

# The Griffins' Nest

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Year after year, Mariah Carey's "All I Want For Christmas Is You" plays from millions of speakers across the globe. We've all heard the song, with its stellar vocals and pleasing melody..."

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# CRYING WOLF: HAMBER'S FOUR CONSECUTIVE FIRE ALARM PULLS

NEWS REPORT by Andre Chen (11)

With the holidays around the corner, Hamber's halls have been filled with the ringing of bells. Unfortunately, the bells in question were not of the Christmas variety, but instead issued by the Fire Department.

Beginning on Dec. 11, Hamber's fire alarm system was triggered four consecutive school days in a row, between the end of lunch and the end of school. By the end of the fourth day, some students were used to having a sort of 'break' from their afternoon classes.

"When it was unexpected the first couple of times it was fun," Suwhan Hsu (11) admitted to the Nest, "but after a while it actually got annoying."

Jake Jang (11), a student in Ms. Mysuria's fourth block AP Calculus class, recounted how he was rescued by the bell.

"When I read the first question, I was like, oh no, I don't know how to do this. I guess it was lucky that the alarm went off when it did," he said.

However, despite many students growing fond of the short afternoon break caused by the fire bell, students with more challenging courses and tests found that these disruptions negatively affected their performance.

"I had math during fourth block, so it was often interrupted by the alarm," said Zoey Cheng (10). "We had a test one class so we had to leave in the middle of it, so we ended up having less time to finish it."

Oliver Seid (10) held a

similar opinion, exclaiming that, "the pulls really pushed my buttons!"

Although there was some diversity in the student body's response to the situation, Hamber's teaching faculty collectively believed that the series of fire alarms were a waste of valuable class time.

"I had to move one of my chemistry tests because my class lost a bunch of in-class study time," said Mr. D. Nguyen (Science). "I also had to be wary of my planning for the test reschedule, as I did not know whether the alarm would be pulled that block."

Mr. Nguyen states that, because of the disturbances, his schedule had to be pushed back further, and as a result, his class would have less time in January to prepare for upcoming tests. Rescheduling class plans while also keeping the course load manageable was a common concern among Hamber teachers.

Some classes were in the middle of a test when the fire bells started ringing.

"Well, we were in the middle of doing a test, right? So that created anxiety, not just for myself but I'm sure for students too as we rushed out," shared Ms. N. Mysuria (Mathematics).

Ms. Mysuria also stated that though the alarm disrupted her test period and led to rescheduling complications, there was nothing else they could do but move on.

"So in the end, you always have to just adapt. It is what it is, you have to deal with it," she said.

Teachers also noticed that the evacuation process proved to be uncomfortable for many

students as they were not dressed to stay outside in the cold for long periods of time.

"What I had on wasn't enough for the cold weather. I wasn't prepared for that," said Kae Lin Whiton (11), who was wearing a thin, long sleeve top the first day. Many students voiced similar concerns.

Cold weather was not the only challenge regarding student evacuation. Mr. B. Gibson (Learning Strategies) explained some of the difficulties faced in evacuating students of Hamber's Learning Strategies department. Many students face sensory issues in the class, and according to Mr. Gibson, they encountered anxiety and stress during the fire alarms.

"I've had some students walk outside in their socks or feet because they didn't want to wreck their indoor shoes," Mr. Gibson said. "There was

even a girl that fainted due to an anxiety attack. The crowds, the fire alarms, everything. Her anxiety got so bad that she actually temporarily passed out."

Furthermore, Mr. Gibson mentioned that the construction for Hamber's new building has caused a new level of inaccessibility for wheelchair users. Now, every time an evacuation occurs, students in wheelchairs have to be brought around Willow St. and along the busy Oak St. sidewalk to the turf, which is generally less safe and could cause uncomfortable sensory reactions.

He also noted that the thought of the fire alarm ringing again gave many students writing tests in the skills room exacerbated anxiety, negatively influencing their academic performance.

"The worst thing is, it's tax

payers dollars," said Winston Lee (10). "The fool who pulls the fire alarm is taking money out of their own parents' pockets for a practical joke." While the exact cost of a fire alarm is uncertain, concerns have been raised about a shortened budget as a consequence.

Mr. A. MacInnes (Administration), Hamber's Acting Vice Principal, explained that incidents like these extend beyond the students and faculty of Hamber.

"Hamber actually has priority over some other emergency operations due to our large student population," said Mr. MacInnes, explaining that fire trucks en-route to a different location would be redirected to Hamber in the case of a fire alarm. "As a result of the fire alarms, these first responders are taken away from their normal duties where they could be out, saving lives."



ADDIE GUAN

## Quebec Doubles English University Tuition, Then Steps Back After Controversy

NEWS REPORT by Olivia Gowans Hoar (10)

In October, Quebec's government announced that university tuition for out-of-province students would almost double, a decision that sparked widespread backlash, including student protests. On Dec. 14, they reduced the minimum to \$12,000, but added a French education requirement, according to *CBC News*. The current minimum yearly tuition for an out-of-province student is \$8,992.

The \$12,000 is nonetheless a 33 per cent increase, and would make studying in Quebec more expensive than anywhere else in Canada, according to Deep Saini, McGill's president and vice-chancellor. The new policy states that 80 per cent of graduates from the three English-language universities must reach a level five oral proficiency in French. Level five involves responding to basic questions and having simple conversations. While the tuition increase will apply starting in the fall, the French requirement will not apply until the 2025-2026 academic year.

"The measures that the government released today are devastating. They are far worse than those announced on Oct. 13,"

Saini told *University Affairs*. Saini does not consider the 80 per cent French requirement feasible. "In the light of the damage these measures cause, I can only view this as a targeted attack."

Higher Education Minister Pascale Déry and Premier François Legault aim to combat a perceived decline in the French language in Quebec by requiring French proficiency among Anglophone students. Both believe that taxpayer money should not go towards universities that bring in out of province students, who they say do not contribute meaningfully to Quebec. Instead, this extra money will be directed towards Quebec's French-speaking universities.

"I really hope that we can Francize the students, the students can stay here, can actually work here, and be integrated in Quebec society," Déry told *CBC News*.

"The measures announced will allow us to recover money that will be used to preserve, promote and enhance the French language in the university system," said Francois Roberge, minister of the French language in Quebec.

Graham Carr, the president and vice-chancellor at Concordia University, also claimed that

achieving 80 per cent proficiency unrealistic. The three universities had pitched the government a plan to reach 40 per cent proficiency among graduating students, but were told their offer was not ambitious enough.

When this plan is executed, the tuition will only increase for those starting university in the fall of 2024; the tuition will not change for students already enrolled in school. At certain universities, there are exceptions to the tuition fee.

At Concordia University, French citizens and francophone Belgian citizens enrolled in a thesis-based Masters (research) program or enrolled in a PhD program are exempt from the tuition increase. At McGill the same exemptions apply, as well as an exception for full-time French Master's students. Bishop's University, an institution in the Eastern Townships, managed to get an exemption from some of the tuition increases due to its small size.

"The students we welcome

to campus from the rest of Canada are not a threat to the French language but rather an essential part of what makes our region unique," said Bishop's University principal and vice-chancellor Sébastien Lebel-Grenier in a statement.

Universities are already analyzing how this could impact them in the coming years. Saini shared in a statement released by McGill that, because of the increased tuition, they are expecting a significant decrease in applications from out-of-province students, and are trying to recruit possible students from Quebec or other countries to fill these spots.

Saini said, "our estimates show that in the best-case scenario, we will fill no more than 80 per cent of these spaces, and in the worst-case scenario, we will fill no more than 20 per cent, thereby reducing the number of students coming to McGill."

Daniel Brandao (12) was halfway through his McGill application when he found out

about the tuition increase, and was disappointed by the government's decision. "I almost applied to McGill as it's one of the best schools for the program I wanted, but because of the tuition change it wasn't an option."

Saige Adams (12), however, is still interested in applying to McGill, specifically to the Jazz Performance Program. "This has not changed my decision, but I go to music school outside of high school and the majority of my friends that were considering McGill are no longer considering applying," Adams said.

With many out-of-province students changing their minds about attending university in Quebec, McGill has expressed concerns about their financial stability. There has been a 20 per cent drop in applications from out of province students, which could result in an approximated loss of \$42 million to \$94 million per year. To combat this loss of revenue, McGill announced a hiring freeze, effective as of Dec. 1, 2023.



CANADA 2036

## HAMBER AND STUDENT LIFE

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## Editorials

These articles are written by the Editorial Board, explaining their stance on a topic.

## HAMBERITES FINDING JOBS: RESOURCES AND TIPS TO GET YOU STARTED

NEWS REPORT by Aika Nimmervoll (12)

Are you a Hamber student who wants to start working? If you're unsure or overwhelmed, no need to fret, because here are some tips and advice from the Hamber community.

The Hamber students interviewed for this article were able to find jobs in various places. They all were able to find a balance between work and school, and said that they learned from the experience.

"I worked at the Richmond Night Market selling tickets. I saw it on Indeed and applied. It was a seasonal summer job so it ended in October," said **Ashley Orr** (12). Summer jobs allow students to avoid the stress of both school and work at the same time.

**Ayrton Fung** (12), **Ella Mazzucco** (12), and **Tamlyn Lum** (12) all had connections that helped them find employment. "I work as a grocery store stocker for the produce department. I know the manager and he put in a good word with HR," said Fung.

Lum works as a cashier at Nesters Market. "I heard about the job when one of my friends was working there. She persuaded me to apply because the work community was very friendly," she explained.

Though working at a younger age can sometimes seem intimidating, these Hamber students had mostly positive experiences.

"It was a good first job. It was fun and I gained new skills and made new friends. But sometimes the customers were rude so that wasn't fun to deal with," said Orr. Her colleagues were all around the same age as her. "We all became friends. I even hung out with them outside of work."

"There is no one in my store that's the same age as me," said Fung. "I think the closest ones are about 20 years old or in university." However, Fung still found a welcoming community. "I think the dynamic is pretty good [...] at my workplace it seems like a family. You know, a bunch of older sisters and brothers," he ex-

plained.

"I like the team I work with," said Mazzucco, who also said her overall experience as a barista at Paragon Tea Room has been positive. "I am the youngest employee there [...] everyone else is at least a year or more older."

Though she is working during the school year, Mazzucco is able to manage her time. "My classes are not too challenging at the moment," she said.

Lum's experience "has been very eventful", and according to her, "talking to customers is very therapeutic." Lum has been working for around two years, and said she had no regrets working at a young age.

The students also shared other advice on how to find a job if you don't have convenient connections. "Always check Indeed," Fung advised, "it is one of the largest job search engines." He also suggested "apply[ing] to as many things as you can," explaining that "it will increase your chances of getting a job." Mazzucco recommended that students should "put themselves out there as much as they can, and most of all, follow up with the business you hand your resumes to."

Once you've found a job you'd like to apply for, working on a resume is the next important step. "Keep it to the point, and keep it to who you are," said Fung. "Describing the strengths that are applicable to the job that you are applying [for] is probably the most important part."

He noted that "some jobs may not care if you do not have that much experience [...] rather they care that you are the right person for the opening." In his experience, employers generally prefer "somebody who is hardworking and eager to learn over somebody who has a lot of experience in the field."

Work experience teacher Ms. E. James (Career Education) advised that when writing a resume, "it is better to say achievement statements rather than action statements. For example, an action statement would be [...] 'I organized the rack of clothing,' but it is important to say what you

achieved. An achievement statement would be 'I provided a clean and engaging store environment by neatly folding clothes.'

"My advice is to seek out part-time opportunities that will help you find out what your strengths are in terms of your employability skills," Ms. James said.

"You want to dress in a way that matches the industry," she said, referring to job interview etiquette. "For example, if it's hip fashion, you do not want to dress in a conservative way."

She also recommended that before an interview, "You want to research the company, and even poten-

tial questions they might ask you. It only requires a few hours of research to see if a job is right for you." To her, it "seems like that's a small portion of your time [in order to] figure out whether or not a job [...] fits you or not."

Students mostly found minimum wage jobs. Orr said that her Night Market employment paid minimum wage, though it was "a sales job, so \$30 bonus for 100 tickets and \$60 for 150 tickets." Mazzucco said her pay was "appropriate." Fung said his pay was "Not enough to make a living in Vancouver, but for a part time job it's okay, it's pretty good."



NOSH AND NIBBLE



TIMES CHRONICLE

## The Gold Rush for Taylor Swift's Vancouver Show Tickets: Is it Over Now?

NEWS REPORT by Vania Qiu (9) & Dora Yuan (9)

The Eras Tour, the three-hour long concert tour celebrating a collection of Taylor Swift's "Eras", or her ten original studio albums, kicked off in Glendale, California on Mar. 17.

Because the tour originally only consisted of American dates, Canadian Swifties would have to cross the border to go to the concert, watch the concert film in cinemas, or tune in to livestreams. However, they had their wildest dreams come true when Swift added Canadian shows to the North American leg of her tour on Nov. 2, nearly eight months after the Eras Tour first began.

These added shows have been long awaited and will commence in Toronto in November 2024. The later announcement of three Vancouver tour dates, which will take place from Dec. 6-8th in 2024, were celebrated by Swifties across the nation.

On July 6, when Canadian fans were still waiting for dates to be announced, Justin Trudeau posted a reference-laden tweet encouraging Swift to bring her tour to Canada. "It's me, hi. I know places in Canada would love to have you. So, don't make it another cruel summer. We hope to see you soon," he wrote.

According to *CBC News*, 3.5 million accounts signed up for the wildly popular Ticketmaster presale. Registered fans are randomly selected to be given a code that grants them access to the

presale. Receiving a presale code does not guarantee tickets, although users cannot gain access to the sale without one.

The great war for presale codes (and eventually, tickets) was felt within the Hamber community. Many Hamber Swifties signed up with multiple accounts to increase their chances at getting a code from Ticketmaster. **Kaitlyn Petersen** (10) registered 27 accounts, but was waitlisted on all of them.

"I didn't want to get my hopes up because I [signed up] for Toronto tickets too, before Vancouver dates were published and I didn't get a code either," she said. "But I thought I would get at least one out of 27."

Fortunately, Petersen will still be able to attend the concert because a friend managed to acquire tickets and offered her one. "I was so, so excited," she said. "But they were a lot of money so my first concern was how I was [going to] pay it back."

Nevertheless, she is really looking forward to the concert. "It's such a production [...] and I'm so excited to see it live," Petersen said.

Many students, however, were not so lucky. **Will Zou** (9), who had expected to be waitlisted after registering two accounts, was disappointed when he had failed to acquire a code.

"I was crying, but not crying with tears," he said. "I expected it, but I was [still] really, really sad."

Like many Swifties, Zou is considering buying resale tickets for the show,

though it is much more expensive. He has been continuously browsing multiple resale apps, as well as a physical ticket service store, for tickets under \$1000. But his search has been in vain so far.

"I downloaded six resale apps and [all the tickets] were, like, \$1000," he said. Maintaining optimism, Will hopes to be able to buy tickets the day before the concert.

The rarity of acquired codes within the Hamber community raises another concern: Is Ticketmaster's code distribution system fair? **Ms. G. Lau** (LLC), who attempted to get tickets herself, called the process an "international scam."

Ms. Lau believes that it is not fair for non-Vancouverites, or even non-Canadians in general, to be held at the same priority as Vancouver Swifties. As a Swiftie herself, she thinks that Vancouver residents should get priority over the codes. "[Vancouverites] are competing with people from all over the world. No wonder we can't get tickets."

Teacher-librarian **Ms. S. Lemmon** (LLC) registered 11 accounts

through Ticketmaster, four of which were Avion-sponsored. Avion members, through RBC, were given presale access to the show. Although she was very hopeful, Ms. Lemmon was waitlisted on all of her attempts. She said she thought about buying resale, "but [it was] \$1,500 for behind the stage."

When asked about her opinions on the fairness of the code distribution system, Ms. Lemmon went on to explain that although she understands that the system is purely based on luck, she does not agree with the process of selecting "verified fans" who, despite the stages of filtration, still resell the tickets for an unjustifiable mark-up price.

"The fact that all of these tickets went on sale and were instantly being resold..." Ms. Lemmon reflected. "Are you a verified fan if you're just in it for the money? A true fan would get the tickets and hold the tickets close."

Instead, she suggests that the system could be more fair by determining the selection of verified fans through their purchase of official vinyls and merchandise, rather than having the system decide randomly.



STEPHEN MEASE VIA-NORTH SHORE DAILY POST

## HAMBER AND STUDENT LIFE

## Hamberites on Christmas Music: When It Should Start, Their Favourites, and Mariah Carey

NEWS REPORT by *Kyler Der* (10)

On Nov. 1, singer Mariah Carey released a video titled *Mariah Carey - IT'S TIME!* on her YouTube channel. It depicts her inside a vault, being defrosted from a block of ice by figures in Halloween costumes. She then screams "It's time!", which breaks the ice, and she proceeds to dance to her signature song, "All I Want For Christmas Is You".

This video blew up online, receiving 9.3 million views in one month. This only added to the long-standing popularity of the song. The original music video has over 772 million views, and a remake released on Nov. 19 of this year for the 2023 Billboard Music Award received more than 5.5 million views. "It's basically a religion at this point," said **Yolanda Yan** (12).

With its popularity, the song has also attracted dislike from some people, who believe it is overplayed. In a 2019 survey conducted by phone company Huawei, Carey's song was voted as the number one most annoying Christmas song in the UK. Additionally, there has been debate over when to begin playing the song every year. In 2021, the Washington Post reported on a Texas bar that went viral for banning the song from being played on their jukebox before Dec. 1.

What are Hamberites' opinions on

holiday tunes? Do they think Christmas music should be blasted from every radio station earlier? Or is it overrated? If so, what other songs have they been playing on repeat for the festive season?

**Mr. M. Todd** (Mathematics) used the same start date for Christmas music as the Texan bar. "It should only be playing for a few weekends so I don't get sick of hearing 'Jingle Bells' playing over and over," he said. Even if he thinks that they can be a bit overplayed, he still loves the songs "because [of] the words, and how everyone knows them."

"I like to play piano at Christmas parties all night long. I know all the songs, and I've played them for years and years," said Mr. Todd. His favourite carol is "Once in Royal David's City", because "it's very heartwarming" and "the lyrics are very poetic, about Jesus going through a life we have, [...] with childhood and weakness."

He also shared his opinion on "All I Want For Christmas Is You", saying that "if you listen to the lyrics, they sound very strange. She's saying she just wants a person, a romantic interest I suppose, [but] she seems to be putting the person below the things. It's saying 'you're not much, but I'll take it.' Although the melody is catchy and all, I think that if you have that

message in your mind, it can be a little problematic. People are more important than things."

In contrast, **Yuxuan Wu** (9) loves the Mariah Carey song. "It's my second favourite song after 'Deck the Halls'. I like 'Deck the Halls' because it has a really nice melody," she said. Wu has been playing her Christmas playlist since Halloween this year, as she "really feel[s] the Christmas spirit".

**Mr. N. Francis** (Music) said that his experience as a band director has shaped his Christmas carol preferences. "It's really tough to choose, but I have two favourites: an old and ancient English carol called 'The Coventry Carol', and an old German one, the famous setting by Michael Praetorius called 'Lo, How A Rose 'Ere Blooming' ('Es ist ein Ros' Entsprungen')."

In his opinion, Christmas music should start playing "about 5:00 PM on the 23rd [of December]. I could handle December 15th. Any earlier than that, no way."

Mr. Francis was very strongly against Mariah Carey's song. "It really is the last thing I want for Christmas. If I could have anything else for Christmas, like a broken leg, serious property damage, they'd all come ahead of that song. Mariah Carey should just stop. She should really just stop."

**Donovan Wong** (10) reflected on the impacts of playing Christmas music too early. "Three weeks straight of Christmas music is so annoying, and also, it's meant to be special. If you play it every single day, then it's no longer special and it loses the Christ-

mas feel to it. So December first, earliest."

**Louie Lee** (12) had a similar view, commenting that carols should be played "during Winter Break, [starting on] the first day."

**Ms. T. Florian** (Fine Arts) shared a different experience with Mariah Carey's Christmas hit. "It used to annoy me so much, but now I love it. Actually, that was the first song that I played for my class a couple weeks ago," she explained. "How can you resist? She hits some really high notes. My favourite is when everybody goes up, singing 'All I want for Christmas is

YOUUUUUUU' and everybody's voice breaks and it's an absolute disaster."

Ms. Florian's view on "All I Want For Christmas Is You" is not her only Christmas song-related opinion that's changed over time. Her current favourite is Chance the Rapper's "Merry Christmas Lil' Mama". But she has loved many Christmas songs from around the world over the years, including the Trojan Records's CD box set of Jamaican Christmas Classics. "I wish we could learn different songs from different cultures," she concluded. "We're going to be doing that in my Socials class. I'm very excited."



MARIAH CAREY  
VIA YOUTUBE

## INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS START A NEW CHAPTER AT HAMBER

NEWS REPORT by *Ella Pendlington* (11)

Starting at a new school can be daunting. Every year, international students from outside of Eric Hamber have to adapt to a different environment, a different schedule, and hundreds of different people.

"The majority of our international students are from China, with the next most popular countries of origin being Hong Kong, Thailand and Vietnam. This year, students in our program have come from 15 different countries," said **Ms. D. Gomes** (ELL), the Vancouver School District International Student Advisor.

"At this time, we have approximately 150 international students for semester one," **Ms. M. Jensen** (Administration) said. "It will be around the same number for semester two,

as some of our international students might go home at the end of the first semester and we'll welcome in new students for semester two."

For many international students, it was a challenge deciding where they wanted to study. They had to consider the distinct cultures of each area and decide which would suit their personal needs and values the best.

"In grade 9 I was interested in studying abroad, and I looked up some places. My cousins studied here before, so I had a foundation to come," **Michael Dinh** (10) said. "In August, I moved here. My plan is to go to university in Canada and see from there."

"I am from Italy and I wanted to do an exchange year to have some new experiences. I picked Canada because I wanted to travel to other places besides Europe," said **Silvia Zenobio Di Fusco** (12). "At first, I was thinking about the US, but I decided on Canada

because it's safer and they have a good school system."

Students have had to instantly adjust to a school system that is entirely unique from their home countries.

"In Italy, you have one class for all five years. You have one room with the same classmates and then the teachers are different for each class. During the week, we end the day earlier, but we have to go to school on Saturdays," said **Zenobio Di Fusco**. "There are different schools you can choose to go to. You can choose classical high school, scientific, artistic and so on. I went to a scientific high school so the focus was on subjects like math, chemistry and physics."

"In Vietnam, my home country, we study in one class for the whole year so it's easier to connect with people," shared Dinh. "I'm used to having teachers and friends that can help me with everything. Now I have to take

the time to really get to know my teachers."

"At my old school, we started the day at 7:00 AM and finished at 9:30 PM, so the school day feels like it goes by very quickly now," shared **Sabrina Yu** (10). "Hamber is also smaller than my other school. My old school was kindergarten to grade 12 which I liked because I could be in the same school as my sister."

Speaking English in school has been a persistent struggle for many. "Communicating with others using English has been the hardest part. Mandarin is my main language and what I spoke in Shanghai, so English is still new to me," said Yu.

On the other hand, **Josephine Lu** (10) learned English at school before moving to Canada. "Sometimes in class, I need to use my phone to translate, but then my teachers tell me I can't have my phone out, so that's hard. In China, my English was thought of as really good, but now that I'm here, I don't think it's considered as good."

Others shared different challenges when being so far away from

home. "It's hard to stay in touch with my friends who are still in China," said **Yonina Wang** (11). "When I am awake they are still sleeping because of the time change."

"The hardest part was making new friends and finding my way around the school. It was not a fun experience!" said **Eric Chen** (11).

Luckily, Hamber has many services set up for international students. These services help students adjust and connect people who have had similar experiences.

"There's an orientation that's provided by the district's International Education program and facilitated by Ms. Gomes," shared Ms. Jensen. "We also have **Ms. J. Polukoshko** (English) who helps as a counsellor with our international student program."

"[Both teachers] also collaborate with international students at other schools. They'll do things like Fright Nights at the PNE and students from across the district might decide to go all together around Halloween," Ms. Jensen said. "It's a good way to experience both the city of Vancouver and also some of the highlights of BC!"



MS. GOMES



MS. GOMES

## HAMBER AND STUDENT LIFE

# HAMBER ATHLETICS AND THE FIRST STUDENT-LED SPORTS NETWORK

NEWS REPORT by Aika Nimmervoll (12)

This year marks the debut of the student-run Griffins Sports Network. The Griffins Sports Network, often referred to as the GSN, features exclusive interviews, highlights, and weekly recaps with Hamber athletes, and is accessible through the Hamber Athletics (@hamberathletics) Instagram account.

GSN creators **Anand Munkh-Orgil** (12), **Ryan Chen** (12), and **Cobe Monte** (12) aim to showcase Hamber athletes and connect the athletics community to the general student body. "We hope to reach the audience of everyone in the school because we want to give recognition to the hard-working student athletes," said Chen. Munkh-Orgil said, "Our overall goal is to lift up Hamber spirit for athletes."

Before the GSN's launch, the creators had to pitch their idea to the school administration. "At first when we were trying to get our club going it got rejected, so it taught us how to persevere and that even if there are obstacles, to work around it," said Munkh-Orgil.

Not only did the idea get shut down initially; they also faced other obstacles before they started filming. "We've faced complications such as how we need student consent for each interview but we bypassed this by handing out forms," said Chen. Once they resolved these obstacles, the three creators could film and post content.

Chen, who is in charge of editing the videos and checking if the content

is good to go before uploading, said "I use an app called Capcut to produce content because it is really easy to access and use during school hours. It takes around 10-20 minutes."

In regards to the content of each video, GSN follows a specific format. "We post [the videos] on Instagram reels and each video can only be one minute and thirty seconds long. We have two interviewers who ask at least two questions each," Monte said. "We start off with the intro, then ask them a few questions ranging from their mentality going into a game, to how the season's looking right now."

The creators of the project have learned a variety of new skills through the Griffins Sports Network. For instance, Munkh-Orgil expressed that while working on the GSN, he learned about professional social skills.

"We have to talk to different people from different teams and ask what

schedule they can do and ask informative questions, which taught us a bunch of social skills," he said.

Monte had a different perspective of what this experience has taught him. "The whole crew of GSN are new to this but it's a learning process. We've learned that having a good background and background knowledge of who were interviewing makes the video more interesting," he said.

Although this is the first year that the Griffins Sports Network is running, it will also be the last for these seniors. "Our plan is to pass it on to people that are as passionate as us," Chen said.

So far, the GSN has hosted interviews with the senior boys and girls volleyball team, senior boys soccer team, cross country team, the winners of the grade 8 and 9 volleyball intramurals, and the bantam boys' basketball team.



## STUDENTS REVIEW FORTNITE CHAPTER 4

NEWS REPORT by Zoe Erickson (11)

With the release of Fortnite Chapter 4: Season OG, many Hamberites have been flocking back to their screens to experience the nostalgia that comes along with their favourite childhood game. The new update has caused a huge spike in players, as Fortnite players old and new have been logging in and readying up.

Chapter 4: Season OG features aspects of the firstmost seasons of the game, which has inspired OG Fortnite players to pick it up once again. However, **Ben Singh** (8) said, "it doesn't really feel OG, it still feels kind of different".

"OG Fortnite was the best season yet, it was way better than all the others," **Jordan Tran** (9) said. "Maybe they could have added more of the old skins though, that would have made it even better."

Hamber's thoughts on the new

season seemed overwhelmingly positive, especially in the senior grade, where Fortnite may have been a more prominent part of students' childhood.

"It was really cool how it brought back a lot of old memories, and it kind of brought out my inner child, which was seconded, I think, by many other seniors," **Cohen Milisavljevic** (12) explained.

**Marcus Olsen-Prissinoti** (12) said that the OG season was "beautiful, and gave everyone what they wanted and needed," and also said that Epic Games, the creators and developers of Fortnite, "really messed up by getting rid of [Chapter 4] after only a month."

Aside from the nostalgia and fanbase it brought back, OG Fortnite also displayed a different, older style of play. **Kainoa Richardson** (12) spoke on this, sharing that "it was a great change of pace for the game. It made it a lot simpler, and just easier and more fun to play."

## WILLOW STREET'S PARKING PUZZLE

NEWS REPORT by Katja Radovic-Jonsson (12)

In 2017, the City of Vancouver issued a total of 31 parking and stopping tickets on the section of Willow St. outside Hamber. In 2023, this number jumped up to 318, a just-over-ten-fold increase, according to the City of Vancouver Open Data Portal. These tickets were mainly given out in large quantities at a time, with 81 tickets given out on Sept. 20 alone. The 2023 data, which currently only includes tickets issued from January to September, is set to be updated at the beginning of the new year.

This increase in issued parking tickets came after "several complaints from residents, staff at Eric Hamber, and from parents of the school who said that the street [outside Hamber] was quite messy," according to Kelly Lee, the City of Vancouver's Parking Enforcement Operations Supervisor.

Lee claimed that although there has been an increase in parking enforcement outside the school, the true reason for the surge in tickets is because of the sheer number of violations in the past year. "There are no-stopping signs outside your school," he said. "[Drivers] should not be stopping there, so as soon as they do stop, we will be issuing a ticket."

The rule surrounding stopping next to these signs is outlined in section 17.1(a) of Street & Traffic Bylaw 2849, which states:

An owner, registered owner, lessee or operator of a vehicle must not cause, allow or permit that vehicle to stop at any place where a traffic sign prohibits stopping wherever signs are displayed indicating that the zone, place or area is in the vicinity of a school, between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. of any day on which school is regularly held.

One Hamber student, who preferred to remain anonymous, shared their experience with being ticketed on Willow St. earlier this year. "[It was] around 8:20 AM, so a lot of other people were getting dropped off

as well," they said. The student was charged \$120 for violating section 17.1(a), which, according to Operations Supervisor Lee, is the standard amount for a ticket of this nature.

"I think they're trying to control the crowd in front of the school because it gets hectic in the mornings, so giving out parking or stopping tickets might make people more aware of where they can stop or can't stop," the anonymous student said. "But it doesn't seem to be the case. Everyone still stops there."

Lee explained that the parking enforcement team also increases their presence after incidents are reported across the city. "If we hear anywhere in the city that a child gets hit, we will step it up," he said, "not just specifically at your school, but any school."

Hamber's administration has informed Lee that they have taken action in regards to parking by communicating at Parent Advisory Council (PAC) meetings. "According to your principal, it gets mentioned at almost every meeting," he said. This information has not been confirmed nor denied by the Hamber administration.

On Sept. 1, administration sent out a statement regarding traffic regulation during drop-off and pick-up in their biweekly newsletter, reminding parents to "be aware of the street and traffic regulations (parking and no

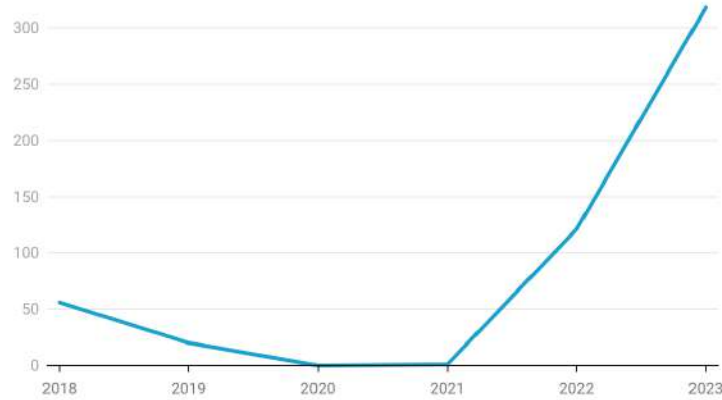
stopping zones) identified along Willow Street beside the school." They additionally encouraged students to "walk, cycle, or use transit to and from our school as often as possible."

One potential solution to the ticketing problem, as suggested by the anonymous Hamber student, is to hire a crossing guard at the crosswalk outside the entrance. "Right now everybody just walks randomly because it's a crosswalk and cars have to stop." They explained it would be beneficial to "have somebody controlling the crowd instead of a free-for-all."

Lee said that the city has suggested hiring a crossing guard "to temper the vehicles from moving, because a lot of vehicles [...] are in a hurry — they drop off the students and they take off. We don't want that kind of movement."

The city is currently testing a variety of programs across Vancouver to deter traffic in front of schools. One example is the School Streets Program, a pilot project at Sir Winston Churchill Secondary which involves creating a car-free environment outside the school during drop-off and pick-up times. Programs like these are tested upon the request of school administration — Lee notes that if the project at Churchill proves successful, Hamber administration should consider applying for the program.

Number of Parking / Stopping Tickets Issued Outside Hamber Per Year



Created with Datawrapper



## Hamberites and their Holiday Food Traditions

NEWS REPORT by Chloé Mayor Moure (10)

From intense baking competitions to spinning coin-filled bread, Hamberites partake in a huge variety of food-centered, seasonal traditions. With Winter Break fast approaching, students and staff are gearing up for another holiday season full of culture, cuisine, family and friends.

On Feb. 10, during the Chinese New Year **Natalie Palmer** (9) and her family exchange red envelopes and go out for dim sum. "For as long as I can remember, we've eaten this for the exchange of letters," she said. "We even order the same dishes every time!" She revealed that food, particularly dim sum, brings her family together. "We've spent so many gatherings eating this at least once or twice a month."

Another Chinese tradition celebrated by students is the Dongzhi Festival on Dec. 22. "It's a celebration for the coming of winter," said **Kayla Tang** (11). "My family is very traditional, so we commit to honouring it every year!" She explained that they celebrate the Dongzhi Festival by playing mahjong and eating traditional Chinese meals like tang yuan, a type of sweet dumpling. "Coming together for this celebration is important to my family for cultural reasons," she said, explaining that the Dongzhi Festival highlights family union.

**Zachary Bichin** (10) cooks tasty treats with his family during the celebration of Hanukkah, which is from Dec. 7 to 5. "I'm not super religious, so continuing to cook traditional meals with my family keeps me engaged with my culture," he said. Bichin added that he loves making latkes the most, and that they symbolize perseverance and the magic of Hanukkah.

**Sonja Prekovic** (10) celebrates Christmas on Jan. 7. This Christian Orthodox custom includes a big lunch at which "the host makes a bread with a lucky coin inside," she said. "Before eating the bread we spin it around, and the person who lands on the piece with the coin is named the lucky person of the year." She explained that this Serbian tradition has become a big part of her family's identity, giving them hope for the new year. "We moved to Canada a few years ago and not many people celebrate this here, so it's important for us to continue the tradition."

**Mr. J. Chan** (Science) and his cousins hold an annual baking competition around Christmas. "All of the cousins bake something sweet based on a Christmas theme, which are judged by our aunts and uncles. The winner then receives an honourable empty mustard bottle painted in gold," he said. He explained that this tradition has been put on hold since COVID-19, and hopes that this year he and his family can start it up again.

## HAMBER AND STUDENT LIFE



## BUNDESLIGA OR LA LIGA: THE GREAT EUROPEAN FOOTBALL DEBATE

NEWS REPORT by Evin Jaaf (9)

The European football season is in full swing, and fans across the world are tuning in to watch their favourite teams and players in hope that they dominate the pitch. Each European league has its own pros and cons, and this poses the question: which league do football fans and viewers prefer? Europe's "Big Five," the most watched leagues, include the Premier League, La Liga, Ligue 1, the Bundesliga and Serie A.

Because of their popularity, these leagues have very passionate and loyal fans, sparking equally passionate debate. Football viewers across the world argue that their league, and team, is the best. Hamber's soccer community is no stranger to this debate, particularly the dispute between the Bundesliga and La Liga.

Home to world class teams, Bundesliga and La Liga both have some of the most renowned players. **Alejandro Diaz-Henderson** (12) argued that La Liga is better because "a lot of bigger names have played in [La Liga] and not in the Bundesliga." For instance, players like Lionel Messi, Alfredo di Stefano, and Chistriano Ronaldo all played on La Liga teams. **Yuki Kimoto** (9) said he prefers La Liga because of Jude Bellingham.

In contrast to Diaz-Henderson

and Kimoto, **Mr. P. Scaglione** (Social Studies) favours the Bundesliga because of Alphonso Davies. "Alphonso Davies is one of my favourite players to watch and he's Canadian," he said. Watching players from home gives fans more reason to root for them, to which Mr. Scaglione said, "that's why the Bundesliga trumps the Spanish League for me."

**Kaito Nomura** (12) shared his preference for La Liga, saying, "It's more entertaining, you don't know what's going to happen every time." He added that although he thinks the English Premier League is the best league worldwide, La Liga is getting closer to its level because the teams are more competitive. "Every year it's been different winners," he said, which he thinks makes it more interesting to watch La Liga games. "The past three years, [champions] have been Atletico, Real Madrid, and Barcelona and this year an unexpected team, [Girona] is in first."

Diaz-Henderson agreed with Nomura, adding that he finds that La Liga has much stronger teams and a higher quality of play. He grew up watching Real Madrid and the Messi versus Ronaldo rivalry, which he said could only happen in a league with very strong competition. "Growing up with that huge rivalry, you don't really see that in the Bundesliga."

The Messi and Ronaldo rivalry

had many fans hooked and is yet to be settled. Barcelona and Real Madrid have the largest social media followings of any teams in sports.

Kimoto also added that "in the Bundesliga, Bayern Munich is too dominant." Bayern Munich is considered to be the best German team, having won consecutive Bundesliga titles since 2013, with last year's title marking the 11th consecutive year.

However, Bayern does not currently sit first in the Bundesliga, Mr. Scaglione pointed out. He said that in the Bundesliga, "the middle teams are more competitive with the higher up teams, but in La Liga there's Barcelona, Real Madrid, and Atletico, then everyone else."

The discourse between Bundesliga and La Liga has led fans to question why it is such a big argument. Nomura explained that he thinks this is because "fans of the German teams think that the Bundesliga is bigger than La Liga, when it's obviously not." Diaz-Henderson agrees, adding that he believes a La Liga and Premier League debate would be more even.

Mr. Scaglione shared that overall, this is a contested debate because both leagues are second underneath the Premier League. "If you're trying to choose between the [second] tier of the best teams of the world, it would be La Liga or the Bundesliga."

8. This event raised \$677.

"Witnessing students running up to the Kiosk with a smile on their face made my day," said StuCo vice-president **Arabella Mew** (11).

"My favourite songs were 'All I Want For Christmas Is You' and a Lana Del Ray song. It was funny: it was the only non-holiday song, but it had meaning," said grade 12 representative **Shaan Sandhu** (12), who was responsible for delivering grams. He sung the song grams in hopes of inspiring younger generations in StuCo, who were less confident about performing in front of classes.

"It was \$5 to buy a song, but sometimes we would go in classes and they had no song, so we felt bad," said Sandhu. "We had the time, so we did it for free for the holiday spirit."

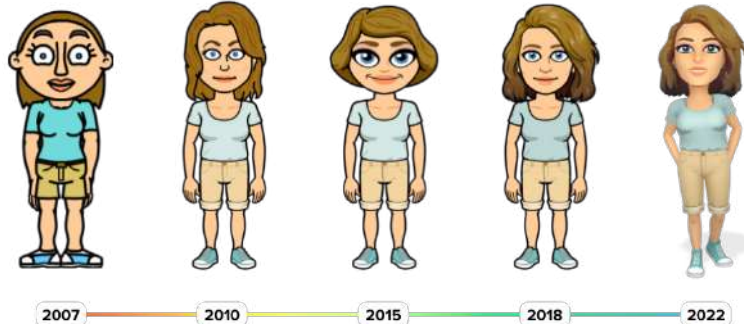
He added that he went down to the LALS class and sang to them as well, as they hadn't received grams and he thought they might not have even known it was happening. "I just wanted to create more spirit for everybody."

The Holiday Marketplace was held on Dec. 13 at lunch. Clubs were welcome to sell their own items, with 40 per cent of all profits going towards CANley Cup. "Having different booths by different clubs is a really great way to see the elements that Hamber brings to the table," said StuCo co-president **Shahreen Chowdhury** (12). Her favourite CANley Cup event was the Holiday Marketplace, which raised just over \$386.

"It's always really funny seeing a member of StuCo dressed up as Santa," said Chowdhury. A special addition to the Marketplace was the StuCo photo-booth with Santa, with all profits going towards the CANley Cup. Students could select props and take festive polaroids.

This year, Hamber raised a total of \$2000.30 for the CANley cup.

WIFIHIFI



## Hamberites Share Views on New Snapchat Bitmoji

NEWS REPORT by Koby Chan (9)

Snapchat's new Bitmoji style has sparked an ongoing debate among students, with many claiming that with each update, it worsens.

In comparison to the 2018 avatar update, the new 3D avatar update in 2023 offers more realistic hair textures and facial qualities. "The new avatar style improves characteristics like hair texture, face shading and body proportions. Your Bitmoji can now have a bolder smile, a more astonished face when they're surprised, and can express even the most subtle and nuanced emotions," Snapchat stated.

"I think Snapchat should change it back, because it used to have the Snapchat vibe, but now it doesn't feel like it anymore," shared **Ashley Park** (9), an avid Snapchat user. Park also said that the new Bitmoji is scarier and more intimidating. "The previous style is still my favourite."

"My favourite bitmoji style was the one before this current one [2018]," **Nicholas Vranakis** (11) said. Vranakis added that the new avatar merely looked unnatural, and that the avatars were like

2D cartoons that were forced to be 3D.

There are numerous ways to personalise your Bitmoji, including facial and physical features and clothing. Some of the clothing options include collaborations with leading brands like Calvin Klein, Nike, Off-White, The North Face, UGG and Adidas.

**Nathan Taviss** (12), has personalized his own Bitmoji with a Santa hat to accompany his black Adidas Sambas. However, his complaint isn't about the clothing options. "I personally think the 3D look is very unnecessary and creepy," he critiqued, "since the original faces don't look realistic in the first place."

Bitmoji is a Canadian company that began with Bitstrips before the release of Bitmoji. The creation of Bitstrips dates back to 2007 in Toronto and was founded by Jacob Blackstock, David Kennedy, Shahan Panth, Dorian Baldwin, and Jesse Brown. It began as a personalised comic strip intended for more self expression, accompanying the more limited basic emoji keyboard. Bitstrips evolved into digital stickers, which have since been recognized as Bitmoji.

## PICKLEBALL CLUB TAKES HAMBER BY STORM

NEWS REPORT by Sara Maya Budhiraja (11)

If you've passed by a public tennis court in Vancouver, you might have heard the steady thwack-thwack of hard plastic balls hitting wooden paddles. It's also difficult to call yourself an Eric Hamber student if you haven't gotten the chance to play a high-stakes pickleball tournament in PE. The new-fangled racquet sport is everywhere, and many students know about the game that has dominated outdoor courts and been the subject of multiple neighbourhood noise complaints.

Here at Hamber, students enjoyed the game so much in gym class that they took the initiative to start their own school club. Pickleball Club made its debut at Clubs Day in October, and since then, they have practised their game weekly. Students in the club range from grades 8 to 12, and new friendships have been formed over the net and off the court.

"All we really do at a meeting is play, and we learn from the creator of the club **Justin Liao** (12), who is a semi-pro, amateur Pickleball player," explained **Ethan Whiton** (12). "I had

never actually played pickleball before this, but I had experience in tennis, so I found it easy to transition from one sport to another."

Hamber is in the thick of the winter sports season, so gym time at school has been hard to come by. However, the team has persevered and found opportunities to hone their new skills. "We practise either in the early morning or late at night, and even though the times aren't great, I still have a good time playing," Whiton shared. "We have our practices in the small gym, and it's always a fun experience."

Like most clubs at Clubs Day, Pickleball Club received many signups, but less engagement than they'd first hoped. Now they have a committed group of multiple grade levels, and according to Whiton, that's part of the fun.

Since the sport is currently only offered as a club at Hamber, opportunities to scrimmage other schools or teams are limited. However, Whiton and his teammates are optimistic about future club pursuits, and the ever-growing popularity of pickleball in Vancouver.



## CANLEY CUP COMES TO A CLOSE

NEWS REPORT by Ally Freedman (11)

With winter break approaching, the annual initiative known as the CANley Cup has taken place once again. This district-wide event is planned and hosted by the Vancouver District Student Council (VDSC) with the goal of collecting non-perishable food items for the Vancouver community.

Through both canned goods and monetary contributions, Vancouver School Board (VSB) secondary schools, including Hamber, participate in the event. The profits provide families, students, and citizens with programs and resources for the approaching holiday season.

To fundraise, schools across Vancouver compete to promote donations and awareness. As the competition comes to a close, the secondary school that collects the most cans of food will win the CANley Cup trophy.

This year, Hamber's CANley Cup consisted of three main events coordinated by Student Council (StuCo): Bring Your Own Mug, Holiday Grams, and the

Holiday Marketplace.

StuCo sponsors **Ms. G. Lau** (LLC) and **Ms. S. Lemmon** (LLC) agreed that all three Canley Cup events were an "absolute blast" for the Hamber community. The Holiday Marketplace is "by far [their] favourite", as the festive vibe and atmosphere bring them joy.

The first Canley Cup event, Bring Your Own Mug (BYOM), occurred on Nov. 29. Students could purchase a cup of hot chocolate with or without their own mug with proceeds contributing to the Canley Cup.

"My favourite part of the BYOM event is seeing Hamber get into the holiday spirit while sharing cups of hot cocoa... it warms my heart," said VDSC representative **Chloe Young** (11). StuCo's BWOM event raised a total of \$81.

The second event, Holiday Grams, was planned in partnership with Diversity Club. From Dec. 4 to Dec. 7 at lunch, students could buy grams between \$1 to \$5 at the kiosk. Options for grams included a candy cane, message, chocolate, or song, which were later delivered to recipients during class on Friday, Dec.





SURREY POLICE BOARD

## SURREY POLICE BOARD REPLACED BY INDEPENDENT ADMINISTRATOR

NEWS REPORT by *Suhani Dosanji* (10)

On Nov. 16, the BC government suspended all members of the Surrey Police Board and removed Surrey Mayor Brenda Locke as chair. Former Abbotsford police chief Mike Serr was appointed by the province to act in the board's place as an independent administrator. This role requires Serr to oversee Surrey's transition from the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) into the Surrey Police Service (SPS).

The transition away from the RCMP first began in 2018, when former Mayor Doug McCallum made the decision to implement Surrey's own municipal police service.

In July 2020, the Surrey Police Board was first assembled by the province to oversee the transition from the RCMP to the SPS.

As of now, the SPS has hired more than 400 police officers and civilian employees, and over 200 SPS officers have been deployed into policing operations.

In October 2022, Locke won the municipal election.

She ran on the promise to keep the RCMP as the Police of Jurisdiction (POJ) in Surrey rather than establishing the SPS.

Under Locke's lead, the Surrey Police Board voted to halt the transition and keep the RCMP as the POJ in Surrey. The decision was made following a corporate report produced by three city general managers, which criticized Surrey's transition into the SPS.

"There is no clear plan, or any supporting documents in place, to continue a transition to SPS," the report read. "As a result, there remains a great deal of uncertainty regarding how a transition to SPS would be completed."

During this time, the Surrey Police Union stated in a news release that 94 per cent of SPS officers signed a pledge declaring that they had "no intention" of ever transferring into the RCMP, although Locke encouraged officers to do so.

Later, in July of this year, the Surrey Police Board voted to completely revert back to the RCMP. However, on July 19, the BC government over-

ruled this and ordered the Surrey Police Board to continue the transition to the SPS.

In response, the City of Surrey filed a petition with the Supreme Court of British Columbia to challenge the provincial order.

Approximately one month later, Minister of Public Safety and Solicitor General Mike Farnworth, announced in a news conference that the province had suspended the Surrey Police Board and replaced them with Serr. Farnworth said in a news release that he made this decision "after careful consideration of the work by the Surrey Police Board, which has been limited due to the lack of progress from the City of Surrey in advancing the police model transition to the SPS."

According to *Global News*, Farnworth assumes that Surrey could have a fully operational municipal force in about a year to 18 months or perhaps sooner. Farnworth believes that his actions will speed up that process, and once there has been enough progress in the transition to the SPS, the Surrey Police Board will be

reinstated.

Locke opposes the decision to disband the board. "Once again, the province is demonstrating that their approach is nothing short of a provincial police takeover in Surrey," she said. "I will continue to oppose this transition because of the extraordinary cost for Surrey taxpayers that will deliver no additional public safety benefit."

SPS Chief Norm Lipinski thanked the Surrey Police Board in an issued statement for their hard work and expressed how he looks forward to working with Serr, the new administrator.

On Nov. 20, Locke amended the petition from Oct. 13, and explained this move in a news conference as a "significant step to stop the NDP police service as a result of the province's attempted police takeover, which would require double digit — double digit! — NDP tax hike on Surrey taxpayers."

Locke hopes to "challenge the constitutionality of the province's latest legislation" as "Surrey voters deserve to have their voices heard."

## Third Year of Vancouver's Firework Ban

NEWS REPORT by *Leo Pi* (10)

2023 marks the third year of the City of Vancouver's consumer fireworks ban. The bylaw, which was initially proposed by City Councillor Pete Fry, took effect on Nov. 1, 2020, and stated that "the sale and use of fireworks by the general public is no longer permitted in Vancouver", with certain exceptions.

According to *The Times Colonist*, most of the public was in favour of the ban and the issue attracted more feedback than any other issues the council has debated. Now, only certified technicians who have a certificate and a permit

according to *CBC News*, Councillor Pete Fry told city council before the vote, "people who suffer from post traumatic stress disorder, children with neurodivergence and autism, veterans fleeing war-torn regions, and people who have pets are absolutely spooked and traumatized by fireworks every year." People can also be affected by the noise and lights from fireworks.

Vancouver Fire Rescue Services (VFRS) Public Information Officer, Matthew Trudeau, supports the ban and says the decision was made in response to an alarming number of properties being damaged, fires, and injuries from fireworks.

### Since the ban, the number of fires in Vancouver has steadily decreased

from the fire department are permitted to use fireworks for community events. Anyone using fireworks illegally can be fined up to \$1,000 by the City of Vancouver.

Under the current bylaw, the only time when fireworks can be used is for special community events like Canada Day, Diwali, Lunar New Year, and the Celebration of Lights. In 2023, the Celebration of Lights took place this summer with Australia, Mexico, and the Philippines showcasing their fireworks over three dates. The Celebration of Lights is one of the designated special community events that is accessible to all and brings people of all ages, backgrounds, and cultures together.

The city decided to ban fireworks for health and safety reasons and for protection of buildings and properties. Ac-

Since the ban, the number of fires in Vancouver has steadily decreased. "We're seeing less property damage and less injuries by a significant margin in the last three years," Trudeau told *CityNews*. Many residents felt relief because they were tired of hearing fireworks at all hours of the day and night.

According to *CBC News*, fireworks retailers strongly oppose Vancouver's ban, saying that they are being unfairly punished for the actions of people who chose not to follow the existing bylaws. This Halloween, people in Vancouver continued to use fireworks illegally and many residents complained about the ban not being reinforced. The VFRS reminded people that fireworks are illegal in the city and drove around neighborhoods to ticket people with them in possession.

## Top Holiday Events in Vancouver

NEWS REPORT by *Vlada Chanskikh* (10)

This holiday season, Vancouver is filled with various fun and festive events to enjoy with friends and family alike.

One of the most esteemed events is the PNE Winter Fair, which will be held from Dec. 14 to Dec. 23. Activities at this attraction include ice skating inside the Agrodome at the PNE, strolling through a walk-through Winter Lights display, and watching live performances of *The Nutcracker on Ice* and a holiday musical called *The Magic of Santa*. There will also be several food trucks selling festive foods, as well as an outdoor marketplace hosted by local merchants that offer everything from clothes to Christmas gifts.

The PNE Winter Fair runs from 4:00 PM to 10:00 PM. The event is located at 2901 East Hastings Street. Admission tickets for this event can be bought online and cost \$18 for youth ages 17 and under and \$25 for adults. Conversely, the price of tickets bought in person at the PNE gate will be increased by a few dollars.

Another holiday event in Vancouver is the annual Festival of Lights, which takes place in the VanDusen Gardens.

Folks can expect to witness millions of beautiful lights around ancient trees and bushes, hear their favourite joyous music, and enjoy some food. Additionally, there is a Dancing Light show that happens every 20 minutes.

The Festival of Lights is running from Nov. 14 to Jan. 7 (but not on Christmas Day). The event occurs every day from 4:00 PM to 10:00 PM and is at 5151 Oak Street.

Tickets can be purchased online at the Gardens' website and will cost \$16.50 for youth ages 13 to 18 and \$24 for adults.

The Christmas Market is an additional holiday attraction that is well-known by Vancouverites. It is a great place to go Christmas shopping, eat traditional food, and watch wonderful festive performances. This year, the European-styled market celebrates 13 years of service.

Besides that, the market offers different themes and special events depending on the day. These events include Christmas karaoke, photos with Santa, Christmas trivia night, and many more. The specific dates of these events are shown on the Vancouver Christmas Market website.

The Christmas Market is located at the Jack Poole Plaza

at 1055 Canada Place and will occur from Nov. 16 to Dec. 24. This event runs from 11:00 AM to 9:30 PM on Sunday to Thursday and 11:00 AM to 10:00 PM every Friday and Saturday.

If tickets are purchased online, the cost for youth is \$11.99 and \$19.99 for adults. They are slightly more expensive if bought at the gate.

Another popular holiday activity in Greater Vancouver is visiting the Canyon Lights at the Capilano Suspension Bridge. The world-famous bridge is fully lit end-to-end with alternating multi-coloured

lights, which people can gaze upon as they walk high above the forest floor. It is the perfect place to take Instagram-worthy photos, enjoy festive music, and get involved in the many family-friendly activities offered.

The event is open every day from Nov. 17 to Jan. 21, except on Christmas Day. Operating hours are from 11:00 AM to 9:00 PM.

Tickets for the Canyon Lights cost \$39.95 for youth ages 13 to 17 and \$66.95 for adults. They must be purchased beforehand online.

PNE PLAYLAND VIA THE DAILY HIVE



FRANCIS GEORGIAN VANCOUVER SUN



BEN NELMS CBC

## VANCOUVER AND THE PROVINCE

# What Has Ken Sim Done In His First Year In Office?

NEWS REPORT by Nigel Goto (12)

Ken Sim, a businessman turned politician, began his mayoral journey with a promise to bring a positive change to Vancouver. In his bid for mayor, Sim outlined a vision for the city that prioritized housing attainability, community safety and economic prosperity. However, his first year in office concluded with mixed results.

Central to Sim's mayoral campaign was a pledge to enhance the safety and mental well-being of Vancouverites. "On day one, we are going to requisition for 100 new police officers and 100 new mental health nurses," Sim said in his victory speech.

While his goal to hire 100 mental health nurses is far from reality, Vancouver's Police Department has experienced an influx of officers, which is expected to cost \$20 million yearly. This investment has resulted in significant changes — the VPD assist with mental-wellbeing has been shifted and the School Liaison Officers have been reinstated in high schools like Eric Hamber.

Ken Sim has also sought to tackle the urgent issue of affordable and accessible housing in Vancouver. Throughout the year, his administration introduced a series of initiatives designed to enhance housing affordability, including bolster-

ing Vancouver's limited supply of housing and streamlining the building approval process. Acknowledging the severity of Vancouver's housing crisis, Sim said, "This work should have been done a long time ago."

However, it remains to be seen whether these measures will have a significant and lasting impact on housing affordability. Critics such as councilor Adriane Carr have expressed concern over the perceived lack of progress. "If you prioritize everything, you prioritize nothing," she said.

Many of Sim's political manoeuvres have elicited a mixed response from the public. While many applaud his decisive actions and straightforward approach to leadership, others criticize him for a lack of transparency and lack of progress. While Ken Sim welcomes criticism, holding town hall meet-

ings and open forums to address concerns, he has been accused of silencing opposition.

Recently, when Sim announced unexpected plans to dismantle Vancouver's Park Board to streamline decisions and save millions, he experienced heavy backlash in the community and among his own party. He characterized his proposal as "beneficial for anyone who likes parks." Scott Jensen, Laura Christensen, and Brennan Bastyvanszky, three Park Board Commissioners in Sim's ABC Party, firmly denied the motion, breaking with Sim and leaving the ABC Party over the issue to become independent candidates. They said that "the mayor's office [...] had no authority to recommend the abolition of [the Park Board]." Despite the setbacks, the motion was eventually passed on Dec. 14 with a majority vote.



JASON PAYNE  
VANCOUVER SUN



SHUTTERSTOCK  
VIA VANCOUVER IS AWESOME

## Coyote Encounters in Vancouver

NEWS REPORT by Miggie Wei (9)

The past year has seen a large number of coyote attacks reported in Vancouver. This year, 993 of 1083 reports were in the category of sightings of approaching and following, and 90 coyotes caused injuries or sickness, bite accidents, pet attacks, death, aggression to humans, and showed defensive/breeding behaviour. There were many sighting reports during the first half of the year and the summer; however, there haven't been any reported encounters through October to December.

To prevent encounters with coyotes, residents are reminded to avoid leaving food on the ground, even fruits from trees in the yard and bird feeders, according to *The New York Times*.

Additionally, The Vancouver

Park Board advised in a statement that if coyotes approach you, act aggressively by standing tall, yelling, or making loud noises. The Park Board also recommended facing an aggressive coyote and standing in one spot as they have a natural instinct to chase their prey.

Ava Lund, a dog walker who encountered an aggressive coyote at Trafalgar Park, told the *CBC* that she decided to start bringing a whistle and coyote deterrent spray around.

The Park Board stated that coyotes often become more aggressive during the early half of the year because they want to protect their denning sites. This is due to pups being born in the earlier months of the year, and reared in and around their dens from March to September. Coyotes see dogs as threats, and coyotes

that normally run from a dog will "stand their ground and act defensively" if they believe they are protecting their young. Coyote pups are born blind, and they stay in their dens for a month until they can see. In October to December, the now juvenile coyotes will start to look for their own territories and mates, which often results in more sightings of larger groups.

Coyotes are mostly active at night and the evening, but it is still normal to see them in the daytime, according to the City of Vancouver. They often live in groups, but can live alone. The Stanley Park Ecology Society says coyotes mate from January to February, where there are more sightings, and residents nearby may hear vocalization from the adult coyotes, who are attempting to secure their territories.

# Strike at Rogers Sugar Inc. Leaves Western Canada with a Major Sugar Shortage

NEWS REPORT by Jhilian Yan-Klassen (9)

Workers at the Rogers Sugar refinery in Vancouver have been on strike since Sept. 28, which has led to a major sugar shortage throughout Western Canada.

Rogers Sugar Inc. is the largest refined sugar distributor in Canada. It was established in June 2008 after Lantic Sugar Limited and Rogers Sugar Ltd. merged together.

There are four facilities run by Rogers Sugar Inc. across Canada, with the Vancouver facility primarily focused on processing imported sugar cane into sugar products to supply Western Canada. It is one of the largest sugar refineries in Canada that process imported sugar cane.

The strike began over issues with wages, benefits, and the company's insistence on adding continuous shifting to workers contracts. Continuous shifting would require employees to work 12-hour shifts, to keep the sugar plant operating 24 hours a day for seven days a week.

Due to the sugar shortage, bakers and other small businesses in Western Canada that rely on sugar are undergoing many difficulties. As stated in a *CTV News* article, Rogers Sugar Inc. has apologized for these issues, promising that their other facilities will help supply Western Canada.

A popular Granville Island bakery, Lee's Donuts, has been forced to limit the size of their orders as consumers, according to *CBC News*.

"Right away they put limits on what we could order," said Carol Kaesbauer, the regional manager of Lee's Donuts, "the limits on [how much sugar could be bought] went down and some

days [bags of sugar] were completely out of stock." Kaesbauer has had to find other sugar suppliers to continue producing donuts.

She has also noticed that the price of ordering sugar has increased significantly. As a result, it is getting harder for Lee's Donuts to keep up with the cost of sugar without increasing their own products' prices.

Another store in Granville Island has also started rationing their sugar supplies. "We are saving some of it for the holidays, for those busy times," Kevin Roque, a worker at the Olde World Fudge Company, told *CBC News*. "If it comes to the point we don't have any sugar ... we may have to close if we don't have any product to sell."

In a *Regina Leader-Post* article, Tasha Henderson, the manager of the Sinfully Sweet Cathedral Bakery in Regina, Saskatchewan, expressed her concerns about the impact that the strike will have on her business. She has already had to double her wholesale costs, with sugar prices increasing

from \$24 to \$28 per bag, to about \$50 to \$62 per bag. She expects the bakery to raise their prices even higher in the new year as a result.

According to *Global News*, Martin Barnett, the executive director of the Baking Association of Canada, believes that there is no current shortage of sugar on the shelves or through distributors. However, there may be an upcoming shortage in a few weeks, which will especially affect industrial bakers.

Barnett advises bakers not to stock up on sugar more than they normally do ahead of the holidays, as there is enough sugar available to meet demand. He notes that the rising global demand of sugar in recent years has caused prices to spike, but assures that there is no need for panic.

As stated by *City News Vancouver*, Rogers Sugar Inc. has requested mediation from the British Columbia Labour Relations Board to help reach a new collective agreement with the 138 workers who have been on strike. The Public and Private

Workers of Canada (PPWC) Local 8, an independent worker's union that currently represents the company's workers, has agreed to mediation.

According to *CBC News*, the president of PPWC Local 8, Adriane Soldera believes the company's demands for longer hours are unrealistic and urges them to hire more staff to avoid the need for long shifts. The Vancouver facility already operates Monday to Friday, and employees work eight-hour shifts.

"We've been asking them to hire more people now, so we don't have to do the 12-hour shifts," said Soldera. "They're maintaining there is a certain headcount they have to have in the plant to make it feasible."

The union is waiting for their demands to be met before returning to work. Jean-Sébastien Couillard, vice-president of finance for Rogers Sugar Inc., wishes to reach an agreement that is acceptable to both parties and hopes that the Vancouver refinery will soon return to operating at a level that supports their customers.



VANCOUVER PARK BOARD  
VIA VANCOUVER IS AWESOME

## Stanley Park Train Reopens After 4 Years of Intermittent Cancellation

NEWS REPORT by Helena Flach (9) & Maggie Perreault (9)

The Stanley Park miniature train is a star attraction of Vancouver, welcoming 200,000 visitors annually. The 15 minute ride has a brightly decorated trail with themed seasonal events such as the Easter Train, Ghost Train, and the Bright Lights train. Bright Lights is the most

popular of the themes. However, the train has been out of operation for nearly four years for various reasons. Recently, though, it reopened on Nov. 30 and will run until Jan. 1, 2024.

*CBC News* reported a long series of delays that prevented the train's operation. In 2020, the train closed due to Covid restrictions. The following year, multiple coyote attacks in Stanley Park led to the train closing due to safety concerns in October. In 2022, the train was called off after a failed safety inspection.

### Listen, the Stanley Park train's back, baby, it's going to be awesome

opened, 17,000 tickets were sold within an hour. Due to the incredible success, an additional 17,000 tickets were added.

"Listen, the Stanley Park train's back, baby, it's going to be awesome," Vancouver mayor Ken Sim told *Global News*. "I'm happy to say the future is looking incredibly bright for the Stanley Park train."

Besides the train, there is the Bright Lights fair that accompanies the ride for free. As well, there is food and live entertainment on Pipeline Road in Stanley Park.



THE NORTH STAR

## CANADA

# JEWISH AND MUSLIM CANADIANS UNSATISFIED WITH TRUDEAU'S RESPONSE TO ISRAEL-HAMAS WAR

NEWS REPORT by Zak Tucker (9)

As the Israel-Hamas war enters its third month, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and senior cabinet members have been struggling to deliver messaging that will please a divided public and slow rising antisemitic and Islamophobic violence, while providing support for the dozens of Canadians still in Gaza.

One Canadian remains unaccounted for in Gaza and eight have died, including one Canadian who died in Lebanon, where fighting between the militant group Hezbollah and Israeli forces has spiked since Oct. 7. Hezbollah is recognized as a terrorist group by the Canadian government. While Global Affairs won't say whether the missing person is taken hostage, a US statement indicated one of Hamas' hostages may be Canadian.

Trudeau and Foreign Affairs Minister Mélanie Joly have called for expanded access to humanitarian aid in Gaza along with "humanitarian pauses." According to *BBC News*, a temporary ceasefire that lasted from Nov. 24 to Dec. 1 allowed additional humanitarian aid to enter Gaza, and 110 hostages being held by Hamas were released.

Speaking to reporters before the announcement of a temporary pause in fighting, Joly said she hopes the success of the deal could translate into a full and lasting ceasefire. *CTV News* reported that on Dec. 12, Canada voted in favour of a non-binding United Nations resolution calling for a ceasefire between Israel and Hamas. Canada also released a joint statement with Australia and New Zealand supporting a ceasefire. They stated that "in defending itself, Israel must respect international humanitarian law. Civilians and civilian infrastructure must be protected. [...] the price of defeating

Hamas cannot be the continuous suffering of all Palestinian civilians." However, before and during this announcement, Trudeau faced backlash on both sides for perceived inaction.

According to an online government statement, Canada's official policy recognizes Israel's right of self-defence, however its support is contingent on Israel abiding to international law. "Canada supports Israel's right to live in peace with its neighbours within secure boundaries and recognizes Israel's right to assure its own security," reads the statement. "Israel has a right under international law to take the necessary measures, in accordance with human rights and international humanitarian law, to protect the security of its citizens from attacks by terrorist groups."

The Canadian government has advocated for a two-state solution, in which Israel and Palestine exist as independent, separate nations. "Canada recognizes the Palestinian right to self-determination and supports the creation of a sovereign, independent, viable, democratic and territorially contiguous Palestinian state, as part of a comprehensive, just and lasting peace settlement," the website reads.

The NDP, Bloc Québécois, some Liberal Members of Parliament, Muslim advocacy groups, and humanitarian organizations have all called on the government to endorse a ceasefire, according to *CBC News*.

Trudeau has told reporters his most pressing concern is antisemitism and Islamophobia within Canada. In his view, the question shouldn't be whether "this magic solution or that magic solution said by a Canadian prime minister [is] suddenly going to bring peace to the Middle East overnight." Rather, Trudeau emphasized the responsibility of Canadians to prevent situations

"when a kid feels scared to go to school in the morning because of their religion, because of their ethnicity."

Trudeau has condemned the actions of Hamas, calling for the release of all hostages being held in Gaza and demanding the group stop hiding itself in civilian locations, such as hospitals. The terror group must "stop using Palestinians as human shields," he said. The Canadian government has considered Hamas a terrorist organization for over 20 years.

The prime minister also raised questions about Israel's actions in Gaza, imploring its military to follow international law and spare civilians from the fighting. "We're hearing testimonies of doctors, family members, survivors, kids who've lost their parents. The world is witnessing this—the killing of women and children, of babies. This has to stop," he said. "I have been clear that the price of justice cannot be the continued suffering of all Palestinian civilians. Even wars have rules. All innocent life is equal in worth—Israeli and Palestinian."

*CTV News* reported that Trudeau called for Israeli Defence Forces to exercise "maximum restraint" in the densely populated Gaza Strip, since "the world is watching."

In a response to Trudeau's comments on Twitter, currently known as X, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu took issue with Trudeau's questioning of Israeli policy. "While Israel is doing everything to keep civilians out of harm's way," he claimed. "Hamas is doing everything to keep them in harm's way. [...] It is Hamas, not Israel, that should be held accountable for committing a double war crime—targeting civilians while hiding behind civilians. The forces of civilization must back Israel in defeating Hamas barbarism."

Canadian Defence Minister Bill

Blair maintained a neutral stance when asked about Trudeau's remarks, reiterating that "the prime minister, quite understandably, is concerned about innocent lives on both sides of that border."

A day after making those comments, Trudeau met with Benny Gantz, an opposition leader in the Knesset and member of Israel's War Cabinet, and "re-affirmed" Israel's right of self-defence, according to the official account of the meeting.

The government's position has sparked outrage in Canada. Following his Nov. 14 remarks on the conflict in BC, pro-Palestinian protesters interfered with Trudeau's dinner arrangements twice. Videos posted to social media show protestors chanting "ceasefire now," before forcing the prime minister out of popular Vancouver restaurant Vij's. Later that evening, 250 protesters, while chanting the same slogan and waving Palestinian flags, prevented Trudeau from leaving another Vancouver restaurant, according to Vancouver police.

VPD spokesperson Sgt. Steve Addison said 100 officers were called to the scene to ensure the prime minister's safe exit.

Reports from *CBC News* confirm dozens more protesters, again demanding the government call for a ceasefire, amassed outside an Ottawa hotel before Trudeau was scheduled to attend a Nov. 21 fundraising event. Some protesters gained access to the event space before being removed by security.

Charlotte Kates, a member of the Samidoun Palestinian Prisoner Solidarity Network who attended both Vancouver protests, told *CBC News* she wants Canadian officials to call for a ceasefire, instead of delivering meaningless remarks on the conflict.

"We want Canada to take a real position on this issue and not simply say that,

you know, the Israeli occupation should be restrained," she said.

Stephen Brown, CEO of the National Council of Canadian Muslims, says Trudeau simply acknowledging the deaths of Palestinian women and children is not enough. Instead, he wants to see Canada call for action in preventing future deaths by calling for an immediate ceasefire.

Speaking about the deaths of innocent Palestinians is "an important and positive step [...] but we need to see more. Canada needs to be a leading voice in the international community calling for a ceasefire and also working for just and lasting peace for the Palestinians."

Brown also called out Netanyahu's social media post for being inconsiderate and insensitive. It was "callous and uncaring [...] Quite frankly, it's ridiculous," he says.

Palestinian Canadian Dalia El Farra told *CBC News* she feels unwelcome in her local community, making an already difficult time even more challenging. "I can't grieve in peace [...] There's a constant feeling of being attacked and needing to defend myself [...] and just constantly trying to humanize myself and my people." In Canada, she feels "very disenfranchised and very marginalized [...] The narrative coming from our elected officials, from the media, from the systems that are supposed to support me and keep me safe, they're making me feel vulnerable."

Jasmin Zine, professor of sociology, religion, and culture at Wilfrid Laurier University told *CBC* journalists that the situation Muslim Canadians are currently experiencing is more dire than the surge in hate that took place in the aftermath of 9/11, but not entirely unexpected, given recent trends.

"[We're in] a situation that is much

## Alberta Deliberates Withdrawal From Canada's Pension Plan

NEWS REPORT by Ruby Ellermann (11)

During a public online consultation in late September, Alberta Premier Danielle Smith made a proposition to withdraw Alberta from the Canadian Pension Plan (CPP). Smith has expressed interest in transferring \$334 billion, or 53 per cent of the CPP's assets, into a 2027 provincial pension scheme that she predicts will result in bigger payments in retirement and lower premiums.

Founded in the 1960s, the CPP is a monthly retirement benefit that compensates for the income of retired Canadian citizens. As of 2023, *Reuters* reported the CPP to have control over \$575 billion for more than 21 million Canadians. The tax consists of 11.4 per cent of employers' and employees' combined salaries and results in pensions available to those aged 60 and above.

With three years of notice, provinces within Canada can legally remove themselves from the CPP once the federal government has evaluated and approved their request. The province's alternative proposal must be relatively proportionate to the current national scheme.

Alberta's government has insisted that withdrawing from the CPP could save \$5 billion for the province and contribute to seniors' pension benefits. Telus Health, which assembled Alberta's pension report, claims to have estimated the \$334 billion based on Alberta's total CPP contributions and its associated investment returns, fewer benefits paid in Alberta, and a share of the CPP's administrative costs. *The Globe and Mail* has reported this to be

part of Alberta's United Conservative Party (UCP) government's broader argument that Canada has taken advantage of Alberta's citizens due to the province's economic success.

Many Canadians, such as University of Calgary professor Trevor Tombe, have raised their financial concerns. Tombe suspected that providing Alberta with more than 22.5 per cent of assets would require a higher CPP input from across the rest of the country. In addition, he believes that if both Alberta and Ontario were to hypothetically withdraw from the CPP, they would remove more money than exists in the plan.

Canada's Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance Chrystia Freeland, as well as CPP Investments, both agreed that allocating 53 per cent of the assets to Alberta would be unreasonable. Freeland also warned that Alberta would have to consider how

Canadians working abroad would be able to ensure the security of their retirement. Edmonton lawyer Dennis Buchanan believes Alberta will be litigated in the courts if it does not adjust its proposal.

In response to the pressing opposition, Smith agreed to put a pause on the proposal until confronted by the governments or courts with a solid number for the withdrawal. Freeland has requested the Office of the Chief Actuary provide a value for the asset transfer rooted in a "reasonable interpretation of the provisions," as quoted by *The Globe and the Mail*. In mid-May of 2024, an online survey and town hall discussions will provide Smith with suggestions. If she does not come to a decision on the distribution of assets before a possible 2025 referendum held by the UCP, the calculations will have to be handled in the courts or through negotiation.



JEFF MCINTOSH/THE CANADIAN PRESS VIA THE GLOBE AND MAIL

THE CANADIAN PRESS



## Coins for the King

NEWS REPORT by Eloise Lee (9)

On Sept. 8, 2022, Queen Elizabeth II passed away and His Royal Highness The Prince of Wales ascended to the Throne and became King Charles III. For 70 years, Canadian coins have featured the familiar face of Queen Elizabeth, but this era is coming to an end. The new coins will display Charles' face in a new design.

A new effigy was designed by Steven Rosati, an award-winning artist from Montreal. The process for deciding on the new coins began with artists selected by the Royal Canadian Mint. 350 artists were invited to submit their portfolios. After the list was narrowed down to 15 people by an internal panel, the finalists submitted designs for the new coin. The King had to be facing to

the right in order to follow the tradition of the new monarch facing the opposite direction from their predecessor.

"It's kind of like an ageless face I have put together," Rosati told the *CBC*, explaining his vision for his King Charles rendition. "I didn't want to make him look too young. I didn't want to make him look too old. So I kind of pieced together a hybrid look of his face."

The new coins are to begin circulating in December 2023, and according to the Mint, "more will follow as banks and businesses draw down their inventory of existing circulation coins."

All current money will remain legal tender. The new coins will be gradually phased into the system in the coming years.



## CANADA

worse than what we saw in the aftermath of 9/11 [...] Over the past two decades, Islamophobia has laid the groundwork that makes it easier to collectively label and punish Muslim populations," Zine said.

Leaders of the Jewish community are similarly dissatisfied with Trudeau's remarks. In a post on social media, Michael Levitt, President and CEO of the Simon Wiesenthal Centre for Holocaust Studies and a former Liberal Member of Parliament, called out the prime minister for his lack of support for Israel. Trudeau's "reckless accusations against Israel [are] deeply concerning," he said.

Speaking to *CBC News*, Levitt accused Trudeau of over-simplifying the situation and failing to discuss the actions taken by Hamas that led Israel to retaliate.

"The prime minister's remarks were delivered sharply and curtly. The accusation of Israel killing women and children, killing babies, it was something that did not properly contextualize how we got here [...] Everything that's happening now, the tragic loss of life that we've seen of both innocent Palestinian and Israeli civilians, is the result of the atrocities committed by the terror group Hamas."

He says he's disappointed with Trudeau's response to the war, and believes many members of the Liberal Party share his opinion. He's most concerned with the forceful tone Trudeau has taken on the matter. Micheal Mostyn, President and CEO of B'nai Brith Canada, agreed in an interview with *CBC News*, adding that Trudeau's tone was not conducive to holding constructive, hate-free conversation in Canada.

"[Trudeau's] words, which belie the facts on the ground in the war between a fellow democracy and a genocidal terror group, may have been meant to deliver a message overseas but that's not the only place they landed [...] The scathing remarks also landed here at home, where Jews like me, reeling from weeks of surging antisemitism, got the message loud and clear [...] [Trudeau's comments hold] the potential to further fan the flames of Jew-hatred that we are facing," added Levitt.

Police in Canada have confirmed a surge in the number of hate-related in-

cidents against the Jewish and Muslim communities following the beginning of the Oct. 7 conflict. Sgt. Addison, the VPD spokesperson, said his force has received 18 reports of hate incidents against the Jewish community in the month following the beginning of hostilities.

From Oct. 7 to Nov. 20, Toronto saw 17 incidents of anti-Muslim hate, a 1,600 per cent year-over-year increase, and 38 antisemitic hate incidents, an increase of 192 per cent, according to numbers Police Chief Myron Demkiw presented to a police board meeting. The uptick is something "we've never seen before," he said.

In the same period, police in Montreal received reports of 35 hate incidents against the Muslim community and 107 against the Jewish community, according to *CityNews*. In a Nov. 25 incident, a Molotov cocktail was allegedly thrown at a Jewish community centre in the city.

Rabbi Saul Emanuel, executive director of the Jewish Community Council of Montreal, the organization who owns the building, expressed relief that no one was injured in the attack, but still called out the violence for its antisemitic sentiment. "Thank god no one was present and minimal damage occurred. [...] The rise of antisemitism in our city is frightening, and the repeated violence and attacks on our community are abhorrent and condemned in the strongest terms." Nico Slobinsky, a vice-president at the Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs who spoke with *CBC News*, says that the danger from antisemitic hate incidents is real, and needs to be addressed. "People are really scared by what's happening right on our streets [...] Antisemitism is a threat to democracy and we all need to work together and stand up together and call out hate anywhere and everywhere it rears its ugly head."

Uthman Quick, director of communications for the National Council of Canadian Muslims, told *CBC News* the level of hateful incidents his community is currently experiencing compares only to the surge in Islamophobia that followed 9/11.

"We've seen so many incidents of Islamophobia coming from across the country [...] What we're hearing from the community is fear but also a level of

being targeted that we haven't really experienced since the early 2000s."

Moreover, the fear of hate and division spreading as a result of the conflict isn't limited to Jewish and Muslim Canadians. 69 per cent of Canadians are concerned or somewhat concerned the conflict will lead to an increase in hate incidents in their communities, according to a Nanos Research poll.

Trudeau has condemned the violence and implored Canadians to help each other through this challenging time. He says dialogue between different communities is necessary, since it is the only way to secure lasting peace for everyone.

"[My] job, as Canadian prime minister, is to help bring Canadians together," the prime minister told reporters. "To understand that, if Canadians can't figure out how to get along and remember to be compassionate and empathetic towards each other, then where in the world is there a solution for the conflict and the tensions in the Middle East going to come [from]?"

Overall, recent polling indicates Canadians' views on the war are largely divided. 28 per cent say their sympathies lie with Israel, while 18 per cent support the Palestinians and 31 per cent say they have equal sympathies for both sides, according to research from the Angus Reid Institute.

Most people want peace in the region. 65 per cent of respondents to an Angus Reid survey said they want to see a full, lasting ceasefire called immediately, while 51 per cent of respondents to a Nanos poll agree now is a good or very good time to start negotiations for a two-state solution, which would see the creation of a sovereign Palestinian state.

While 43 per cent of Angus Reid respondents say Israel's treatment of Palestinians is a form of apartheid, 78 per cent also believe Israel has the right to exist and defend itself. 57 per cent of Nanos Research respondents think Israel is justified or somewhat justified in using its military to dismantle Hamas.

Meanwhile, approximately 70 people with connections to Canada remain trapped in Gaza, according to figures from Global Affairs Canada. 600 Canadian citizens, permanent residents, and their family members have fled to Egypt through the Rafah gate, the only way out

of the besieged territory.

Louis Dumas, Canada's Ambassador to Egypt, told *CTV News* that the process of securing evacuation for Canadians through the Rafah gate has been challenging. "We spare no effort talking to the people who produce the [exit] list—we're talking here about the Israeli officials, Egyptian officials, and their conversations [...] We try to influence, as much as possible, the possibility of having more Canadians, permanent residents and their family members on the list."

The government is seeking to provide aid for the residents of Gaza.

Minister of International Development Ahmed Hussen announced \$20 million to support the Red Cross' operations in Gaza, along with the efforts of several UN agencies. An additional \$40 million has also been promised.

Amidst the growing division surrounding the war, a message of unity has emerged from Jewish and Muslim law students studying at the University of Ottawa. In an open letter that has earned the support of 1,000 people in the legal community, the students ask Canadians affected by the conflict to "focus on how our shared pain unites us, instead of letting hatred divide us."



JUSTIN TRUDEAU/THE CANADIAN PRESS VIA CTV NEWS



ANADOLU AGENCY/GETTY IMAGES

## Not All That Glitters is Gold; How Inflation in Northern Canada Differs from Southern Canada

NEWS REPORT by Salena Sharma (10)

After reaching 6.8 per cent earlier this year, Canada's inflation rate has begun to near its goal of 2 per cent once again. Food and gas prices have decreased, and many other commodities aren't priced as high as they were earlier this year.

However, this is not the case for northern Canada, where commodities like groceries are given luxury prices. The difference between northern and southern Canada is extreme in their grocery store shelves. There are higher costs of commodities in the northern area and most products are on the verge of rotting, according to *Now Toronto*.

Inflation rates in northern Canada have been high for more than a decade. Since most regions in northern Canada are remote, food prices there would be much higher, Dr. Malek Batal, a Research Chair in Nutrition and Health Inequalities of Canada, told *Global Citizen*.

This inflation has also been affected by climate change, as Canada experiences its effects at two times the rate of the rest of the world. This is because it is in the northern hemisphere, according to Canada's Changing Climate Report. Changing weather patterns ruin the crops many Canadian farmers produce for sale nationwide, making this produce more scarce and harder to find in rural stores.

"Everything is about four times more expensive here [in Nunavut]," said Muhammad Wani, vice-president of the Islamic Society of Nunavut and head of the organization's Arctic Food Bank to *National Observer*. "If you purchase, say, \$35 worth of groceries down south [...] here it will be \$100."

Although food prices in northern Canada are a long-standing issue, global events like the COVID-19 pandemic and the Russian invasion of Ukraine raised these prices even more, Reuters reported.

Since the beginning of COVID-19, Canada's economy has taken a dive, which greatly impacted the inflation rates as well. Last year, inflation rates steeply inclined; which according to *Global News*, is something Canadians haven't seen since 1983.

The Bank of Canada has taken many measures since last year to combat inflation, including hiking interest rates to reduce the high costs countrywide. CBC reported that these measures were effective for the southern part of Canada, but the factors contributing to the high inflation in northern Canada have yet to be alleviated.

Indigenous peoples in the northern territories are becoming increasingly angry as little action has been taken on this matter, *Now Toronto* reports. Many Inuit community members spoke out about their experience with inflation, some commenting on how it was nearly impossible for families to feed their children in proper

quantities.

As the prices for non-luxury items skyrocket in northern Canada, parents are unable to afford food products to have a healthy and balanced diet for their children. Dr. Anna Banerji, a pediatric infectious disease specialist at the Dalla Lana School of Public Health in Toronto, published a paper on the effects of food shortages in Indigenous communities. Her paper is primarily centered around how these issues are affecting children the most.

Banerji told *Global News* that because most families are unable to afford these high prices, they end up purchasing ultra processed foods, which leads to malnutrition amongst many Indigenous youth. Banerji's research found that malnourished children in Nunavik were an average of 2 cm shorter than other "food secure" Canadian children. In addition, children are more likely to have cognitive and behavioural problems as a result of this issue.

As someone who has many personal connections with Indigenous people in the north, Banerji urges people to take action to stop this issue from persisting. "We've got children who are starving in this country, how is that reconciliation?... We have to go beyond the rhetoric and make some real substantial changes."

On social media, several influencers have spoken out about the circumstances Indigenous peoples have had to endure for over a decade. In a TikTok video, user Shina Nova (@shinanova) shared images of the cost of many food products and stressed that people should take action to prevent this from continuing or getting worse. Nova is a highly influential Indigenous figure, with over 4.2 million followers on TikTok. She advocates for the rights of Indigenous peoples, especially youth and women.

Another influencer, Willow Allen (@willow.allen), posted a Tik-

Tok video where she filmed herself purchasing groceries at a store. The prices of these groceries were high, and the price ended up being twice as much as it would be in southern Canada. Nutella at the grocery store was \$48.59 before tax, whereas it would generally be around \$7.49 in southern Canadian grocery stores. In the comment section of the video, many viewers were shocked about these prices; others replied that this has been the case for northern Canadians for years.

In a video addressing high inflation, *Now Toronto* spoke with a TikTok user who compared different food items to products in southern Canada and commented that most of these items were rotten.

As the crisis continued, politicians like NDP leader Jagmeet Singh commented. After a visit to Iqaluit in late October, Singh heard many accounts of the high inflation circumstances they have endured. Singh said to *Nunatsiaq News* that Indige-

nous peoples should continue fighting the issue, "and instead of asking them [the federal government] nicely, let's force them to lower prices by putting in better protections, stronger laws that would actually bring these prices down."

In response to concerns over the years, the government developed the Nutrition North Canada Program in 2011 to provide northern grocers with a subsidy for basic commodities like fresh vegetables or milk. Despite expectations that the program would reduce food costs, Indigenous communities have commented that it hasn't helped them much. *CBC News* reported in 2014 that a reason for this may be that retailers did not use the subsidy as intended.

"So-called solutions, like the Nutrition North program, are not solutions and are certainly not the permanent solutions to the kind of food insecurity and high cost of living northern communities face," NDP MP Niki Ashton said.



## EDITORIAL

## NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS FOR THE VSB

## EDITORIAL

As 2023 comes to a close, many students find themselves setting goals for the new year. Likewise, the Editorial Board has a few changes in mind when we look ahead to 2024. However, we can't implement them on our own. The shifts we would most like to see occur are district-wide, and require the help of the VSB's Board of Trustees. That's why we've conveniently created a list of nine new year's resolutions for the VSB — one for each trustee on the board.

## 1 Reinstate Honours Programs Across the Board

During their 2022 municipal election campaigns for School Board positions, members of Ken Sim's ABC Party promised to bring honours programs back to Vancouver schools. ABC now holds the majority on the school board, and honours programs are still in limbo. These educational opportunities had previously been scrapped by the VSB in 2022 (see the Vol. 12 Issue 1 editorial). So far, little progress has been made towards reinstating them. In an era of declining academic outcomes among students, the extra learning options that honours programs provide are needed now more than ever. Ken Sim and his party must respect the pledges made to their voters and bring back these important services. This is a promise that must be fulfilled.

## 2 Tighten Policies On Plagiarism and Late Work

A document issued by the VSB in January 2023 required teachers to stop penalizing students with reduced marks for plagiarism, work turned in late, or work not submitted at all. This astonishing policy should be revoked and the alarming trend that it fuels should be halted.

The policy statement claims that "taking marks off for late work or for work not handed in distorts the grade and doesn't provide an accurate description of student learning."

Penalising students for late or unsubmitted work is a central and fundamental principle of ensuring responsible work habits. If students have no deadlines and lose no marks for missed work, what incentive is there to complete any work at all?

This VSB policy claims that "the mathematical damage that is done to a student's grade when zeros are assigned is not a proportional response" to plagiarism or late work. However, the Editorial Board believes that these actions should be met with consequences. Otherwise, how will students be assessed accurately on the amount of effort that they put in?

The report goes on to declare that "a zero for academic dishonesty without the opportunity to rewrite or resubmit without penalty will result in that same inaccuracy." This effectively removes any consequences for plagiarism, and with that, any disincentive to plagiarize. With the rise of AI tools such as ChatGPT, schools must now be stricter about plagiarism than ever before. If there are no defined consequences for plagiarism, what's to stop the student from simply plagiarizing again? Students in the proposed system will no longer be motivated to submit their work themselves in the proper time frame.

Though the VSB may believe that when a student receives a zero, "they are effectively being told that they do not need to do the assignment," which is "the opposite of accountability," the Editorial Board contends that firm penalties for academic dishonesty will help students make ethical choices in the future. If a student receives a zero on an assignment that they plagiarized, they will be encouraged not to do so later on in the course, knowing that being caught again will again be a detriment to their mark.

Additionally, giving free marks to intentionally underachieving students removes incentives for any student to complete work. This surprisingly relaxed policy reduces student accountability, despite the School Board's arguments to the contrary. While students must be given adequate support in order to succeed in their coursework, this VSB proposal is not working towards this. Inequities in education will not be solved by lowering academic standards and diminishing basic principles, but by supporting students that are struggling in their efforts to reach these standards.

Such policies will not prepare students for the world. Life after high school may not provide the same second chances. Students who perform at an objectively low level academically and still receive average marks will move forward in school without adequate understanding of the material being taught. They will continue to fall behind in their future classes. The school system will thus fail at its most crucial objective — teaching its students.

## 3 Allow Access to Office 365 Outside of Canada

Although the Editorial Board understands that the decision to prohibit Office 365 access outside of Canada is based on security concerns, the benefits to opening up international access outweigh the risks. It would allow students on international trips to access Teams and submit assignments even while abroad. Through Teams and Outlook, students are able to stay in the loop regarding important school announcements which they would otherwise miss. Students who will be visiting relatives over the coming winter break will be cut off from the possibility to submit assignments or receive guidance from their teachers.

Considering how close the US border is to our school — 45.2 kilometres, to be exact — it's a no-brainer that we should be able to use our school-issued software while abroad, or at least within North America. Students do not have to go far to be blocked from school online services.

While it is possible for students to use a VPN to access Canadian wireless while in other nations, these services are sometimes expensive. Financial inequalities among students should not be discounted.

It is unrealistic for the VSB to assume that students will always be in Canada while completing their schoolwork. The restrictions on students attempting to access Teams outside of Canada should be removed in order to meet the needs of a diverse student community with connections spanning the globe.

## 4 Establish Consistent Rules and Guidelines for Fundraising and Activities Across the District

Currently, Eric Hamber's Student Council (StuCo) is prohibited from running various types of fundraisers and events due to school-specific policies. This has impeded their ability to raise money for charities like the CANley Cup and exciting events such as school dances.

Other Student Councils in Vancouver, however, have not faced such obstacles, and continue to organize activities that their counterparts at Hamber are unable to. These inequalities among Vancouver schools are not due to meaningful distinctions between the schools, but differences in their administration. A VSB-wide policy would establish a clear framework for addressing fundraising decisions, reducing uncertainty and discord among school communities.

Hamber's Grad Committee and StuCo have not been allowed to run any fundraisers involving food, taking many event options off the board. Due to the widespread appeal of food, initiatives such as bake sales and the Griff have historically been very popular in the Hamber community. Some fundraisers blocked this year include a Grad Committee initiative to sell bubble tea and a StuCo bake sale proposal.

Additionally, for legal reasons, StuCo was also not allowed to advertise for online donations for CANley Cup. Due to these and other factors, collected donations were significantly lower than past years. According to an anonymous StuCo member, Hamber raised approximately \$2,000 in 2023, a 60 per cent decrease from \$5,000 in 2022. The teacher pie event, a success in previous years, was called off due to perceived disagreement with the school's values. Spirit days like "Adam Sandler Day" were canceled because some of the actor's movies were not rated PG-13. These overly cautious restrictions are significantly reducing school spirit and student enjoyment based on trivial and alarmist reasoning constantly imagining the worst possible outcomes.

Other VSB schools have had success with events that would transgress our restrictions shows the inconsistency of the school board's rules. The Editorial Board calls upon the VSB to be more consistent with their regulations. Each rule must be supported by a clear chain of logic that demonstrates why an event might be genuinely detrimental to students.

## 5 Regulate Food and Drinks Sold at School Cafeterias

An investigation by the Editorial Board in June 2023 revealed that the VSB has no centralized list of the food and drink items sold in VSB secondary school cafeterias. Despite this, the VSB claimed that its contracts with cafeteria suppliers require all food and drinks sold to follow the provincial guidelines for food and beverage sales in schools.

In the same investigation, *The Nest* discovered several pre-packaged food options at the Hamber cafeteria whose nutritional content did not meet the provincial guidelines. One example of this was

a 591mL-size Diet Pepsi in wild cherry flavour containing 71 mg of caffeine, almost three times the permitted amount as per the guidelines.

Additionally, many of the items on the cafeteria menu, such as the "Superfood Salad", "Vegan Grilled Cheese", and "Buffalo Quinoa Bowl", were not actually available to purchase, despite being listed as daily vegetarian and vegan options.

The Editorial Board calls upon the VSB to create open communication between the cafeteria and the student body regarding options, especially if menu accommodations for dietary restrictions are not always available. This can be achieved by having a public centralized list of foods sold in cafeterias, along with their nutritional information.

All students have a right to know what's in the food they eat, and be given the opportunity to make healthy decisions for themselves. Students with dietary restrictions should not have to worry about going hungry because there aren't appropriate options for them at school.

It is also important to note that if students and staff uphold the provincial food guidelines in their fundraising events, school cafeterias should also be held accountable by the VSB to follow them.

## 6 Increase Outreach for VLN Courses

Many students across the district are met with the need to take an online course, whether due to unavailability of in-person classes or scheduling conflicts. Opting for an online course is presumed to be more efficient and provide more independent learning options, yet the structure of the Vancouver Learning Network (VLN) courses appear to do exactly the contrary. On the VSB website, VLN is described as "a comprehensive, flexible and engaging education program that provides an alternative to traditional in-person learning for many different profiles of students." In reality, VLN's system is neither comprehensive nor engaging.

Students are initially provided with exactly 365 days to complete the course material, but there are no strict due dates and rarely any communication with the student. Learning material also varies greatly across courses — some courses provide video lessons, but some only exhaustive notes. The lack of sufficient and consistent course material significantly affects the students' ability to self-teach, as VLN is essentially the same experience as a student teaching the subject to themselves. In some courses, the guidelines by which students are marked are unclear.

Although aimed to be self-directed, the amount of self-discipline required for a student to excel in online courses is quite extensive. Many students lack support from teachers and family to keep them focused and disciplined. VLN staff and teachers very rarely reach out to students, typically only emailing students a month in advance of the due date. Students are given the option to reach out for support themselves, but with busy school and extracurricular schedules, they may neglect this option and the course altogether. Without support, sufficient resources, and frequent reminders, students taking VLN online courses are consistently set up for failure.

The Editorial Board calls upon the VSB to reframe the VLN online learning structure to better accommodate students' learning needs. Providing space for more consistent teacher outreach and standardizing course material and marking procedures would provide more clarity to the student and help them find success in independent learning.

## 7 Clarify Applying-Extending Framework for K-9 Students

In August this year, a new policy was released by the Ministry of Education and Child Care that outlined changes in student assessment. As stated on the VSB website, "The purpose of assessment is to facilitate learning and move it forward in an equitable and inclusive way." Students in grades K-9 are to be entirely assessed using a proficiency scale with four points: Emerging, Developing, Proficient, and Extending.

These points are in many ways quite similar to the previous letter grade system, simply with different categories. However, the new system is a much less specific assessment of student learning and academic outcomes. While the proficiency scale initially included finer gradations, like Applying-Extending, these have been discontinued. Student performance is now expected to fit into one of four levels, which may not accurately describe the student's abilities. A student who is "barely Proficient" cannot fairly be put into the same category as a student who is "almost Extending". Unlike Hogwarts students, the students of Vancouver schools cannot be perfectly sorted into four categories, especially considering our lack of a magic

hat to do so.

Within the four-point scale, "Proficient" is supposedly the goal, but many programs and initiatives, like mini schools, look for students with predominantly "Extending" outcomes. What constitutes an Extending grade is entirely subjective — how does one "Extend" in math? Some teachers may award any test with 90% or above an Extending grade, while others may only award Extending grades for perfect scores. As a result, subjectively graded subjects like math have become more subjective, jeopardizing students' grades and their admission to high schools and accelerated programs. Although meant to help students think critically about their learning journey, the four categories seem to box in learning further, disregarding the nuances of student progress. There is less opportunity for varied grades, and we believe this is inherently detrimental to student progress. Grading system variation, with clear and universal guidelines, is needed to ensure that learners are given the best possible chance of success.

## 8 Bring Back The Original MACC Program

In 2021, the VSB announced their "revisiting" of the Multi-Age Cluster Class (MACC) program for gifted elementary school students. The MACC, which is a comprehensive multi-year program, is set to be replaced by Gifted Education Centres (GECs). The GECs will allow students to partake in "engaging enrichment activities with new friends and peers" for six weeks at a time. The program will admit up to 720 new students per year — as opposed to the 80 students the MACC currently admits.

Two members of the Editorial Board have previously attended the MACC program. We understand its importance for not only students with gifted designations, but all those who are unable to reach their full potential in a traditional elementary classroom environment. We have witnessed firsthand its benefits for us and our peers.

The MACC's full-time nature also allows students to fully immerse themselves in the program and make connections with like-minded peers. The GEC programs, however, are not long enough to establish such connections, and simultaneously alienate students from their home school by taking them away for six weeks at a time.

Moreover, the decision to replace the MACC was made by the previous VSB trustees, who largely held different values than the current board does. Reinstating the MACC program would be a logical decision considering the current board's pledge to reinstate the Honours program.

## 9 Create a Board-Approved Journalism 11/12 Course

Journalism is a severely under-represented subject in Vancouver education, and the Editorial Board believes it deserves much more recognition. At a time when the future of journalism is in doubt, it is astonishing that no public high school in Vancouver offers any courses with a specific journalism focus.

A journalism course would allow students to gain valuable insight into the laws protecting freedom of the press in Canada, as well as the state of modern journalism. This knowledge would help students become well-informed Canadian citizens and promote student journalism skills.

Additionally, through a Journalism 11/12 course, student publications like *The Nest* would be able to receive more funding from the school district — required to create a high-quality publication. An on-timetable course would allow reporters and editors to dedicate more time and effort into their journalistic work, rather than balancing it with a full timetable.

Finally, through journalism, students learn valuable lessons in collaboration. Without constant communication between reporters, editors, and staff, it is virtually impossible to run a publication like *The Nest*.

However, introducing a journalism course could bring risks of its own. If poorly managed, it could inadvertently reduce students' journalistic independence by bringing more administration oversight. The intention of the journalism course should be restricted to educating students about journalism, and *The Nest* should remain an independent entity. While students might submit *Nest* articles as work for the class and dedicate class time to work on the publication, it is extremely important that the creation of a journalism course must not bring increased oversight or censorship to student publications.

The Editorial Board calls upon the VSB to include a journalism course in the new curriculum in a carefully considered manner that does not disrupt or intrude upon the firm foundations of journalistic freedom that VSB students currently possess.

## INTERNATIONAL

# New TV Shows and Movies Revealed as SAG-AFTRA Seals the Deal With Studios

NEWS REPORT by Mia Boguslavsky (12)

On Nov. 9, the Screen Actors Guild — American Federation of Television and Radio Artists (SAG-AFTRA) union reached an agreement with Hollywood studios regarding wages, residuals, and production safety. Part of strike protocols and picketing involved artists not promoting any of their new work that involved a union contract, which greatly reduced the amount of publicity that projects were getting.

Major studios, such as Disney and Netflix, decided to withhold trailers and project reveals until the strike ended and actors were able to promote their work. Therefore, on the day that the strike ended, a great amount of announcements were made regarding new TV shows and movies, and several trailers were released. Many projects that were already completed revealed their release dates.

Although there have been rumours of its production since 2016, *The Garfield Movie* was only officially confirmed after the end of the SAG-AFTRA strike. An adaptation, the film will include many of the same characters from the original comic strips.

The story will follow the adventures of Garfield as he reunites with his long-lost father, a street cat named Vic. With an all-star cast, the film features Chris Pratt as Garfield, Samuel L. Jackson as Vic, and Nicholas Hoult as Jon Arbuckle, the owner of Garfield. The movie will

make its theatrical debut on May 24, 2024, and will eventually be released on Netflix.

*Inside Out* first caught the attention of audiences in 2015, with the animated film achieving box office success at \$858.8 million. The sequel film, *Inside Out 2*, was announced in 2022 at the Disney D23 expo. Trailers for this movie have since been released.

The movie will follow Riley, the lead of the original film, as she navigates becoming a teenager and faces new emotions. In the trailer, the emotions from the first film, Sadness, Anger, Fear, Disgust, and Joy, are surprised by a demolition crew who come to make space for new emotions. Though only one new emotion, Anxiety, appears in the trailer, three more will be in the film.

The cast, though largely under wraps, will feature Maya Hawke as Anxiety and Liza Lapira as a re-cast Disgust. Set to release theatrically on June 14, 2024, the movie will later be available on Disney+.

Another instalment of a superhero adventure will be making theatrical rounds later in 2024. *Venom 3* is set to premiere on Nov. 8, 2024. Though speculated to have been filmed earlier in 2023, a selfie posted on Tom Hardy's Instagram after the end of the strike showed the actor in costume, revealing that production has only officially begun. Much is unknown about the story of the film, but a few leading cast members have been announced: Juno Temple and Chiwetel Ejiofor will be starring alongside

Tom Hardy.

Immediately after the end of the strike, casting for season three of the *White Lotus* began. Key characters have been revealed by *Deadline* to be "a patriarch, a corporate executive, an actress, a couple of mothers, a misfit and a yogi." However, cast member Jennifer Coolidge reportedly will not be reprising her role as Tanya McQuoid.

This instalment is set to take place in Thailand following last season's location of Sicily, Italy. Though filming will begin at the end of this year, the new season will only be available on

Amazon Prime in 2025.

Finally, details about a sequel to the 2000 film *Gladiator* have been officially disclosed. Taking place years after the ending of the original, the film will follow Maximus' son, Lucius, as he embarks on his journey. With many new additions to the cast, the film will star Paul Mescal as Lucius. Pedro Pascal, Joseph Quinn, Denzel Washington and Connie Nielson will star as undisclosed characters. The current theatrical premiere date is Nov. 22, 2024, but it is subject to change, as post-production was halted due to the strike.

## GARFIELD

EXCLUSIVELY IN MOVIE THEATERS

2024



IMBD



PHILLIP FARAOONE/GETTY IMAGES VIA VANITY FAIR

# Friends Star Matthew Perry Dies at 54

NEWS REPORT by Cynthia Zhu (10)

On Oct. 28, 2023, actor Matthew Perry was found unconscious in his hot tub at his house in Los Angeles and was later pronounced dead.

The autopsy report was released by the Los Angeles Medical Examiner's Office on Dec. 15 and the cause of death was ruled as cardiovascular overstimulation and respiratory depression, coupled with acute effects of ketamine. Perry was reportedly undergoing ketamine treatment to combat anxiety and depression, and his death was ruled an accident with no foul play suspected. He was 54 years old.

During his career, Perry took on roles in various movies and television shows, with his jump to international fame coming from his role as Chandler Bing on the sitcom *Friends*. Along with acting, he also heavily engaged in philanthropy.

Having suffered from addiction throughout his life, he actively engaged in philanthropic work for the rehabilitation of drug addicts, as well as other causes. One such example is the creation of the Perry House, a sober living facility to help those who struggled with addiction.

In 2011, he lobbied the US Government in support of funding for drug courts. He also served as an Honorary Board Member and raised funds for the Lili Claire Foundation, which was created in memory of *Friends*' Casting Director Leslie Litt's daughter.

Perry's passing carried a profound impact, with many prominent figures expressing their condolences. Prime Minister Justin Trudeau,

Perry's childhood friend, took to X to describe his passing as "shocking and saddening," and said that "[he] was loved — and [he] will be missed."

Actor Julia Roberts, Perry's ex-girlfriend, told *Entertainment Tonight* that his untimely passing was "heartbreaking," but could be used as a chance to "appreciate what we have and to keep going in a positive way as best we can."

A statement released by Perry's costars from *Friends*, Jennifer Aniston, Courtney Cox, Lisa Kudrow, Matt LeBlanc, and David Schwimmer read, "There is so much to say, but right now we're going to take a moment to grieve and process this unfathomable loss."

Many of Perry's fans from around the world turned to social media to express their grief as well, with many rewatching shows and movies in which he was featured. Users reflected on Perry's role in their childhood shows and voiced their heartbreak over his passing, with many sharing this sentiment.

Following Perry's passing, the National Philanthropic Trust, an American charity, established the Matthew Perry Foundation in his name. The foundation's mission is described as "the realization of Matthew's enduring commitment to helping others struggling with the disease of addiction," and aims to honour his legacy of philanthropic work.

In April, Perry told the *Los Angeles Times* that he would like to be remembered "as a guy who lived life, loved well, lived well and helped people," and "that running into me was a good thing, and not something bad."

# THE 10TH ANNUAL GAME AWARDS

NEWS REPORT by Darlene Soh (11)

The Game Awards, an annual award ceremony celebrating the achievements of the best video games worldwide, streamed live on Dec. 7 this year. Winners were decided by a blend of an international voting jury of global media and influencer outlets and a public vote.

The live stream of the 10th Game Awards was welcomed on all major streaming services and was streamed from the Peacock Theater in Los Angeles. With over 30 categories of awards to be honoured, and 112 games nominated, the Game Awards acknowledges the best video games in the global industry.

The most prestigious award, the Game of the Year, recognizes a game that delivers the absolute best experience. Six games were nominated: *Resident Evil 4*, *Super Mario Bros. Wonder*, *The Legend of Zelda: Tears of the Kingdom*, *Marvel's Spider-Man 2*, *Baldur's Gate 3* and *Alan Wake 2*. The award was won by *Baldur's Gate 3* by Larian Studios.

*Baldur's Gate 3* not only won Game of the Year, but also Best Community Support Award for transparency and responsiveness in regards to social media activity; Best Multiplayer Award for outstanding massive multiplayer and co-op experiences in gameplay and design; and Best RPG with rich player customization and progression.

Best Performance was awarded to actor Neil Newbon for voice acting, motion, and performance. Lastly, *Baldur's Gate 3* also won Player's Voice, which is entirely voted for by fans who choose their favourite game of 2023. *Baldur's Gate 3* was the ultimate winner at The

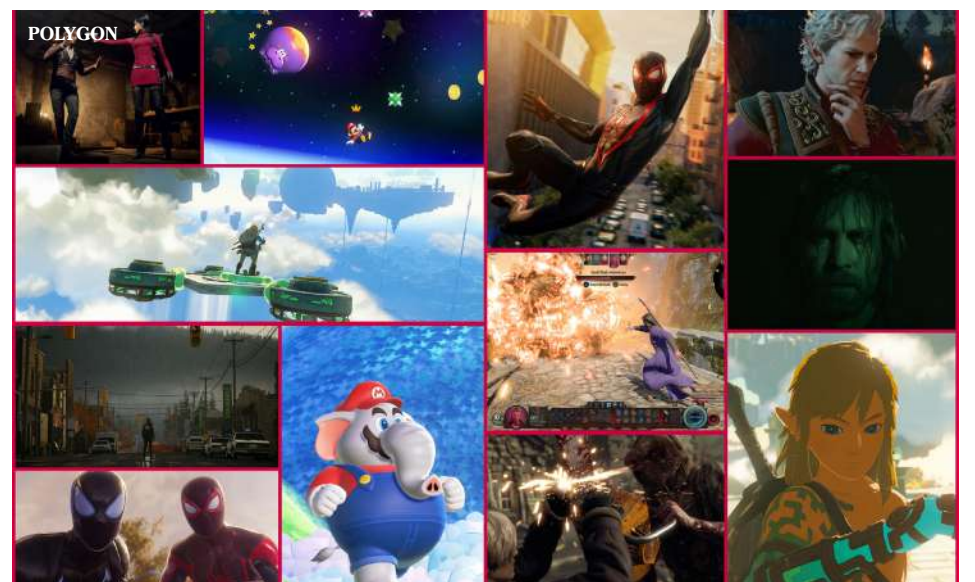
Game Awards this year, taking the titles of six trophies.

*Alan Wake 2*, created by Remedy Entertainment/Epic Games Publishing, also performed well, winning three awards: Best Game Direction, Best Narrative, and Best Art Direction. *Alan Wake 2* showed outstanding innovation in game direction, creative technical achievement in design and animation, and excellent storytelling and narrative development.

Best Ongoing Game this year went to *Cyberpunk 2077* by CD Projekt Red, which was awarded to the game for its outstanding development of ongoing content that evolves player experience over time. *Cyberpunk 2077* won the Best Ongoing Game, despite only recently being announced as fully completed. Many fans received this well, and although the game had a reputation of extreme bugs and glitches during its early release, fans thought it was a well deserved award after a long journey.

Best Esports Game of 2023 went to *Valorant* by Riot Games for the second year in a row. *Valorant* did this by delivering the best overall esports experience to players around the world in regards to tournaments, community support, and updates. *Valorant* beat Riot Games' *League of Legends*, Lightspeed/KRAFTON/Level Infinite's *PUBG Mobile*, and Valve's *Dota 2* and *Counter-Strike 2*.

The Best Action/Adventure award, for combining combat with traversal and puzzle solving, was given to *The Legend of Zelda: Tears of the Kingdom* from Nintendo EPD/Nintendo. Despite being nominated for five different awards, the game only took home one award this year for its ongoing success.



## INTERNATIONAL

# BOX OFFICE UNDERPERFORMANCE MAY “SNAP” MARVEL OUT OF EXISTENCE

ANALYSIS by Elle Glen (10)

The Marvel Cinematic Universe (MCU) first debuted in 2008 with the release of *Iron Man*, and after 15 years and earning more than \$28 billion at the global box office, the franchise appears to be sinking under its own weight.

Recent Marvel films, *Ant-Man and the Wasp: Quantumania* and *The Marvels* both severely underperformed at the box office and received poor critic and audience ratings. This downturn is causing casual and dedicated fans alike to question the studio's future. Will a global fatigue with superhero movies cause the end of the MCU or will Marvel find a way to keep dominating theatres?

The decline arguably started after the release of *Avengers: Endgame*, the highest grossing Marvel film of all time, which made 2.798 billion dollars.

Since the start of “Phase 4” of the MCU, Marvel has released nine films that have each globally grossed under \$1 billion. The most recent movie on this downward trend is *The Marvels*, the long awaited sequel to *Captain Marvel*, which came out in 2019 to a global box office of around \$1.1 billion. In comparison, the sequel has only made \$197 million globally after being in theaters for four weeks, according to *Variety*, which is the lowest figure ever grossed by a Marvel film.

In addition to *The Marvels*, recent underperforming content released by Marvel in the past year includes the TV series *Secret Invasion* as well as *Ant-Man and the Wasp: Quantumania*. According to *Screen Rant*, *Secret Invasion* fell short because of creative team disagreements and a mid-way change in writing staff. *Ant-Man and the Wasp: Quantumania*, the 3rd installment in a series, appears to be failing due to overuse of CGI and confusing storylines, including the introduction of the quantum realm, as explained by Paul Tassi for *Forbes*.

According to *The Direct*, ratings from every major film website and company show a severe decline in rankings for Marvel movies, including among audiences. This has led to questions surrounding the decline of one of entertainment's most popular action franchises, and whether Marvel will ever be able to recover.

## Quantity over Quality

Marvel's rapid expansion has been incredibly expedited, resulting in a staggering content release rate. From 2008 to 2018, Marvel produced 20 films. In the last four years, 2019 to 2023, they have released 13 movies. This accelerated production pace has significantly contributed to Marvel's financial success,



but it has come at the cost of storyline quality.

As the MCU continues to grow, it becomes oversaturated with content that lacks quality and direction, causing a decline in viewership. While the decrease in quality has become more noticeable in the last few years, many, including Oscar winning Director Martin Scorsese, have never viewed Marvel as true cinema. Scorsese told *Empire Magazine* in 2019, “that's not cinema. Honestly, the closest I can think of them... is theme parks.” He later explained this quote in an op-ed in the *New York Times*, saying that his reasoning was simple. “In many places around this country and around the world, franchise films are now your primary choice if you want to see something on the big screen... There's worldwide audiovisual entertainment, and there's cinema. They still overlap from time to time, but that's becoming increasingly rare.”

Superhero films have always followed the hero's journey story arc and generally rely on simple, formulaic plot and lengthy action sequences to tell the story. The lack of resonance with audiences is just another aspect of “superhero fatigue,” a term that arguably sums up the potential cultural shift away from these types of stories.

Movie theater success has usually been reserved for big action franchises

like Marvel, Star Wars, and DC, but in the last year, films like *Barbie* and *Oppenheimer* have dominated theaters and became an even bigger cultural event than many of Marvel's hits, showing that Marvel doesn't have the control over theaters that they are known for.

Now that the Infinity Saga has ended, Marvel has been heavily relying on sequels, which can be a good way to expand a story, but the lack of originality and quality make these films seem unnecessary and even detrimental to the original film. Recent examples of this are *The Marvels*, *Ant-Man and the Wasp: Quantumania* and *Thor: Love and Thunder*.

When Disney CEO Bob Iger spoke on Marvel at the New York Times Annual DealBook summit, he defended recent sequels, but also spoke of future improvement. “I don't want to apologize for making sequels. Some of them have done extraordinarily well and they've been good films, too... We're making a number of [sequels] now... but we will only greenlight a sequel if we believe the story that the creators want to tell is worth telling.”

*Avengers: Endgame* also saw the final appearance of staple heroes such as Captain America and Iron Man, leaving a void which the company is attempting to fill with anti-hero or side characters. In order to find a new “face of the Aveng-

ers,” Marvel has released films and series spotlighting individual characters. Often, these films, like *Black Widow*, perform worse in the global box office than films that include multiple staple characters.

## “For The Fans”

According to *The Hollywood Reporter*, Marvel arguably has the biggest fan base of any franchise and has continued to draw people in following the release of *Avengers: Infinity War*, but now the recent addition of content is proving to be an ultimatum for casual fans.

With a cinematic universe that contains such a long and complex storyline, one should really watch all these films to truly understand the intertwined plotlines — or so says Marvel. But for many, this sounds like too big of an undertaking, and they aren't wrong. With around two days worth of movies and TV shows, many people who aren't diehard fans may be deterred by this massive library of content.

Not only do new films build off of older stories, but Marvel's newer content is often filled with “easter eggs” meant to share a hidden message or idea. This further isolates newer fans, polarizing viewers into categories of either diehard Marvel fans or viewers who dislike Marvel.

## Scale

Introducing the idea of timelines and

multiverses to increase scale may have lost viewers as the films have become more unrealistic and confusing. First the stories were set in a city, then a country, then the Earth, and finally in *Endgame*, the universe. With an increase in scale in each film, now Marvel continues finding new ways of upping the stakes and drawing in more attention. A failed attempt at this was the multiverse approach, which began with *Spiderman: No Way Home* and was amplified in *Doctor Strange: Multiverse of Madness*.

These kinds of stories may be leading to severe fan burnout, causing once dedicated fans to grow tired of Marvel stories. Professor and pop culture expert Robert Thompson told *CNBC* that “The problem is that [Marvel] created a wonderful creature and now they don't quite know how to feed it.”

## Outliers

During this period of decline, there have been a couple outliers. A major example of this is *Spiderman: No Way Home*, which earned \$1.916 billion USD at the box office. This success could be credited to outside story development and production from Sony, who own the character Spiderman, as well as the inclusion of Spiderman characters from previous franchises.

Another Marvel project that stood out was the experimental TV show *WandaVision*, which was well received by fans and critics alike. According to *Deadline*, *WandaVision* was the most watched series premiere on Disney+ prior to the release of the series, *The Falcon and the Winter Soldier*, and received attention and praise for being unlike any other Marvel content. Despite only dropping episodes once a week, which contributed to low viewership, *WandaVision* put Marvel “back on top of the entertainment media food chain,” said film critic Scott Mendelson.

## What's Next for the MCU?

With 11 more films announced for release, Marvel shows no signs of stopping the constant outpour of content, with announcements of releases as far ahead as 2027. *Loki* recently dropped its season two finale, and is receiving lukewarm praise. The second season of the experimental animated series, *What If...?* drops December 22nd. *Madame Web*, a film from Marvel and Sony, is set to release by February 2024, followed by the long-awaited *Deadpool 3*. While it's hard to tell how content will be received by critics and audiences, the continuous stream doesn't seem to be ending anytime soon. It currently appears that unless Marvel pivots and adjusts their content priorities, the MCU may continue its downward slide.

## PRESIDENT XI MEETS WITH AMERICAN BUSINESS TITANS

NEWS REPORT by Justin Chuk (11) & Adrian Koo (11)

On Nov. 15, Chinese President Xi Jinping visited the United States. His visit aimed to strengthen economic ties and ease geopolitical tensions between the two nations. There was a stark contrast between his last trip, in 2017, and his most recent visit, which now stands against the backdrop of more than half a decade of escalating

tensions between the two countries.

President Xi held a high-profile dinner to encourage foreign capital to remain in China. Business Titans and CEOs like Apple's Tim Cook, BlackRock's Larry Fink, as well as others from Blackstone, Pfizer, Qualcomm, Boeing, Visa, Mastercard, and Broadcom joined the event.

The dinner, hosted by the US-China Business Council and the National Committee on US-China Relations, was

a platform for Xi to pitch his nation's economic potential directly to global power players. Amidst a global reopening post-Covid that fell short of anticipated growth, China still accounts for a substantial portion of sales for companies like Apple, Qualcomm, and Broadcom; making the country a vital market for these tech giants.

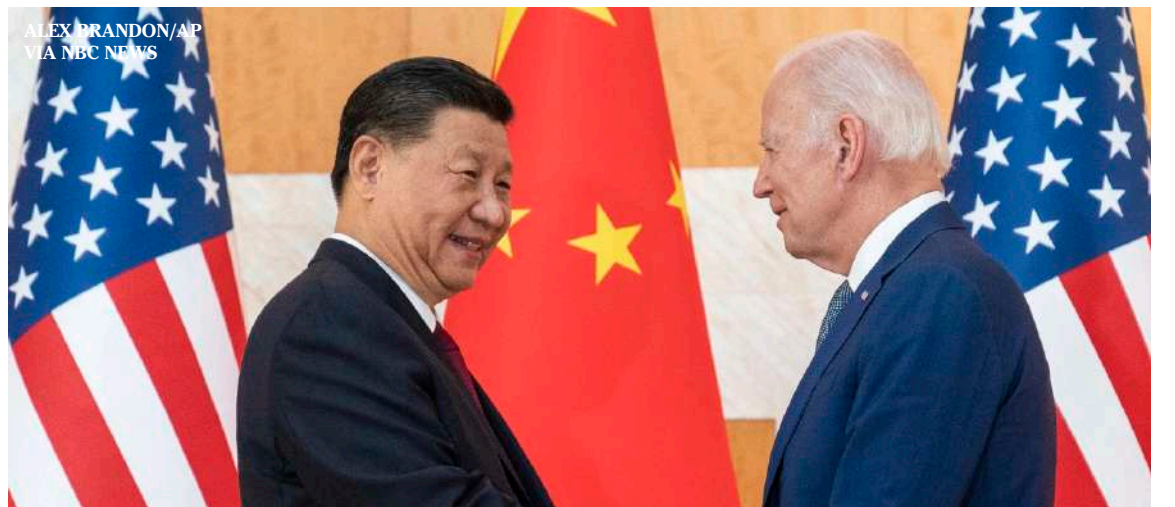
However, after a new security law passed this summer, Chinese police raided the Shanghai offices of multiple

consulting firms conducting market research for investments in China. This tightening of national security laws and the perceived risks associated with foreign investments have left many questioning the country's intention for foreign capital to remain.

Despite concerns about economic growth, recent indicators suggest a potential rebound, with the International Monetary Fund forecasting a 5.2 per cent increase in the Chinese economy

this fiscal year — compared to a mere 2.99 per cent increase in 2022.

“The Chinese economy is clearly weakening. There's no question,” Derek Scissors, a senior American Enterprise Institute (AEI) economist, told *BNN Bloomberg*. “But if you need to stay in China, and you're worried about your position because of Chinese government behaviour, it's even more important to be able to talk to Xi.”



## INTERNATIONAL

THE GRAMMYS



## 2024 Grammy Nominations

NEWS REPORT by Joanna Pidoche (9)

On Feb. 4, 2024, the 66th Grammy Awards will be held at the Crypto.com Arena in Los Angeles, with a host yet to be announced. The televised ceremony is airing live on CBS, and will be available for streaming on Paramount+.

Three new categories are being included in this year's ceremony: Best African Music Performance, Best Pop Dance Recording, and Best Alternative Jazz Album. On the Grammy Awards website, Recording Academy CEO Harvey Mason Junior explained that the three new categories were introduced to "acknowledge and appreciate a broader array of artists...while also exposing a wider range of music to fans worldwide."

SZA, with nine Grammy nominations, has scored the most out of any other artist. Following right behind her, three nominees are tied with seven nominations: Victoria Monét, Phoebe Bridgers, and mixing engineer Serban Ghenea.

Others who came away with six nominations include Brandy Clark, boygenius, Miley Cyrus, Billie Eilish, Taylor Swift, Olivia Rodrigo, and producer Jack Antonoff.

This year's highly anticipated categories are dominated by female nominees, as Jon Batiste was the only male performer to achieve six grammy nominations in both the song and record categories.

Many Canadian artists were also nominated this year. Among them were Drake—who has finally decided to end

his long boycott of the Grammys this year—with a nomination for "Spin Bout U" in the best melodic rap category. Always, the Canadian indie pop band, has also earned a nomination in best alternative music performance.

The soundtrack of Greta Gerwig's blockbuster hit, *Barbie*, collected 11 nominations, which was more than any musical artist. Five of these nominations were bestowed upon the song "What Was I Made For?" by Billie Eilish. Dua Lipa, Ice Spice, and Nicki Minaj have also brought in nominations for their songs in *Barbie*.

Along with that, Ryan Gosling's ballad "I'm Just Ken" was nominated in the best song written for visual media category. However, the actor himself was not nominated along with his song, as he was not one of the songwriters.

Album of the Year

This bestial is the most prestigious award category, making it an honor to receive this prize commemorating an artist's skills.

In the Album of the Year category, the eight nominees are: *Midnights* – Taylor Swift; *SOS* – SZA; *GUTS* – Olivia Rodrigo; *the record* – boygenius; *World Music Radio* – Jon Batiste; *Endless Summer Vacation* – Miley Cyrus; *The Age of Pleasure* – Janelle Monáe; and *Did you know that there's a tunnel under Ocean Blvd* – Lana Del Rey.

Record of the Year

This award is part of the four "general field categories", and it is awarded for a single or one track from an album. The award is given to the artist, producers, recording and mastering engineers.

This year's Record of the Year nominees consist of: "Anti-Hero" – Taylor Swift; "Kill Bill" – SZA; "Vampire" – Olivia Rodrigo; "What Was I Made For?" [from the motion picture 'Barbie'] – Billie Eilish; "Flowers" – Miley Cyrus; "not strong enough" – boygenius; "Worship" – Jon Batiste; and "On My Mama" – Victoria Monét.

Song of the Year

This category is very similar to record of the year, but unlike it the award is given to the writer(s) of the song and not just to the featured artist, but in many cases, might be the same person.

The eight nominated songs for Song of the Year are: "A&W" – Jack Antonoff, Lana Del Rey, and Sam Dew; "Anti-Hero" – Jack Antonoff and Taylor Swift; "Butterfly" – Jon Batiste and Dan Wilson; "Dance the Night (from Barbie the album)" – Coroline Ailin, Dua Lipa, Mark Ronson and Andrew Wyatt; "Flowers" – Miley Cyrus, Gregory Aldae Hein, and Michael Pollack; "Kill Bill" – Bob Bisel, Carter Lang, and Solána Rowe; "Vampire" – Olivia Rodrigo and Daniel Nigro; and "What Was I Made For?" – Billie Eilish O'Connell and Finneas O'Connell.

Best New Artist

This last category recognizes an artist who has achieved a breakthrough in the past year. This does not mean that they are new to the industry, or just launched their first album, but rather that their careers just skyrocketed.

This year's nominees are Gracie Abrams, Fred Again, Ice Spice, Jelly Roll, Coco Jones, Noah Kahan, Victoria Monét, and The War and Treaty.

European Commission, once the European Digital Identity has been given formal approval by both the European Parliament and the Council, EU members will have to roll out the Digital Identity Wallets over the following 24 months. The rollout aligns with the targets set for the EU's Digital Decade initiative, which aims to enhance digital identity effectiveness by 2030.

This digital identity wallet is a precursor to the EU Centralised Bank Digital Currencies (CBDCs), which are digital currencies issued by central banks, and whose planning stage was approved in November of this year. Critics of the proposal, including a group coalition with digital rights groups such as Privacy International, have voiced concerns over the implications of such a centralised system on citizens' privacy and autonomy. In an open letter, the group pointed out the potential for government surveillance and control — heightening concerns on privacy and individual liberties.

Canada also has ambitions to implement a digital identity platform. Mona Fortier, who served as treasury board president from 2021–2023, was tasked by Prime Minister Justin Trudeau with working towards establishing a secure digital identity platform for seamless service delivery to Canadians in December 2021.

The current approach, led by MP Anita Anand and Citizens' Services Minister Terry Beech, emphasises a "digital first" strategy for federal services. However, this is not a universally supported concept among Canadians, as during a rally in Penticton, BC in July, CPC Leader Pierre Poilievre pledged never to introduce a "mandatory digital ID" if he were to become Prime Minister.

## After the WGA and SAG-AFTRA Strikes: 6 Months of No Work

NEWS ANALYSIS by Malena Brewer (12)

On May 2, the Writers' Guild of America (WGA) strike began. On July 14, the Screen Actors Guild-American Federation of Television and Radio Artists (SAG-AFTRA) joined the writers, leading to a combined strike that lasted until Nov. 9.

When the WGA and SAG-AFTRA unions renewed their contracts recently, ending the strike, they requested increased residuals, protection from AI, and better safety. Still, weeks later, the effects of the strikes continue. The aim of the strike was to fight the large corporations that control the film industry, but it also led to many non-union workers losing jobs and independent companies going out of business.

There are many International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees (IATSE) workers that function within the film industry. This includes jobs such as catering, cinematography, lighting, assistant work, prop making,

Large companies let go of huge amounts of employees in order to save money. This led to even more people without jobs, including VFX and animation workers. According to the 2023 Animation Industry Layoff Tracker provided by *Cartoon Brew*, Disney's Industrial Light & Magic shut down its animation and VFX production facilities in Singapore, which impacted over 300 employees.

Scanline, a VFX studio in Vancouver, began a mass exodus and Outpost, a VFX and editing company in Quebec, began cutting salaries by 20 per cent. According to *The Hollywood Reporter*, over 45,000 workers lost their jobs over the course of the strike.

Smaller animation and VFX companies also began to lay off employees, and tried to preserve their funds until the strike ended. However, many VFX artists who do have work still get underpaid, according to *Collider*, with long working hours and no paid overtime. According to *Cartoon Brew*, incidents such as Christopher Nolan's

## Smaller animation and VFX companies also began to lay off employees

etc. here are also non-union workers, like VFX artists and producers. The WGA and SAG-AFTRA strikes caused many of these people to either lose their jobs or be temporarily laid off, because without writers or actors, the only media being consistently made were unscripted shows, mainly reality television. According to *Variety*, below-the-line workers had been losing houses, cars, and even spouses as divorce rates spiked as soon as the strike began. Some people even left the industry for good.

*Variety* also stated that struggling workers' took a total of over \$60 million was taken from their retirement funds to use to support their families. Hollywood's economy was not the only one damaged, as cancelled and postponed films resulted in many locations used for filming losing millions of dollars. This included many US states, like Montana, and cities in Canada, the UK, and India. *Reuters* reported that the US's national economy has lost over \$6 billion as a result of the strike.

*Oppenheimer* only crediting 27 VFX workers out of hundreds, have been a large hit to morale.

The VFX industry remains unprotected from situations like this due to a lack of a proper union. The reason for this stems largely from a lack of organization— with VFX artists and companies scattered all over the world, the industry is too large and complicated to create unions country by country. There is also fear that if only one country has a VFX union, then large companies will begin to avoid working with anyone in that union and reach out to companies in other countries instead.

Still, according to *Indiewire*, with nine out of ten VFX workers believing that they have no ways to negotiate for their rights, this strike has begun to energize the movement again. Recently, for example, Marvel Studios' VFX workers voted to unionize with the International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees, as a way to gain overtime pay, more feasible deadlines, and job security.



## Europe's New Digital Identity Wallet

NEWS REPORT by Justin Chuk (11)

On Nov. 8, the EU's Internal Market Commissioner, Thierry Breton, announced a deal with Members of European Parliament (MEPs) for a European "digital identity wallet". According to Breton, this initiative promises every EU citizen "a secured e-identity for their lifetime".

A digital identity wallet is a platform that stores personal information, from government-issued identification, to sensitive documents like birth certificates, medical records, banking activities, and more. It aims to centralise and streamline almost all aspects of citizens' lives into a digital format accessible through one secure platform.

"Any citizen can use [it] anywhere in Europe to do anything from paying [their] taxes to renting a bicycle," said Ursula von der Leyen, President of the European Commission in a State of the Union address.

The new European digital identity wallets will enable access to online services for all Europeans with national digital identification. It will be recognised throughout Europe, without people having to use private identification methods or unnecessarily sharing personal data with third parties.

However, with this innovation comes potential implications and concerns. The major shift towards digitalising personal identity raises doubts on the level of government oversight into citizens' daily lives.

In a statement released by the



## INTERNATIONAL

# RIP OMEGLE: THE DEMISE OF THE ONLINE CHAT SERVICE

NEWS REPORT by Kaitlyn Chan (9)

The online video chat service Omegle was shut down on Nov. 9. This followed the settlement of a 2021 lawsuit regarding the sexual abuse of minors on the platform, which was originally created in 2009 by then 18-year-old Leif K-Brooks. The Omegle website now shows K-Brooks' lengthy statement regarding the service's closure, and the video chat functions are no longer available.

According to the Omegle website, the platform was originally created to connect users randomly to "Talk to Strangers" as its tagline states, and to introduce "a form of social spontaneity that [K-Brooks] felt didn't exist elsewhere."

The platform has been popular since its release, gaining millions of daily users and over 70 million visits a month. On top of its popularity, many content creators share recordings of chats from Omegle on YouTube, TikTok, and other social media platforms.

For a long time, Omegle has been accused of giving opportunities for sexual predators, especially because of the platform's more young and vulnerable users. According to the *BBC*, Omegle has been mentioned in over 50 cases against pedophiles in the last two years.

In his statement announcing the closure of Omegle, K-Brooks said, "I was under no illusion that only good people used the Internet; but I knew that, if I said 'no' to someone online, they couldn't physically reach through the screen and hold a weapon to my head, or worse."

The statement included that the internet was a "magical," safe space for him when Omegle was first created, for "it was the idea of 'meeting new people' distilled down to almost its platonic ideal", but the misuse has gotten out of hand, resulting in the site's shutdown.

The popular video chat platform closed just a week after settling a prominent lawsuit with a person identifying as A.M., who accused the platform of connecting her in 2014 at the age of 11 with sexual predator Ryan Scott Fordyce who was in his late 30s at the time. Fordyce was sentenced to prison in Canada for exploiting A.M. and other girls after police found thousands of illegal photos and videos on his devices in his home in 2018.

The first time A.M. and Fordyce paired on Omegle, they exchanged text messages on the platform. After a while, they started connecting on outside platforms, and according to the lawsuit, he "forced A.M. to take and send naked photos and videos of herself engaging in sex acts of his choosing" for the next couple of years. A.M. claimed that Fordyce threatened to release pictures of her and bring about her arrest, as well as pressuring her to recruit other underage girls on Omegle. Their interactions lasted for four years, until A.M. was 15.

In 2021, A.M. sued for \$22 million in damages for the platform's ignorance of their users' sexual abuse, accusing Omegle of causing A.M. to be sex trafficked and profiting from the crime.

The lawsuit critiqued the design of the platform, explaining that though there were warnings on the website saying one must be 18+ or 13+ with parental consent and supervision to use the chat

service, the platform did not require users to prove their birthdate or parental consent.

The lawsuit states that the website was supposed to protect children and anonymity, to which Omegle responded that A.M. voluntarily gave away her contact information and that the abuse happened mainly on outside apps. Both sides eventually agreed to settle the case, so Judge Michael W. Mosman dismissed the case in federal district court in Oregon.

K-Brooks went on to add in his statement that "Omegle's moderation even had a positive impact beyond the site. Omegle worked with law enforcement agencies, and the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, to help put evildoers in prison where they belong."

Due to the website's promise of anonymity — a key feature in its success — it was ultimately unable to protect its youngest users.

"The only way to please [the people criticizing the platform] is to stop offering the service," said K-Brooks in his statement. He described analogies like shutting down Central Park because crimes are committed there, or destroying the universe because it contains evil. "I worry that, unless the tide turns soon, the Internet I fell in love with may cease to exist," he said. "Unfortunately, what is right doesn't always prevail."

To close off his statement, he said, "From the bottom of my heart, thank you to everyone who used Omegle for positive purposes, and to everyone who contributed to the site's success in any way. I'm so sorry I couldn't keep fighting for you."



## SEC DELAYING BITCOIN ETF: SOMETHING BIGGER AT PLAY?

NEWS REPORT by Justin Chuk (11) & Adrian Koo (11)

On Nov. 17, the United States Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) again delayed an application by the investment firm Franklin Templeton on the much-anticipated Bitcoin (BTC) exchange-traded fund (ETF). This delay marks a recurring trend in the SEC's approach to the application of Bitcoin ETFs and has left the crypto community speculating about the underlying reasons and potential outcomes.

A Bitcoin ETF serves as a bridge between traditional finance and cryptocurrencies. It is a publicly traded security that offers investors exposure to the price movements of Bitcoin. However, instead of directly holding the crypto asset, they possess a contract that promises to buy or sell Bitcoin at a future date.

A spot Bitcoin ETF is very similar, except it is tied to the current market price instead of dealing in futures. Once approved, the Bitcoin ETFs will begin operations immediately and be listed and traded on major stock exchanges.

However, the SEC must first approve the ETF within 240 days of its proposal, according to *Blockworks*. There are several times in this 240-day period where the SEC must either approve, deny, or postpone their decision on the ETF.

Thirteen of the world's largest investment firms, with their assets under management totalling over \$20 trillion USD, including BlackRock, Grayscale, WisdomTree, ARK Invest, and Fidelity, have all submitted applications for Bitcoin ETFs. According to *Forbes*, the SEC has been meeting with spot

Bitcoin ETF applicants, addressing crucial technical aspects for potential U.S. exchange listings. Additionally, SEC memos disclosed separate meetings with BlackRock and Grayscale representatives, signalling a dynamic regulatory environment. Speculation is high on the approval timeline for a spot Bitcoin ETF. Hashdex, among these applicants, eyes a potential launch by Q2 2024, while Hashdex's Dramane Meite claims that the conversation surrounding the launch has shifted from 'if' to 'when.'

Eric Balchunas and James Seyffart, Bloomberg's research analysts, are confident that Jan. 10, 2024, will be the date for the simultaneous approvals of all spot Bitcoin ETFs, which coincides with the deadline for the application from ARK Invest.

Standard Chartered Bank projects that Bitcoin will reach \$100,000 by the end of 2024. Geoff Kendrick, head of crypto research and EM FX Head at Standard Chartered emphasised the pivotal role of ETFs in driving this anticipated upswing. He also highlighted Bitcoin's increased dominance in the crypto market, up around 150 percent since the start of 2023.

"Going forward, we expect digital assets' rising overall market cap to be a bigger driver of Bitcoin price upside than a continued rise in Bitcoin dominance within the space," Kendrick wrote. New supply will also be diminished by next April's Bitcoin halving, a recurring event that reduces the amount of tokens awarded for mining by half every 4 years. As the supply of Bitcoin experiences a two-fold decrease while demand for the asset is increasing, Kendrick argues that the price of Bitcoin will only surge.



# Safety Declaration Signed At First International AI Safety Summit

NEWS REPORT by Alexandra Chow (12)

The United Kingdom government hosted the first international artificial intelligence safety summit in Bletchley Park on Nov. 1 and 2. According to *Beis Newsroom*, the UK Foreign Secretary James Cleverly said, "No country will be untouched by AI, and no country alone will solve the challenges posed by this technology. In our interconnected world, we must have an international approach."

The location of Bletchley Park for the summit is significant, as that was where computer scientist Alan Turing led a group of codebreakers to crack Nazi Germany's Enigma machine in 1941.

As reported on by *Beis Newsroom*, UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak said, "To fully embrace the extraordinary opportunities of artificial intelligence, we must grip and tackle the risks to ensure it develops safely in the years ahead."

The safety of humanity was a major focus, as the summit sought to address two concerns: misuse and loss of control of "frontier AI". Mis-

use is using the new AI capabilities to further harmful acts, whereas loss of control is when AI can be used against humans.

The summit attendees included Microsoft President Brad Smith, OpenAI CEO Sam Altman, Google DeepMind CEO Demis Hassabis, Meta AI chief Yann LeCun, and Meta President of Global Affairs Nick Clegg. Over two dozen countries, including Canada, China, France, Germany, India, Japan, Saudi Arabia, and the United States, were represented. The United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres was also present.

During the summit, 28 countries and the European Union signed the Bletchley Declaration on AI Safety, which outlines the "urgent need to understand and collectively manage potential risks through a new joint global effort."

According to *CTV News*, Sunak described the declaration as "a landmark achievement that sees the world's greatest AI powers agree on the urgency behind understanding the risks of AI — helping ensure the long-term future of our children and grandchildren".

US Vice President Kamala Harris,

who was present at the summit, said that Britain and other countries need to act faster and more decisively. According to *CTV News*, Harris believes tech companies need to be held accountable through legislation.

In her speech at the US Embassy, Harris argued that the world needs to address "the full spectrum" of AI risks, not just threats to humanity's existence, like widespread cyberat-

tacks or AI-created bioweapons. She believes "there are additional threats that also demand our action, threats that are currently causing harm and to many people also feel existential".

It is also stated in the *CTV News* report that Sunak argued against legally regulating AI technology, with the reasoning that it needs to be understood fully before trying to regulate it. On the other hand, Harris believes

"societal harms..are already happening such as bias, discrimination and the proliferation of misinformation," which must be addressed.

There are more AI summits planned in the coming year. South Korea will host a mini virtual AI summit in six months, followed by France hosting an in-person summit in one year, according to the UK government.

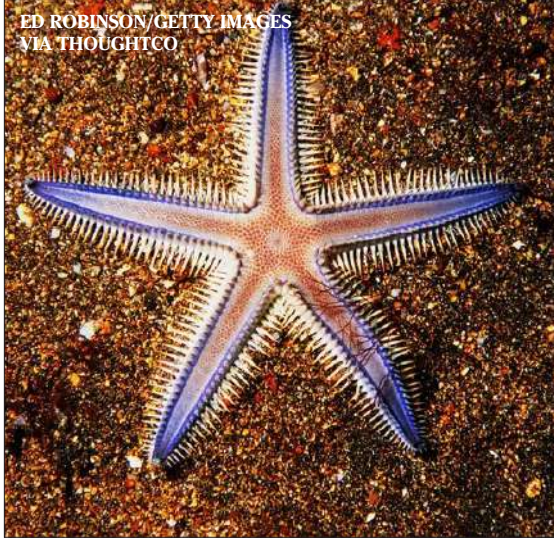


## SCIENCE

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## SEA STAR ARMS: AN EXCITING NEW REVELATION

NEWS REPORT by *Aubrey Brandt* (9)

Sea stars may seem to have a plethora of limbs, but new discoveries reveal that their “arms” are more like extensions of their head. These sea creatures are some of the most fascinating in the world. They have no blood or brains and eat by vomiting out their stomach and swallowing their prey in it. Several sea stars have the ability to regenerate lost body parts or even create a new sea star from one of their “arms”. For years, scientists have been puzzled over the anatomy of these strange creatures. Sea stars, with no recognizable head, were thought to not have one. But new research published on Nov. 1 in the journal *Nature* reveals the complete opposite.

Sea stars have a pentaradial body plan, which means they can be divided into five equal segments. Experts have long wondered how echinoderms — animals including sea urchins, sand dollars, and sea stars with pentaradial symmetry — evolved from animals with a bilateral body plan, which is common in animals such as insects, molluscs, vertebrates, and humans.

Over the years, scientists have come up with several hypotheses that could explain the odd bodies of sea stars. One such hypothesis is the du-

plication hypothesis, which suggests that echinoderms retained a bilateral body plan similar to their ancestors and multiplied it, with each arm exhibiting a bilateral form similar to its relatives. The anterior — the head region — is located in the center of the body, and the arms are five posterior regions stretching outward.

Another hypothesis called the stacking hypothesis suggests that the posterior region is located at the top of the sea star, and the rest of the creature’s body is stacked underneath, with the anterior at the bottom.

In the new study, researchers suggest that neither of these hypotheses are correct. Instead, sea stars and other echinoderms lost their trunks over time. Now, their body is their head.

To work out the anatomy of a sea star and locate its head, researchers ran several genetic tests on *Patiria miniata* — bat stars — to conclude which types of genes were present in each area of the creature’s body.

“We made slices of the sea star and sequenced each slice to construct a 3D model of the messenger RNA [mRNA] across the body,” head researcher and author Laurent Formery told *Live Science*.

To observe the mRNA and identify where it was located in the bat stars’ bodies, the researchers used fluorescent dye to highlight specific types of mRNA.

If the duplication hypothesis was true, the anterior genes would be found at the tips of the sea star’s arms, and if the stacking hypothesis was true, the anterior genes would be located at the top center part of the creature’s body. Neither one of the hypotheses turned out to be true. “We found that anterior genes are expressed all the way to the tip of the arms,” said Formery.

The researchers also compared the genes in the head region of *Saccoglossus kowalevskii*, a type of acorn worm closely related to sea stars. The researchers found that the genes “switched on” in the head area of the acorn worms were present in the sea stars’ skin, which covers the sea stars’ entire bodies.

The posterior genes were located near the very perimeter of the sea stars’ arms. Essentially, sea stars lack the genetic patterning for a trunk (or torso) of bilaterians.

“Although a slight oversimplification, the findings suggest that one could think of the body of a starfish (at least in terms of the anterior–posterior identity of its surface tissues) as a disembodied head walking about the sea floor on its lips — the lips having sprouted a fringe of tube feet, co-opted from their original function of sorting food particles, to do the walking,” Thurston Lacalli, a biologist from the University of Saskatchewan, told *Live Science*.

## PHOTOGRAPHIC EVIDENCE CONFIRMS SURVIVAL OF ATTENBOROUGH’S LONG-BEAKED ECHIDNA

NEWS REPORT by *Austin Witter* (12)

A team on an expedition to Papua New Guinea has captured conclusive evidence of an endangered species of mammal previously feared to be extinct. Attenborough’s long-beaked echidna (*Zaglossus attenboroughi*), named after the British nature broadcaster, is one of only four living species of echidnas. “[It] has the spines of a hedgehog, the snout of an anteater, and the feet of a mole.” said Dr. James Kempton, a biologist and expedition lead from the University of Oxford.

The undertaking, termed Expedition Cyclops, was a collaboration between Oxford, an Indonesian NGO, local university students, and members of the community of Yongsu Sapari, according to *Smithsonian Magazine*. Expedition Cyclops found the echidna photos and videos at the very end of the four-week trip, on their final SD card.

*Zaglossus attenboroughi* first became known to science in 1961 when a specimen was collected in the Cyclops Mountains of Papua New Guinea, the only area in which the animal has ever been recorded. Since its discovery, it has been extremely rare. It is an elusive animal, small and nocturnal.

Known as *payangko* in the local Tepera language, the echidna was an element of traditional conflict resolution techniques. One party had to venture into the forest to find an echidna, while the other would attempt to catch a marlin in the ocean. The animals were considered so rare that by the time they were found, peace was considered to have returned.

Fieldwork in 2007 found evidence of echidna presence, according to Bailie, Turvey, & Waterman (2009). This evidence includes testimony from local villagers, as well as “nose pokes” — traces in the ground made by a feeding echidna searching for food with its beak. However, no photographs were taken.

Since 2009, scientists have speculated that the animal might be extinct. “Long-beaked echidnas are threatened

across their range by subsistence hunting and habitat loss from farming, logging and mining,” stated the University of Cambridge paper that reported the 2007 discoveries.

Iain Kobak, the co-founder of a Papua New Guinea-based foundation that supported the expedition, said, “I really hope and believe [Expedition Cyclops] will become a catalyst for strong conservation of the Cyclops Mountain Range.”

Along with the platypus, the four echidna species are the only living examples of monotremes — a group of mammals that split off early on in mammalian evolution, thus lacking many derived features that all other modern mammals possess. Monotremes lay eggs instead of giving birth to live young, and have no nipples, instead secreting milk through pores found in specialized areas of the fur. Like reptiles and birds, but unlike other mammals, one opening, the cloaca, is shared by the digestive, urinary, and reproductive tract. “These five species are the sole guardians of 200 million years of evolutionary history,” said Dr. Kempton in the *New York Times*. “To protect that unique and fragile evolutionary history is extremely important.”

Despite their differences, however, monotremes also have many crucial features in common with placentals and marsupials, the other two groups of mammals. These include the presence of one fused lower jaw bone, three inner ear bones, hair, and the production of milk, according to University College London.

Monotremes are most commonly considered to have diverged from other mammals before the placental-marsupial split. Genetic studies indicate that monotreme divergence likely occurred around 200 million years ago, at the end of the Triassic period. Since then, monotremes have evolved many specialized features, such as a lack of teeth and a modified snout or beak.

According to the *New York Times*, the expedition also found multiple other species new to science, including a shrimp that lives in trees, a cricket, a scorpion, and a frog.

## Gobi Bear? Or Nowhere? Soon to be Extinct in Mongolia

NEWS REPORT by *Gina Hallensleben* (12)

The Gobi bear is a unique species of brown bear living exclusively in the Mongolian Gobi Desert. The cute but scraggly-looking bear, also known to the Mongolians as “Mazaalai”, is critically endangered, with less than 40 individuals left in the wild.

While some may have heard of the Gobi bear through the *CBC* television show *Heartland*, many are unaware of the bear’s existence and re-population struggles. Common knowledge of the Gobi bear may be slim because the hashtag, #savethegobibears, is not as prevalent on social media platforms as it should be.

Inhabiting the harsh environment of the Gobi Desert in south-western Mongolia, the bears have adapted and managed to thrive in vast sand dunes and ice-filled canyons. They must also contend with harsh desert winds and minimal rainfall. However, according to the Gobi Bear Project, which “promotes [the] conservation and protection of a critically endangered species, the Gobi bear,” human activity in the desert has been a largest threat to the Gobi population.

Plentiful mineral deposits attract international mining corporations, who set up illegal large-scale mining operations in the desert. The areas where Gobi bears dwell are also commonly targeted by illegal hunters, and farmland across the desert assists the frequent traversing and overgraz-

ing of livestock, which damages the grasslands.

Feeding on wild rhubarb, berries, nitre bush, grass shoots, wild onion, and other plants supported by desert springs, the Gobi bears have a unique diet. Changing climate and overgrazing livestock make it increasingly difficult for these wandering bears to find food.

The Gobi Bear Project states that the bears occupy three main areas within the ‘Great Gobi Strictly Protected Area — Zone A.’ The area was established in 1976 and covers a total distance of around 46,369 square kilometers, but the bears tend to have much larger home ranges and travel greater distances to try and mate.

In an interview with *The UB Post*, Dr. Harry Reynolds, the leader of the Gobi Bear Project, spoke on the issue of connecting bears for re-population. In the interview, Reynolds said, “One way to connect bear genetic diversity to bears in national parks is to build overpasses for them. Because right now they are in danger trying to cross the railroad tracks. They have the problem of getting hit by a train.”

Reynolds explained inbreeding is not an issue for the bears because “[the] population is not isolated by its lack of genetic diversity.” Although the genetic diversity is low, the main issue is connectivity between the bears. Building bridges would help promote connectivity and help keep the bears alive to #savethegobibears.

The Mongolian government has

also introduced supplemental feeding sites in an effort to promote Gobi bear survival. First introduced in the early 1990s, the sites were primarily functional after the winter hibernation period during March or early April, according to the 2010 Gobi Bear Progress Report. When additional funding was available, further feeding was provided during the fall months. The

Gobi Bear Project helps the government manage these feeding sites.

The Gobi Bear Project also fit 20 Gobi bears with GPS satellite radio collars. The project website states that the collars help in “understanding how the bears move in and utilise their landscape and thus enable [the researchers] to determine how their behaviour relates to their survival.”

Even after the introduction of designated protected areas, continuous tracking, and government-implemented feeding sites, the Gobi bear population remains pocket-sized. However, through increased awareness and funding for Gobi bear research and conservation, the world can help the Gobi bears continue to survive and thrive in the Mongolian desert.



## REVIEW

# Why Our Music Taste is Objectively Better Than Yours: A 2023 Music Review

REVIEW by Oliver Izen (12), Nigel Goto (12), Max Von Dehn (12)

Despite Drake releasing an album, 2023 was actually a fantastic year for music. While this year might not have been for all the dogs, there were quite a few mainstream artists who released solid albums. However, listening to all of those will leave a blank space in your head. Therefore, we would like to review some of the albums that you definitely should have listened to this year but have probably never heard of.

## Beloved! Paradise! Jazz! – McKinley Dixon

It's beloved, paradisaal, but leaves you asking one question: jazz? Known for his poetic lyrics and rich instrumentation, McKinley Dixon's latest jazz-rap album, *Beloved! Paradise! Jazz!?*, exemplifies his continuous innovation.

From the start, Dixon sets the tone with a poetic reading of a work from novelist Toni Morrison. The poem depicts scenes of hardship and triumph, a theme that is carried throughout the album.

In its modest 28-minute runtime, the album covers a lot of ground, from the sweeping strings on the track "Sun, I Rise" to the vibrant saxophones on "Live! from the Kitchen Table". All the while, Dixon's linguistic creativity shines as he delivers some of his most poetic and personal lyrics. The album comes alive with the song "Run, Run, Run", on which Dixon masterfully contrasts playful piano riffs and grim depictions of violence.

The velocity and grace Dixon demonstrates as he flows through this album are outstanding. While short in length, *Beloved! Paradise! Jazz!?* manages to deliver an

auditory experience unlike anything you have heard before.

## Petrodragic Apocalypse – King Gizzard and the Lizard Wizard

**Song: Witchcraft**  
The prolific Australian band is back, because what else is there to do in Australia? King Gizzard, fresh off releasing five albums last year, returned this year with a complete change of pace from last year's *Ice, Death, Planets, Lungs, Mushrooms, and Lava's* jazz rock and Timeland's techno-thrash metal.

King Gizz have thrown themselves completely into their metal sounds, creating an insane album about the end of the world. The album prominently features the dynamic psychedelic guitars that the band is known for, making the metal sound much more palatable for a general audience. That's not to say *Petrodragic* is anything but heavy metal, though. Drums pound while lead singer Stu sings with a far hoarser, screamed voice than usual. Despite being 50 minutes in length, the album is filled with enough high-intensity moments and occasional periods of rest to keep it feeling new and exciting the entire time.

## mini mix vol. 3 – Magdalena Bay

**Song: 2 Wheel Drive**  
Magdalena Bay creates the music that 2022's *Midnights* wishes it was. The synth-pop duo of Mathew and Mica has been putting out some of the best music in the genre, with the duo really finding their sound in their 2021 album *Mercurial World*.

*mini mix vol. 3* has much of the same retro synth sounds condensed into a little over 15 minutes. While not a

full album like the rest of the projects in this article, *mini mix* more than makes up for its short runtime. Each track sees the duo affirm the signature style they have built by integrating Matt's exquisite production and some of Mica's catchiest choruses yet. Songs like "2 Wheel Drive" sell their sound perfectly, as Mica's tongue-in-cheek hooks give way to a surprisingly impactful synth beat drop.

## 3D Country – Geese

**Song: 3D Country (title track)**  
You might not expect a group of birds to make fantastic music, but in this case, you would be dead wrong. New York band Geese's sophomore album *3D Country* is a complete departure from their previous work, somehow pivoting from traditional alt-rock into a strange post-punk-country-rock hybrid.

What really makes this album are the incredible vocals from lead singer Cameron Winter. Winter's vocal range is simply extraordinary, with low, almost whispered lines and incredible falsettos. No song better illustrates this than the title track "3D Country", where Winter's vocals are practically flying away, only brought back to earth by the suaveness of the backing vocals.

"Gravity Blues" is another highlight of the album, with Geese creating a surprisingly genuine ballad. The instrumentation once again perfectly brings out Winter's vocals. As well, the revamped guitar sound that Geese implemented helps the song ascend at the end.

However, the album still has much of the alternative tendencies Geese developed

on their breakthrough album, with screamed vocals and walls of noise to contrast the otherwise smooth production. But do skip "undoer".

## No Highs – Tim Hecker

**Song: Monotony II**  
Vancouver native Tim Hecker has been in the electronic and ambient space for a while now. Whether it be on his stark 2011 extended play *Dropped Pianos* or his more atmospheric debut *Haunt Me*, Hecker has always focused on the slow build of his instrumentals to create vast soundscapes.

*No Highs* is a culmination of Hecker's work, featuring the electronic sounds he broke out with but with the careful orchestration he has developed since. The first track, "Monotony", is a great example of this. A rhythmic pulsing slowly combines with droning synths as the song builds. *No Highs* is less mysterious than most of Hecker's work, layering heavy chords which work towards a feeling of gentle triumph.

"Monotony II", which features saxophonist and fellow titan of the ambient scene, Colin Stetson, demonstrates best what separates *No Highs* from the rest of Hecker's catalogue. The song mixes the digital synths that characterize the album with Stetson's raw saxophone, creating a song that stands out in the mix.

## Let's Start Here – Lil Yachty

**Song: running out of time**  
Lil Yachty, originally stemming from SoundCloud's rap era, managed to pull off one of the wildest music career pivots with his latest album *Let's Start Here*. While he carries over his signature melodic hooks, his success is far more reliant on his curation.

To fulfill his psychedelic sound, Lil Yachty clearly took advantage of his connections, as evidenced by Magdalena Bay's synthpop production on the standout track "running out of time". Between his in-

stantly catchy hooks and the chilled production, Lil Yachty crafts a wacky experience full of surprises.

As a result, the instrumentals on *Let's Start Here* are quite strong, and his vocals are sometimes overpowered. However, despite his occasional vocal shortcomings, like on the song "pretty", he still manages to craft a unique fusion of rap and indie that marked a shocking rebranding. Sadly, none of this matters anymore, as he quickly regressed back into his old self.

## Scaring The Ho\*s – JPEGMAFIA and Danny Brown

**Song: Burfict!**  
What's better than one niche underground rapper? How about two? The dream team of Danny Brown and Peggy is for real. *Scaring the Ho\*s* is by far the most dynamic, insane rap project released this year. JPEGMAFIA's unique, out-of-the-box production miraculously works.

In many ways, the album is a passing of the torch for the two underground artists, with JPEGMAFIA once expected to replace Danny in the underground space. Their collaboration has led to one of the most wild experiences on record. On tracks like "Garbage Pale Kids", Peggy's chaotic production finds its most jarring moments yet as he reworks old commercials into the dizzying beat.

Danny and Peggy often trade lines, somehow finding rhythm over the collage of beats. "Burfict" shows the power the duo have. It features some of the most grand production, including a huge horn section at points, bringing some of the most extreme energy across the entire album. It's not normal, but that's not a bad thing.

## Live At Bush Hall – Black Country, New Roads

**Song: Dancers**  
When the lead singer of Black Country, New Roads (BCNR) left to become a bak-

er, the future of the band was completely uncertain. However, as BCNR has proven with this live long-playing record, the departure might have simply made them better. The live album features songs with vocals from a variety of the band members, giving the album a lot of variety. While the quality of each vocalist varies and the absence of the former lead singer is noticeable, it is impressive to see the band move through such a dramatic change with such poise.

The music itself is essentially what you would expect from BCNR, with rock sound influenced by saxophone and strings. The live is full of standout tracks that feature this rich instrumentation, with the song "Dancers" perhaps being the pinnacle of this. The track also serves to highlight vocalist Tyler Hyde's skills, showing that whatever the band chooses to do in the future, they'll have success.

## STRUGGLER – Genesis Owusu

**Song: The Roach**  
Genesis Owusu continues Australia's legacy of great artists with his sophomore album *STRUGGLER*. Following his innovative debut, Owusu's follow-up continues to take risks. Following the neo-soul-infused funk sound of his previous album, *Smiling With No Teeth*, songs like "The Roach" see him pivot into dance-punk, with heavy synths and driving drums.

Under the danceable beats and melodies, Owusu takes the opportunity to tackle a new complex concept. As a concept album, Owusu's lyrics focus on struggling against an insurmountable force, with Owusu becoming a roach to society.

Despite the intense focus he maintains throughout the album, the off-moments are equally impressive. Songs like "That's Life (A Swamp)" and "See Ya There" give the album space to breathe, incorporating relaxing funk into his synth-centric sound.

# FIVE LAPTOP OPTIONS FOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

APPLE



REVIEW by Isaac Yan (8)

With the holiday season approaching soon, students may be considering the purchase of a new device in the new year. However, prices for these devices are usually overly expensive. Here are some laptops that are affordable, reliable, and highly productive for school purposes.

## Acer Aspire 5

If you are a student who comes in under a budget and you're looking for a laptop that will perform well and last you through the day, the entry-level Acer Aspire 5 is the perfect device for you. With a price ranging from \$300 to \$750, this model of the Aspire 5 is an affordable laptop. It contains an 11th-Gen Intel CPU, with sturdy design and weight of 1.7 kilograms. Although its performance is nothing special and its graphics are sub-par, it is more than enough to get students through several years of school work.

## MacBook Air M1

Now, if you want a laptop that is lightweight, efficient, and graphically pleasing, the classic Apple MacBook Air M1 is the way to go. The M1 MacBook Air is a more convenient option for high school students than the newer but more overpriced M2 MacBook Air. With a starting price of around \$800, this laptop

is one of the most universally useful laptops you can buy. It weighs 1.29 kilograms, coming with the Apple M1 8-Core CPU, the Apple M1 7-Core GPU, and a great battery life. This laptop is especially exceptional for in-school work as it is very quiet, it doesn't overheat easily, and its overall performance is quick and reliable. Furthermore, the whole structure of the device carries a very sleek and glossy visual flair, which many students enjoy. Overall, the Apple MacBook Air M1 is an exceptional laptop for productivity and efficiency, both in school and at home.

## HP Pavilion Aero 13

Students often want to have their device with them at all times. However, phones may not be the best option, as their screens are too small and they are ineffective for school work. A more productive alternative would be the HP Pavilion Aero 13. This laptop's price ranges from \$750 to \$1,125. It comes with a set of really promising specs, including an upgrade to the keyboard, display, storage, and Wi-Fi card. The HP Pavilion Aero 13 may not scream "budget-friendly laptop", but you are actually getting quite a lot of value for the money. Additionally, the device is highly convenient, weighing just under one kilogram and being a smaller laptop in general. Overall, this device performs excellently with

everyday tasks and school assignments.

## Dell XPS 13

If you are a student who mainly prefers Windows over other brands, the Dell XPS 13 is the laptop you deserve. With a starting price of \$599, it is one of the cheaper laptops in this list. This specific laptop has long been a top recommendation for Windows users looking for a MacBook Air alternative. The device is thin, lightweight, and carries a great build. Its battery life, graphics, and performance are exceptionally strong. The Dell XPS 13 is a very cost-efficient and convenient laptop for students and is a great alternative to the Mac if you are on a budget.

## Acer Chromebook Spin 714

The final pick here is the Acer Chromebook Spin 714. This laptop normally lists for around \$700. It is a great device, as it has a sturdy design, nice-looking display, strong performance, and long battery life. With an updated 13th-Gen Intel Core i5 processor, this device still works with US pens. Although there are less expensive options, if you want a Chromebook that will last you for years, this laptop is for you. The Acer Chromebook Spin 714 is a reliable and visually pleasing device that is perfect for getting schoolwork done in a productive way.



## REVIEW

## SIX MOVIES FOR THE HOLIDAY SEASON

REVIEW by Eloise Ramsie (11) &amp; Mila Geisel (11)

**Die Hard**

*Die Hard* isn't necessarily what comes to mind when you think about cuddling up under the fire to a Christmas special — it's far closer to *John Wick* than to *White Christmas*. There is, however, festive cheer and machine guns and an ending where all conflict is resolved with nothing short of a Christmas miracle.

We follow detective John McClane (Bruce Willis), who saves the day when his wife's holiday party is interrupted by a group of terrorists who take over the entire high-rise. He quickly realizes there is nobody to save the hostages but himself. The thrilling stakeout spans the night of Christmas Eve into the early hours of Christmas morning. Our hero, with violence and wit, fights tooth and nail to save the hostages, his marriage, and Christmas.

'Tis the season for corpses written on with Yuletide messages, stepping on glass barefoot, and launching off imploding skyscrapers. *Die Hard* is grippingly entertaining, and it's the most edge-of-your-seat movie you'll be watching this Christmas.

**A Charlie Brown Christmas**

When you hear Charlie Brown, it's hard for the name not to be accompanied by the image of a spindly, nevergreen tree we can't help but pity. It has an endearing charm that manages to persevere with real simplicity. Such is the magic

quality of this movie and its 'lovable loser' lead, Charlie Brown (Peter Robbins). He's got the Yuletide blues, and in a brave, out-of-character maneuver, he volunteers to direct the school's Christmas play.

The story is simple, lovely, and sweet. Like most good festive films, it arrives at the truth of what Christmas is all about. The earnestness of a film like this will itself cut across any viewer and any moment in time. In *A Charlie Brown Christmas*, there is real melancholy, but there is also a sense of comfort and worldly innocence. Christmas time is here. Happiness and cheer. And for fans of the Peanuts, that means a classic Christmas delight.

**Carol**

If you're looking for romance this holiday season, *Carol* leaves any Hallmark film in the dust, welcoming a love story that is different, extraordinary, and painfully just out of reach. Set in New York in the 1950s, the film follows Therese (Rooney Mara), a shopgirl at a posh Manhattan department store, and Carol (Cate Blanchett), one of the store's best customers. Together, they embark on a love story amidst the complicated consequences of the unforgiving era they've been born into. To call *Carol* a Christmas miracle feels like an understatement — a miracle is what sums up the full weight of this love story.

**Elf**

A Christmas classic, this

staple holiday film follows our quirky main character Buddy, the human-elf played by Will Ferrell, on his adventures to reconnect with his father in the heart of New York City. His enthusiasm gets him into some sticky situations, but with the help of newfound family and friends, he attempts to save Christmas and spread holiday cheer. *Elf* should be at the top of your list of Christmas movies this year, and every year, for that matter. So, gather some friends and kick off the holiday season!

**Home Alone**

Where heist meets the holidays, 8-year-old Kevin McCallister (Macaulay Culkin), the youngest of five children, finds himself abandoned over winter break by his chaotic family who leave for a trip to Paris without him. He embraces his rebellious side and exploits his sudden independence. But come Christmas Eve, trouble knocks on his door. With a hectic runtime of one hour and 45 minutes, this classic keeps viewers on their toes as Kevin humourously fends off two criminals who want to rob the family home.

**The Polar Express**

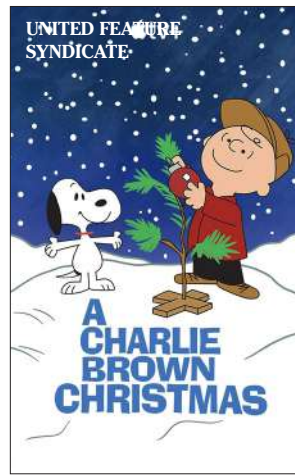
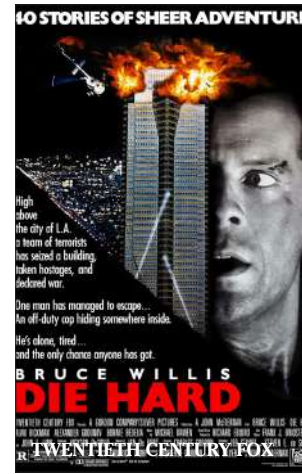
Take a train to a world of Christmas nostalgia with *The Polar Express*, an animated and inspiring tale that truly brings picture books to life. We watch as a boy who has yet to believe in the magic of Christmas embarks on an unexpected journey aboard the Polar Express.

He meets friends and makes memories that will last him a lifetime, but most importantly, he discovers that the "true meaning of Christmas is in your heart," as the train conductor wisely tells him. The Polar Express makes for a tender and heartwarming Christmas

comfort movie, so settle in with some hot cocoa and watch the magic unfold.

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portantly, he discovers that the "true meaning of Christmas is in your heart," as the train conductor wisely tells him. The Polar Express makes for a tender and heartwarming Christmas comfort movie, so settle in with some hot cocoa and watch the magic unfold.



## ROARING THROUGH THE NEON: UNVEILING THE THRILLS AND SPILLS OF THE INAUGURAL LAS VEGAS GRAND PRIX

REVIEW by Tiffany Adams (10)

Last month, Formula One's most anticipated grand prix was held in the entertainment capital of the world, Las Vegas. For those unfamiliar, Formula One is the highest international car racing competition, where ten teams and 20 drivers compete in specialized, high-performance cars for the World Drivers' and Constructors' Championships. What was so intriguing about the Las Vegas Grand Prix (LVGP) that had fans excited and Vegas locals infuriated?

Before this year's Grand Prix, there had only ever been two F1 races in Las Vegas, both in the parking lot of Caesars Palace in 1981 and 1982. The Caesars Palace Grand Prix was not popular among drivers in the early 1980s due to the extreme heat, resulting in its removal from the race season. In 2022, the president of Formula One announced the return of F1 to Las Vegas, with a new street circuit spanning 6.201 km around downtown Las Vegas. Approximately \$500 million was invested in constructing the grand prix, with over \$1.2 billion expected to be generated in local economic benefits, according to Forbes.

Construction of the Grand Prix broke ground in the first quarter of last year, sparking discourse online. Many locals were quick to voice their opinions on the traffic and the "destruction" of the strip leading up to the weekend. Organizers cut down all the trees lining the strip, and blocked the Fountains of Bellagio with the massive

grandstands. Tourists visiting Las Vegas were inconvenienced by the traffic caused by all the construction and the scaffolding obstructing the views of the city.

Besides the locals, countless fans made no secret of their dislike for the late start times. Even though the start times were set to accommodate its mainly European viewership, they inconvenienced individuals watching on TV on the east coast of the continent.

Not even ten minutes into the first practice session on Thursday night, chaos ensued after Ferrari driver Carlos Sainz and Alpine's Esteban Ocon had complications involving a water valve cover which dislodged and damaged their cars, ending the practice early. Both drivers had the damages to their cars repaired; however, Sainz was given a grid penalty of ten places for Saturday's race for exceeding the power unit component allocation. The drivers fortunate enough to make the top three by the end of the race were Kevin Magnussen in P3, Nico Hülkenberg in P2, and Charles Leclerc in P1.

After a two and a half-hour delay to cover all drain covers on the track, free practice two was underway at 2:30 AM Friday morning. Drivers were finally able to familiarize themselves with the track and work on tyre management for one of the coldest races in Formula One history. Friday morning's practice was quiet, with the grandstands empty for safety reasons with public traffic and the late hour. Individuals who came to watch FP2 were kicked out and given a \$200 voucher for the merch stall

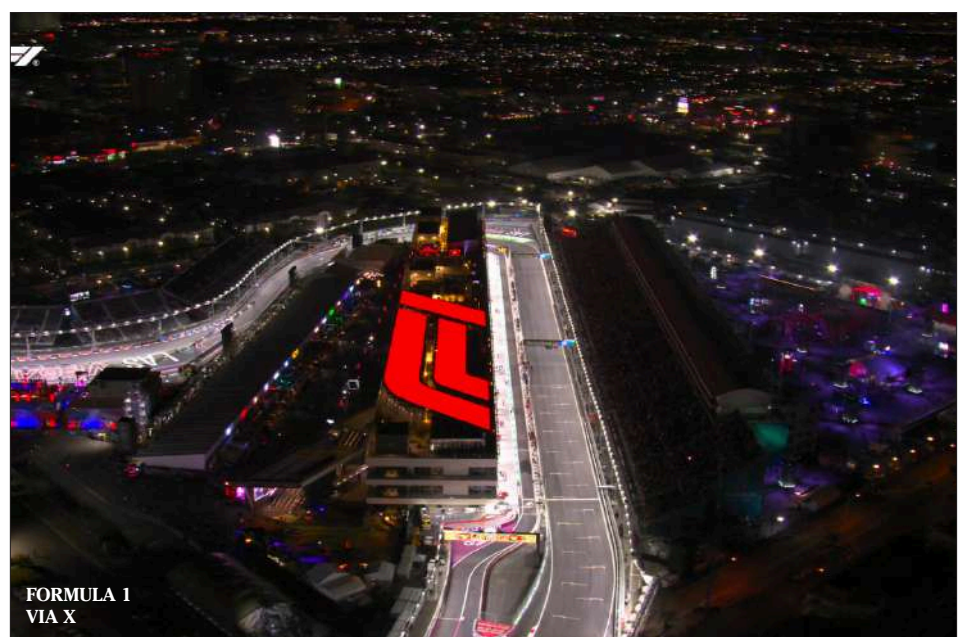
if they were lucky. FP2 ended with Charles Leclerc in P1, Carlos Sainz in P2, and Fernando Alonso in P3.

Friday night brought FP3 and a much more interesting experience, with fans finally being allowed back into the stands. The event had a festive atmosphere, with celebrities like Paris Hilton and Ryan Reynolds being spotted out and about. Unfortunately, FP3 came to an end a few minutes early, when Williams driver Alex Albon collided with the barriers, losing a tyre and bringing out the red flag.

George Russell and his Mercedes came in P1 with a time of 1m 34.093s after a difficult season for Mercedes. McLaren rookie Oscar Piastri came in P2 almost four-tenths of a second behind Russell, McLaren was expected to struggle in Vegas with the environment of Vegas being unsuitable for their cars. American Williams rookie Logan Sargeant finished in P3, despite usually finishing in the bottom ten.

Early Saturday morning in Q1 of qualifying, both McLaren drivers Lando Norris and Oscar Piastri were eliminated along with Alphatauri's Yuki Tsunoda, Alfa Romeo's Zhou Guanyu, and Alpine's Esteban Ocon. In Q2, seven-time world champion Sir Lewis Hamilton of Mercedes was eliminated in P11. The four other drivers eliminated were Red Bull's Sergio Perez, Haas's Nico Hülkenberg, Canadian Aston Martin driver Lance Stroll, and Alphatauri's Daniel Ricciardo.

As qualifying came to a close in Q3, a fight between the two Ferraris for pole began. The



fight ended with Charles Leclerc securing pole position for himself, but with the 10-place grid penalty for Sainz who claimed P2 he would be starting 12th, Max Verstappen landed himself in the front row after coming in P3.

As 10:00 PM approached, spirits were high for Saturday's race. Celebrities like Rihanna, A\$AP Rocky, David Beckham, and Brad Pitt were seen strolling around the paddock. Earlier, Max Verstappen expressed his dislike for the weekend, calling it 99% show, 1% sporting event, explaining it didn't focus on the sport but more on the aesthetic of Las Vegas. As the lights went out, Verstappen took the lead from Leclerc at turn one by forcing him off the track, obtaining a five-second penalty. While the Red Bull and Ferrari were

battling it out in the front, Alonso and his Aston Martin spun, causing a virtual safety car to be deployed. Not long after the virtual safety car ended in lap three, Lando Norris lost control of his McLaren, banging into the barriers by turn 11, bringing out a safety car. During the final ten laps, the stakes were high when both Red Bull drivers pushed Leclerc down to third.

In the 50th and final lap, the fight for second place between Perez and Leclerc heightened. With barely a second between them, Charles Leclerc was able to overtake Sergio Perez and finish second place. Even through the chaos of the weekend, Max Verstappen was able to bring home another win, all the while singing "Viva Las Vegas" by Elvis. All the sweating and anxiety disappeared after the drivers

began celebrating by dowsing each other in sparkling wine on the podium.

The Las Vegas Grand Prix was a success, even if it brought controversies. Since the LVGP will continue to be on the official 2024 schedule, it joins the Miami GP and the United States GP as the third American GP. Verstappen's witty remarks throughout the weekend like "Send them my regards." after being given a five-second penalty also added to the chaos of the weekend. In addition, given it was a completely new track for all the drivers, it made fans hopeful that their favourite driver might have a chance at a win. The Las Vegas Grand Prix exceeded expectations, taking initial negative attention and transforming it into a victorious celebration for both fans and locals.

## OPINION

# ALL I WANT FOR CHRISTMAS IS ROYALTIES: MARIAH CAREY AND HER STRANGLEHOLD ON HOLIDAY MALL MUSIC

OPINION by *Cyrus Fu* (12)

November first. You walk into the grocery store, hoping to score some discount Halloween candy. And then you hear it. The flashy 13-note opening that signals the beginning of the holiday season; the song that lets people know, "Yes, you can put up your inflatable Santa now." Year after year, Mariah Carey's "All I Want For Christmas Is You" plays from millions of speakers across the globe. We've all heard the song, with its stellar vocals and pleasing melody. But how did it come to be?

In November 1994, Mariah Carey, along with Walter Afanasieff, wrote and produced the notorious song. It was an instant hit; within two months, the song skyrocketed in popularity in the USA, and, soon after, across the world.

The song was written as part of Carey's fourth album, *Merry Christmas*, which included covers of popular yuletide tunes. The album included other original songs as well, such as "Miss You Most (At Christmas Time)" and "Jesus Born On This Day". However, as we all know, "All I Want For Christmas Is You" has reigned su-

preme. Ever since its release, the song consistently climbs the charts every December. Since 2019, it has hit No. 1 on the Billboard Hot 100 every year.

The song has had an impressive history. It is currently the only holiday single to have sold more than 10 million units, making it a Diamond Record. Additionally, the song holds the record of most streams in 24 Hours on Spotify, which is a record that it just keeps breaking; in fact, the song has broken the record four times, each time spiking during the Christmas season.

The song also holds the Guinness World Record for the highest-charting holiday song on the Billboard US Hot 100 by a solo artist. "All I Want For Christmas Is You" has affected the listening patterns of people around the globe, topping the music charts from countries all over the world, like Japan and the UK.

With global domination comes a tidy sum. "All I Want For Christmas Is You" brings Carey around an estimated \$3 million dollars yearly, amassing around \$60 million since its release, an amount that just keeps on increasing. It is also the first holiday ringtone to be certified double-platinum, sell-

ing more than 80 000 units. Needless to say, the pop icon's Christmas stocking will be filled with cold hard cash.

The song has certainly changed pop culture, from media to music. In 2015, Carey published her own book with the same title. Later, in 2017, she produced an animated movie, also titled *All I Want For Christmas Is You*, featuring the voice of herself and others. The plot follows a young Carey wanting a dog for Christmas, and the chaos that ensues (58 per cent on Rot-

ten Tomatoes. Yikes.)

On top of all that, her hit song has inspired a slew of "She's Defrosting" memes across the Internet. In fact, Carey herself is in on the joke; for the past two years, the Grammy-winning artist has been posting a short video of herself right after Halloween with the caption "It's Time!", and indeed it is.

Clearly, "All I Want For Christmas Is You" has had a lasting impact on the world, with dozens of covers and

numerous world records. The song is a holiday classic, with its exponential spike in plays approaching as December draws near. It transcends generations and connects people everywhere, young or old. With its simple instrumentals and Carey's impressive vocal range, the song is festive, upbeat, and energizing. Truly, "All I Want For Christmas Is You" is the perfect example of what the holidays are all about: spending time with the people that matter.



## A BRIEF EXPLORATION OF THE PLANTS VS. ZOMBIES SERIES: ITS FAULTS, AND ITS SUCCESSES

OPINION by *Mackenzie Chung* (11)

As a self-proclaimed enthusiast of mobile games, nothing speaks more dearly to me than the world of *Plants vs. Zombies* (PvZ), arguably the most successful mobile-centered game franchise to come out of the 2010s.

With the ongoing beta testing for PvZ 3 still under works (yes, they're making a third one), I've noticed the... less than than optimal game design decisions being made so far. I think this is a good time to do some review on how this franchise came into success, the development of some of the games not many people even know exist, and how it's progressed since then. One, because I'm annoying, and two, because game developers always need to be criticized by random 16-year-old girls who have never touched Unity in their lives. I will summarize the entire PvZ series, and my opinion on where it fell short both from an internal and gameplay perspective.

### Plants vs. Zombies 1

Where it all started! Released officially on May 5, 2009 on both PC and mobile, PvZ was the pinnacle of childhood for those all across the globe. A simple tower-defense style game with cute graphics and quirky challenges, it worked well at providing both non-committal entertainment for the general audience and an experience of challenges hardcore fans could dedicate themselves to.

The success of the first game was obvious, and according to PopCap, the company behind the franchise, the game sold 300,000 copies on IOS nine days after its release, generating over a million dollars in revenue.

The appeal of the game was in its accessibility; after its initial release the company adapted the game into every console and device on the planet. This model was a huge reason the success of the game skyrocketed, because if you had a screen, you could play it.

It seemed only success was in the works for the series, and as one does when their product is booming, the PvZ universe looked to expand to further horizons. Just over two years after its initial release, PopCap was bought out by Electronic Arts (EA) for \$650 million cash, \$100 million in stock with the company, and an undisclosed multi-year earn out bonus. This deal is where, in my opin-



ion, the problems in the franchise would begin, but we'll get into that later.

### Plants vs. Zombies Adventures

This was a bit of a weird one. Coming shortly after PopCap and EA's collaboration over the series, I can only assume this was a test into the waters of new gameplay relative to what the series was known for. Admittedly this is the only game in this lineup I haven't played myself, because it was only available on Facebook, and also because it stopped operating in 2014 when I was 7 years old. So. Yeah.

But from what I can salvage from gameplay clips of PvZA on YouTube, it was alright. It was like the Homescapes of the PvZ series, with different game modes where you expanded the fictional town of Neighbourville into zombie-less prosperity. This concept would later be adapted to beta tests for PvZ 3, but that game will be covered later.

### Plants vs. Zombies 2

This game is really the main reason behind the writing of this piece. Because I hate it (not really). With a newly developed art style, and new set of levels, PvZ 2 was the first major installment of the series since EA's involvement with the franchise.

Although the gameplay didn't differ

that much from its predecessor, there were two very major issues with the game right off the bat. Firstly, EA completely abandoned the accessibility model set up by PopCap, leaving the release of the game exclusive to mobile downloads even to this day, ten years after its release.

One of the main reasons for the first game's original success was dependent on the fact that it was an extremely easy application to get your hands on, and so no matter what device you had, you could play it! Abandoning it just meant lost streams of possible revenue, which led to EA's eventual 'solution'.

This ended up just causing the second issue with the game itself: the difficulty threshold noticeably increased exponentially from the first game to the second. While some might argue that this was just a result of creating a harder challenge for the sequel, the majority of the reason was to help promote PvZ 2's new pay to win system.

In an interview from 2013 with Game Informer, senior producer Allen Murray said that "many zombies and plants [from the first game] never made the cut for the launch, but that doesn't mean they won't return in some way or another in later worlds."

While an initially promising statement, this was the unfortunate fore-

shadowing for the introduction of pay-to-win gimmicks in the PvZ universe. The format of the game eventually got to the point where you had to buy the power ups or special edition plants in the shop, with real world currency, in order to make a dent in the insanely hard levels the game introduced.

Refusing to invest in the expansion of the game to different console formats and relying on the consumer's need to purchase in-game power ups was a complete money-hungry move on EA's part. Players knew that from the very beginning. EA took a game that could have been great, and put a giant credit card scanner on the front.

### Garden Warfare (1 and 2)

Okay, admittedly this game was pretty good. Both of them, actually. And I suck at first-person shooters. This game took everything wrong with in-game currency in PvZ 2 and did it well! Adapting a format we've seen from games in previous years, the in-game currency in *Garden Warfare* just acted as a tool to speed up getting skins and perks you could get from playing the game normally. There was no dependence on real-world money, but instead the addition of reasonable perks that didn't give an insane advantage to those who were unwilling to spend money on

digital sprites.

### Plants vs. Zombies Heroes

*Plants vs. Zombies Heroes* (PvZH) is, to put it kindly, definitely a game that was released. As to why, that can be answered with three simple words: a cash grab. After being released globally (not including China) in October 2016, the format of the initial release followed PvZ 2's very closely. Only mobile, seemingly no intentions of expanding beyond it after, and most importantly, real world currency being the only way to succeed in the game.

To EA's credit though, the setup of PvZH in particular was always destined to come to pay-to-win. With its card style format (similar to *Hearthstone*), the optimal way to play the game is buying the best cards with real money and destroying everyone else in your path. So while it sucks, it's not the first of its kind to exist, and definitely will not be the last.

### Plants vs. Zombies 3 (so far)

PvZ 3 will be the third and hopefully final installment of the PvZ tower-defense style game series, and so far its development has been ill received by alpha and beta testers. While I think it's redundant to try and criticize a game which is still in early development (despite the fact that there have been three separate beta releases over the past three years), I will say that trying to revitalize a series that has pretty much boiled down its audience to a niche group of superfans is probably not the best idea.

The latest beta test in 2022 went down like a very lukewarm bowl of soup. Too many short filler levels, lack of cohesiveness in the general story, and lack of interesting gameplay mechanics has really just left the game...boring. Obviously EA still has lots of time to retweak these aspects, and I'm sure they are, but the interest in the game has only been fading, and will only continue to as they delay the official release in lieu of half-baked betas.

All in all, the life of PvZ as a franchise started out as a really simple and effective form of entertainment, but has slowly devolved into a set of monetary prioritizing games with little to no creative direction to make up for it in the gameplay. I really hope that PvZ is able to rejuvenate its reputation with the third game in the main series, but only time will tell.

## HAMBERGER

# HOLIDAY EXCLUSIVE: Q&A with the Grinch

SATIRE by Jeffrey Chan (11)

Jeffrey: Mr. Grinch, thank you so much for taking time out of your busy day to show up for this interview! What is the story behind your flagrant opposition against such a unanimously beloved holiday, Christmas?

Grinch: Oh boy, I'm thrilled to be here. Now, I'm sure everyone's already heard of the grossly sensationalized story of mine, in which I allegedly "ruined Christmas", but I assure you it really wasn't that deep. The Whos down in Whoville have this awful obsession with owls, it totally irked me out.

J: They say you sound like an owl.

G: Who?...Who??

J: Anyways, it's been quite a while since your first advent, and it's become an annual occurrence. What keeps you motivated to persist in your actions in the face of constant disapproval from everyone else?

G: You know, if you regard it from a contemporary perspective, it's almost like a public service, a victimless crime, per se.

Nowadays, everyone's homes are cluttered with superficial junk around the holidays, which they feel obligated to keep because they feel too bad throwing it out. I'm just doing them a favour by eliminating the dreaded decision of what to keep!

J: That's actually really insightful, though I'm sure many others would disagree, attributing it to your kleptomaniacal tendencies rather than your altruistic ones...

G: Nonsense! I am no such kleptomaniac!

J: Okay, Mr. Grinch, whatever lets you sleep at night. But I digress. The notion of Christmas has undergone various changes throughout the years. I'm sure you're all too familiar with the "true meaning of Christmas"; who better to provide insight on such a hotly debated topic than Santa's sworn enemy?

G: Well, nowadays, everything is so commercialized. You turn the corner and you overhear a conversation that goes something like:

"Hey, what did you ask your parents for Christmas?"

"Oh, nothing much, just for them to cash out my entire Amazon shopping cart."

"Nice, nice. Are you going to get anything back?"

"No, they're being graced with my presence, which is more than enough for a Christmas present."

I guess I should thank our dearest Santa Claus for founding and perpetuating this season of gift-giving, as it turns out, there's more for me to steal. Y'know, if you really think about it, Santa Claus has done worse for Christmas than I have! Did you know that Christmas used to be the season of giving to the poor and needy? Instead, everyone's busy buying each other unnecessary gifts... as if they even need any more stuff.

J: Interesting... So what you're saying is that people need to learn how to declutter and clear their minds so that they can come together and find joy and sustenance in each other's company? And that Santa Claus is antithetical to the spirit of Christmas?

G: Absolutely! And by stealing Christmas, I'm working to combat this issue of the loss of the historical culture of Christmas! My plan to take down Santa Claus is slowly coming to fruition.

J: Hmm... you're right, Santa Claus seems to have fallen further and further away from the spotlight. However, it seems that there is a Christmas power-



house continuing in popularity. Have you heard the name Mariah Carey, dubbed the "Queen of Christmas"?

G: Heard the name?? I can't stand her song 'All I Want for Christmas is You'; I get a visceral reaction the moment the bell chime intro plays. She literally has the entire world wrapped around her fingers starting in November, all the way until early-mid January!

J: I totally understand how you feel. I had a job in retail once and it ruined my experience with that song. I know many retail workers who would echo that sentiment. Honestly, I'd say she's unlocked the secret to success in the holiday season, capitalizing on everyone's displeasing sentiments towards superficial gifts and making a song that talks about the accompaniment being the best gift!

G: Hmm, I guess I do see the genius behind her little scheme... So what were you saying about retail workers hating her song?

J: Oh, it's not just her song. Rather, it's a distaste for the holiday season as a whole. There's chaos at shopping malls during Christmas, and it's the retail workers that have to deal with them. All on top of listening to that one song on repeat for ten hours a day!

G: Is that so? Well, it seems like I have a plan to steal Christmas for good... MwahahahaHAHAHAHAHA!

J: What a jolly fellow. And that concludes this holiday segment: an interview with the Grinch! We'll catch you all up next with another holiday exclusive: Q&A with our beloved Santa Claus!

# HOLIDAY EXCLUSIVE: Q&A with Santa Clause

SATIRE by Austin Witter (11)

Austin: Mr. Claus? It's an honour to be here with you today, sir.

Mr. Claus: Thank you! Something to break up the Christmas preparations is always welcome. And I have the impression the world hasn't heard from me in a while. I have all sorts of advice.

A: So how long have you been in the business of supplying children with gifts?

C: Well, I've been around since Biblical times, but I was only full-time in the business in 1752. And it took a while to really ramp up production. We only started up our PR division in 1773. But at first it was just me and the Dutch sailors I hired to manage the reindeer. Feeding, taking them for flights, shoveling dung.

A: Shoveling dung?

C: See, flying requires a lot of energy, which means food, which means, well, excrement. That's part of the reason we

moved to the North Pole — the job's much easier when it freezes up into bricks. That's how we built the first elf housing, in fact.

A: That's concerning. Considering you've recently faced some controversy about the elves, could you explain a bit more?

C: You young types will cancel me anyways, but I'll tell you. We found the elves living at the Pole when we arrived. After a bit of negotiations we came to a mutually beneficial agreement. They helped us out with the gift-making, and in return they got access to all the imported goods of the modern age. They should've been thanking me. But instead they began to plot against me in secret, gathering in their housing and developing anti-Christmas ideologies. They began forming labour unions and striking for better working conditions, like they weren't fine enough already.

A: I don't know, if they were living in dung houses, sounds like they might have had a point there.

C: You don't understand, you see, Pole politics are a whole other sort of bear to fight. It's a harsh environment, and working together is essential. There's got to be collaboration in order to keep the presents coming, and the elves simply weren't interested. This was just after the turn of the century, when it all started up. Personally, I don't blame the elves. It's not their fault they were seduced by Marxist propaganda.

A: There must be some sort of new invention that you're working on.

C: Well, we tried the metaverse, but somehow it didn't catch on as much as the Nintendo Switch.

A: The metaverse was your idea?

C: Certainly. I don't understand why it didn't work out. With the current screen time trends, you'd think it would simplify things to just plaster your phone to your eyes. But I guess you young folks just aren't ready. Sometimes it takes an ex-

perienced individual like myself to truly innovate.

A: If you have such control over the tech sector, why can't you stop Apple from stealing everyone's data, and get them to make more interesting new products?

C: Well. There are a few things in this world that are a necessary evil. I mean, how do you think we compile our naughty and nice lists? Much simpler than the whole elf-on-a-shelf ordeal. Turns out they're awful at staying still.

A: To be clear, you're saying that you use the data Apple collects on users to decide whether they're "naughty" or "nice"?

C: Yes, yes. But before you get too uppity, remember that every lump of coal in a stocking is one that isn't going to be burned and release greenhouse gases. I'm trying to solve climate change here, and no one gives me any credit.

A: Interesting. How about things up at the North Pole? What does a typical day on the job look like for you?

C: Well, not much. I don't oversee the workshop anymore.

A: What do you mean?

C: I guess I have to confess sooner or later. It's just not the same without Mrs. Claus.

I mean, Ms. Claus. The thing is, we broke up in January.

C: We were married for — basically as long as I can even remember. I don't even remember what I did when I was alone, before. We would have celebrated our 200th anniversary this Christmas.

A: That must be difficult.

C: And it just came out of nowhere! I tried my best to make it up to her but nothing worked, and now all I can do is sit in my home a mile from the workshop while the snow blows 'round outside and read letters from kids.

A: You said you and Ms. Claus separated in January. Do you think the return of Christmas after 11 months might lift your spirits?

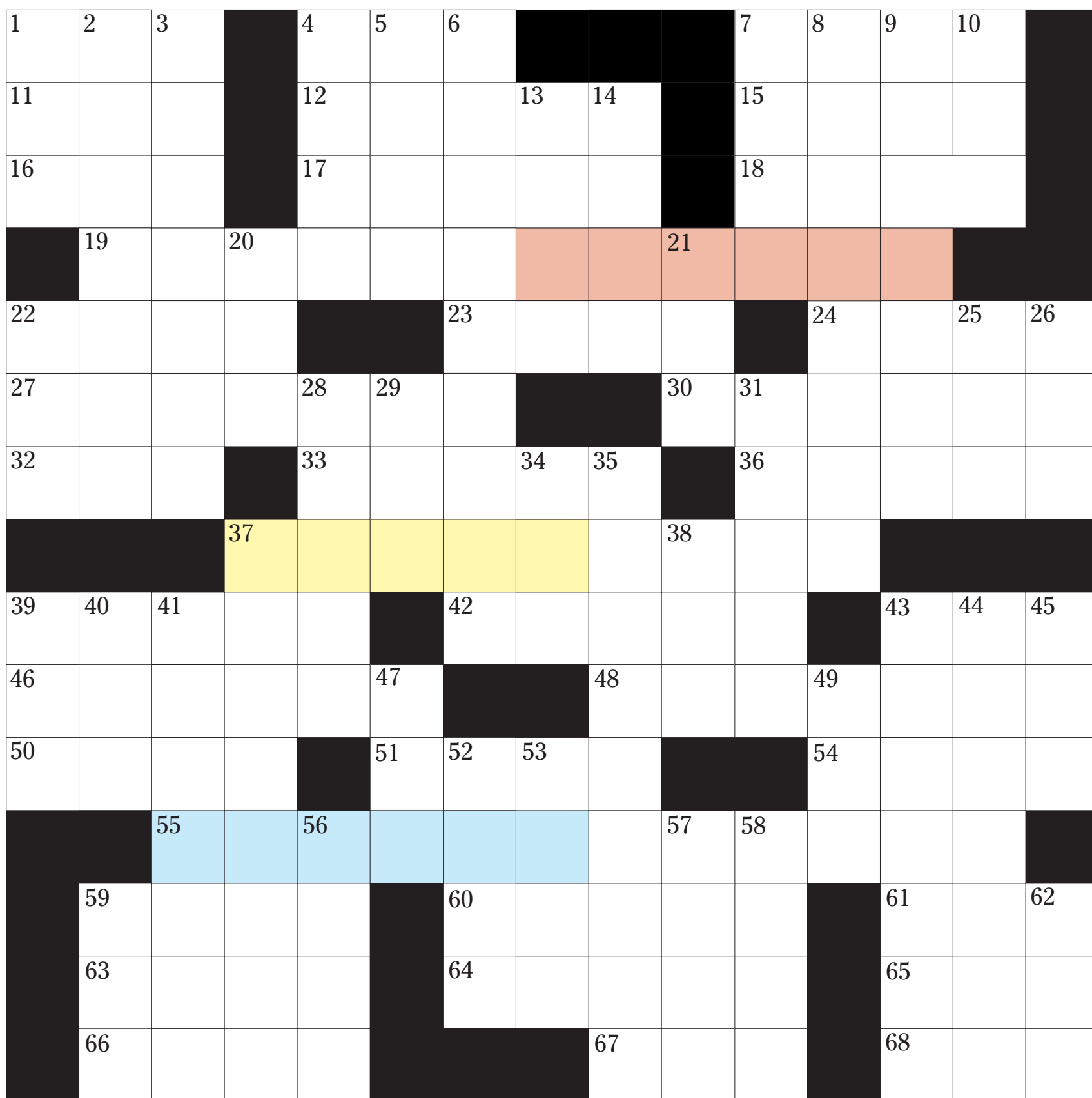
C: I do love a good Christmas. Things look pretty bleak right now, but perhaps a good round of sleighing with the boys will make up for it. And you know, you asked about support, the reindeer have been real nice. Rudolph and I go back quite a while, well, not as long as Mrs. Claus — Miss. Claus — and I. And Blitzen is always a nice ice fishing partner, no one better to sit in silence with in the bitter Arctic cold. At least out there I can't hear the holiday haters.

A: Thanks for your time, Mr. Claus. Merry Christmas!



COMIC by Aubrey Brandt (9)

HAMBERGER



# CROSSWORD CORNER

PUZZLE by Thomas Catchpole-Stirling (12)

**Across**

- 1) Canadian streamer whose screen name is derived from his province's abbreviation
- 4) "Quiet down"
- 7) Chemicals banned after creating a hole in the ozone layer
- 11) Mascot memed for its menacing messages
- 12) Composer of the "Surprise" symphony
- 15) Antonym of fire that also rhymes with fire
- 16) Word meaning "literally" almost exclusively found in square brackets
- 17) Bashar al-\_\_\_ (Syrian politician)
- 18) Roswell's \_\_\_ 51
- 19) Like one found stealing strawberries?
- 22) Similar (to)
- 23) Frozen character who sings "Let it Go"
- 24) Broad
- 27) Convince
- 30) Nova \_\_\_
- 32) Director Spike
- 33) Poet T.S. responsible for "The Waste Land"
- 36) Fool, in Canadian slang
- 37) Path taken by Dorothy Gale in The Wizard of Oz
- 39) Character played by Tina Fey on 30 Rock
- 42) Many Swedish cars
- 43) Mo. containing labor day
- 46) "You can't make" one of these "without breaking some eggs", according to a proverb
- 48) Unintelligent sorts
- 50) Backwards stitch in knitting
- 51) Good, in Jamaican slang
- 54) Comply
- 55) Manual laborer
- 59) Salamanca cousin on Breaking Bad
- 60) Matriarch of the Rose family on Schitt's Creek
- 61) The mitochondrial variety of this is used in many vaccines
- 63) Bothers
- 64) Prefix with national or active
- 65) First name of "James Bond" author Fleming
- 66) Blister
- 67) Long-handled farming tool common in Minecraft
- 68) Prefix with rock or right

**Down**

- 1) Laughs, in internet slang
- 2) Speedy session
- 3) \_\_\_ Bear (2023 film based on a true story)
- 4) Messy carpet popular in the '70s
- 5) Word preceding pipe or brown
- 6) Uncontrollably excited, with "in"
- 7) Stacy's counterpart, in memes
- 8) Common use for a natural log
- 9) Hollywood endings?
- 10) North, Black, or Red
- 13) Children's author Roald
- 14) Documents that bind one to secrecy
- 20) Game famous for its reverse card
- 21) Rap's Lil \_\_\_ X
- 22) Tool used to pierce leather
- 25) Random number generator, in a way
- 26) Part of corn rows?
- 28) Author Jules of "Around the World in Eighty Days"
- 29) Football player Manning
- 31) Gorge
- 34) \_\_\_ Crisis (1990 disaster)
- 35) Exchange goods
- 37) British balls?
- 38) \_\_\_-wan Kenobi
- 39) Detach, with off
- 40) War infamously fought and lost by Australia
- 41) Closest planet to the sun
- 43) Russian region formerly home to many gulags
- 44) The \_\_\_ City (nickname for Rome)
- 45) "Gangnam Style" rapper
- 47) Acronym used when information is new to someone
- 49) Curved frying pan
- 52) Actor Malek of "Bohemian Rhapsody"
- 53) Type of curtain that divided Europe, in a famous Churchill quote
- 56) Show featuring the numbers 4, 8, 15, 16, 23, and 42
- 57) Cookie with varying amounts of Stuf
- 58) Word used to describe steak or Pokemon
- 59) It can precede "tac" or "tac-toe"
- 62) Marvel superhero, with "man"