



Unpacking the Silver Suitcase: Exploring the Mind of Matt Hammon

by Elliot Stravato and Hayden Miller

Mr. Hammon describes his childhood home as filled with music. As a kid, his parents woke him up with blaring records of Bob Marley and Bob Dylan, the beginning of an obsession with rock that eventually led to his discovery of the drums.

When, one day, he found himself in front of a friend’s drum set, he “instinctively knew how to play it.” Inspired by this instant connection, he formed Nothing In Return with his friends (including HSPVA Piano Alumni Tess Wiley). What started as a band formed before they actually owned instruments became a nationally recognized group with three albums.

For better pay, he decided to go solo, enjoying a decade of drumming, touring, and making music. “I never wanted to go get a job. I wanted to play music and do nothing else,” he remarks. His hometown of Houston has inspired this resilience, a commitment to one’s dreams despite the extreme obstacles faced. “This is a really hard city in which to be consistently happy, and yet, the world can’t stop moving here. I’m very inspired by that—perseverance.”

Hammon has also found inspiration in a wide range of artists from Simon and Garfunkel to Rihanna (“I didn’t know she sang those songs,” he said of her Super Bowl halftime performance). “What I really love is genre defying, an artist that really develops over time even if that means ostracizing their previous audience. There’s a lot of bravery in that.”

Bob Mould epitomized this defiance for him— “This punk rocker could write these incredibly vulnerable, beautiful, acoustic songs” that “completely changed” Hammon’s life at the ripe old age of 12.

Fast forward to 1997, when Mould walked into a set Hammon was playing in Austin. Impressed, he met up with Hammon afterwards and they got to know each other. A year later, Mould asked him to play on his next album: *The Last Dog and Pony Show*. Hammon jumped at the opportunity. “The very next day there was a FedEx envelope with two cassette tapes and a check with a lot of money on it.”

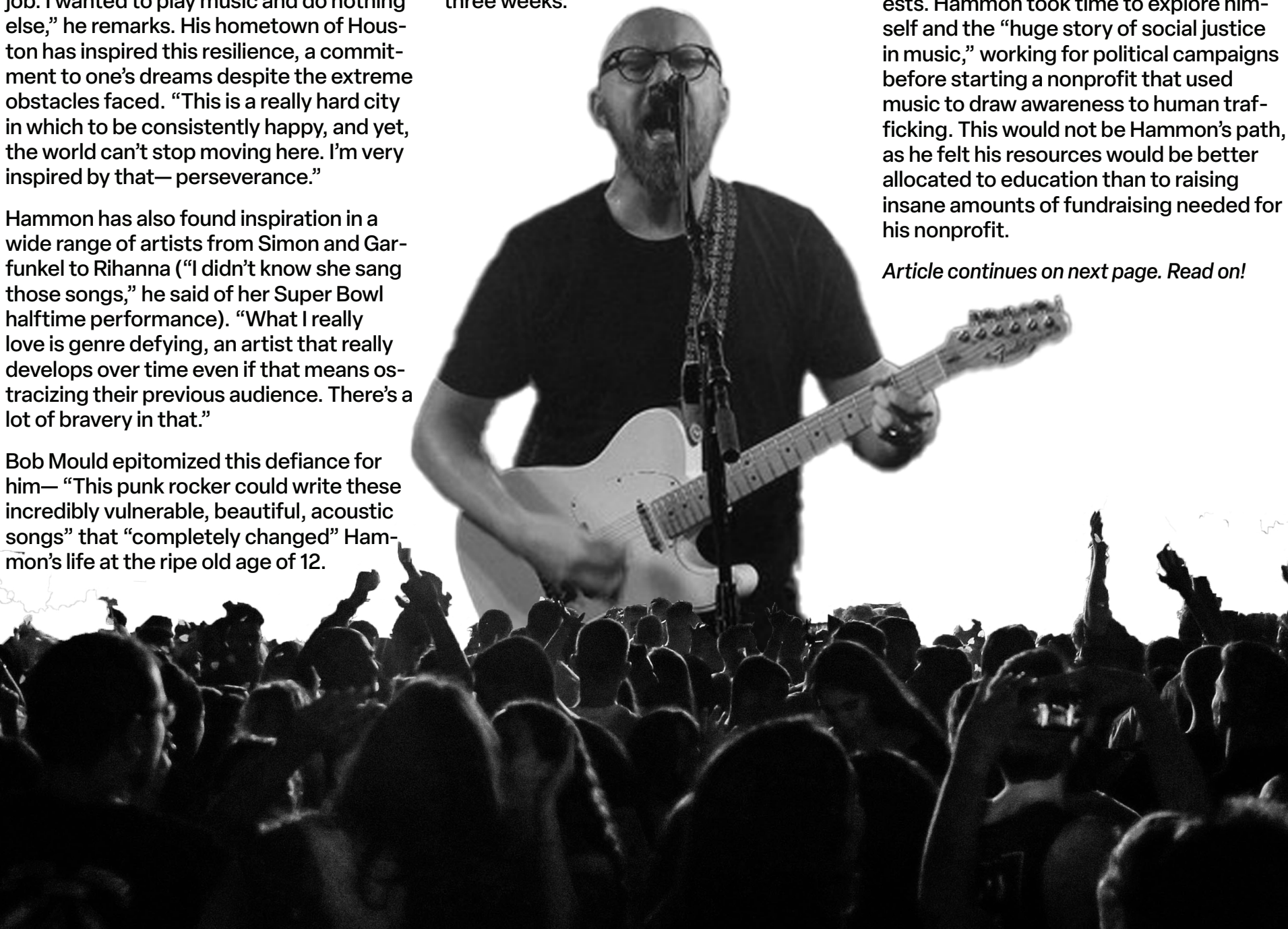
Hammon attacked this project with characteristic drive, shredding nonstop for three weeks.

Adding extra pressure was Mould’s untraditional recording process: “The drummer is the last thing. You’re playing to finished tracks, so you can’t mess up; there’s no room for an error on any beat on the whole song.” Hammon’s performance was a crashing success and he soon found himself on a world tour with his childhood icon.

However, you’ll soon learn with Hammon that everything has an opportunity cost (economics term!). “One day I turned thirty and all my friends were buying houses and I did not have the lifestyle I wanted at all.” So, he put his past behind and completed a college degree, finding a new side of himself: economics.

“That’s what’s so beautiful about college”—learning that you have other interests. Hammon took time to explore himself and the “huge story of social justice in music,” working for political campaigns before starting a nonprofit that used music to draw awareness to human trafficking. This would not be Hammon’s path, as he felt his resources would be better allocated to education than to raising insane amounts of fundraising needed for his nonprofit.

Article continues on next page. Read on!





Unpacking the Silver Suitcase, Continued

About with cancer “reset” Hammon’s sense of time; “It was like the B.C / B.C.E. moment for me.” With a new outlook (and more free time), Hammon began a new project just for himself; *The Silver Suitcase*. “The way I rationalized it to myself was that I was done playing other people’s music.”

The Silver Suitcase, he explained, was a record full of music he had packed away over the years; music he “needed to go somewhere else to unpack.” Between a

new career and a baby, the record took almost 5 years to complete. Of the whole album, he says Track 5 (“As a Child”) is the best.

It seems music was packed in his metaphorical Silver Suitcase, but what would Hammon pack in a real one? In our interview, he reveals the five items he couldn’t live without: a French press, an eye mask, a Macbook Pro, a copy of Rebecca West’s *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon*, and a razor.

And now, after the Silver Suitcase, what is he working on?

In a change of direction, Hammon is working on “Bouts of Mania,” an album that promises to be different from previous work. To be released on May 26, his new album is a foray into more instrumental waters.

Seniors, watch out: May promises not only graduation, but a brand new album that is sure to be gold.

Oscar Predictions

by Rafael Valdes

This article will be published 2 days before the Oscars premiere on March 12th, 2023, an annual event that every TV in America tunes into. Of course I, Rafael Valdes, had to tune in myself and give my predictions on who will be sweeping this academy season (because I am always right).

Also, before I even start this article, I’d just like to point out that *NOPE* (2022) directed by Jordan Peele and *Pearl* (2022) directed by Ti West were both absolutely snubbed this award season, and both deserved all of the Oscars, especially Keke Palmer...

Actor in a Leading Role

Prediction: Colin Farrell
Personal Favorite: Colin Farrell

The Banshees of Inisherin was a simple yet amazing story about the most heart wrenching bro-break up, and Colin Farrel seriously acted his ass off in this movie. Despite being set in 1923 and being about grown Irish men, he had me yelling “HE’S JUST LIKE ME FOR REAL” the entire time. #RIPDONKEY

Actress in a Leading Role

Prediction: Michelle Yeoh
Personal Favorite: Michelle Yeoh

Come on.... Is this a surprise? I didn’t even really like EEAAO, but I will admit I adored Michelle’s performance and the personality she brought to Evelyn. No clue how she did such an unserious plotline with such dedication and perfect execution.

Actor in a Supporting Role

Prediction: Ke Huy Quan
Personal Favorite: Brendan Gleeson, Barry Keoghan, Ke Huy Quan

If I could split the award into thirds I’d give it to all of my personal favorites. However, I think Ke Huy Quan is going to take this one home since he’s been on a mean streak this award season with his performance as Waymond in “*Everything Everywhere All At Once*”. And I will say, I think among the candidates he’s had the biggest presence in his movie.

Actress in a Supporting Role

Prediction: Jamie Lee Curtis, Stephanie Hsu, or Angela Bassett
Personal Favorite: Everyone except JLC, espe-

cially Kerry Condon

It’s gonna be one of these three situations, A) they give the award to JLC as a “sorry-for-never-having-nominated-you-for-this-long” award, B) they take a Marvel movie seriously and award Angela Bassett, or C) They give Stephanie Hsu an Oscar for her insanely underappreciated performance in EEAAO as Joy/Jobu Tupaki. I seriously believe everyone on this list deserves an Oscar, but I have a crush on Kerry Condon.

Animated Feature Film

Prediction: Guillermo del Toro’s *Pinocchio*
Personal Favorite: I didn’t watch any of these

All I gotta say is “Ciao Papà, Mio Papà, time has come to say fareweellllllllll”

Cinematography

Prediction: All Quiet on the Western Front
Personal Favorite: All Quiet on the Western Front

I mean, maybe *Elvis* might win this one for it was really aesthetically pleasing to watch but so incredibly boring. After all, a war movie is a war movie and the Academy always eats them up so I don’t think *Elvis* will be too strong, but who knows.

Directing

Prediction: Todd Field (*TAR*) or Daniels (*Everything Everywhere All At Once*)
Personal Favorite: Martin McDonagh (*The Banshees of Inisherin*)

A small piece of me believes McDonagh might win, but I know it’s either the Daniels or Todd Field.

Film Editing

Prediction: *Elvis*
Personal Favorite: *Everything Everywhere At Once*

Elvis was an entire movie edited like it was on Capcut by a 16 year old fangirl under Instagram hashtags, and I think the Academy is gonna find this revolutionary. However, we all know the real winner should be *Everything Everywhere At Once*.

Best Picture

Prediction: *The Fabelmans*, *Everything Everywhere All At Once*
Personal Favorite: *The Banshees of Inisherin*

Hardest ever prediction because the Oscars are well... The Oscars, so you have no clue how they’re gonna go about this. Clearly, there are many signs pointing to *Everything Everywhere All At Once* due to their 11 nominations, but I feel like the Academy doesn’t want to be too predictable. I’m throwing in *The Fabelmans* as my prediction because it’s a movie about loving movies, which I’m sure the Academy would think is groundbreaking. However, it is possible that *Avatar: The Way of Water* could win, scary, but possible...

This is all I really care about: winning. Everything else will be a snack and restroom break when watching. If I am right, then I will tell you “I told you so”. If my personal favorite wins, then it would just confirm my opinions are always right. If I am wrong, I will just say that I was gonna say that, but I got too nervous.

If you would like to bet, please send me your credit card information to hspvapaper@gmail.com and I hope to see hell on Twitter.



Thoughts on the Grammy Awards

by Samiyah Green

Every year, music stars and influencers show up to the red carpet event formerly known as the Grammys. Here, they receive awards, put on performances, and walk in decent (sometimes treacherous) outfits in front of millions of people on TV.

Now, I would be lying if I said I was not interested in the Grammys. As a matter of fact, this is the most I've been interested in the Grammys in a while. With all of the TikTok hits and consistent album drops, I was actually expecting it to be pleasant. Was I disappointed? Not necessarily, but I was definitely not content. Let's take a look at the 2023 Grammys:

Who in the World won the Best Song of the Year?

I am not the one to knock an underground artist, especially if their success was long overdue. But, I do not think this was particularly the category to highlight that success. There were plenty of iconic, actually known songs that were nominated ("As it Was" by Harry Styles, "About Damn Time" by Lizzo, etc), these songs should have, not necessarily more recognition, but at least some accolades. Granted, few people can argue that most of the nominated songs were overplayed, but at least we know it.

Harry Styles should not have won Album of the Year... Yet?

Beyonce, Adele, Kendrick Lamar, Bad Bunny! What do all of these artists have in common? They all made versatile, impactful, and well produced albums. That being said, this is not to say that Harry Styles did not have a great album; I actually quite enjoyed it, but to say it moved me in any way would be a huge overstatement.

Some might argue that the impact and traction is the reason for his win, but since when did Album of the Year become based on numbers rather than pure art? Kendrick Lamar's album wasn't just songs on a CD, it was pure art, and Adele's album brought out emotions I didn't even know I had. Also, if we really wanted to talk about numbers, Bad Bunny received 9 billion streams off of Spotify! I know Harry Styles fans are extremely proud of his accomplishment, and though I am sure he has the capabil-

ity of producing an Album worthy of Album of the Year, I don't think this was the year.

Who Runs the World? Beyonce!

I am part of the minority who are not the biggest Beyonce fans. However, I was happy to see the queen break records at the Grammys. She started as the lead singer in Destiny's Child and grew to become one of the most influential artists of all time. It's almost as if each year she becomes more and more iconic. It's clear that Beyonce cuffed the Grammys.

I can go on and on about the Grammys (the hideous outfits, the wacky performances) but all good things must come to an end and that includes this article. Overall I hope you enjoyed the Grammys, for I somewhat did.



Teacher Superlatives: A Blast From the Past

by Athena Haq, Kate-Yeonjae Jeong, Lila Mankad

Superlatives are one of the most iconic traditions in high school; however, this issue, we wanted to redirect it to the teachers. What superlative did they wish they received in high school?

Mr. Mendez - Most likely to go on hot dates

Mr. Hammon - Most likely to win a grammy

Ms Rosales- Happy to be in the shadows

Ms. Galindo- Happy to exist

Ms. Llano- The cool nerd

Mr. Morales- Mr. Steal Your Girl*

Ms. Carothers- Makes everything fun

Mr. Croy- Best dressed

Mr. Barnes- Sassiest

Ms. Apte - Homecoming Queen

Ms. Manchac- Most likely to succeed

Ms. White- Most likely to live abroad

Ms. Curtis- The funniest

Mr. Denning- Best hair

Ms. Hall- Most likely to sing at the MET

Mr. Longoria - Cutest couple (with his wife, who is also an HSPVA alum!)

Ms. Sachdeva- Most likely to travel the world

Mr. Landry- Most likely to be in a Catch 22

Mr. Lozano- Most likely to graduate and make it across the stage without falling and into the parking lot to drive away forever from high school

Ms. Jiminez- Most likely to win an Oscar

Ms. Phillips- Most likely to have a solo show at the Menil Collection

Ms. Switek - Most likely to end up in New York City

Mr. McCommis- Most likely to be in a famous band

Ms. Saunders- Most likely to sleep through physics

Mr. Waddell- Has multiple beverages at once

Dr. Smith- Most likely to drive a Lamborghini away from graduation

Ms. Landry - Most likely to wear flip flops in the snow

Mr. Falomo- Most likely to be a published author

*A note from the Editor: I must admit I might have pushed for this superlative, but I had to do what I had to do... Thank you to Mr. Morales for being a good sport!



Personalities at PVA: Pete, Justin, Paris, or Barack?

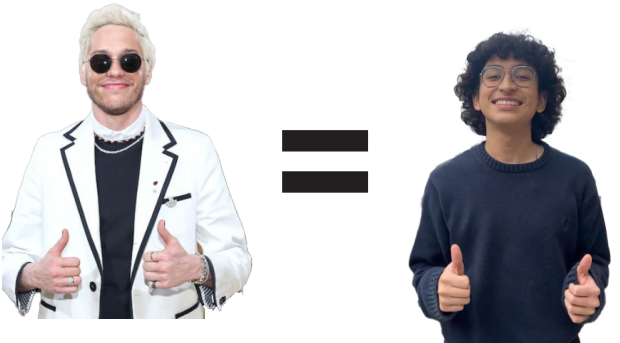
Nowadays, there are so many different ways to identify your personality type. There are zodiac signs, Myers Briggs test scores, love languages, or even sortings based on hobbies and interests. What these tests lack is outside perspective. An individual's personality can only be evaluated in reaction to a social climate.

Therefore, I have hypothesized the ultimate personality grouping. The only caveat is, you can not sort your own personality. I will use real PVA students to illustrate what each personality type should look like.*

#1 Pete Davidson

The Pete Davidson personality type revolves around 3 major components: a) the confidence b) the sense of humor c) the following of unfairly attractive and talented members of the preferred sex. You probably think that you are closer to the Pete Davidson than you are and being friends with them makes you feel cooler than you really are. The Pete Davidson knows how to navigate any social situation with no sense of awkwardness with a niche sense of humor that everyone else tries to understand.

At PVA there is one prime example of a Pete Davidson, Angel (AJ) Ayala. Other than the fact that they are both Scorpio men with big egos, AJ is the type of person that could be friends with anyone seemingly without trying and he has a long alleged history (since freshman year) of extremely attractive and talented women who he's been associated with. All this to say, a Pete Davidson makes you wonder; what's so special about this guy?



#2 Justin Bieber

While telling someone they have a Justin Bieber personality may sound like an insult at first, read the full description before you make up your mind. A Justin Bieber is first and foremost popular. Their style, talent, and taste is well known and characteristic to only them. They are always authentic to themselves and tend to be stubborn at times. They most likely have an active SoundCloud or Spotify creator account (even if they are embarrassed about it). A Justin Bieber doesn't need to be a people person necessarily; in fact, they may only have a smaller circle of friends. But this doesn't stop them from having an influence on others-whether they like it or not.

PVA's Justin Bieber is none other than Stuart Adams. Some may know him from his seashell necklaces, plethora of Spotify singles, or even his DJ career. Stuart is clear and determined about his artistic vision and personal image. In fact, in the making of this article, he was the only one to request that I send him what I would write about him before it was published.



#3 Paris Hilton

The Paris Hilton is flawless. A Paris Hilton is known for the way she talks and dresses. She is a trend setter and being friends with her makes you feel like a slack off. She has a naturally bubbly personality but she's also extremely adventurous and fun to be around. Her sense of humor appeals to just about everyone. A Paris Hilton must be blonde or have dyed her hair blonde at some point: I'm sorry, I don't make the rules.

by Lucia Maynard



Our PVA Paris Hilton is undeniably Lucie B. Phillips. For anyone who's ever seen her outfits around school, you know how put together they are. Obviously, her favorite color is pink. Aside from her understanding of fashion and style, Lucie is fun, lively, and cool. She is known throughout the school for her flamboyant personality.

#4 Barack Obama

The Barack Obama is arguably the rarest personality type. The Barack Obama is both extremely talented and diplomatic, which in itself is hard to find in a performing arts school. The Barack Obama is a people person but equally very private. They are almost an emblematic figure to the rest of us.

The Barack Obama of HSPVA is Takeru Niihara. Takeru is well known for his violin playing and has made a name for himself around PVA since the start of freshman year. He has placed in the UIL State Division multiple times. In one conversation with Takeru, he said he practices close to 5 hours a day individually. Needless to say he takes music seriously and has incredible talent and technique. Equally, he is a hardworking student and well liked by everyone (which is almost unheard of in high school). Fun fact: Takeru and Barack Obama are both Leos!



Why are the Black Box and Studio Theater So Cold?

by Brian Oliveira

As a Theatre student and an acting major, I spend much of my time at school having classes in either the Studio Theater or Black Box. But as any student who has spent a significant length of time in either of these rooms knows, these rooms always seem to be below freezing. But why is this?

As I investigated this phenomenon, a couple theories came up. Perhaps it is some freak weather phenomenon, a cold front that happens to center itself right in this corner of the building and nowhere else. But the chances of a cold front targeting only this corner and not even spreading to the halls outside are low. So maybe it's targeted, perhaps... by a haunting presence? Ghosts are known to give

off cold auras after all, and this would explain the specificity of the phenomenon's location. Maybe this ghost (rabbi or otherwise) just hates rooms painted all black. But these tales of freak weather and supernatural presences are fanciful, and thus I present a completely grounded, realistic theory:

HSPVA is in a secret conspiracy with clothing companies.

Let me explain: the colder the rooms at school are, the more students will go out and buy jackets, thus giving clothing companies more sales. In exchange, these companies presumably provide the school with extra funding. This would explain not only the Black Box and

Studio Theater, but every other room at PVA that often seems to drop to subzero temperatures (the English rooms, the Denney, etc); it is all part of a grand plan to sell more jackets. And I've come across more evidence: I've lost quite a few belongings at this school over time, but I was always able to find them, except for: two lost jackets. Lost jackets that just "mysteriously disappeared." Lost jackets that caused me to go out and buy new ones, paying money to this theoretical grand conspiracy.

So, is PVA in a grand corporate conspiracy to sell more jackets? Well, my lawyers told me not to make any public claims, so I'll leave you to ponder the facts yourself. Till next time, PVA.

* Please be advised everyone was notified of which character they received and gave their consent. Thanks!



Warning: The Oscars!

by Eva Rami

If you’re anything like me, on some designated spring day at 7 P.M. CT, you’re curling up on your couch and turning on The Oscars, an American award show celebrating acclaimed films. The Oscars are known for their glamorous guests, lavish locations, public debacles, and of course, revered film awards.

For the longest time, I was convinced that it was some sort of fantasy magic that chose the award winners, and that nobody really knew who was going to win an Oscar until the award presenter opened that little golden envelope and proclaimed the winner to the world.

Unfortunately, it’s a little more complicated than fairies and envelopes. The Oscars are nominated by members of the Academy of Motion Pictures Arts and Sciences, who also determine the final winners. The Academy is approximately 81% white and 67% male.

In 2015, *Straight Outta Compton* became the highest-grossing music biopic by a Black director (F. Gary Gray). An article released in 2016 by The Washington Post, details an encounter between Rod Lurie (a member of the Academy), some of his other fellow members, and their discussion of *Straight Outta Compton*. Rod Lurie proclaimed the film one of the year’s best movies, but his colleagues (all old and white), had not only not voted for it - they hadn’t even seen it.

One man declared the rap biopic “too loud.” To this, Rod Lurie responded, “The truth is, those academy members will watch movies that deal with the heroism of the African-American community or history... what doesn’t interest

them is the current black experience or black culture.”

The issue lies in the fact that the Academy was formed with the goal of recognizing and elevating films and the people that create them, and yet revolutionary films are constantly snubbed yet and yet again, and there is a common denominator in these unrecognized movies - minority groups, specifically people of color.

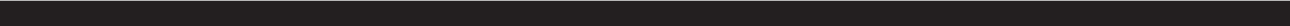
In 2015 and 2016, the Academy awarded all of their acting nominations to white actors, leading to public outrage and the birth of the hashtag #OscarsSoWhite. After, #OscarsSoWhite, public anger, and backlash led the Oscars to slowly diversify their awards. 2019 showed a 17% increase in film nominees starring people of color.

In 2020, seven branches of awards reported more nominated women than men. Five branches reported a large number of nominees from marginalized ethnic and racial communities.

Though the Oscars have made improvements to increase diversity, the award show is still majorly white-dominated. Systemic disadvantages for Black and

minority actors and filmmakers become ever so obvious in the Oscar nominees. *SELMA* remains the only film directed by a Black woman to ever be nominated for Best Picture. A Black man has yet to be awarded for Best Director - a Black woman has never even been nominated. This year, all of the nominees in the Best Director category are men and all the nominees for Best Actor are white with Michelle Yeoh as the only non-white nominee for Best Actress.

The 2023 Oscars are being held on March 12. If you choose to watch, please, keep in mind these staggering numbers and remember the constant discrimination that occurs in the Academy. Keep in mind that they need to be doing better.



HSPVA Survival Series: Spring Break

by Chloe Cheuk

What to do Alone:

Solo Karaoke Party. Sing your heart out to your favorite songs! It doesn’t have to sound good, it just has to be enjoyable.

Discover your Neighborhood. A lot of times people don’t really know a lot about their neighborhood (like me) and their neighbors despite living there their whole life. Walk around your neighborhood and go into those stores that your parents never let you go to. Walk around the parks, empty lots, and unexplored streets. It’s a lot more fun than most would think!

Rediscover Childhood Nostalgia. Play the games and toys you played when you were six, watch the YouTubers you watched when you were ten. Look back and realize how dumb they all are (but surprisingly addictive for some) and have a good laugh!

Tips on Studying for the SAT:

Take a Practice SAT Test as a Diagnostic. It’ll help gauge the topics you are weaker and stronger in and help you prioritize. A must if you’re in a time crunch.

Take Note of Missed Problems. Track all of your missed problems on a spreadsheet with why you got them wrong, the topic, and difficulty. Over time you’ll see your most common mistakes, hardest topics, and can strategize on how to fix these mistakes.

Review Recurring Formulas. The SAT likes to reuse the same concepts and formulas. Take note of similar questions and continually practice them to get a solid foundation in the topic.

Explain Incorrect Answers. Dissecting incorrect answers makes it easier for you to tell what makes an answer wrong.

Mimic the Testing Environment. Set a timer, turn off any music, and clear off your desk. The more comfortable you are with the testing environment, the easier it will be when you take it.

How to Speed Read Passages. Skim the passage first, then summarize it in your head. Look at the questions to see what you should be looking for. Then, read it in more depth. This helps with speed, as the detailed read has less pauses from confusing sentences.

How to Make Hanging Out With Family Members (Or Most People) Less Awkward:

Ask them about their childhood. The older the family member, the more excited they’ll be to talk about their childhood. Their childhood is likely vastly different from yours, so it can make great conversation to compare the two.

Ask lots of Questions in General. This advice can be applied to any conversation in general. Asking questions about someone will make them feel like you’re genuinely interested in them and will make them more comfortable. After all, people love talking about themselves!

Pace your Conversation. Let there be some short and long pauses between topics. Don’t rush it. If you expend all of your talking points in a few minutes the conversation will soon turn awkward. If a pause seems too long, try bringing up a random (best if absurd or embarrassing) experience (they’ll likely have an experience like that as well, which you can ask about).

paperviews*

*in case you care what we think

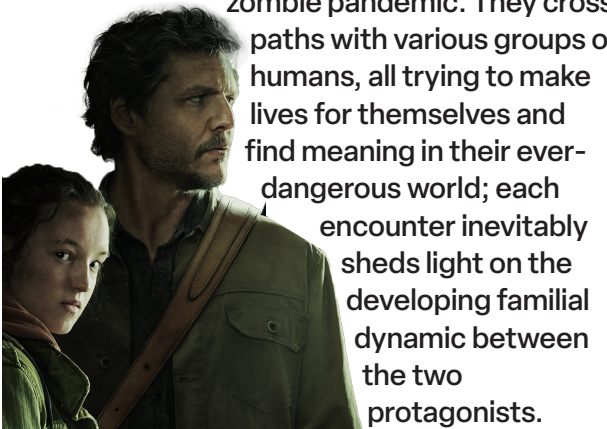
ENTERTAINMENT

The Last of Us

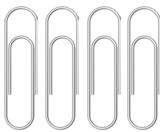
by Sonya Azencott

The Last of Us, currently coming out on HBO Max, is a zombie show that doesn't really care about the zombies. In the first five episodes that are currently out of this adaptation of the eponymous 2013 game, the zombies mostly make brief appearances to add a bit of tension to the climax.

Instead, the show uses the apocalyptic landscape as background to a larger meditation on human connection and what makes life worth living. The plot follows Joel, a hardened 56-year-old man, as he ventures west with Ellie, a 14-year-old girl who may be humanity's only hope for a cure to the fungal-based



zombie pandemic. They cross paths with various groups of humans, all trying to make lives for themselves and find meaning in their ever-dangerous world; each encounter inevitably sheds light on the developing familial dynamic between the two protagonists.



Where the show really shines is in the side characters, all who end up being more interesting (so far) than the protagonists, despite some exemplary performances by Pedro Pascal (Joel) and Bella Ramsey (Ellie). Part of this is due to the closed-off nature of both characters, which hopefully will be remedied by the end of the season. However, the one-off characters, who often have entire segments dedicated to them at the beginning of each episode, add much needed heart to the show, and the episodic structure allows the show writers leeway to explore various dynamics and themes.

As far as horror elements go, *The Last of Us* is less concerned with easy jump scares (though the fabulously janky and surreal fungal zombies accomplish that a-plenty) and more with creating a sense of looming dread---we know that the characters we meet cannot escape from their world, even if Ellie's immunity to the disease provides some hope for the future.

As someone who does not enjoy horror, I can safely say that this show should not give you nightmares unless you are particularly con-

Puss in Boots: The Last Wish

by Callisto Lim

Puss in Boots: The Last Wish is the second installment in the *Puss in Boots* series and a spinoff of the *Shrek* Cinematic Universe. It features a charismatic protagonist, a loveable side character (the *Odie* to *Puss*' *Garfield*), a badass love interest, and a slew of villains ranging from death incarnate to *Goldilocks* and the *Three Bears*.

The plot centers around *Puss* navigating the last of his nine lives. Previously, he "laughed in the face of death," but now it haunts him in every shadow, catching up to him in several pivotal scenes. He struggles to grapple with the reality that he may soon die, so he embarks

on a journey to get his lives back. Along the way, he teams up with a cutesy, bumbling little dog, and *Kitty Softpaws*, his ex-fiancée.

The movie has received tons of recognition from critics and social media for its animation and particularly its opening scene, where *Puss* takes down a newly-awakened *Earth Giant* to an exceedingly jaunty tune. According to the animators, they realized audiences craved more sophisticated animation, so they decided to use a painterly style to make it look like a fairy tale.

As of the writing of this article, the movie has a stellar 96% on *Rotten Tomatoes* and has been



you've probably seen floating around social media), but once in a while the sheer excess of the characters and situations will get you in that campy way. I mean, everyone is in love with *Velma* even though she's completely arrogant and doesn't care about any of her friends, and rampant-misogynist *Fred* transforms into a feminist after reading *The Feminine Mystique* once, to give some less absurd examples.

The art is genuinely beautiful, even if what the animators have been forced to bring to life is uncanny and disturbing, and because the characters have no resemblance to their original personalities it is easy to completely dissociate

Velma

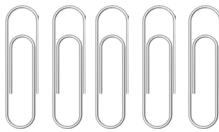
by Sonya Azencott

I think we've all heard about HBO Max's new *Velma* show by now. Panned by left-wing and right-wing and centrists alike, the show has come under fire for its brazen sexualization of teenagers, strange and on-the nose humor that tries to play both sides of the "PC culture" debate, and race-swapping.

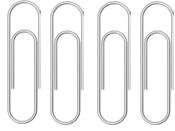
The first two are valid concerns; the third is simply racist. After having watched the entirety of *Velma* season 1, I can now safely say that it is...dun dun dun... bad but kinda fun, actually?

Yes, most of the jokes aren't funny, and some are downright in bad taste (the #MeToo joke

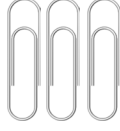
paperviews* Ratings
March Madness Edition




The upcoming Spring Break!




Nice weather after the bipolar Houston winter



The bittersweet feeling of nearly finishing the school year



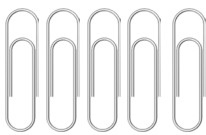
Senioritis hitting hard (Junior-itis?)



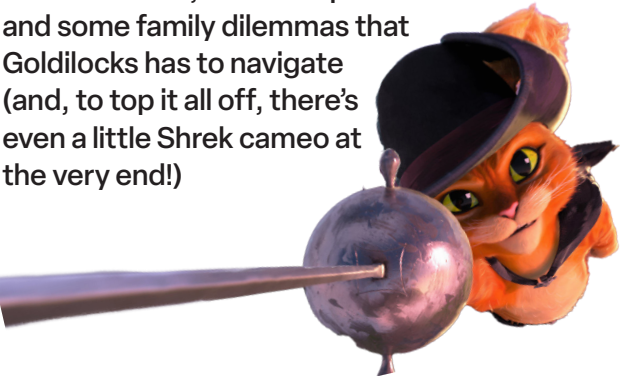
The approaching SAT day and AP exams...

cerned about the possibility of mushroom diseases (don't worry---despite what the show tells you right at the beginning of the first episode, a jump of the zombie-mushroom (*cordyceps*) from ants to humans would probably take a million years, so we've got some time to prepare).

Even though *The Last of Us* does not quite deliver on its main characters, the lush scenery, fantastic acting, and formidably human secondary characters all make it worth a watch, though I can't vouch for its accuracy as an adaptation.



nominated for a plethora of animation-related awards. I love this movie for so many reasons. It has a soundtrack that's genuinely really fun to listen to, the characters all feel well-rounded, and it has great humor mixed in with some very real-life issues, like *Puss*' panic attack and some family dilemmas that *Goldilocks* has to navigate (and, to top it all off, there's even a little *Shrek* cameo at the very end!)

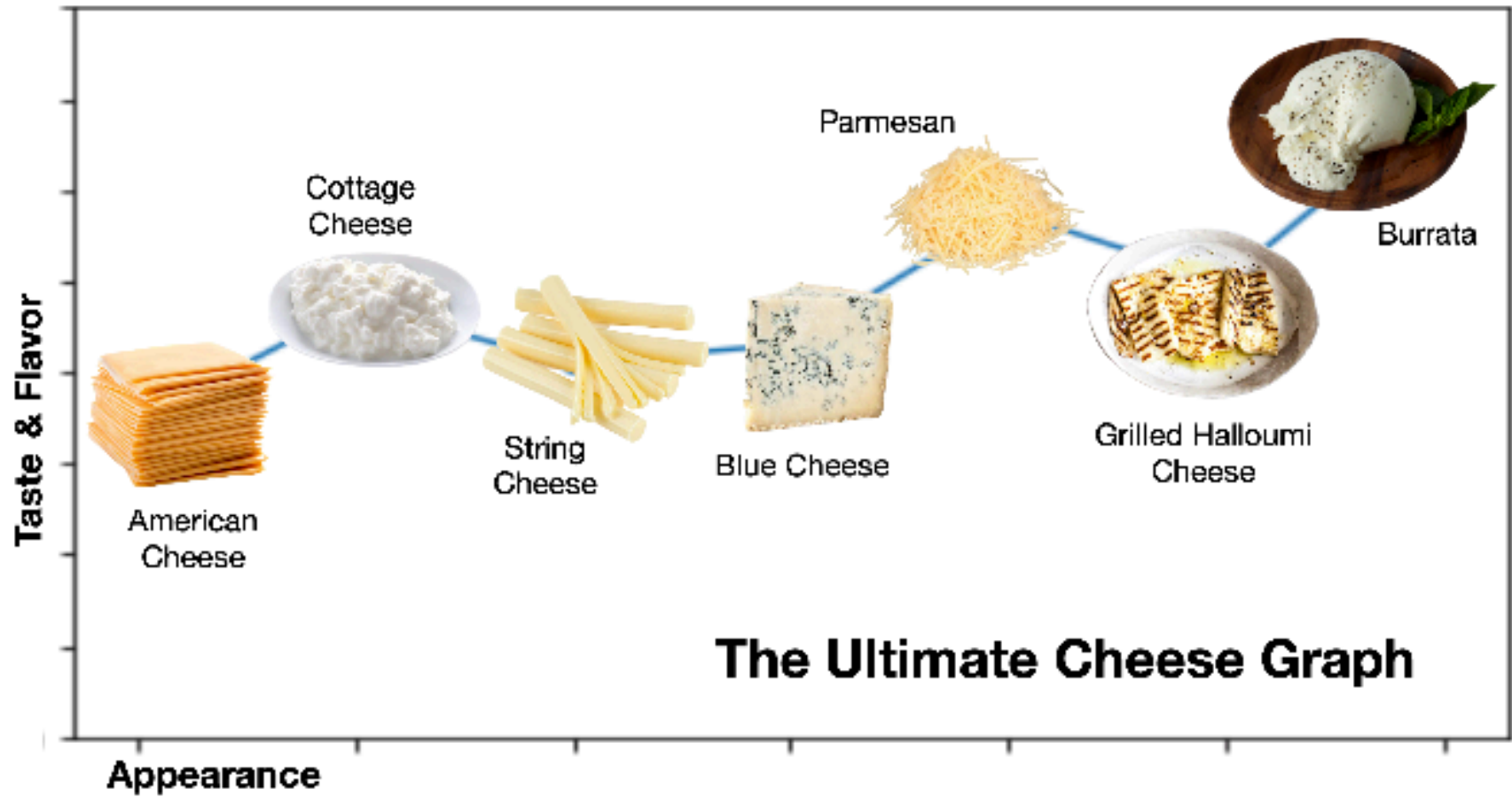


them from the beloved *Hannah Barbara* cartoon of old. *Norville*---*Velma*'s *Shaggy*---is the only character with any human decency, and he delivers some of the only genuinely funny lines of the show.

So would I recommend *Velma* to the average TV viewing audience in search of mystery, an eclectic found family, and humor? Absolutely not. Watch *Scooby-Doo: Mystery Incorporated*, *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, or *The Hardy Boys* instead. But if you want to turn off your mind for a bit or remind yourself of the sheer absurdity that exists out there, then sure, take a whirl. It's camp. Just go with it.

The Ultimate Cheese Graph

by Kate-Yeonjae Jeong



Frida’s Rhythm and Beats: March Madness

by Frida Ruiz Berman

March, at last, you’ve arrived! March is a time of stress beginning to rise, feeling the green buddlings beginning to grow from between the sidewalk, of a misty productivity growing in people’s psyche. It is a time before the full bloom of springtime, as the little plants begin to warm up slowly.

“Águas de Março” - Elis Regina, Jobim

As soon as March rolls around it becomes time for “Águas de Março”, the perfect bossa nova song written by Jobim in 1972. The title, written originally in Portuguese, translates to Waters of March, and discusses the promise of life and the many facets of what it really means to be alive through some seemingly random objects discussed throughout the song. A really perfect song to listen to on those walks that will no longer be enjoyable once the humidity hits in April, Águas de Março is a fantastic introduction to bossa, and will satisfy most with ears and the slightest sense of humor!

“Come To Atlanta” - Faye Webster

I know, I know - now while many of you may be grunting and groaning at yet another Faye Webster song, this lady has me and millions of other sad little southern girls wrapped around her cute little finger. Fun and just a little groovier than most of her songs, Come To Atlanta by Faye Webster is a nice mix of exciting and listenable. As we approach March, SATs, finals, and AP exams are looming, and Come To Atlanta by Faye Webster is a perfect option to play as you’re gleefully and very willingly studying.



“Without A Thought For My Heart” - Rachel and Vilray

Sweet, charming, and utterly lovable, Without A Thought For My Heart would be a wonderful addition to your March rotation. Rachel and Vilray, an eccentric New York based duo, included this cute little tune in their 2019 Album “Rachel and Vilray”, among other sort of jazz inspired songs. I particularly love this album and duo because they are very seemingly normal, regular, people. They sing about normal things, and have a really simplistic and straightforward way of going about their execution of storytelling throughout the music. A slightly melancholy, but ultimately comforting piece, I’d really recommend you give this duo a listen!

“The Glue Song” - Beabadoobee

Alas, “The Glue Song” has finally come to us this last month! A wonderful little tune, “The Glue Song” is perfect for this upcoming time in which you and your valentine graduate into the next month of dating. Orchestrated and carefully guided by the consistent little chucking of the guitar, this song is everything - sweet, catchy, utterly listenable, and just overall enjoyable. Here’s so many streams and a lack of valentine man-related tears this next March.

“Suzanne” - Leonard Cohen

If this March gets you down in a rut, I have just the melancholy song for you. “Suzanne” by Leonard Coehn feels like that strange in between freezing and warming that so carefully characterizes and lines March. It feels like sitting in bed, above the covers, and feel-

ing your hands freeing, a feeling that slowly consumes you down to the tips of your toes. Melancholy, beautiful, and filled with vivid imagery, Suzanne by Leonard Cohen may just be the song for you this March.

“The Weekend” - SZA

An old classic, “The Weekend” is the song for those who perhaps are seeing the light at the end of the putrid Valentine’s day tunnel - a pipeline that is penetrating, and quite dark. By the incomparable SZA, this song may maybe serve as a throwback to some - in the strange barren lands of March, where everything is barely on the brink of fruition, The Weekend reverberates with the sweetness of the summer and spring that is about to fall upon us.

“Hello It’s Me” - Todd Rundgren

Let us be fanciful for a moment ; suppose you have been pining. Dear reader, I’m sure most of you have been for quite some time, too long if you will. “Hello It’s Me” by Todd Rundgren is a song all about confessing and saying what in most human relationships is left unsaid. Included in Rundgren’s seminal 1972 album *Something/Anything?*, “Hello It’s Me” is a song that has no other explanation for being on this list other than it feels like the premonition of spring, the feeling in March when you can sense that everything is about to start being fresh, and stressful, and all the stuff life is about, but is not quite yet.



A Look Back: The 2022 United States Midterm Elections

by HSPVA High School Democrats of America Officers Athena Haq, Chloe Cooper, and Kristyn LeRoy

The Overview

On November 8, 2022, the United States Midterm Elections were held. Taking place two years into a president’s term, these elections have a huge impact on the politics and decision-making of the country.

First, the election includes seats in the two chambers of congress—the House of Representatives and the Senate. Members of the House are elected for only two year terms, meaning that all 435 seats are open for election each midterm. Senators have staggered six-year terms, so there were 35 out of 100 senate seats open for election this year.

It also includes statewide elections, including state governors and legislatures, citywide elections for mayors, elections for local officials, and local or state ballot initiatives. Historically, the Democratic party’s candidates usually trend positively in the midterm elections, while far-right leaning Republican candidates have not had as much success in the past. This year, the Democratic party won a majority in the Senate with 51 senators, and the Republican party won a majority in the House of Representatives with 221 members.

The Midterm Elections: Texas

Midterm elections allow US citizens to elect one third of the US Senate (democratically confirms the president’s appointments and treaties) and all of the members of the House of Representatives (makes and passes federal laws). If the Senate and the House have a majority of a certain party then they have the authority to pass laws or reject The President’s appointments in their beliefs favor based on their votes alone.

In Texas the house provides 38, 25 were Republican and 13 were Democrats. Texas also re-elected governor Greg Abbott, Attorney General Ken Paxton, and Texas Lieutenant governor Dan Patrick, all from the Republican Party. Greg Abbott’s work includes, but is not limited to, “passing Constitutional Carry, defending religious freedoms, and passing the heartbeat bill to ensure every unborn child with a heartbeat is saved from abortion...reinforcing in skyrocketing property taxes; investing more in our classrooms and teachers; keeping our schools safe;” - gov.Texas.gov. However, in contrast to the majority of Texas, Houston leans Democratic and re-elected Harris County Judge Lina Hidalgo.

Historic Steps in this Midterm Election

As high school Texas democrats, we all felt a little disappointed over Beto’s loss to incumbent governor Greg Abbott. In this loss though, we gained many wins around the country.

The 2022 midterms have brought a number of historic firsts, including Congress seeing its youngest lawmaker and states that have only ever been led by men getting their first woman governor.

Maxwell Alejandro Frost, a 25-year-old community organizer, has officially become the first Gen Z member elected to Congress after winning a House seat in Florida’s 10th Congressional District. Frost’s win notably adds to the body’s generational diversity: The average age of a House member is currently 58, and more than 80% of members are Gen X or baby boomers. Frost’s victory — which was driven by his advocacy for stronger gun control laws and support for progressive policies like Medicare-for-all — strengthens the representation a younger set of voices, which tend to lean more liberal, will have in Congress.

He will be the first Afro-Cuban person in Congress as well, adding to the diversity of a body that is still more than 75% white. Frost is just one candidate who made history this week along with Massachusetts gubernatorial winner Maura Healey and Arkansas gubernatorial winner Sarah Huckabee Sanders, both of whom were the first women elected to these roles. Here is a list of other notable candidates that made history this election!

Maura Healey, Democrat — The first woman and first openly gay person elected as governor of Massachusetts.

Sarah Huckabee Sanders, Republican — The first woman elected as governor of Arkansas.

Katie Britt, Republican — The first woman elected to the US Senate from Alabama.

Wes Moore, Democrat — The first Black person elected governor of Maryland.

Aruna Miller, Democrat — The first Asian American person to be elected lieutenant governor of Maryland.

Becca Balint, Democrat — The first woman and openly gay person elected to Congress from Vermont.

Leslie Rutledge, Republican — The first woman

elected lieutenant governor of the Arkansas.

Delia Ramirez, Democrat — The first Latina elected to Congress from Illinois.

Summer Lee, Democrat — The first Black woman elected to congress from Pennsylvania.

Austin Davis, Democrat — The first Black person elected as lieutenant governor of Pennsylvania.

Shri Thaneder, Democrat — The first Indian American elected to Congress from Michigan.

The Girls Are Fighting

This year set a marker in history as Republican Speaker of the House Kevin McCarthy had the first multiple-ballot Speaker election in a century. On January 7, 2023, McCarthy was finally elected Speaker after fifteen rounds of voting and days of intense negotiations.

In order to be elected as the Speaker of the House, the candidate needs a majority vote from the House members who are present and voting. Why did it take so long for McCarthy to get elected?

A majority of the whole House would take 218 votes. For McCarthy, 5 or more Republicans refusing to cast their vote for him would keep him below the necessary threshold. Several far-right leaning Republican representatives withheld support for McCarthy, feeling that his objectives are too closely aligned with a broken system. One congressman called for McCarthy to change the status-quo with larger-scale reforms, such as how bills can be amended and how they are brought to the floor.

Without a Speaker elected, the House was essentially nonfunctional. The other new and returning representatives cannot be sworn in until the Speaker has been. They’re unable to organize without an administrative head, halting the production of federal laws. After five grueling days of voting and many negotiations limiting the Speaker of the House, McCarthy was elected.

Now that the House is back in order, our representatives have returned to their normal routine of proceeding with legislative activity, keeping bills (and drama) on the House floor.

If you would like to take part in HSPVA’s chapter of the High School Democrats of America, fill out the form in the Instagram bio of @hspva-dems or email hspvadems@gmail.com.



SEARCHING FOR A GIRLFRIEND!

Let me get straight to the point: I am looking for a girlfriend. Below are things that come complimentary with my offer:

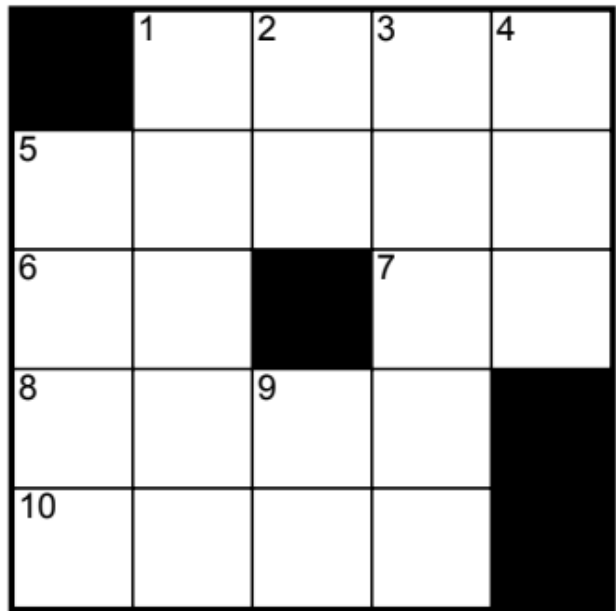
- Security and loyalty
- I will rap for you, anytime and anywhere
- Elevator pass privileges

Serious inquiries only. *Freshmen ineligible.* Hit me up at S1656014@online.houstonisd.org

To the left:
HSPVA’s very own Bachelor, Chase Johnson- Let him give you the rose!

Crossword: March Mini

by Sofia Fontenot



ACROSS

- 1 Prefix with ‘boy’ or ‘girl’
- 5 ___ away (very impressed)
- 6 Short album
- 7 Feared player in a game of tag
- 8 “After that...”
- 10 March madness creature?

DOWN

- 1 Top dog
- 2 __ and fro
- 3 String used to tie packages or hay bales.
- 4 It might go marching one by one
- 5 Piano-playing March sister of ‘Little Women’
- 9 Hesitant word

The Evolution of the Houston Rodeo

by Izzy Issakhan

Howdy, y’all! It’s about that time again... for the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo! You definitely don’t want to miss it.

From concerts to Western vendors, the best fried foods to mutton bustin’, the rodeo has got it all. It’s also the perfect excuse to practice your lassoing skills to gather ‘round your friends and family for a (not so) friendly, bull-riding competition! The rodeo is a Texan rite of passage, but our sweet, southern tradition couldn’t exist without some of its miraculous milestones. Listed below are some noteworthy events that have shaped the rodeo we all know and love:

1932- The first ever livestock show in Houston—known by its less flattering name: the Fat Show; Gulf Coast ranchers could now show off their newly-bred cattle (American Brahman) after entry rejection at the Southwestern Exposition and Livestock Show in Fort Worth.

1940s- Enter: music! In 1942, Gene Autry, the “Singing Cowboy,” was the first nationally recognized performer of the Fat Show.

1950s- The 75 miles-cattle drive from Brenham to Houston.

1954- The Go Texan Committee was established, creating Go Texan Day to advertise the Fat Show while encouraging Texans to dress up in Western attire.

1957- The first African American cattle drive from Prairie View to Houston. At the same time, the first scholarship (\$2,000 worth) was granted by the Fat Show.

1961- The “Fat Show” was renamed the “Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo.”

1966- Jimmy Dean’s performance attracted more than 40,000 fans, nearly filling the 45,000 seats in the Astrodome.

1973- The first Hispanic cattle drive, aka “Los Vaqueros Rio Grande Trail Ride,” was 400 miles long, from Reynosa, Mexico to Houston.

1974 -The World’s Bar-B-Que Contest was launched by the Go Texan Committee.

1988- 5k and 10k fun runs occurred in downtown Houston; their entry fees went towards the rodeo’s scholarships.

1992- Houston became the reigning recipient of the Indoor Rodeo Committee of the Year Award for the next four years.

Fast forward into the 21st century, (2019) RodeoHouston wins the Large Indoor Rodeo of the Year Award.

2021- RodeoHouston’s first ever shutdown, due to Covid-19—the first cancellation in the rodeo’s 84 consecutive years in business.



2022- The rodeo is re-opened to the public, with the second-highest attendance in the rodeo’s history.

Good gravy, the rodeo is more than a show! It has come a long way, providing us with cultural experiences and long-lasting memories. The rodeo also gives back to the community. From scholarships and entertainment, from Texas pride and diversity. All are welcome to go and enjoy the show of a lifetime.

Political Partay! The rise of... spy balloons?

by Mia El Yafi

Currently, it’s three days past the deadline for this article. I just finished my AP Euro thing that was assigned 2 weeks ago. I have a research paper I haven’t started due next week. I can not bring myself to read even one paragraph about spy balloons.

Now let me preface this by saying this is all pretty unlike me. I am usually relatively on top of things (on top of things meaning I may wait until the morning of to do assignments, but I

get them done). I actually like reading political news— I mean that’s why I have this politics column. But I just can’t do it today. It’s like every ounce of motivation has left my body. All I want to do is go play racquetball at the YMCA, binge watch the Hunger Games, and bake banana bread.

After much consideration, I finally realized what this strange condition is: senioritis. I thought it was a myth! It is not. Is it merely

confirmation bias? I don’t know, but I do know it feels very, very real. Anyways, no article for this month; just this investigative journalism piece on senioritis (does it count as investigative journalism if I only interview myself? I think it does). If you want to learn about spy balloons go google “spy balloon.” The New York Times writers actually get paid for this kind of stuff.

Ranking All My High School English Books

by Brian Oliveira

A comprehensive ranking of every assigned English class book I’ve read in my three years at PVA. Enjoy!

Chrétien de Troyes’ Arthurian Romances: 1/10

inhales AHHHHHH—We read two stories from this book: the Lancelot one and the Holy Grail one. Lancelot’s story has no plot until the last, like, 10%. It’s all just him going around and performing miraculous tasks, with everyone around him proclaiming how great he is. With how much it praises him, it’s like Lancelot himself wrote this story. It’s BORING, REPETITIVE, and has NO CHARACTER ARC OR STORY. The Grail one was passable I guess.

Drawing the Line by Howard Brenton: 3/10

Eh. A story about a British guy being sent to India in the 1940s to decide where to divide it in two. I feel like it could have dealt with the subject matter better, and the main character is kind of a douchebag.

Giovanni’s Room by James Baldwin: 4/10

I’ve got mixed feelings on this one, and I’m not sure if I really like it or not? The story just didn’t really click with me, but at the same time it did a good job of keeping my interest. A depressing relationship where one person ends up on death row isn’t my idea of great gay representation, but I suppose it was pretty groundbreaking for the 50s.

The Age of Innocence by Edith Wharton: 5/10

Okay, I technically only read the first 50 pages or so, BUT I did watch the movie, so I can at least say the story was good. The old language can be a bit of a barrier to get through (not

helped by Edith Wharton sometimes going on for three pages about a random character’s entire life history) but the bit I did read was enjoyable enough and occasionally witty.

Twelve Angry Men by Reginald Rose: 5/10

Pretty decent! Following a jury of a dozen ticked-off lads deciding whether to convict a young man accused of murder, this play is really carried by the characters, and how their opposing viewpoints cause conflict. Even if some characters are a bit two-dimensional, it’s good overall and gets pretty serious at times.

The Metamorphosis by Franz Kafka: 6/10

For such a weird concept, The Metamorphosis is a surprisingly good story dripping with existential dread and depression. Gets slow occasionally, but for the most part stays interesting throughout.

The House on Mango Street by Sandra Cisneros: 6/10

A series of vignettes about a young Hispanic girl growing up in Chicago, this book has both nice slice-of-life stories and vignettes that dive into mature subjects. It’s not one of my favorites, but it’s pretty solid.

Romeo and Juliet by William Shakespeare: 7/10

Maybe it’s my bias as a theatre kid, but I very much enjoyed reading Romeo and Juliet. Once you actually understand what’s happening (No Fear Shakespeare and clips from movies are quite helpful!), it’s easy to see why it’s one of Shakespeare’s most iconic plays. The characters are great, and the message is simple but good.

Station Eleven by Emily St. John Mandel: 7/10

Not what I expected, but I liked it a lot. The story, hopping forwards and backwards in time, tells a pretty good apocalypse story. It’s surprisingly slow, but that works in its favor as it gets to develop some good characters.

Between the World and Me by Ta-Nehisi Coates: 8/10

An emotionally powerful dive into racism and its history and presence in America, this book really made me rethink a lot about the society I live in. It is eye-opening, well-written, and just all-around great.

The Hitchhiker’s Guide to the Galaxy by Douglas Adams: 8/10

THIS SH** SLAPS. One of the funniest books I’ve read in a while, the polite British style of humor is great and makes “random humor” work without being annoying *cough Hitchhiker’s Guide movie adaptation cough*.

Persepolis by Marjane Satrapi: 9/10

Just all-around pretty great. Marjane Satrapi’s depiction of her life growing up is just so interesting, and the book manages to balance some hilarious comedic bits with some really touching emotional moments. The simple art style fits the tone of the story quite well.

Slaughterhouse Five by Kurt Vonnegut: 10/10

Jesus Christ, I did not expect Slaughterhouse Five to be this good. It’s just so compelling, able to convey such big philosophical and existential themes through dark humor and its bizarre story involving time travel and aliens. At the core of all the craziness is a painfully human story and a powerful anti-war message.

Signs that HSPVA is Becoming a Communist Nation

by Mathius Černýachramowicz

Recently, I’ve noticed something both interesting and disturbing about our school. I’ve felt as though things have been changing, and after some work I’ve diagnosed the condition of PVA’s transformation: this school is slowly becoming communist*.

Here is my reasoning:

CCTV cameras watch our every move.

Government sponsored buses are bringing people to a state education institute where leaving is forbidden.

They say all students are equal when obviously, that isn’t true!

There are mass produced lunches that people have to line up for.

Starting your own business is outlawed, and economic competition with the school store is prohibited.

Transactional processes are forbidden unless you undergo a mountain of paperwork.

Only school-run news agencies can publish and spread information.

Political dissent, unapproved media, and events/activities are censored (this has happened to me before!)

Unpaid labor is encouraged.

Rivals, protestors, and rebels are disciplined and re-educated.

**Clearly, this was written in good fun and light-hearted humor and was intended for a good old laugh that makes you want to slap your knees. This is in no way factual and true and everything above is a joke. If anything, do not take this article seriously... Please don’t censor me admins!*

Answers for your crossword!

Tag us @hspvapaper and tell us what you think about the crossword!

Do you have any requests for future themes? Email us ideas at hspvapaper@gmail.com, or any crossword suggestions in general!

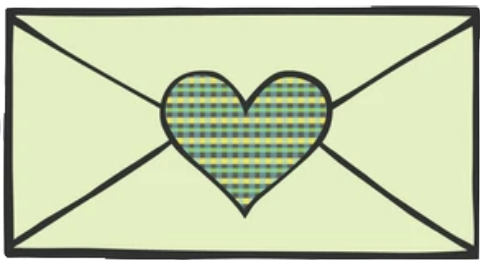
H	А	В	Е	
↓0				
↓	Н	Е	И	
8		↓		
Е	Ь		↓	↓
9				
В	Г	О	М	И
2				
	А	↓	↓	А
	↓	5	3	↓

Teacher Talk!

by Mr. Landry

Thank you for stopping by the teacher talk article. This piece is a little different than usual because I personally wanted to take a moment to say thanks and give a shout out to students, staff, and faculty who are willing to throw out a good word for someone when they see fit.

It doesn't have to just be ___ appreciation week, every day we are surrounded by wonderful effort and talent to the point where we may at times take it for granted. I hope this brief article helps provide a nudge to build each other up directly, face to face, and not screen to screen. Smiles are so much better in person. So to get things rolling here are a few "Teacher Talk" recognitions to the students...



To you, the student who tries to do “the work” and asks questions of peers or teachers, thank you for your effort. You are seen and appreciated and we as teachers thank you for checking “in” and not checking out.

To you, the student who totally just owned that performance in the Happening, but then finished your lunch and went on to class like it wasn't a thing...that WAS a thing! You did so great! We are so glad you put yourself out there and shared your time and talent with us.

To you, the student who chills in the hallway at lunch chatting with friends and picking up afterwards, it is wonderful to see you connecting face to face with peers and helping keep our school beautiful.

To you, the student who listened to and consoled a friend who needed to get something off their chest, thank you. Life is not always fair and comes at us in ways we would never expect. We all need each other to make it through and it makes my heart glow to know that friends like you are out there in the student body.

To you, the students leading in big ways and small, thank you for putting in the extra effort and time to help build and uphold our PVA culture through your clubs, lunch meetings or mentorship. PVA is what it is because of the investment you are making and your actions are inspiring future students in ways you may never be able to measure or comprehend.

There are so many more, but you know what, that is what this article is about... People don't know what you are thinking unless you share it. If you have something you want to share, just share it! It only costs you a breath (or two). Celebrate PVA for all that it is to so many different people. Make someone else's day, or not, the choice is always yours.

A Rebuttal to Brian Oliveira's Ranking of High School Books

by Sonya Azencott

As an editor, I get to see articles before they are published. Through this incredible privilege, I was able to (thankfully) catch Oliveira's sacrilegious ranking. Are people entitled to their own opinions? Maybe. Maybe not. Either way, my opinions rank supreme, so here is my definitive ranking of the books I read in High School (excluding senior year).

Chretien de Troyes: Yvain or the Knight of the Lion: 1/10
From my admittedly hazy memories, de Troyes' writing style is incredibly dry and his Arthurian plots, which sound interesting on paper, fall flat in execution. On this, I agree with Oliviera.

Drawing the Line by Howard Brenton: 4/10
Again, I agree with Oliviera---don't worry, I'll highlight her ranking failures later. Drawing the Line lacks a compelling protagonist to lead us through the tempestuous and interesting historical backdrop of pre-partition India. It's a historical period that deserves more care and quality writing than this play provides. (Hayden Miller protests this ranking.)

The Metamorphosis by Franz Kafka : 4/10
I know that this is controversial. I love absurdism and existentialism, but this book was just boring. The idea of a man turning into a giant bug sounds fantastic, but the story drags and Gregor, the protagonist, never manages to elicit any emotion from me. It was just...boring. I do appreciate the apple-related memes that came from this book and have permeated my life up through senior year.

The House on Mango Street by Sandra Ciceneros: 5/10
The main issue I have with this book is that it was forgettable. Even as I write this, I can't really remember anything about The House on Mango Street. The writing was pretty, I think, and I liked one of the characters? I remember

feeling apathetic while reading, but there's nothing wrong with the book.

Station Eleven by Emily St. John Mandel: 5/10
This is my hill that I will die on. Station Eleven is a mediocre book (Sorry, Mr. Lozano). The characters are boring, and the interweaving storylines, particularly those set in the present, never pay off. I did enjoy the sequences in the past, but they are overshadowed by the sheer mediocrity of the unoriginal post-apocalyptic setting in the present. To top it all off, the diction and syntax were juvenile and uninspired, leading to a very meh book.

Romeo and Juliet by William Shakespeare: 7/10
Ask anyone, and they'll tell you that I love Shakespeare. Romeo and Juliet simply ranks lower on my Shakespeare list. I've been forced to read it too many times in English classes, and the analysis is always surface level. I have to admit that I hold a bit of a grudge against the play too because it is usually my peers' introduction to Shakespeare and turns them away from the Bard, which makes me sad. It's still a great play though.

The Bell Jar by Sylvia Plath---7/10
This is a hard book to rate. Following a suicidal young woman as she navigates her adult life and the mental wellness institutions of the time, this semi-autobiographical novel highlights difficult subjects with tact. The overwhelming sense of depressive apathy that permeates the entire book is hard to get through, however. You have to be in the right head-space for this book.

The Age of Innocence by Edith Wharton --- 7/10
I liked this book! It was funny! The satirical commentary on the upper echelons of New York society was poignant and hilarious, making up

for the absolute aggravation I felt every time Newland Archer spoke. The plot is tightly knit and well executed, and the two main women are compelling and fully fleshed out.

Slaughterhouse 5 by Kurt Vonnegut---7/10
Aliens. War. Time? This book is weird in the best way, absurd with an anti-war philosophy at its center. I love the way that it plays with time to advance its themes and takes us as readers on an acid trip. It's a slightly worse version of Catch-22, but that's okay. I enjoyed it profusely.

Between the World and Me by Ta-Nehisi Coates: 8/10
This book should be required reading for all high school students in the United States. A mixture of essay and memoir, the book conveys its historical facts through powerful prose, simplifying complex history to make it accessible without losing nuance or importance.

Twelve Angry Men by Reginald Rose: 9/10
I adore this play, with its wide range of memorable and despicably human characters. The film adaptation is excellent, with fantastic performances, and I would highly recommend it. The dialogue is wonderfully written, and the characters bounce off each other as their conflicting worldviews come into contact. It's definitely my favorite work I read freshman year.

Giovanni's Room by James Baldwin: 10/10
This is one of my favorite books of all time, and Oliviera's abysmal ranking prompted me to write this rebuttal. James Baldwin is a literary genius. His prose is enchanting, forming swirling phrases that build a world through minutiae. It feels like a song. My favorite of his novels is *Go Tell it on the Mountain*, but *Giovanni's Room* is a close second. Although neither David nor Giovanni are particularly likable characters, they feel very real, involving me in their dynamic. I should reread it...

Overheard@PVA

“You’re a poor college kid with only spare change looking for free things to do. Well, studying is free.”
-Mr. Landry

“I’m hearing voices in my head, but not like schizophrenia.”
-Ms. Hall

“Every mammal gets milked... including us.”
-Quentin Pham

“I thought Warren Buffett was a country singer.”
-Aaron LaVohn

“He may be rich, but he lacks beauty completely.”
-Sra. Jimenez, on Elon Musk

“We should start measuring our weight in grapes. I am 12,698.812 grapes.”
-Layla Crear

“While you were off Wizzing, you could have been rizzing instead.”
-Carter Neil-Dobbs

“I can’t wait for all my teeth to fall out so I can only eat soup.”
-Katherine Citino

“Who’s that rapper who has a thing for all the moms? Lil Mama?”
-Meg Routh, on Yung Gravy

“I’ve started to think of myself as a country.”
- Mr. Hammon

“I hope my baby looks like my husband because he’s really hot.”
-Ms. Garza

“I feel like I’m gonna have a kid or something.”
-Jasmine Lin

“Rosa Parks looks like my MeeMaw, but my MeeMaw is Filipino.”
-Faith Lopez

“Someone allergic to peanuts is gonna use this calculator after me and go into anaphylactic shock.”
- Gentry Claire Lumpkin

“If it’s funny, it’s not racist. Don’t quote me on that.”
-Danielle Bush

“Sometimes I feel like my mom just had me so she could use the HOV lane.”
-Victoria Peyro

“Wife him up.”
-Simon Martin

“Does anybody need a hug? ...Go hug a cactus.”
-Ms. Rosales

“Optimus Prime has a snatched waist and it’s DISGUSTING!”
-Zachary Enano

“I would be so unsurprised if Ms. Rosales stole my first born child.”
- Athena Haq

“Ronald Reagan’s wife was Nancy Pelosi?!”
-Zech Bocchetto

“Take him off the toilet for the big reveal!”
-Mr. Waddell