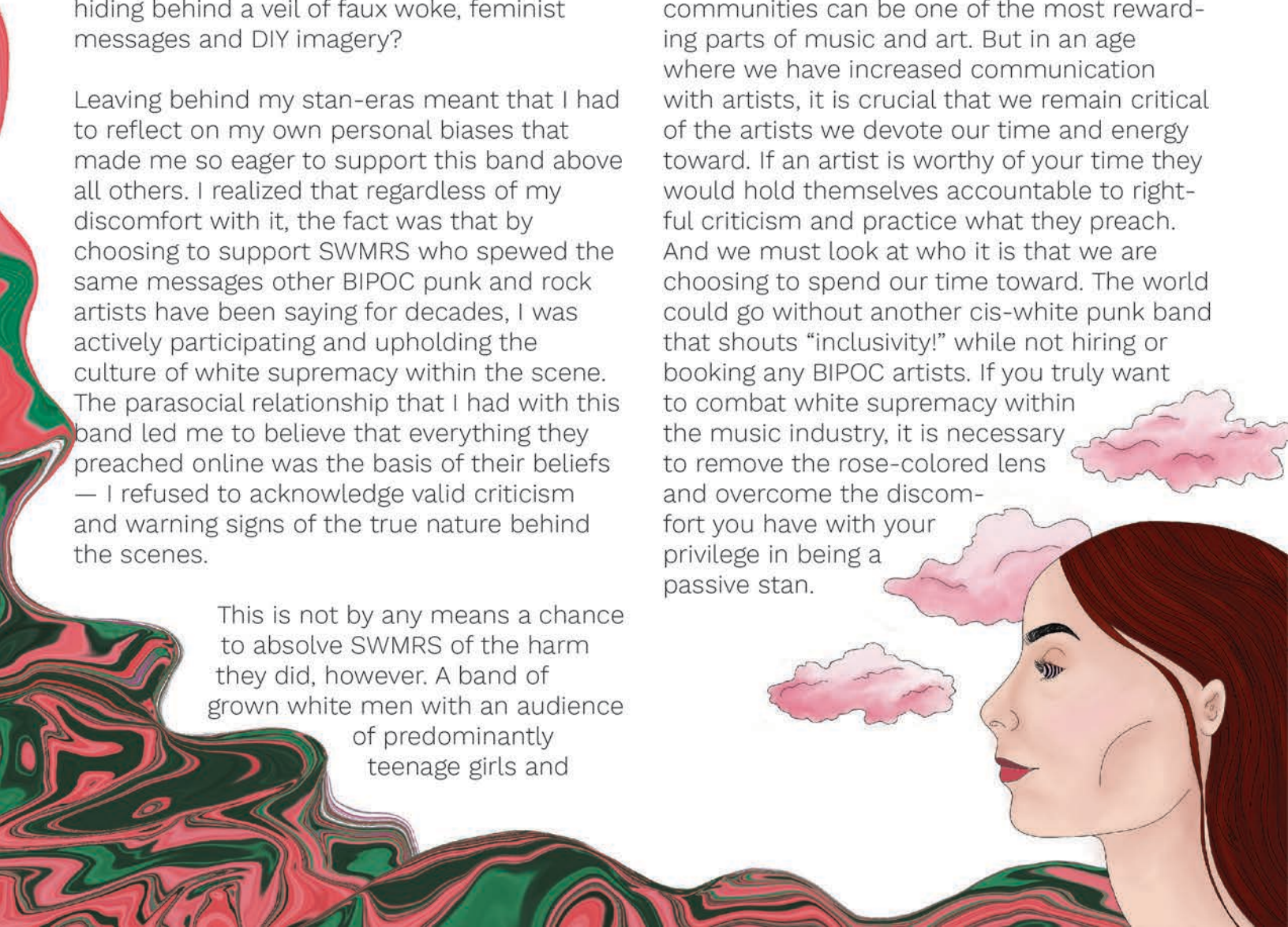
And yet, a year later I have not stopped thinking about SWMRS. Why was it that I felt such deep loyalty to this band, who ultimately did not know who I was nor cared about me? Why was I so eager to listen to messages of inclusivity and feminist values from a band of Piedmont-based cis white men who could fall back on the clout of their rich daddies? Of all other artists of color who have led the work in creating more diverse scenes and dismantling white supremacy, why would I choose to stan the white band that was taking up space and hiding behind a veil of faux woke, feminist messages and DIY imagery?

Leaving behind my stan-eras meant that I had to reflect on my own personal biases that made me so eager to support this band above all others. I realized that regardless of my discomfort with it, the fact was that by choosing to support SWMRS who spewed the same messages other BIPOC punk and rock artists have been saying for decades, I was actively participating and upholding the culture of white supremacy within the scene. The parasocial relationship that I had with this band led me to believe that everything they preached online was the basis of their beliefs — I refused to acknowledge valid criticism and warning signs of the true nature behind the scenes.

This is not by any means a chance to absolve SWMRS of the harm they did, however. A band of grown white men with an audience of predominantly teenage girls and

nonbinary folk made the conscious decision to manipulate messages that young fans wanted to hear. They encouraged the faith and dedication of their young fans by crossing the boundaries between fan and artist time and time again. After Knight's statement, several fans came out with stories of SWMRS allegedly hiring them and failing to compensate them for their time and labor. Friends I made within the SWMRS community shared this collective pain we felt over being exploited and feeling so naive and idiotic for letting ourselves get fooled so easily. To this day it is difficult to come to terms with the fact that a band we felt so strongly about caused so many of us to become disillusioned with music and art — being fans of anyone or anything.

None of this is to say that being a fan is bad — far from it. Becoming a fan and establishing communities can be one of the most rewarding parts of music and art. But in an age where we have increased communication with artists, it is crucial that we remain critical of the artists we devote our time and energy toward. If an artist is worthy of your time they would hold themselves accountable to rightful criticism and practice what they preach. And we must look at who it is that we are choosing to spend our time toward. The world could go without another cis-white punk band that shouts "inclusivity!" while not hiring or booking any BIPOC artists. If you truly want to combat white supremacy within the music industry, it is necessary to remove the rose-colored lens and overcome the discomfort you have with your privilege in being a passive stan.



Queerbaiting Masked as Representation

Written by: Jocelyn Ortiz

Designed by: Natalie Kemper

'We are the products of a new generation' is a phrase many of us will grow up hearing. Whether it be new technology, new ways to view politics, new humanitarian tragedies or new ways to consume media – our society seems to have taken off running, expecting us all to keep up. As many of us born in the early 2000s see the world around us drastically changing, we can not help but be exposed to this new era of social consciousness. This has served as a positive, paving the way for us to become familiar with diverse communities that have grown to feel comfortable accepting and showcasing all parts of their identity: including sexuality and gender expression.

This has been essential in media and music especially. So many artists have gained traction by becoming a face of representation for their Queer listeners; their experiences a focal point in their creative voice. As avid consumers of music, many of us have become hyper aware of this intersection between issues pertaining to the LGBTQ+ community and the way it is showcased in the media. This has given space for interesting threads of discourse which break down the falls and triumphs of this type of representation. It is quite remarkable that there continues to be a growing acceptance of queerness in all forms, but we must be cautious as to what representation we call empowering.

Queerbaiting across media is not a new concept, rather it has more recently been brought to people's attention as a pressing issue. Expression of queer 'relationships' has been sensationalized in TV and music ever since people discovered it could easily be used for shock value. That being said, throughout the last 10 years, conversations surrounding sexuality have been brought to the forefront of our everyday discussions, many having to learn and unlearn stigma surrounding the LGBTQ+ community. As a result, many have rightfully become critical of what is played in lyrics, videos and even performances.

Queerbaiting is dangerous as it uses queerness as a tool for profit, showcasing homoerotic interactions or relationships to gain attention, yet never addressing the queerness expressed. It has been shown to happen a lot on TV where two same sex characters will allude to a romantic or sexual relationship, but will never actually achieve that 'normal' relationship many straight characters would. This has more recently been a common critique in music videos or performances, where same sex attraction is exploited, but often passed off as a 'kiss between friends' or even worse it falls into the stereotypical 'girls just want to have fun' trope. As a consequence, many individuals within the LGBTQ+ community are left feeling invalidated in their experience, feeling that representation comes at the expense of a genuine depiction of sexual fluidity.

To flesh this out, let's remember Katy Perry's iconic, 'I Kissed a Girl' song. Many of us may remember singing along to this pop song, unaware of the narrative it was dishing out. Though it was marketed as simple risqué fun, the song itself carried a legacy of fetitization and invalidation of same sex relationships, more specifically relationships between women. This song alludes to the curious urge to want to experiment with women (which is completely valid), but it takes a turn when the narrator of the song expresses guilt over such feelings and/or actions because it is simply 'not what good girls do'. Not only is this inherently homophobic, but it also invalidates these feelings as not holding any important weight, bypassing them as a phase that should not be unpacked further. Of course, looking at it now, even Katy Perry expresses regret as she too let herself be influenced by internalized homophobia. This tactic of using same sex allusions to captivate an audience, only to turn around and say this behavior is not accepted is the epitome of a marketing ploy for profit. Not only is this behavior invalidating to many, but it also normalizes the fetitization of queer relationships.

When it comes to male artists, many will consequently use queerness between women as part of their misogynistic male fantasy. This is obvious in music videos where women are portrayed to have sexual relationships with each other for the pleasure of a man, but more specifically we see it through lyricism. In Drake's recent hit 'Girls Want Girls' he seems to hint to lesbianism as something that would not be taken seriously as he raps 'say that you a lesbian, girl me too' in order to have a chance at getting at the woman in question. This discourse has a lot to do with the invalidation of female sexuality and relationships which has been normalized through queerbaiting. Same can be said about The Weeknd as he faced controversy for his lyrics in 'Lost in the Fire' where he insinuates he can make a woman 'become straight again' because the attraction she feels is a mere phase.

More recently, many of us have had to grapple with the issue of queerbaiting in music video imagery. Once again, it should be considered a win for artists to show same sex attraction on platforms that reach a global audience, but it is the opposite when artists fail to address these topics for what they are. As a result they undermine communities that are still widely unaccepted. Pop artists Ariana Grande and Normani both have been called out by devoted fans, disappointed in their music videos which contribute to the narrative of fetishization between women for the male gaze. Ariana Grande's music video for 'Break Up With Your Girlfriend' follows her, competing for attention from a man, only to go and kiss the woman that was her 'competition' in the end. Many fans called this out as a move for shock value. Similarly, Normani and Cardi B faced backlash after releasing the music video for 'Wild Side' which showcased both of them naked and gyrating against each other. In both cases, the celebrities have never openly discussed their sexuality, which made many fans conclude that these instances of queerness were nothing but a marketing tactic.

This discourse is not just one sided though, the question we as an audience must ask ourselves is: Why do we feel entitled to know everything about celebrities simply because they are exposed to the public eye? When Cardi B was questioned about this backlash that both she and Normani had faced, she claimed that people were wrong for questioning her sexual identity as they did not know her personally. She also shut down this complicated discourse by firmly stating that she did not necessarily owe them that part of herself. Cardi B claimed that people often misconstrue what queerbaiting is, and simply water down the term in order to warrant hate towards an artist. This brings up a very important point: artists are also people with lives outside of fame that are trying their best to figure out their identity with enormous amounts of pressure. They are expected to share every bit of themselves with their fans, when in reality they should not feel pressured to do so.



“We are the products of a new generation”



I believe it is important to allow artists to navigate their sexuality, mostly as we come to understand more and more, that it is fluid and will not be stagnant throughout one's life. Artists like Billie Eilish and Harry Styles have also responded to claims trying to hold them 'accountable' for showcasing queerness without explicit knowledge of their sexuality. After Billie Eilish released her music video for 'Lost Cause' she was backed into a position where she had to explain her sexuality in order to appease the public that was trying to 'cancel' her for queerbaiting. Much like Harry Styles, she claimed that she did not exactly know the label that best fit her identity, which should be completely valid. As people, we may not always be sure what label, if any, best suits how we are feeling. We should not feel entitled to need a response when the artist themselves do not feel comfortable attaching an identity marker that does not feel right.

Yes, queerbaiting is a serious topic that consequently causes a lot of damage for LGBTQ+ communities, but it is also not justifiable to pressure a person (yes even an artist) to adopt a label in order to appease a general public. This is an issue that does not have a clear solution, rather it is something that can be better understood with time and discussion. As for now, we must continue to uplift artists that do face the negative consequences for being their most authentic selves. Queer representation still comes at a cost for many, which is why it is important to hold artists accountable when someone's identity is used for profit. Yet, we must also remember that humans are ever changing, and someone that might be using their music to express sexual fluidity does not do so with malicious intent.

The Hidden Warnings of the Kpop Phenomenon

Written by Eric Min Young Park

Design by Carol Ng

Thanks to prominent Korean artists such as Psy and BTS, Kpop has become a global phenomenon, a symbol of Korean culture that garners fans from all over the world. Due to this sensation, Kpop has become a defining feature of Korean identity. However, this overgeneralization does more harm than good for Korean people living in predominantly non-Korean countries because it causes many people to fetishize our culture.

The earliest incident of Kpop taking the world by storm was the release of "Gangnam Style" by Psy in 2013. This launched Kpop into a prominent musical subculture in the international scene, and turned the world's attention to Korean entertainment. But the rise of the group BTS led to an entirely unprecedented wave of international fans that dedicate themselves to Korean aesthetics.



As a Korean person, I can't help but feel a sense of being seen amongst American people, and feel a sense of appreciation for the way that non-Korean people appreciate my culture. I feel proud when I see my father or grandfather express pride in being Korean whenever we walk around and see American people adoring Kpop and Korean culture because they lived in America at a time when Korean people were looked down upon. But as a Korean-American, I can't help but feel uncomfortable at the way Kpop has led some American people to perceive us. Kpop is marketed as a picture perfect product, with beautiful and handsome "idols" who can sing well and dance well, and caters to consumers through its aesthetically captivating "Kpop packages" or "Kpop lightstick." As a result, people tend to overly glamorize Korean culture. This is problematic because diversity is undermined by filtering only the pleasing components of our culture, and the complexities of Korean identities are overlooked.

The fact that my parents are more proud of this phenomenon while I myself am more cautious is a sentiment shared by Korean-Americans and Koreans today. Korean people most often share the same viewpoint as my parents; they feel a sense of pride knowing that a piece of our culture is appreciated by such a wide audience, and rightfully so. Korean people have been historically looked down upon. Often associated with Chinese people because of ethnic and facial similarities, our culture was often met with a sense of disgust and dehumanization. Unknown was the middle name of Korea. Even a decade ago, a lot of people had never heard of Korea, so much so that whenever I told someone I was Korean, there would always be the one kid who would ask me, "North or South?" But now everyone knows Korea, and it's largely due to Kpop. That's why for many Koreans, the rise of Kpop is a feeling of being appreciated and heard, which is a wonderful thing when you historically weren't.

But Korean-Americans have to live with the side effects of Kpop. The rise of Kpop led to people that obsess over Korean culture—so called “Korea-boos” that romanticize all things Korean. These people would often say things like:



I wish I was Korean.

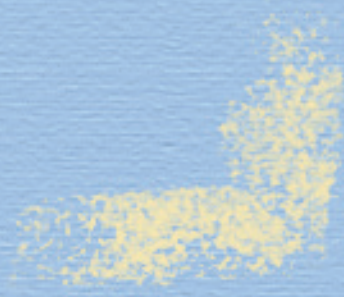
Koreans are the best types of Asians.

In hindsight, while it may seem like positive comments, they're extremely damaging. Having a picture perfect idea of a culture and country can lead to false expectations because no country is perfect—Korea included. And to assume that Koreans are in some sense “superior” to Asian countries is problematic because, for starters, Kpop isn't a work solely done by Korean people. Many people from many Asian countries, from China to Japan

to the Philippines and Thailand are Kpop idols, and this comment is damaging those idols that have contributed to the scene. Secondly, People seem to have fetishized the idea of Korea such that they completely overlook the racism in those statements. We even see a small group of people take fetishization to extreme measures; one influencer known as Oli London is an example, identifying as “transracial” to express that they identify as a different race than the one they were born into and performing numerous plastic surgeries to look like the Kpop idol Jimin from BTS.

This is not only blatantly racist but insensitive towards transgender individuals, but it's masked under the misguided perception that it's a compliment. As Kpop's influence grows, so too does the proliferation of ignorance in its fanbase.

However, Koreans and the Korean government don't realize these effects, which can be attributed to a difference in culture. The experience of being Korean and the experience of being Korean American are radically different because Koreans don't have to deal with cultural appropriation and Korean Americans do. The Korean government is also a soft country that brands its nation through Kpop and Korean aesthetics. A soft country is a country that exerts soft power, which is a form of cultural and economic influence without the use of a military. They have a ministry of culture, sports and tourism dedicated to Kpop and brand Korean products strategically. Through Kpop, South Korea has one of the largest soft powers in the world.



Although fetishization of Korean culture is ubiquitous among obsessive fans of Kpop, it has generally led to a larger appreciation for it as well. Asian people have found a home in Kpop. It's a matter of pride for some, and generally something that makes one feel heard. Eurocentric beauty standards have been challenged through Kpop, where artists with Asian features are also considered beautiful. The problem is that people fetishize Asian beauty, trying to look more Asian through the Fox eye trend and following Korean beauty standards. Another problem of fetishizing Korean beauty standards is that Kpop provides a one dimensional idea of what beautiful Asian men and women look like. Just like how not every American is a walking Chris Evans or Michael B Jordan or Angelina Jolie, not every Asian person is a walking BTS member. Furthermore, Kpop trainees, who are aspiring Kpop idols, often go through excruciating diets and cosmetic procedures, perfecting their dance moves or their "personality" with little to no money just for the slim chance that they will be able to make their debut one day. This pushes a harmful agenda that all Asian people look like this and that all Asian people should look like this, which can drastically lower the self esteem of Asian people.



The line between appropriation and appreciation is very thin, and the glamification of Korean culture through KPop has caused many fans to push over this boundary into appropriation. For international Kpop fans that adore Korean culture, there's no problem. After all, it's a method of entertainment meant to capture the interests of people, and it's not wrong to enjoy entertainment. But it is important to realize that it's just that: a form of entertainment, and that one should be more aware of how Kpop might push unrealistic perceptions of

what an entire group of people may look like. Korean people, or anyone with Asian features, are more than just this "Kpop stereotype." As consumers, I believe that we have the responsibility to be aware of the implications of the kind of product we choose to pay for and to what we give our attention. If we become more aware of the problems with the media we consume and actively advocate for avoiding and preventing them, we can enjoy ourselves at no expense to other people.

Eric Min Young Park

LO-FI HIP HOP BEATS TO STUDY/PROTEST TO

The Intersection of Hip-hop and Anime as a Form of Rebellion

WRITTEN BY JAX SAMSELL | DESIGN BY REYNA WANG

Hip-hop is one of the definitive genres that arose from urban New York African American culture as a symbol of individuality, protest, and disenfranchisement. Deriving from the south Bronx in the 1970s, hip-hop rose from the ashes of the economically depressed borough where arsonists and landowners burnt down buildings with no regard for the people it would displace. This practice left the south Bronx in shambles, leaving Black and Latinx communities in a state of neglect. In tandem with the rising racial tensions due to repeat instances of police brutality, conflict brewed until it eventually engendered the turbulent political environment that birthed hip-hop. Hip-hop has historically served as a place for the youth to commiserate over their shared experiences of injustice by providing an outlet for individuals to express themselves through prose against their frustrations of the system around them. This gave rise to groups like the Ghetto Brothers, a Puertican rock group that also functioned as a gang, to create "music scenes" where youth in the south Bronx would gather and dance to music with one another. This carved a space for hip-hop to model itself after, and simultaneously created a subculture of rap fans in the Bronx. Hip-hop's interconnected relationship with Black culture in its liberatory themes is pivotal in its implementation into media, especially in anime such as Devilman Crybaby, Afro Samurai, and Samurai Champloo.

The anime Samurai Champloo (2005) follows a vagabond trio in the Edo period of Japan and mixes hip-hop into the soundtrack to create an alternate history of Japan, often re-writing the outcomes of monumental battles. The Edo period is

known for being a period of peace and "political stability." The nobles were no longer warring and therefore samurai were no longer employed by the noblemen to be their protectors.

It left many samurai who once had such a meaningful duty with what felt like a purposeless life. Two of the three main characters are samurai, but one of them is a ronin, a disgraced samurai with no master. The integration of hip-hop in a show set in a period of surface level tranquility brings out the characters' restlessness and rebellion against systemic oppression and neglect. It mirrors our world where even if things are "equal on paper", the world is not absolved from injustice as some choose to believe. Much like the characters in the show, Black and Latinx communities are still susceptible to systemic racism even though those in positions of privilege continually claim that there is no such thing.

One of the protagonists, Mugen, employs unorthodox methods of sword fighting and is garnished in loose fitting clothes meant to resemble modern day street wear. He is heavily coded to be Black. His fighting style mimics breakdancing, and his body moves in an unwieldy, unpredictable manner. Furthermore, Mugen's backstory illustrates the atrocities of colonization. SPOILER WARNING. Mugen's backstory is based on the real location, the Ryuku Islands, that were colonized and eventually annexed by Japan. In the show, Mugen's island was massacred by the Shogunate, leaving him with no family and no knowledge of his islands' culture. This story can be interpreted as an allegory for American history and slavery. Black people were enslaved and deprived of their culture and language, leaving them only with what was before them to rebuild. That is why hip-hop's implementation into the show is crucial in its relation to the character's struggles because hip-hop is Black. Hip hop is not something the colonizer created; it expresses the experience of loss and oppression. Mugen's resentment and frustration set to hip-hop music is akin to the youth in the 1970s who used hip-hop as a creative outlet. The use of hip-hop within Samurai Champloo, while coming from two



vastly differing cultural backgrounds, represents the struggle against the authorities who try to maintain the status quo and oppress those who do not adhere to it. The intention of the music is to demonstrate the anachronistic tendencies of the genre, mixing old and new, the same way the show mixes contemporary street culture and feudal Japan. The music embodies rebellion and liberation, similar to how the show displays resistance against a corrupt government. Hip hop doesn't have rules; it breaks conventions in its aberrance. It forms a site of protest in the form of lawless music.

The anime's soundtrack is composed of notable hip hop artists such as Nujabes, Fatboy, and FORCE OF NATURE. These artists are often described as "lo-fi", a genre that integrates jazzy warm instrumentals against a grainy imperfect background. It pulls from hip-hop, but mixes in a lot of jazz elements to create an ambient "vibey" track. Nujabes is one of the forerunners of this style of hip-hop and eventually inspired other famous hip-hop artists like MF Doom, Madvillainy, and Blu to adopt lo-fi. The subgenre of "lo-fi hip hop" is testament to hip-hop's influence and how it continually gets remixed into other forms. Lo-fi hip-hop pulls from a politically charged genre, but by being remixed into something new altogether it takes on a new life. Hip-hop is a genre that inspires and its many remixes over the past few decades prove its relatability to countless amounts of people. Not to mention it is presently regarded as one of the biggest genres of music in the world, with many of the world's most famous musicians being hip-hop artists.

The intersection between hip-hop and anime extends beyond lo-fi and into modern rap. Rapper Megan Thee Stallion is known for liking anime by often cosplaying as popular characters, inserting anime references into her songs, and having a merchandise line with popular anime streaming site, Crunchyroll. Her love of anime is expressed in many of her projects, and in a recent interview with Sean Evans of "Hot Ones" she maintains she likes anime because she can relate to the main characters fighting against people who doubt them. She says, "I feel like...main character[s] in anime

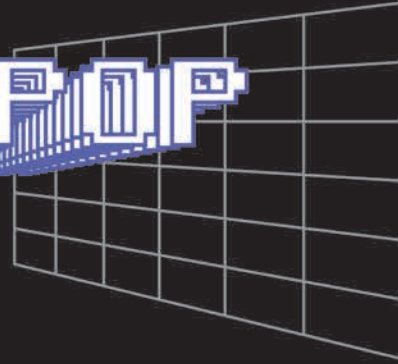
because...people try to count you out when they feel like you ain't shit or you ain't got something yet. But you training and training and fighting and fighting and keep proving everybody wrong. You keep beating the odds. I feel like that's the kind of person I am." The stories found within anime are widely applicable in people's lives and the ability for people to place themselves within these shows gives power to the individual in generating their own meanings and understandings of the world. Both art forms address similar themes of being doubted, ignored, and rejected; it's no question that the two influence and complement one another.

Hip-hop originated from the frustration within the marginalized communities of the south Bronx, but it is a liberating force due to its unrestrained self-expression. Hip-hop is a genre of counter culture, it serves as a space to reject the status quo. Therefore, its implementation in anime, especially when it's a notable feature, is critical in its storytelling. Like in *Devilman Crybaby*, a Netflix original, the anime displays freestyle rappers on the fringe of society who have become fan favorites, or how the anime *Afrosamurai* has an opening theme to a song by RZA. The most recent example of Nujabes' influence can be seen in *Yasuke*, a new netflix anime, with a jazzy score done by producer Flying Lotus. The collaboration of these two mediums subverts the audience expectations by inserting a traditionally American genre of music into a Japanese anime, but it succeeds in representing the hardships of the characters as they push against a society that continually fails them. Asian and Black culture have both similarly been inadequately addressed by the political systems that serve them. The collaboration by the two have a similar goal: liberation. Hip-hop calls for all listeners to break away from the hegemony of their society and follow the anarchic nature of "street culture." Not unlike *Samurai Champloo* where the characters long to be free and do what they want, but unfortunately, they are burdened by their roles in society as well as the rigid social structures in place preventing them from prospering.



What Do Chief Keef and Charlie XCX Have in Common?

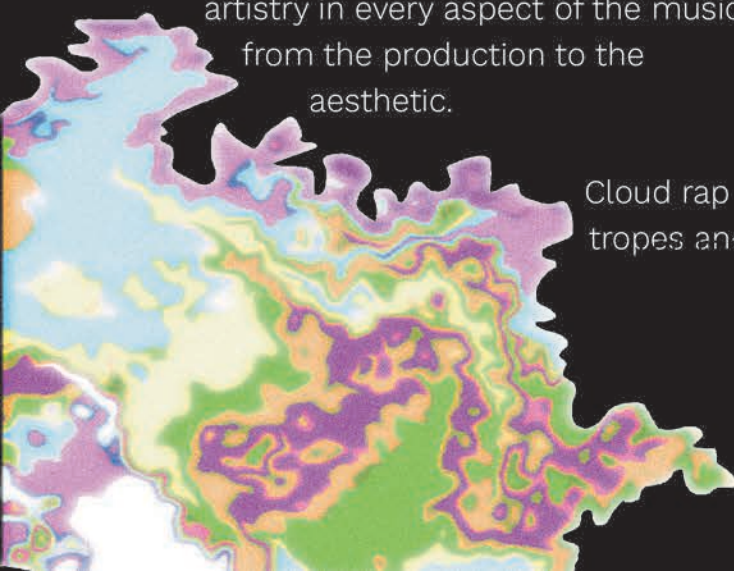
HYPERPOP



Hyperpop feels like it came from nowhere. The first ten seconds of David Shawty and Yungster Jack's viral song "Pressure" might be the most representative piece of hyperpop ever, with five producer and rapper tags stumbling over each other while the bumping synths bubble in the background. It's a shitshow, tons of amateur collectives taking influence from nowhere and everywhere to create a new wave of music. Marginalized artists use the internet as their primary platform of distribution, creating places for mental health in cloud rap and queer and trans people in PC Music. The aesthetics and musical styles of these two subgenres combined to create hyperpop.

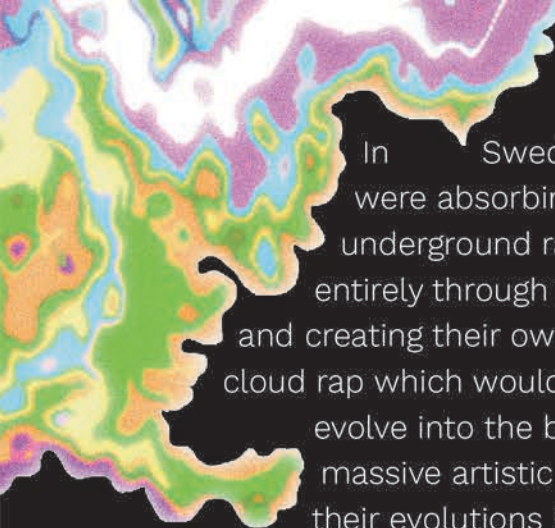
This all began in 2008. Lil B laid the blueprint for an emotional authenticity and vulnerability only found in cloud rap, yet his influence reached far and wide in the rap community. It fundamentally shifted the musical focus of rap from rhymes to finding artistry in every aspect of the music, from the production to the aesthetic.

Cloud rap tropes and



Written by Alton Sturgis & Elliot Yu
Design by Reyna Wang

instrumentals lend themselves perfectly to legendary Chicago drill rapper Chief Keef to express his struggles growing up in the disadvantaged O-block neighborhood in milestone mixtapes such as *Almighty So* and *Back From the Dead 2*. The former project features dense layers of drill drums, bold brass, and dreamy synth melodies that threaten to suffocate Keef's lethargic flow. Producer tags, gunshot samples, and outright silly sounds litter the soundscape to evoke the grimy atmosphere of a hotboxed trap house. The fact Keef is able to express this pain and struggle subliminally in such a stereotypically "shallow" subgenre of hip hop is an artistic achievement in its own right. The foundations for this vulnerability are found in the DNA of cloud rap. *Almighty So* plays like a look back at his days gangbanging and struggling to get by in the systemically poor neighborhoods of Chicago, coping with the trauma through copious amounts of drugs and money. It's a reflection of his upbringing that he can't directly address what he's experiencing - instead the pain reveals itself through claustrophobic production, unique delivery, and subversive lyrics.



In Sweden, four teens were absorbing early 2010s underground rap culture entirely through the internet and creating their own brand of cloud rap which would eventually evolve into the building of massive artistic personas, and their evolutions into unique music that heavily influenced hyperpop.

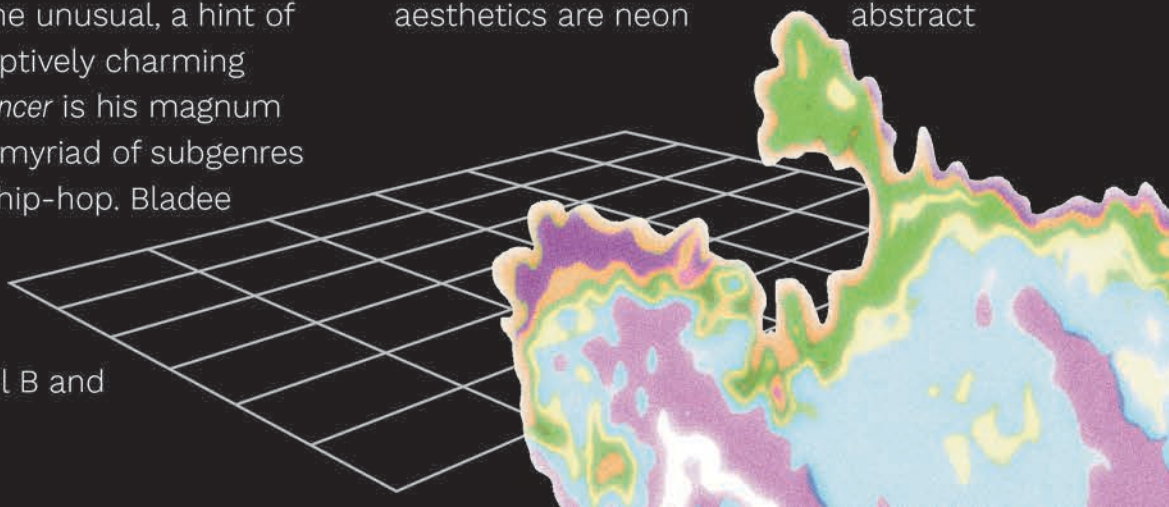
Yung Lean took the musical influences of Lil B, Chief Keef, and the bubbling vaporwave aesthetic of the early 2010s to bring cloud rap into the mainstream. His earliest works take straight from the book of Lil B. His first album, *Unknown Death 2002* features the dreamy instrumentals and absurd lyrics one might expect of cloud rap.

At the same time, close friend and affiliate Bladee was trailblazing his own distinct style. Bladee and Ecco2k got their musical start in the Swedish punk scene but were heavily influenced by Chief Keef and the cloud rap movement on the internet and assimilated those styles into their own brand of surreal cloud rap. However, Bladee took it on himself to completely embrace the musical persona he had created with his projects and track his mental health over the years. What has remained central to his style through all this time is a penchant for the unusual, a hint of spirituality, and his deceptively charming autotune crooning. *Icedancer* is his magnum opus, a launchpad for a myriad of subgenres loosely associated with hip-hop. Bladee continues the cloud rap tradition from the old greats, combining the aesthetic originality of Lil B and

the genius of Chief Keef to bring the art of hip-hop to another level.

PC Music is a London-based label and artist collective owned by A.G. Cook that sprouted the likes of GFOTY, Hannah Diamond, and SOPHIE. PC Music's internet background resulted in mixtures of UK Bass and numerous EDM genres to create what is formally known as "Bubblegum Bass". Bubblegum Bass reimagines pop with amplified femininity and chaotic presentation, which are achieved through pitched-up vocals, industrial soundscapes, and bouncy rhythms. Breakthrough single *Beautiful* by A.G. Cook represents everything PC Music stands for: themes of self affirmation delivered with layered feminine vocals, redefinition of a pop structure, and a sound of pure bliss.

SOPHIE particularly defined most of the movements in this space with multiple genre-breaking singles and mixes. She serves as a genesis for modern music because of her methods which remove samples in favor of hand-crafted sound. *BIPP* and *Lemonade* defined the bubblegum bass sound with its industrial samples and wonky yet danceable composition. *VYZEE* and *HARD* evolved the sound to a more accessible level with a quicker tempo and aggressive tones. The singles' aesthetics are neon abstract

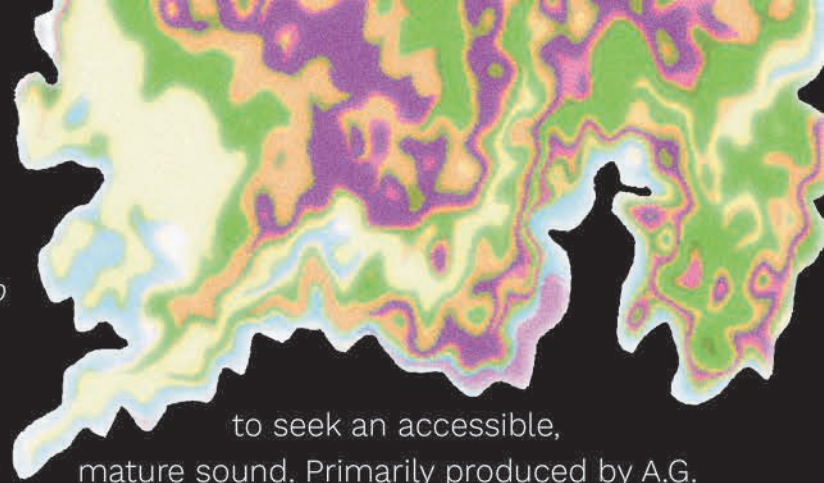


shapes on a minimalist backdrop which effectively represents the closeted state of the queer sound.

A two year hiatus from SOPHIE led to *It's Okay To Cry* (2017), a clear statement of transgender self-realization and desire to save kindred souls. The queer undertones to PC Music artists were finally unearthed and realized with this single. *OIL OF EVERY PEARL'S UN-INSIDES* (2018) is a personal trip through the transgender experience where we learn of SOPHIE's world where emotions are extremely sporadic like the music which can vary from the soft, bawl-producing intro to a depressing ambient static.

Genre-defining "Faceshopping" and "Immaterial" set the benchmark for the rest of the evolving scene that now portrays queer themes proudly and celebrates experimentation. While SOPHIE crafted experimental masterpieces in their own work, the production along with pop artists, especially Charli XCX, disseminated the scene's thesis to the masses to digest and understand for the next few years.

Charli XCX's story began with MySpace in 2008 making electro pop bangers that exploded in popularity. Her industry career progressed akin to a normal pop star until her exposure to P.C. Music. There, she met the likes of A.G. Cook and SOPHIE who gave her music an experimental flair. *Vroom Vroom* (2016) was a turning point for Charli - a flamboyant pop artist closely aligned with PC Music finally delving into the harsh experimental sounds offered by SOPHIE. The title track departs from traditional pop motifs and moves towards a chaotic production that serves as a perfect medium for Charli's lush vocals. *Pop 2* (2017) and *Charli* (2019) distanced themselves from the harsh, experimental noise



to seek an accessible, mature sound. Primarily produced by A.G. Cook, these albums thematically proclaim the rush of life viewed by a hedonistic, yet troubled lens. Although these two releases fell short of the experimental heights of *Vroom Vroom*, numerous artists sprang from the PC Music-inspired work in these three releases. *How I'm Feeling Now* (2020) was a return to the experimentation that set the bar for the emerging hyperpop scene. Produced by A.G. Cook during the COVID-19 quarantine, this is a cacophony of pent-up emotions expressed with hard-hitting EDM influences.

Outside of PC Music's developments, another soundcloud-based movement, NXC, formally known as nightcore, was experimentally progressing in parallel. Here, typical pop songs would be sampled into electronic dance songs with breakcore elements, hyper-femininity from pitch shifting, and fast tempos around 180 BPM. This scene was the home of Laura Les, a transgender woman finding solace in a genre that celebrates femininity in its sound. Dylan Brady was also active in soundcloud rap circles, where many emerging artists within cloud rap, avant-nightcore, and bubblegum bass would use his production. In their initial collaborations, they would mash all of these genres together to create the realized project 100 Gecs. The influences range from Skrillex, John Zorn, to PC Music,

which were all genre-defining acts. Their thesis is the chaotic reality of living in the post-information age presented in a sonic embodiment of a parody of everything the internet has done. Such a topically profound thesis is implicit and aesthetically disposed of by their absurd presentation and "lore". Their project cemented the genre "Hyperpop" by differentiating their sound and presentation from anyone else in the scene.

Osquinn, co-signed by 100 Gecs, is another one of the many big names of hyperpop, and her meteoric rise through internet music circles and Spotify playlists mirrors the growth of the genre.

Similarly, the biggest artists in the scene owe their success to the virality of the internet and their ability to access countless under-the-radar genres that seem to be perfectly suited to their personal identity: osquinn herself claims that one of her biggest influences is SOPHIE, who helped osquinn navigate the difficult realization that she was transgender. Still, the 15-year-old takes her musical influences from all over the place. She even stated in a Fader interview that she grew up listening to Chief Keef and other Chicago drill rappers and they were her main influence.

"i dont want that many friends in the first

place," her most popular track, utilizes distorted walls of synths and 808s punctuated with chiptune samples to create an infectious music experience. Her debut album drive-by lullabies takes her musical exploration even further. "mallgrabber p" is a minimalist take on hyperpop, featuring the signature pitched-up autotuned vocals but is decidedly more downtempo, with a soothing electric guitar in the background and occasional IDM-inspired clicks and beeps for percussion. Directly following that track is a showcase of osquinn's rapping chops. A sample-heavy instrumental with a rustic edge complements her pitched-down freeform verses, reminiscent of Earl Sweatshirt, who is also heavily influenced by cloud rap tropes.

100 Gecs and osquinn are the future of pop music. Their ability to mix and match the genres they love and manipulate them into completely new styles is a unique musical talent, but credit must be given where it's due. The self-parodying surreal aesthetic of cloud rap meshed with the danceable chaos of PC Music to create hyperpop, the artistic maximization of pop music. Hyperpop is truly remarkable for being a genre that came from accepting mental illness and transgender identities and still manages to be catchy as hell.



The Space Between Us: NASA's Problematic Portrait of Our Universal Language

Written by Ally Flygare &
Joe Sison

Design by Lohana Chiovarou

In 1977, the Voyager spacecrafts were launched by NASA on what would prove to be one of the defining accomplishments of the American Space Age: The Grand Tour of the Solar System. The mission was to flyby the outer planets and record scientific observations of them, their respective moons, rings, etc.

After completing this mission, Voyagers I and II would continue adrift, beyond the solar system, into interstellar space—the first manmade objects to leave the solar system. Carl Sagan and co. would not miss the opportunity to attach a time capsule to the Voyager, a time capsule to represent, and in all probability, outlive humanity. This historical cache would become The Golden Record.

One side of the record included 116 pictures detailing the extent of Western scientific knowledge, Earth's diverse geography, and stills of human life. The record also included sounds of Earth, ranging from the sounds of nature (whale song, waves crashing, etc.), greetings from the then UN Ambassador to the General Assembly, greetings in fifty-five languages, and just over 90 minutes of music.

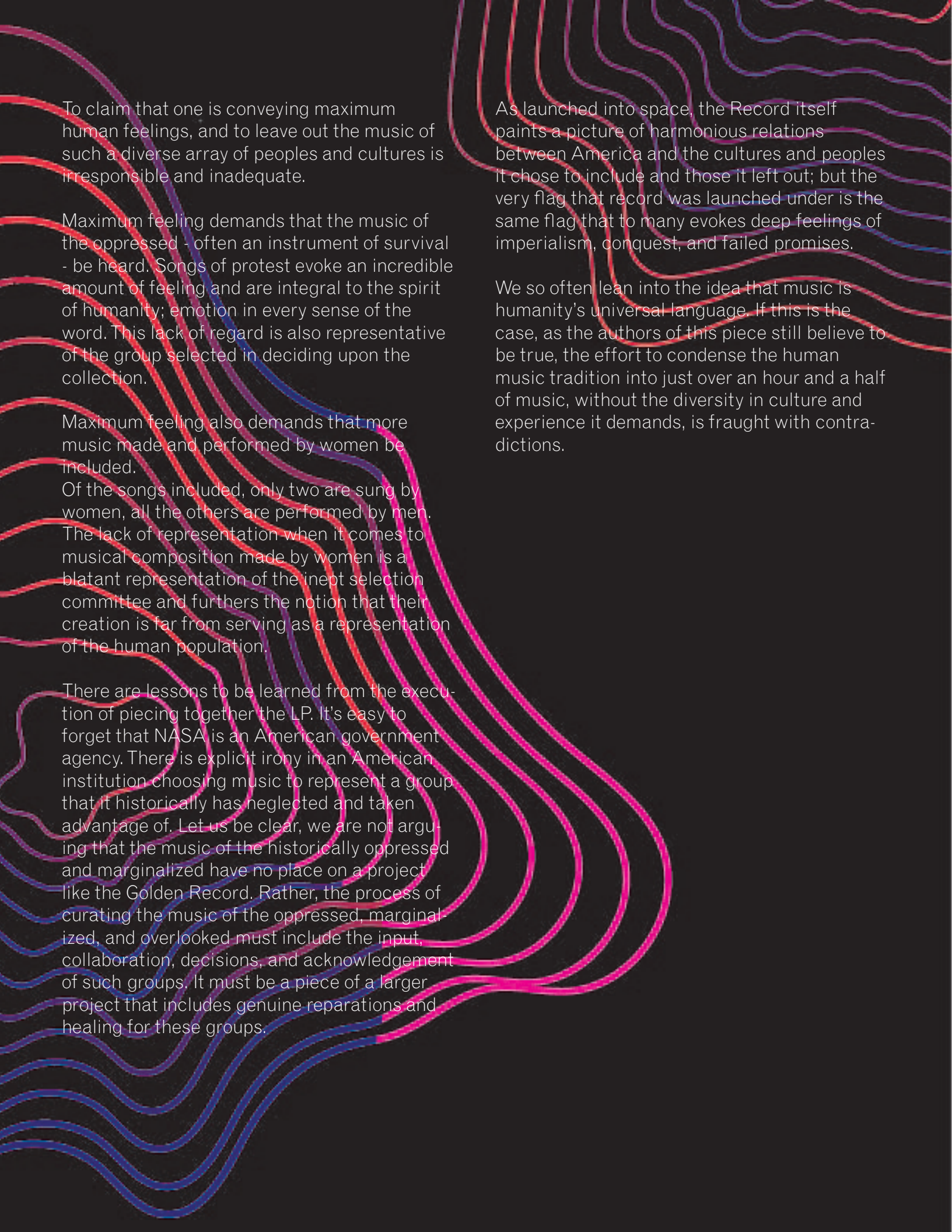
Of everything to be included on the Golden Record, it is the inclusion of 27 pieces of music that is the most informative about its makers' convictions and shortcomings. For a group of scientists, astronomers, engineers, and physicists to see the importance of including music, alongside milenia of scientific achievement and over a myriad of other aspects of the human project speaks volumes of our intimate connection with the artform. Music crescendos where our science derives and sings in place of theory. It exists at the edge of reason; its inclusion is a concession to the inkling that there are facets of the human experience that we still cannot explain.

By what criteria did Sagan and company choose which pieces to press onto the Golden Record? According to Jim Bell, author of *The Interstellar Age*, pieces were ultimately chosen "to convey the maximum feeling". And while the team acknowledged the importance of representing the diverse musical traditions around the world, "when choosing a single piece from a culture, the emotion conveyed by the piece was paramount".

However, to even give precedence to "maximum feeling" demands a diverse and representative sampling of the human musical tradition. Firstly, different cultures and peoples attach varying degrees of emotional investment to their music. For Sagan and co. to observe (as outsiders) a musical tradition and not give it its proper weight is fraught with complications. Not to mention the flux with which we as individuals preference and associate with music. The songs that brought you to tears in your adolescence may today evoke different feelings, but nonetheless continue to captivate the hearts and minds of a new youth.

Maximum feeling demands diversity in culture. (we need to unpack maximum feeling more evidently maximum feeling does not include the spectrum of human emotion, but rather the rosey, white-washed experience.) One need not look further to music of protest; how immersive music can be for the oppressed and how threatening it is to those in power.

In spite of this, with the criteria of maximum feeling in place and with the consultation of a handful of music historians, of the twenty-seven pieces chosen, 11 were from European or Western countries, 2 were from female musicians, and an astounding 5 pieces were from Bach and Beethoven alone. (A full list of the pieces can be found on NASA's website.)



To claim that one is conveying maximum human feelings, and to leave out the music of such a diverse array of peoples and cultures is irresponsible and inadequate.

Maximum feeling demands that the music of the oppressed - often an instrument of survival - be heard. Songs of protest evoke an incredible amount of feeling and are integral to the spirit of humanity; emotion in every sense of the word. This lack of regard is also representative of the group selected in deciding upon the collection.

Maximum feeling also demands that more music made and performed by women be included.

Of the songs included, only two are sung by women, all the others are performed by men. The lack of representation when it comes to musical composition made by women is a blatant representation of the inept selection committee and furthers the notion that their creation is far from serving as a representation of the human population.

There are lessons to be learned from the execution of piecing together the LP. It's easy to forget that NASA is an American government agency. There is explicit irony in an American institution choosing music to represent a group that it historically has neglected and taken advantage of. Let us be clear, we are not arguing that the music of the historically oppressed and marginalized have no place on a project like the Golden Record. Rather, the process of curating the music of the oppressed, marginalized, and overlooked must include the input, collaboration, decisions, and acknowledgement of such groups. It must be a piece of a larger project that includes genuine reparations and healing for these groups.

As launched into space, the Record itself paints a picture of harmonious relations between America and the cultures and peoples it chose to include and those it left out; but the very flag that record was launched under is the same flag that to many evokes deep feelings of imperialism, conquest, and failed promises.

We so often lean into the idea that music is humanity's universal language. If this is the case, as the authors of this piece still believe to be true, the effort to condense the human music tradition into just over an hour and a half of music, without the diversity in culture and experience it demands, is fraught with contradictions.

LET WOMEN BE HAPPY

Written by Baylie Raddon

Design by Lohana Chiovarou

As listeners of music, we've all heard at one time or another people who cite music as a place of solace, as therapy. Something about relating to melancholy music must be cathartic because when dealing with heartbreak, walking in the rain, or avoiding your thoughts, many of us turn to sad music to immerse ourselves fully in the emotion. In the crying playlists of the last decade or so, you are likely to find one or more of the following names; Lorde, Billie Eilish, Mitski, the women of Boy Genius, Taylor Swift, and Adele. Other than being unified by the Sad Girl trope, these female artists have something else in common: their listeners are dependent on them remaining as somber as they have been and often hope that they will become even more dejected. Why do people, even the fans of the artists, seem to want women to be upset?

With her fans keeping tabs on her Antarctica adventures and onion ring reviews, Lorde has been watched like a hawk for signs of dropping an album. During the summer rumors spread quickly and in June, she released her first single in four years, "Solar Power." This single was met with what must have been a surprising amount of criticism for an artist whose very first release was an immediate success. The fans biggest complaint? Lorde seemed *happy*. She urges the audience to "forget all the tears [they've] cried - it's over." For many of the fans, this felt like a betrayal; after over a year of a pandemic, jubilant growth was not what most expected to be reflected in the pop star's music. When the second single, "Stoned at the Nail Salon," came out, fans were relieved at the somber reflection on the passage of time that mirrored the artist's previous fan favorites. Then the whole album came out, and fans were left yearning for that same bittersweet feeling, but instead found a level of happiness they were

not prepared to confront. Controversy ensued in the fandom, with two sides essentially arguing "we don't like the album" and the other saying "you just don't like that she's happy." The latter might be onto something.

One of the poster children for sad indie music in the past few years has been Phoebe Bridgers. The singer-songwriter has been quite successful recently, and she embraces the icon of sadness that she represents to her fans, so much so that she leans into it with the title of her record label: Saddest Factory Records. Muna, one of the bands signed to the label, put out a triumphant song just like Lorde this summer. Title "Silk Chiffon," the "bop," as the kids call it, features Phoebe Bridgers on a verse and chorus. The repeated refrain of the song is "Life's so fun." While this song was better received than Lorde's recent releases, some people on the internet lamented the shift in the tone of Bridger's music. With the 27-year-old recently being public with her boyfriend, "Normal People" actor Paul Mescal, fans have been commenting on how Bridgers is in her "*Lover* Era," which is a reference to Taylor Swift's 2019 album about being in a happy relationship. Fans worry that, like Swift, Bridgers might write a happy album about being in love they won't enjoy because of the tone. Though there are fans that prefer *Lover* to some of Swift's other albums, overall, it is one of her least popular releases, and if Phoebe Bridgers were to write something of that caliber, she might suffer the same fate.

Phoebe Bridgers, however, seems to make everything she touches have a little bit of sadness or irony at least, and while she embraces it, not even all her bandmates feel the same. Bridgers is a part of the trio *Boygenius*,



which is composed of her, Julien Baker, and Lucy Dacus. All three of these women get funneled into the category of “Sad Girl Indie.” While most of Baker’s songs are quite heavy, often dealing with mental health issues and mentions of suicidal ideation, and Dacus’s songs are rife with heartbreak and visceral angst, Dacus does not want her or women like her to be limited in synch a way.

This issue of pigeonholing is even worse for women of color such as Mitski, who is often crowned as one of the leading voices of the genre Lucy Dacus takes issue with. In the case of Mitski’s music, she is often describing her experience as a woman of color trying to wrestle with a world that favors white people. Her white fans often relate her experience to how they feel about their queerness or mental illness, which Mitski does seem to touch on, though not as explicitly as issues of race. Mitski released a single for the first time in three years titled “Working for The Knife” which criticizes the working culture within capitalism, which is another common theme in her music, yet the internet looks to her to release more music that can make them feel sad. Out of all the artists mentioned, she addresses the widest range of issues in her music, yet she is not described as thought-provoking, just sad.

All of these women tackle intense topics and emotions through their music and whether or not they have put out “happier” music recently, they are allowed to create whatever type of music they want. Music is never simply happy or sad, just as people are never just happy or sad. There is a large range of emotions that all people feel that is represented in the music of the “Sad Girl Indie” genre, and it should be paid attention to. When sadness is prioritized, pain necessarily comes with that and just because the audience might be in pain, rejoicing in and banking on the pain of others is not appropriate or fair. Besides, while the world is going through collective trauma and sadness is the most prominent thing you see in people’s faces,

isn't it a relief that there are those out there who have shown they understand pain and can also demonstrate happiness, growth, and betterment. To me, that is more comforting than any crying playlist could be.



THE ANTI-GRIMES MANIFESTO

written by Piper Samuels and designed by Lucia Agnew



A SPECTER IS HAUNTING THE INTERNET — THE SPECTER OF GRIMES!

Thus Piper Samuels introduces her program for the reorientation of justice-seeking music listeners towards new electronic-pop artists.

A specter is haunting the digital sphere—the specter of a pseudo-activist tech giant worshipper with a desperate individuality complex. All the powers of justice-seeking activists, TikTok teen leftists, and theory-reading library dwellers have entered a holy alliance to (metaphorically) “hunt down” and “exorcise” this specter: Popes and Tsars, Rave Connesseirs and House Heads, EDM Geeks and Pop Princesses, Activists and Allies.

The post in question pictures Claire Elise Boucher holding a copy of Karl Marx’s *The Communist Manifesto*. (And no, she’s not one of the Bob’s Burgers children. I said “Boucher,” not “Belcher.”) We’re talking about the centibillionaire-South-African-space-mogul’s sugar-baby, most often referred to as “Grimes.” Her caption reads,

“Full disclosure I’m still living with e and I am not a communist... I’m more interested in a radical decentralized ubi that I think could potentially be achieved thru crypto and gaming but I haven’t ironed that idea out enough yet to explain it.”

It’s a humanitarian shame Grimes’ policy idea is too wrinkly for elaboration. Rumor has it the United Nations’ highest-paid diplomacy strategists frequently reference “Oblivion” for inspiration. Rumor has it Robert Reich’s Twitter account is run by Holy Child X Æ A-Xii. Rumor has it that when the gatekeepers of heaven showed this caption to William Shakespeare, Karl Marx, and Thomas Edison, they immediately had an orgy and were brought back to life. They say God was so inspired, He joined the party.

Every day that passes without Grimes in office, a species gets added to the “endangered” list. Every day that passes without Grimes in office, a quarter billion children die of hunger. Every day that passes without Grimes in office, Uber prices surge by 64% and wait times by another 27%. Experts claim the Roman Empire fell because it didn’t do enough crypto and gaming.

Move over, Hillary. There’s a new girlboss in town. Make America Grimes Again! It’s tough to compete with Boucher’s utter literary and political eloquence, but I’m going to give it my best shot. Back to reality: Why did this pasty, eyeliner-wearing Canadian assert herself into the contemporary era’s justice-oriented discursive political spheres? Who gave her the right?

I: Big Tech Bourgeois and Artist-Proletarians

This titanium trophy wife (Grimes) is/was partnered with the single most powerful, exploitative, and oppressive capitalist ever to walk the earth (and float in space): Elon Musk. Therefore, by the transitive property of relationship status, she actively supports the oppressive systems that exploit communities across the world, especially those in the Global South, who are faced with no choice but to provide Musk with slave labor. This physical manifestation of a Redditor’s wet dream (Grimes) immensely benefits from this slave labor.

Although Grimes claims that her “bf doesn’t fund [her] career,” her partnership with Musk grants her significantly more mainstream attention than fellow electro-pop artists who aren’t so closely allied to celebrity billionaires. These artist-proletarians should not have to enter artificial relationships with artificial-intelligence lovers simply to have their autotuned voices heard by the industry.

This manic-pixie-dream-alien (Grimes) exploits her own quirky behavior to demand space within progressive circles— circles that strive to uplift communities whose identities have been legitimately and systemically marginalized by Western hegemonic structures. Newsflash, Grimes: quirkiness does not equal marginalization.

This self-proclaimed “martian” should instead refer to herself as “pig,” because she incessantly hogs a major artistic platform that would be much better suited for activists and artists of color. It is high time that justice-seeking music listeners direct their ears towards new electro-alt-pop musicians— musicians whose art uplifts marginalized communities and makes legitimate steps towards social progress, justice, liberation, and eventual harmony.

II: Artist-Proletarians and Justice-Seeking Music Listeners

We, the justice-seeking music listeners, have one tool at our disposal: choice. The tech industry may have created the code that fuels our listening, but we have the power to use this code to support and uplift artists from underrepresented groups. Below is a list of musical alternatives to Grimes: all femme and/or queer and/or POC, none married to centibillionaire oppressors.

Yaeji - “WAKING UP DOWN”
Spelling - “Haunted Water”
Erika de Casier - “Better Than That”
Kero Kero Bonito - “The Princess and the Clock”
Santigold - “Crashing Your Party”
CSS - “Hits Me Like a Rock”
Rina Sawayama - “Tokyo Love Hotel”
SOPHIE - “VYZEE”

L’Rain - “Two Face”
Kelsey Lu - “Poor Fake”
Kilo Kish - “NICE OUT”
Charli XCX - “anthems”
Arca - “Machote”
Namasenda - “Unlimited Ammo”
PinkPantheress - “Nineteen”

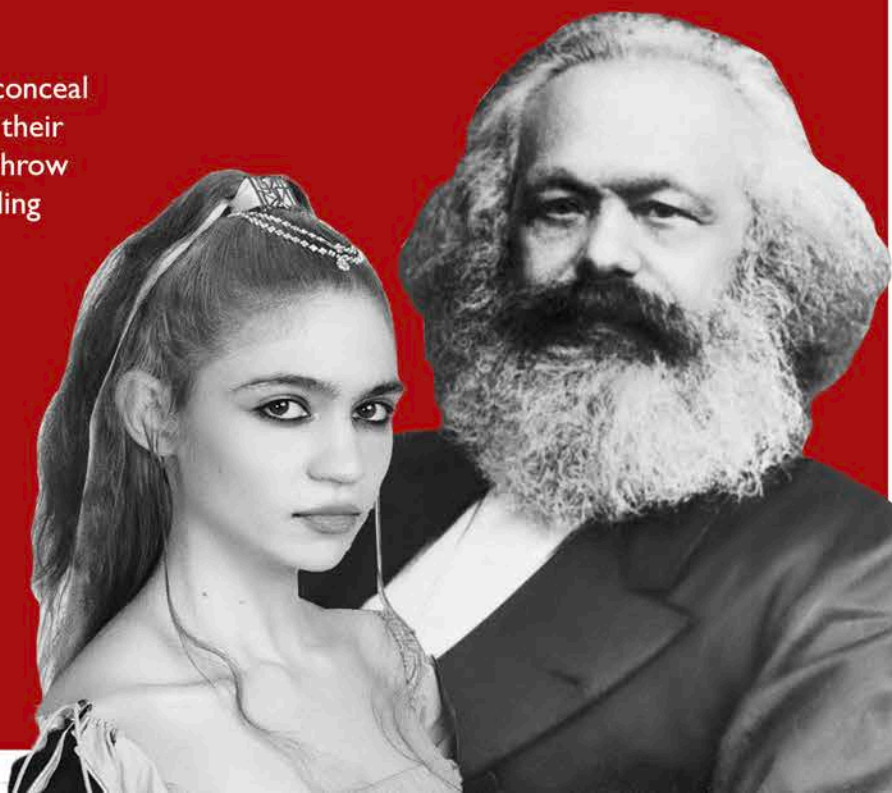
Stream their songs! Add them to your playlists! Share their music to your Instagram story! “Gatekeeping” is a thing of the past— democratize the industry, promote horizontal ownership! Spread radical love!

III: Conclusion, as Marx put it:

The justice-seeking music listeners disdain to conceal their views and aims. They openly declare that their ends can be attained only by the musical overthrow of Grimes and the tech giants, alike. Let the ruling classes tremble at a justice-seeking musical revolution. The artist-proletarians and justice-seeking listeners have nothing to lose but their chains. They have an industry to win.


**ARTIST-PROLETARIANS AND
JUSTICE-SEEKING MUSIC LISTENERS
OF ALL COUNTRIES, UNITE!**

(thru crypto and gaming ofc)



the case for country

Walker
Price



Country gets a bad rap. It's undeniable. Ask anyone aged 15-28 what they listen to and I guarantee 85% of them will reply with the time-tested "anything but country." It's a genre that gets constantly derided as the nationalism-touting genre of southern rednecks. Its image has, in recent years, seen rehabilitation with the popularity of "Y'allternative" and artists like Kacey Musgraves. She's not exempt from controversy, getting slammed online for her photoshoot posing in a food truck in which she was flippant towards essential workers during the COVID-19 pandemic, proving the genre still has a long way to go. However, country's bad reputation is largely rooted in classism. The genre that began and continues in the working-class south to express pro-union sentiments by workers, anger at unjust management, and anger at capitalism itself proves that country is a radical genre. The term redneck, an epithet generally directed at

Design by
Ana Light

"The music, and what it represents, act as a dreamy, slowcore-tinged subversion of the mainstream perspective of country music"

lower-class southerners, is classist, referring to one who does manual, "unskilled" labor, one whose neck gets sunburned from working outside. To reduce this entire genre and all of its subgenres with a rich, diverse working-class history to what amounts to Bo Burnham's portrayal in an episode of Parks and Recreation is not only classist, but unfortunate for the closed-minded individual ignorant to eclectic music with a rich history. A lot of fantastic country music is being created right now in all regions of the country by people who do not fit the typical "America-first" portrait of a country artist. Enter Jodi. Jodi is a Chicago-based solo project by Montclair, New Jersey's Nick Levine. Levine, who is nonbinary, cut their teeth in twangy indie band Pinegrove. Jodi seems to draw a lot of comparisons to their alma mater, but the project fully distinguishes itself as a new creative venture, with Levine as the mastermind. They describe the project as "queer country,"

a label that would probably turn some heads at a Luke Combs concert and provides listeners with a very convenient preview of what to expect. Blue Heron, their debut LP on Chicago's Sooper Records, is studded with declarations of queer love. Songs like "Softy" feature gut-wrenchingly vulnerable lyrics like "you can always call/softy, after all/i'm your biggest fan/hear the show of hands" sung in Levine's near-falsetto that provides a constant companion to their masterful use of pedal steel throughout the record. The album doesn't rely exclusively on traditional country instruments: the pedal steel and a 12-string guitar both grace different tracks, the former on the majority of the album and the latter on opener "Power," delving into synths and electronic drums while still suffusing the project with warmth.

The music, and what it represents, act as a dreamy, slowcore-tinged subversion of the mainstream perspective of country music: it's sonically and lyrically modern, in line with the trends of the bustling Chicago music scene while still carving its own niche, and Levine's queer identity bleeds into the lyrics. This combination of factors succeeds in setting the project apart from the genre's zeitgeist and ushering in a new era of country, one in which new artists delve into the genre, unafraid of the stigma surrounding the genre and the relentless fun people like to poke at it. I dream of a world in which people respond to the "what music do you like?" question with a far less classist, "Anything but Imagine Dragons."

Present Punk & Past Precedent In The Bay Area

Written by Arielle Steere,
Design by Stella Singer

Two Saturdays after arriving in the Bay Area, I stood on a dark San Francisco beach, in some sort of dystopian dream. Lit by a single portable stage light, a crowd of Mad Max-esque teenagers huddled around the quick bass and drums of Moms with Bangs, a local punk group. This was a benefit show for the Red Cross put on by the teen run Control Zine. "Controlapooza" was spray painted in red on the wall behind the bands, which separated the beach from a forgotten dumping ground. You could see the silhouettes of scraggly trees and brush and the boats on the black water. By the end of the show, my clothes and everyone else's were yellow from the dust kicked up in the mosh pit.

This show was my introduction to the DIY Bay Area Punk scene. The music was loud and fast. The bands stomped and screamed and banged their heads. There was aggression, but it was friendly. Kids were sweet to each other.

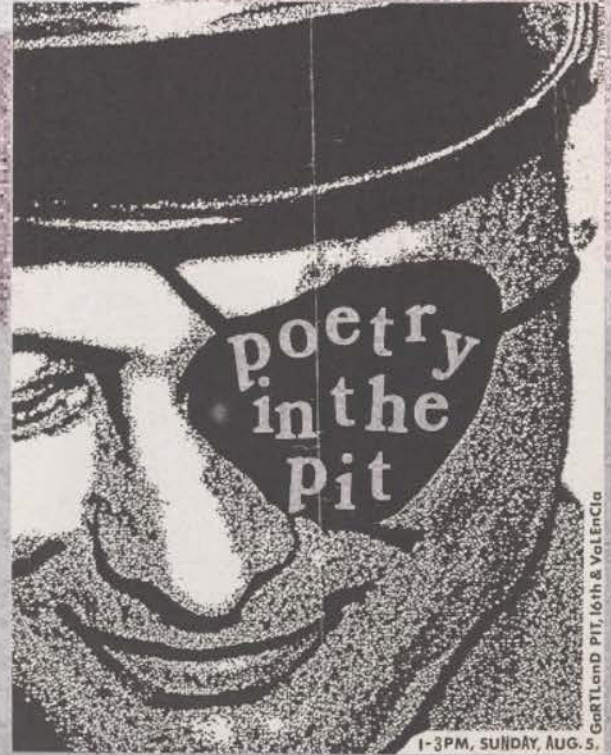
"Oh my God I love your hair lemme get your number," as they picked each other up in the mosh pit.

Six bands played: Moms with Bangs, Hell Bound Pound, Failsafe, Steel Worker, Iron Front, and Surprise Privilege. They were all fast, reminiscent of the Germs but with the humor of the Dead Milkmen, and a little more metal.

Starting hard and fast, then would slow to deep sections. The pit would break out energetically, and then the bands would give us time to breathe with a pounding, slower bass line. I have always loved LA hardcore. Never had I been to a show that imitated it so well without the same above-it-all attitude.

After the show I talked to one of the bands, Surprise Privilege, the most well known of the acts. They have put on more than a dozen outdoor, free, public shows in the last year.

I understood their growing popularity. I saw something special in this outdoor show.



The use of public space creates a more inclusive and community-oriented place than in a venue. No stage. No separation of audience and artist. A space to create and be accounted for is worth more than just the sound. The space builds passion for community. And the audience values more than just music.

Giving people access to a free space to create and enjoy that creativity has power. "It's very important for punk to be all ages. If it's old people it's stagnant, and that is not what punk is about," Cody from Surprise Privilege told me. He's right. Punk is a response to something outdated. It can't be stagnant. In spite of the white washed commercialization of punk culture, punk is made up of ethnic minorities, political radicals, and overlooked citizens. It is aggressively avant-garde, a political and creative outburst. It has the ability to create change, to bring people together to protest and make art that is a reaction to the norm. It has the ability to represent minority people, such as people of color and the queer community and all anti-commercial outliers.

Alice Bag, activist and punk singer from the LA hardcore scene, nailed it: "Punk has been portrayed as music by and for angry

white males, but in its inception, it was a rebellion against all rock cliches. Gender, ethnic, sexual and class taboos were all challenged by our early punk community and that is a story which is not very often told. People of color, queer folk, women—all were present from the very beginning of Punk.”

Watching Controlapalooza, I admired the ability to collect energetic young people into a public space to create and enjoy...but there was something big missing.

Talking to both Surprise Privilege and the creators of Control Zine, it was clear that they understood how their space and energy could potentially make an impact on the local punk scene, but there was a disconnect between what they wanted to see and their actual shows. Punk has always been seen as “white people music,” as Cody put it. This space is too white. There is a glaring lack of race and gender diversity. No female band members, and people of color woefully few in the bands. At its core, the founding ethos of punk is diverse and radical. There needs to be more to show for it. This scene falls short.

“We definitely need more representation,” Cole from Controlopolza admitted. “More artists, more genres, more people. Punk has far to go.”

Cole addresses the question. Change is wanted. Both Control Zine and the bands they represent acknowledge that punk falls short when representing the scope of cultures and peoples in the Bay Area. What needs to happen, if change is really wanted, is an effort to showcase bands that include people of color, a wider scope of genders and identities. “Punk” really means a scene that reaches into the big Bay and pulls a diversity of artists and art to incite the action that embodies the ethos of the genre.

The Bay area has a powerful living tradition of art and activism. In the late 80s, an art scene erupted out of economic instability, a punk scene akin to Controlapalooza in its raw energy and proud griminess. Urban Rats was a group that created street art. Gartland Pit was an outdoor pit where performance groups much like current Bay Area punks put on illegal shows. The SF punks of the 80s protested for more affordable housing and against laws supporting gentrification.

In Golden Gate Park, the Urban Rats would make anti-Reagan street art. The movement brought on a unique wave of punk focused on ritual, activism and rebellion. Punks here used public spaces like the Gartland Pit to create a diverse community of people who not only valued the ridiculous and avante garde but wanted a voice and a place in a rapidly changing and unequal city. The Bags spoke out against the homogeneity of the punk scene showcased in the doc film Decline of Western Civilization, also used their own scene to represent POC, women and the queer community. This niche of punk took advantage of the Bay Area’s open space, generating a grassroots and-anti authoritarian movement through performance making.

Doing the same now will be difficult. As much as I believe the Bay Area’s current and growing punk scene needs to be more inclusive, diverse and charged, there are formidable obstacles. Emerging from the pandemic, it can be hard for artists to make connections.

Over coffee, in an interview a few weeks later, Cole explains the difficulty of forging connections; “It was already so hard to find the bands we work with now, especially when so many artists have been isolated by the pandemic, and work solo.” He knows that growing the audience brings more risk in illegal shows.

Reading about past movements and scenes, and witnessing current ones, I feel that this metro subset of punk could be close to a breakthrough and new significance. After the male dominated, testosterone-poisoned pits of LA punk, this scene is refreshing. I got here so weary of black cuffed pants and Vans shoes, and I am so glad to see printed knee socks, dyed hair, outrageous leather jackets. It’s so much younger and more vibrant here.

There is a smiling cynicism and sense of humor among both the audience and bands that creates an atmosphere that seems more accepting of diversity, the avant-garde, change. There is space and music because these people love it. They create it themselves, and they can make it more inclusive and significant.

Letter from the Editor

Design by Elise Rodriguez

With love, I conclude the 11th edition of The B-Side Magazine, our 2nd Fall iteration during my time as Editor-in-Chief, and one of my favorite issues to date.

This current installment has so many wonderful insightful pieces on music culture and I am ecstatic to see it all come together. I am extremely proud of every contributor in this magazine and I am so excited for it to be shared with the rest of our community. Thank you to our dream design team, thank you to our enriching writers, our editors, and everyone who contributed to this issue, in any way shape or form —this magazine in your hands is the cultivation of countless hours of hard work and dedication.

Last semester, we had so many of our beloved members graduate, but this term we added so many new lovely people to our already vibrant team. All the fresh faces, their dewy joy, and the newfound excitement feels like fuel for our publication's fire. On top of the already ferocious determination from our existing team, the B-Side proves to be a combination of many forces that come together to make something special.

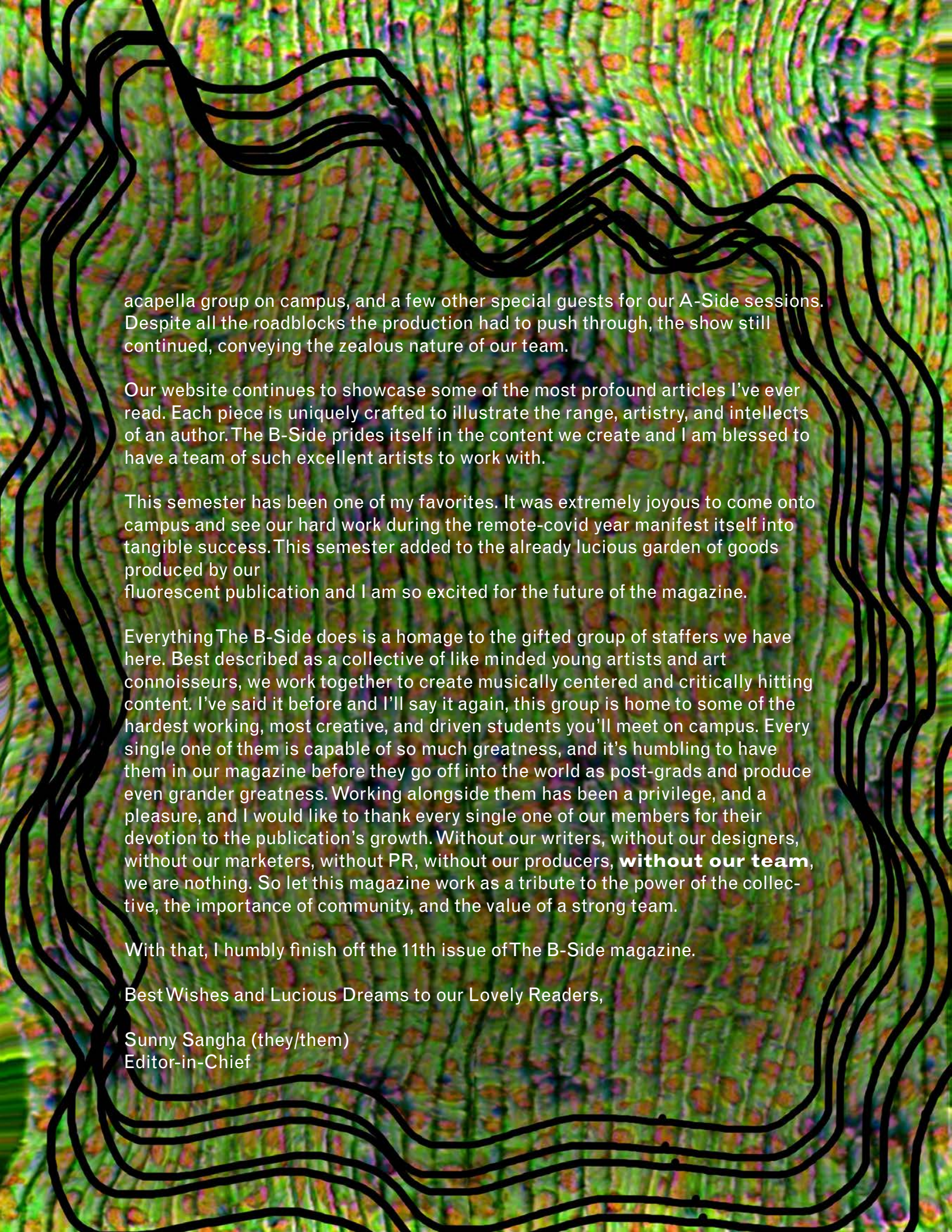
This was our first time meeting in person again since Spring 2020. It was beyond beautiful to see everyone in person again and collaborate in the ways we previously did. Although it took some time adjusting back into a "new normal", the semester was enriched by being able to see people in real life and interact with fewer barriers.

Our numbers this semester doubled, and we received a record breaking number of applications. To have such an eager and large group of creatives on campus seeking comfort within the pages of our magazine is something so sweet and indescribable. I hope to provide each future prospect, and current, an experience they cherish forever and knowledge they use continuously in their careers.

Throughout the semester we've reached many achievements. We've hit 15k followers on our Tik-Tok, rounded out to 2k on Instagram, and almost 400 followers on Spotify. We've created a consistent and kind flow of eyes from our socials to our articles, productions, and other projects.

This semester we've gotten our team back to covering concerts, highlighting fan favorites such as Isaiah Rashad, Japanese Breakfast, Phoebe Bridgers, and so so many others.

We've also gotten to work with local artists, like the extraordinary Tie Knee J, an amazing



acapella group on campus, and a few other special guests for our A-Side sessions. Despite all the roadblocks the production had to push through, the show still continued, conveying the zealous nature of our team.

Our website continues to showcase some of the most profound articles I've ever read. Each piece is uniquely crafted to illustrate the range, artistry, and intellects of an author. The B-Side prides itself in the content we create and I am blessed to have a team of such excellent artists to work with.

This semester has been one of my favorites. It was extremely joyous to come onto campus and see our hard work during the remote-covid year manifest itself into tangible success. This semester added to the already luscious garden of goods produced by our fluorescent publication and I am so excited for the future of the magazine.

Everything The B-Side does is a homage to the gifted group of staffers we have here. Best described as a collective of like minded young artists and art connoisseurs, we work together to create musically centered and critically hitting content. I've said it before and I'll say it again, this group is home to some of the hardest working, most creative, and driven students you'll meet on campus. Every single one of them is capable of so much greatness, and it's humbling to have them in our magazine before they go off into the world as post-grads and produce even grander greatness. Working alongside them has been a privilege, and a pleasure, and I would like to thank every single one of our members for their devotion to the publication's growth. Without our writers, without our designers, without our marketers, without PR, without our producers, **without our team**, we are nothing. So let this magazine work as a tribute to the power of the collective, the importance of community, and the value of a strong team.

With that, I humbly finish off the 11th issue of The B-Side magazine.

Best Wishes and Luscious Dreams to our Lovely Readers,

Sunny Sangha (they/them)
Editor-in-Chief

