

North Texas Daily

Serving the University of North Texas and Denton since 1916

VOL. 123 No. 9 • THURSDAY, APRIL 6, 2023

 North Texas Daily  @NTDaily  @NTDaily • NTDAAILY.COM

ARTS & LIFE

Local plant store grows from budding booth to blooming brick and mortar



The Brown Thumb's window stands on Cedar Street in Denton on Feb. 26, 2023. **Marco Barrera**

By **Kaitlynn Hutchins**
@KaitHutchins

On Cedar Street in downtown Denton is a little shop full of green leafy plants, natural light and a storeowner passionate about self-care practices.

The name of the shop, The Brown Thumb, is a term usually used to describe someone who cannot seem to keep a plant alive. Despite the moniker, the store welcomes plant parents of all abilities, using plants to promote mental health care practices.

Monique Segovia, The Brown Thumb owner and Denton resident, has not only built a budding business, but has put down roots and created a community.

"It's nice to have your own community that you build yourself," Segovia said. "I know what it's like to be lonely, so that's why I wanted The Brown Thumb to be so big."

Segovia and her husband Christopher moved to Denton from Florida in 2020. After moving halfway across the country during the COVID-19 pandemic, she found herself feeling lonely and isolated. Segovia did some plant growing and selling in Florida, but once she got to Texas, she immersed herself in it as a way to help with her anxiety.

The business started online, and in 2021, Segovia began selling plants and handmade planters at the Denton Community Market. At first, Segovia used the market as a way to socialize. It was at the market that she began to make connections with customers and other vendors.

SEE **BROWN THUMB** ON PAGE 3

SPORTS

Men's golf looks to strengthen follow-through as C-USA championship approaches

By **Jillian Nachtigal**
@JillNachtigal

Men's golf is approaching the end of its season with hopes of building momentum going into the Conference USA tournament.

As the team gears up for its final three tournaments, they are looking to work on consistency and mental strength. North Texas has finished in the middle of the leaderboards in its spring tournaments, but head coach Brad Stracke said he knows the team can improve going forward.

"Our good golf has been really good, and our bad golf has been just a little bit too inconsistent for my liking," Stracke said. "We're very close to performing at a high level, and we've been competing against the best teams in the country."

North Texas is coming off a tie for a 10th-place finish out of 21 at the All-American Intercollegiate in Houston. The Mean Green topped two C-USA competitors in the tournament — the University of Texas-San Antonio and Rice University. Junior Vicente Marzilio led the way, tying for 27th individually at 4-over par.

"We've been working really hard, and we realized how good we are and how good we can be if we just put that extra effort in," Marzilio said. "We've been competing against really good



Image Source **Mean Green Sports**

teams and putting on a show, basically."

Earlier this season, Marzilio was named C-USA golfer of the week after shooting back-to-back 5-under-par 67s and taking second place in the Trinity Forest Invitational in Dallas last fall.

Juniors Tucker Allen and Diego Prone tied for 33rd at 5-over par in Houston. Tucker led the team in the prior tournament at

SEE **GOLF** ON PAGE 6

NEWS

City of Denton plans for Phase 2 of new Vision Zero project



Students cross the street near a pedestrian sign in front of Crumley Hall on March 26, 2023. **Gabe Houser**

By **Celie Price**
Staff Writer

The city of Denton has begun developing phase two of Vision Zero, a national transportation safety program introduced locally last April, seeking a goal of reaching zero deaths from traffic accidents.

Vision Zero has been implemented in communities across the nation after the United States Department of Transportation released the National Roadway Safety Strategy last year, promoting a goal of reaching zero deaths from traffic accidents. The concept was developed in the '90s in Sweden but saw implementation in American cities in the 2010s as a result of rising deaths and severe injuries on the road. There were 59 fatal crashes and 68 accident-related deaths in 2021, according to data from the Texas Department of Transportation.

"Vision Zero is an approach to transportation planning with goals to eliminate all traffic fatalities and severe injuries for all road users," said city of Denton transportation planner Karina Maldonado. "However, it goes beyond just making a statement to have zero deaths. A Vision Zero approach emphasizes that deaths are preventable when we account for human error or behavior. It also strives to provide safe, equitable and healthy mobility for all users. This means designing safer roads and intersections, creating a more connected network in all areas of town, especially in areas where there is a high density of vulnerable road users, and implementing context-sensitive designs."

Vision Zero utilizes what is known as a Safe System Approach, differing from a "traditional approach" in that it focuses on using a systemic approach rather than individual responsibility in increasing road safety. The U.S. Department of Transportation adopted the safe systems approach, including its five principles: safe road users, safe vehicles, safe speeds, safe roads and post-crash care. This approach acknowledges human mistakes cannot be avoided, but fatalities and severe damage can be prevented.

"Phase one was a separate assessment of how current practices and policies in the city of Denton compare to the 10 Core Elements for Vision Zero Communities developed by the Vision Zero Network," Maldonado said. "Through a series of outreach events, we gathered feedback from our partner agencies and other stakeholders to understand where we were doing a great job and where we were failing. The end result was a matrix of action items for the city to pursue to be better aligned with the Vision Zero core elements. This matrix is available on our Vision Zero webpage."

For Vision Zero to work, several high-level public officials and

SEE **VISION ZERO** ON PAGE 2

WHAT'S INSIDE



THE DOSE, pg 5

Lana Del Rey spills intimate secrets in 'Did you know that there's a tunnel under Ocean Blvd'



OPINION, pg 7

Comic book movie franchises need to change their writing style to regain box office success

North Texas Daily

Editorial Team

Editor-in-Chief

John Anderson
@JohnAndersonTX
NorthTexasDaily@gmail.com

Managing & Video Editor

Madeleine Moore
@Moore_Maddie
NorthTexasDaily@gmail.com

Design Editor

Kelly Tran
@KellyTran28
NTDaily-Design@unt.edu

News Editor

Ayden Runnels
@A_y_denRunnels
NTDaily-News@unt.edu

Arts & Life Editor

Samantha Thornfelt
@SamThornfelt
NTDaily-Artsandlife@unt.edu

Sports Editor

Reed Smith
@Reed_Smith25
NTDaily-Sports@unt.edu

Opinion Editor

Hana Musa
@MusaHana21
NTDaily-Opinion@unt.edu

Visuals Editor

Maria Crane
@MariaCraneMedia
NTDaily-Visuals@unt.edu

Illustrations Editor

Jazmine Garcia
@JazminesG_
NTDaily-Visuals@unt.edu

Production Team

Designer / Copy Editor

Melanie Hernandez
@M3lan13H
NTDaily-Copy@unt.edu

Designer / Copy Editor

Samantha Freeman
NTDaily-Copy@unt.edu

Designer / Copy Editor

Rose Wright
@RoseWright111
NTDaily-Copy@unt.edu

Designer / Copy Editor

Hannah Burke
NTDaily-Copy@unt.edu

Senior Staff

Deputy Sports Editor

Jillian Nachtigal
@JillNachtigal

Senior Illustrator

Erika Sevilla
@JasperBee

News Staff Writer

Ismael Belkoura
@IBelkoura

Arts & Life Staff Writer

Kaitlynn Hutchins
@KaitHutchins

Senior Photographer

Marco Barrera
@MarcofromTX

Faculty Adviser

Randy Loftis
940-565-3495
Randy.Loftis@unt.edu

To pitch a story or contact the Editor-in-Chief, please email northtexasdaily@gmail.com



SCAN TO SIGN UP FOR OUR WEEKLY NEWSLETTER



Vison Zero aims to reduce Denton traffic deaths

VISION ZERO CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

agencies have committed themselves to supporting its initiatives. The program has a list of nearly 80 stakeholders across the Denton community, all of whom provide input by participating in webinars, surveys and workshops. Major stakeholders include the university, Texas Women's University, North Central Texas College, the Denton Police Department, Fire Department and Denton ISD.

"I had never heard of Vision Zero before, but now I'm curious to see how it will impact Denton," said university mechanical engineering senior Akemini Ike. "Even if the number of deaths isn't zero, I still think something like this project will be beneficial for the city. From reading about Vision Zero, it seems that they are tackling the issue from different angles to really get to the root of the issue and how to find a solution."

Phase one of the project began in April 2022, but discussions regarding Vision Zero started



Signage indicates a cross walk on Highland Street on March 26, 2023. Gabe Houser

back in 2019. City staff met with representatives from the Federal Highway Administration and gave a presentation to the city council in December 2019. The city then began researching how to best implement Vision Zero in Denton.

"My predecessors in this role evaluated many approaches and ultimately decided to phase our approach to implementing Vision Zero," Maldonado said.

In Texas, cities like Austin, Houston and San Antonio have adopted the plan. Neighboring cities of Denton, like Fort Worth, have sought resources to adopt the Action Plan. Maldonado said

there had been consistent contact through quarterly meetings to inform other communities about Vision Zero, and discussed new ideas for Denton's approach.

"Many cities in the U.S. have implemented Vision Zero with varying success," Maldonado said. "To staff, and most certainly the residents, we cannot move forward with a plan that will sit on a shelf. The success of implementing Vision Zero comes with a continuous cycle of implementation, evaluation and adjustment to improve our safety efforts."

Some examples of safety planning around the city include

adding traffic signs and creating "slow zones" to areas with high volumes of pedestrians, data tracking of areas with higher numbers of car accidents, completing street concepts encouraging other forms of transportation like walking and cycling and an incentivized usage of public transportation and ride-sharing services such as the Denton County Transportation Authority and GoZone.

"Vision Zero seems to be a beneficial plan to decrease and hopefully eliminate traffic fatalities," university psychology senior Graci Gilliland said. "I think it is a great idea to make changes regarding traffic stops if it can increase driver safety all around. I'm sure it is a whole process and may take some time, but I feel it is worth it to be inconvenienced by road work for a short period in order to have safer roads in general. This plan explains several ways in which traffic fatalities can be avoided or eliminated. I think it is a good plan to implement change in an attempt to save lives."

SGA senators-elect talk goals and aspirations for the coming year

By Ayden Runnels & Ismael Belkoura
@A_y_denRunnels & @IBelkoura

Twenty-seven students have been elected as senators for the Student Governor Association's 2023-2024 legislature in the largest election turnout since the COVID-19 pandemic.

SGA elections were held last week and the results were posted on SGA's Instagram page Friday evening. The president and vice president election results have not been released due to possible election code violations announced Friday.

"I've never met so many like-minded but also diverse group of individuals who are just so passionate about their colleges, their students, but, more perspective, UNT in general," SGA Speaker Pro-Tempore Kaylen Ruiz said. "I'm beyond excited and [I'm] so looking forward to seeing how these senators are going to work next semester."

Every senatorial race experienced an increase in voter turnout this year. While some college senate seats had only 10-20 more votes than last year, others gained hundreds more than

last year. Throughout the 2022-2023 year, the SGA senate experienced a 100 percent retention rate in their senate, a first since the SGA's inception in 1948.

The SGA senate is currently made up of 15 senators out of a possible 45.

In addition to 22 senator-elects representing specific colleges, five senator-elects were voted to represent the entire student body, and experienced record-breaking voter turnout, with over 3,800 votes cast. Daisy Pulliam, a human resource management junior, received the most votes out of any senatorial candidates, with 582 votes, only nine fewer votes than current president Jermaine Turner received during the spring 2022 election. The nontraditional student said she was "stunned" but was also encouraged to see her hard work pay off.

"Even though I had these few interactions one-on-one, [I was] able to put our name out there for [Off-Campus Student Services] and other non-trads and talking to them and just seeing what I could do," Pulliam said. "I felt like I was starting to make an impact somewhere."

Pulliam was the Non-Traditional Student

Representative for the university until the beginning of March and worked in OCSS. Pulliam said being a senator at-large means she will "need to be more aware" of other issues on campus.

"I can't just focus on what I have — I need to focus on everybody as a whole," Pulliam said. "And I know we won't do a huge impact, like getting something done right away, but we can lay the foundation work for that."

Pulliam spoke on her multitude of goals, including the parking issue and tackling inclusivity, but also talked specifically about diversity, equity and inclusion policies on campus.

"I think it's something that impacts everyone," Pulliam said. "Even if it doesn't impact you directly, it impacts one of your friends, it might impact a student in the future. We need to lay the groundwork to get those initiatives included and look and see how can we serve you in order to do this."

Several of the senator-elects named the possible removal of diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives from the university as the most pressing issue the university faces. Senate Bill

17 was filed in the Texas Legislature earlier this year and would remove all DEI policies from Texas universities, and a letter sent out from Gov. Greg Abbott's office led to the university pausing all new DEI hiring initiatives.

"[Senate Bill 17] trumped every other issue because, well, UNT as a diverse student community is going to be affected severely," at-large senator-elect and technical theater freshman Jeremy Garza said. "Whether that's through the Black Student Union, the Multicultural Center, LatinX and LGBTQ+ communities, with this bill being passed it's going to affect everyone."

As the semester ends, the SGA executive board will be replaced with a new administration. SGA director of leadership and development Molly Williams, who helped implement the new First

Year Council in the fall 2022 semester, said she hopes to see the council double in size under the new administration.

"Like all organizations here at UNT, we've had retention issues, multiple organizations have seen that issue, and a lot of the reason is that I feel like we can better incentivize First Year Council," Williams said.

Some of the senators and members of the SGA executive board are in their final semester in their positions. Ruiz is in the process of creating workshops before the end of the semester to help teach the incoming senators.

"We're going to help them, and we're going to guide them so that next semester, they're not lost," Ruiz said. "Essentially, making it to where if they have a question, they know the answer by the time it's next semester."



Illustration by Jazmine Garcia

The Brown Thumb plants its roots in community

BROWN THUMB
CONTINUED FROM
PAGE 1

The next year, Segovia returned to the market, and her business kept growing. She began to see repeat customers and continued to build her relationship with other small business owners.

"The Community Market has been phenomenal," Segovia said. "It's helped me as an individual build community [in Denton] and has made me feel so comfortable and welcomed."

Lois Robertson, The Brown Thumb employee and Denton resident, has worked at the shop for six months. Robertson started as a regular customer at the Community Market and later applied for a position at the store when she saw a hiring ad in an Instagram post.

"We definitely believe here that anyone can take care of a [plant]," Robertson said. "It doesn't have to be this mystifying experience. You can be anyone, and I like that."

Before starting The Brown Thumb, Segovia worked in corporate business and social media marketing. She said she was burnt out from working in



Many different types of plants are for sale at The Brown Thumb on Feb. 26, 2023. **Marco Barrera**

the corporate world and knew she wanted to be her own boss from that experience.

"I'm not bashing any of the companies I worked for because they were absolutely amazing — it's just, you know something's not where you're supposed to be," Segovia said.

With the support of her husband, she decided to become fully devoted to her business. She began working on opening her own storefront, and in June 2022, the brick-and-mortar location opened. Segovia continued to operate a booth at the Denton Community Market every week as well.

While preparing to open

the storefront, Segovia learned she was pregnant, welcoming her baby girl into the world last December. She soon had to adapt to navigating pregnancy and opening and operating her shop at the same time.

"It seemed like everything was fine, but it was such a struggle being pregnant and trying to tackle everything [...], but it all worked out," Segovia said. "The Denton community has been phenomenal and so supportive."

Around November, Segovia realized she had not been taking care of herself the way she should have and decided to take a break. She is currently

on maternity leave and plans to return to the store later this month.

"I preach about self-care all the time, but for someone to preach about it and then actually do it for themselves is hard," Segovia said.

Segovia has plans for The Brown Thumb to branch out even further in the community. She is planning to turn the business into a nonprofit organization that aims to improve mental health among minority communities using plants.

As part of her mission to promote mental health, Segovia

is in the process of starting a podcast along with the owners of Ixchel Designs and Salvage Shoppe. The podcast will be a way to talk about the details of running a small business that often goes unsaid.

Juliana DiGennaro, owner of Salvage Shoppe and Denton resident, met Segovia through a mutual friend, Michelle Toledo, who owns Ixchel Designs. One day, the three spoke about the difficulties that come with owning a small business.

"There are times when I'm just like, 'Okay, I'm done,' because having a small business is one of the biggest challenges I've ever faced in my life so far," Segovia said.

During the discussion, someone joked about starting a podcast, and Segovia liked the idea so much she pushed for it to become a reality.

"I think that in business, it is normal to keep to yourself and put on this front that everything is perfect because, as a society, we are competitive and don't want people to see us struggle," DiGennaro said. "But if we were all more transparent, it could be a lot easier to uplift each other because we are all going through similar experiences."

Things to do in Denton this weekend



Illustration by **Jazmine Garcia**

By **Samantha Thornfelt**
@SamThornfelt

Denton First Fridays Poetry Readings

When: Friday, April 7, 6:30 p.m. - 7:30 p.m.

Where: Patchouli Joe's Books & Indulgences, 221 W. Hickory St.

What: Celebrate April's first Friday at Patchouli Joe's. The bookstore will host a variety of poets' readings in the shop. Go to patchoulijoesbooks.com for details.

A Touch of Rust Market

When: Saturday, April 8, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Where: North Texas Fair and Rodeo, 2217 N. Carroll Blvd.

What: The semi-annual Touch of Rust Market will take place this Saturday. The event will feature over 100 vendors who sell repurposed, vintage and handcrafted goods. Food trucks will also be available to attendees. Visit atouchofrust.com for more information.

Easter Eggstravaganza

When: Saturday, April 8, 9 a.m. to noon

Where: Denton Civic Center, 321 E. McKinney St.

What: Hop on over to the Civic Center this Saturday for a morning full of festive fun. The event's schedule includes a variety of bounce houses, arts and crafts, vendors and age-categorized egg hunts. Admission is free. More schedule details can be found on the Denton Civic Center's Facebook page.

Easter Egg Bike Hunt

When: Sunday, April 9, 1 p.m.

Where: Oak St. Draffhouse, 308 E. Oak St.

What: Experience a new way to hunt with the 5-7 mile Easter Egg Bike Hunt. From Oak St. Draffhouse to Quakertown Park, participants can hit three spots where they can hunt for eggs full of candy, coupons, merchandise and more. Bikers can then return to Oak St. Draffhouse where they can redeem any deals they find. Visit Oak St. Draffhouse's Facebook page for more information.

Environmental group, PETAL, sows seeds of change

By **Gianna Ortner-Finlay**
@Gianna_NTDailyMedia

To start the night's lesson, PETAL Project Co-Founder and papermaking workshop host Alex Khraish asked the group of attendees what paper means to them.

Those attending the March 30 event hosted at the Greater Denton Arts Council raised their hands eagerly, with answers ranging from legal documents to craft paper. Khraish believes that asking questions like this can show workshop attendees the value of paper and what it can create beyond what is considered a paper product.

"I founded [The PETAL Project] with a group of friends," said Rachel Weaver, PETAL Project Director and university alum. "We're all volunteer, and we're kind of just trying to get this initiative going in the community [...] where they can share knowledge and build up our sort of environmental community together."

The PETAL Project was founded in fall 2022, and hosted its first workshop in November, with members of PETAL leading the instruction. The workshop focused on urban ecology — the study of living organisms concerning their relationship to one another in a more developed environment.

"I was working towards my environmental educators' certification, and I wanted to have this organization that could help bring all [of] these folks together," Weaver said. "I just started to kind of realize [...] that artists are really at the forefront of trying to share the message of environmental issues and

climate change."

Climate change is the long-term shifts in global temperature or weather patterns, according to an article by the United Nations. They also acknowledge that while natural warming and cooling patterns may cause these shifts since the 1800s, human activities have participated majorly in rapid changes on a global scale.

"[PETAL] stands for Participatory Environmentalism Through Art and Learning, so that is kind of our idea," Weaver said.

Weaver thinks of those at The PETAL Project and those participating in PETAL activities as pollinators. They believe PETAL is a space where people can develop ideas and be creative about being environmentally conscious.

"I'm attempting a zero waste lifestyle," said Jordan Mundhenk, Texas Women's University general studies junior. "I'm not able to do it perfectly by any means, but it's just being able to consciously think about what I'm consuming."

Living a zero-waste lifestyle prioritizes reducing the number of materials thrown away instead of participating in the vast amount of waste humans produce daily. Americans make 5.91 pounds, on average, of trash daily, with only 1.51 pounds of that waste being recyclable, according to a study by the Environmental Protection Agency.

The PETAL Project has several members with artistic abilities, with Khraish having a paper-making and art history background. Khraish added that handmade paper has always been integral to her artistic practice and



A plant papermaking workshop for the PETAL Project takes place at the GDAC on March 30, 2023. **Makayla Brown** creative process.

Every Thursday, the Greater Denton Arts Council hosts events and workshops that those in the community can attend for free. Papermaking is done by blending a mix of scrap paper, boiling water, and in the case of the workshop, flower seeds into a pulp. After the pulp is cooled, a mold and deckle are placed into the mixture and then dried on a couch to create a sheet of paper.

"I just feel like [workshops like this are] something you don't really get the opportunity to do unless you like pay big money for a class," said Melody Schmidt, Denton resident and El Camino Community College student. "I just feel really inspired, [like] this is something I wanna try for myself at my house because it's really fun."

In 2016, Denton became a "Bee City Affiliate," which means that Bee City USA recognized the active effort that Denton was committing to cultivate community-wide pollinator conservation. According to Bee City USA, Denton is one of only

340 cities or campus affiliates declared a "Bee City" in the United States. In addition to that title, Denton also holds a Butterfly and Tree City label.

"I guess in my own time, I've noticed, 'Oh, they leave a lot of areas open, and they have a lot of flowers planted out like in the square' and some other places," Mundhenk said. "I think it's a great effort, and every city should be making those kinds of efforts as well."

The PETAL Project will host a benefit show in partnership with Magic Capsule Music on April 22 for Earth Day Fest. The proceeds of the show will go toward creating a local community garden in Denton.

"Environmentalism and sustainability has to be a community project, and trying to be aware of the impact we can make together," Weaver said. "It's coming from a place of 'What can we offer that's helpful [with our resources]?' It takes community to build up that sense of sentiment and that we care."

'John Wick: Chapter 4' is the peak of action

By Joaquin Fernandez
@FernaJustoo

"The highly anticipated finale to the hit action franchise "John Wick" released in theatres on March 24. The star-studded film features Keanu Reeves (John Wick), Donnie Yen (Caine), Shamier Anderson (Tracker), Ian McShane (Winston), Rina Sawayama (Akira) and Bill Skarsgård (the Marquis). The film is directed by Chad Stahelski, who previously directed the franchise's past three entries.

"Chapter 4" picks up shortly after the last entry, with John on the run after the infamous High Table put a large bounty on his head for betraying the sacred rules and killing an elder. The Marquis is a member of the High Table tasked to eliminate Wick and all his allies using hired assassins. In the exaggerated world of the "John Wick" films, assassins have a role in every aspect of society with the High Table representing an overseeing council to keep everyone in check.

Although the runtime clocks in at 2 hours and 49 minutes, the risk for a slow pace is avoided with the highly engaging action and characters. It's essentially one long action sequence broken up with brief pauses to further the plot.



Actor Keanu Reeves speaks to the audience after the "John Wick: Chapter 4" world premiere on March 13, 2023. **Madeleine Moore**

For an action-heavy film like "John Wick," the story is supplemental to the amazingly shot and performed fight scenes throughout. Reeves performed many of his own stunts, which adds to the believability of Wick's prowess. He's punched, kicked, stabbed and shot countless times — to the point where superhuman powers must be in effect.

A noteworthy scene comes at the film's climax, where John must fight waves of goons atop a 200-step plus staircase. Once he finally kills them all and reaches the top, he's quickly pushed down and stumbles all the way to the bottom in a hilarious fashion.

The movie's humor is more natural and occurs sparingly, compared to the average Marvel hit or other similar blockbusters. McShane's role as Winston brings a much-needed sense of brevity and

wit to every scene he enters. The late Lance Riddick as Charon makes a memorable appearance in the film's beginning sequence.

Reeves has long perfected his role as John Wick at this point in the franchise, favoring physicality over dialogue. Most of his lines can be summed up with "Yeah," becoming a synonymous phrase for the character.

Important new characters introduced in the film consist of Yen's Caine, Sawayama's Akira and Anderson's Mr. Nobody. Caine is a blind assassin from Wick's past who's sent in by the Marquis to hunt him down in exchange for sparing his daughter's life. Some of the film's best action scenes include Caine due to his unorthodox way of fighting — akin to Daredevil.

Mr. Nobody is the mysterious third party, after

John Wick for seemingly nothing more than the high bounty and fame. He's accompanied by his attack dog, maintaining the iconic canine element found in the previous films.

Sawayama's Akira is the daughter of the Osaka Continental's owner Shimazu, who's another friend of Wick's from the past. She distrusts him for bringing the full might of the high table to their doors but manages to hold her own against them in an epic fight sequence.

There are so many other characters throughout the film, but the focus remains on John Wick and his unrelenting mission of revenge and survival.

The cinematography remains even stronger than ever in this entry, with a unique action sequence filmed from a top-down view like a

videogame. This is backed up by a memorable soundtrack bringing immense energy to almost every scene. Techno-dubstep used throughout has become iconic music for the franchise.

A showcase of this appears in a high-octane chase scene with John and a mob boss named Killa, who killed someone very close to him. They run through a nightclub with an encompassing crowd and artificial waterfalls all around.

John beats on Killa through the crowd of people to the sound of booming music and bright neon lights. It ends in Killa being pushed over to his death after a long pursuit and fight with John.

"John Wick: Chapter 4" surpasses all the other films in the series in terms of action, characters, visuals and even story. The action scenes all stand out as particularly mesmerizing and engaging to watch at every point. Additional new characters introduced not only fit well into the story but offer some nice room for exploration going forward.

Reeves is perfect as John Wick and this film concludes his story in an emotionally satisfying and perfect way.

Joaquin's rating:
4.5/5

Icon of the Week Chris Pine



Credit Madeleine Moore

The *Daily's* Icon of the Week goes to American actor Chris Pine. The "Dungeons & Dragons: Honor Amongst Thieves" star has garnered recent attention for his role as Edgin Darvis in the film, which released in theaters on March 31.

Pine, the son of actors, discovered his own love for acting while attending the University of California, Berkley. Before graduating with a bachelor's in English in 2002, Pine began doing theatre after searching for a "place where he'd belong." He went on to participate in several productions as a member of the UC Berkeley Theater Department, including Caryl Churchill and Shakespearean plays.

He later received a series of early TV and film roles in the 2000s, including episodes of "CSI: Miami" and "The Guardian," as well as the lead male role in "The Princess Diaries 2: Royal Engagement." He went on to star as Captain James T. Kirk in the 2009 "Star Trek" film. The project was released to critical and viewer acclaim and remains one of Pine's most recognizable roles.

It was announced in February 2022 that Pine is set to make his directorial debut with the film "Poolman," which he also co-wrote. Pine will star as Darren Barrenman, a man tending to a swimming pool who uncovers a "sizeable water heist."

Fall Out Boy's new album proves pop-punk isn't dead yet

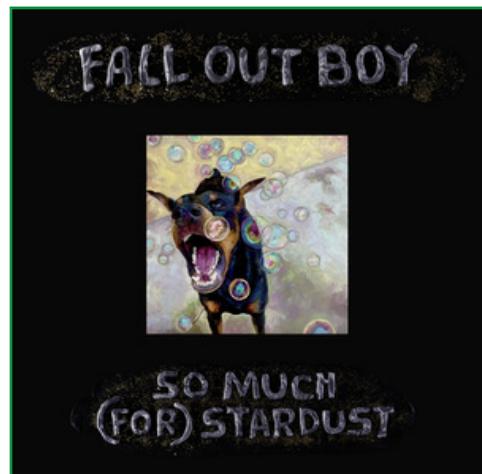


Image source Apple Music

By Kaitlynn Hutchins
@KaitHutchins

Two months after Panic! At the Disco disbanded, surviving "emo trinity" group Fall Out Boy released its eighth studio album, "So Much (For) Stardust," proving that pop-punk is not dead yet.

"SM(F)S" is a welcome return to a more traditional sound from the band after their 2018 album "MANIA." Its heavy electropop sound was considered a flop by many fans and critics, largely because it was so different than

previous albums.

It has been 20 years since the release of Fall Out Boy's debut album, and the popular music landscape has changed significantly. Even though the band has moved away from its history of long and confusing song titles ("From Under the Cork Tree," "I'm looking at you), Fall Out Boy has continued to stay true to their pop-punk roots while remaining relevant.

"SM(F)S" undeniably has a stronger pop sound than its early predecessors, but that isn't necessarily a bad thing. After all, pop is in the name of their genre. For this album, the band returned to the label Fueled By Ramen — the same label used for its 2003 debut "Take This To Your Grave."

Earlier this year, two singles from the album were released: "Love From The Other Side" and "Heartbreak Feels So Good." Both songs are upbeat and have heavy drums and guitar during their catchy choruses — classic marks of a pop-punk track.

These songs gave hope that the rest of the album would have the same sound. For the most part, fans were not disappointed.

There are several things done well on the record. The members of Fall Out Boy are entering their 40s, so they have a very different outlook on life than they did 20 years ago, and this album reflects that.

"So Good Right Now," the sixth song on the album, opens with the lines "I got this doom and gloom in my mind, yeah / I got this doom and gloom, but I feel all right," and repeats "I know, I know I've made mistakes, yeah / I know, I know, but at least they were mine to make." This could suggest a more mature handle on emotions that previously characterized the band as emo.

Aside from the song's lyrics, it has a classically pop-punk sound paired with a swing-like rhythm, which is really enjoyable. This song is one of the strongest on the album.

"SM(F)S" has a cohesive flow throughout its tracks. Listeners do not feel like victims of whiplash from quickly jumping from one song to a dramatically different one, which is sometimes felt when listening to an album from start to finish.

While songs on an album being entirely dialogue are not all that impressive, listeners can appreciate the addition of "The Pink Seashell" with Ethan Hawke and "Baby Annihilation."

The first minute-long song is a dialogue track with Hawke speaking about a reflection on lessons from a late father with a musical backing from the band. "Baby Annihilation" seems to be a spoken poem or lyrics to a song full of metaphors about aging.

Both songs add a lot of artistic and thematic

value to the album, coinciding with the idea that the band has matured with age. However, these tracks are sure to be skipped when listening casually. "The Pink Seashell" works better as a spoken piece because it is a story, but "Baby Annihilation" would have worked better as an actual song.

The song "So Much (For) Stardust" closes out the album in a satisfying way, repeating lyrics and musical motifs from the first song on the album, "Love From The Other Side." The lyrics confirm the band and album's reflective maturity, with lines like "I need the sound of crowds or I can't fall asleep at night," or the repeating "thought we had it all, thought we had it all."

While pop-punk hasn't died quite yet, we must come to terms with the fact that it has grown older and the genre's hypothetical frontal lobe has developed. "SM(F)S" is nowhere near the angst level of earlier albums like "Infinity on High" or even "Save Rock and Roll," but maybe we no longer need Fall Out Boy to give us so much angst.

This is not the best album Fall Out Boy has released, but it also is not the worst — and hopefully not the last.

Kaitlynn's rating: 3.8/5

Lana Del Rey spills intimate secrets in ‘Did you know that there’s a tunnel under Ocean Blvd’

By Jack Moraglia
@JackMoraglia

In 2022, thieves broke into Lana Del Rey’s car and stole a bag. Inside were her laptop, camcorders and hard drives containing a manuscript for her unreleased 200-page poetry book and many song files.

In “Did you know that there’s a tunnel under Ocean Blvd,” Del Rey sings like she’s stitching the stolen songs back together, one word at a time.

One word defines the album more than any other: intimate. Matched with the frequent use of second person, it sounds like she is spilling secrets directly to the listener.

Del Rey’s ninth studio album features heavy piano, but that doesn’t mean her sound is stripped down. She experiments with sampling, spoken word and sound warping.

Opening the album, the piano in “The Grants” feels like it is aching to lift off the ground, before breaking open with bright strings floating above.

The titular song is a ballad about a mosaic-decorated tunnel, hidden under Ocean Boulevard in Long Beach, California. Del Rey sings like she’s speaking to a romantic partner, revealing tidbits about her life and the city around her. This type of lyricism persists throughout the record and continues with “Sweet,” which plays like a sung letter to her lover: “Do you want children? Do you want to marry me?”

At an hour and 17 minutes, this record is Del Rey’s longest. She plays at a patient

tempo and stretches songs as far as they’ll go. Rather than sold-out stadiums, this album would be best played live at a small cocktail bar filled with bookshelves to bounce the acoustics off of.

At times in “Candy Necklace (feat. Jon Batiste),” it sounds like Del Rey is messing around at the piano with no set tempo or length to the song, ad-libbing with her timeless voice. One can imagine her at a piano, continuing songs long after they could be finished, like in “Kintsugi.”

“A&W” is a 7-minute song that starts as an acoustic confessional about being an “American whore.” A dramatic shift sends the song into a repetitive beat about a man named Jimmy, whose love is messy and drug-induced. The sharp change and long length of the song are similar to “Venice B—h” on Del Rey’s “Norman F—ing Rockwell” album, which shifts into a long instrumental section midway through the song and is sampled at the end of “Taco Truck x VB.”

“Fingertips” repeats beautiful sequences over and over, almost like a Catholic hymn that repeats to accommodate a long communion line. Religion is a recurring theme on the album, most notably in the “Judah Smith Interlude,” with over four minutes of preaching.

“Judah Smith Interlude” includes a sermon from Smith, a megachurch preacher at Churchome. The interlude sparked discourse among Del Rey’s fans, due to Smith’s past anti-LGBTQ comments. It is unclear what Del Rey’s meaning is with this interlude, however, because the singer can be heard giggling

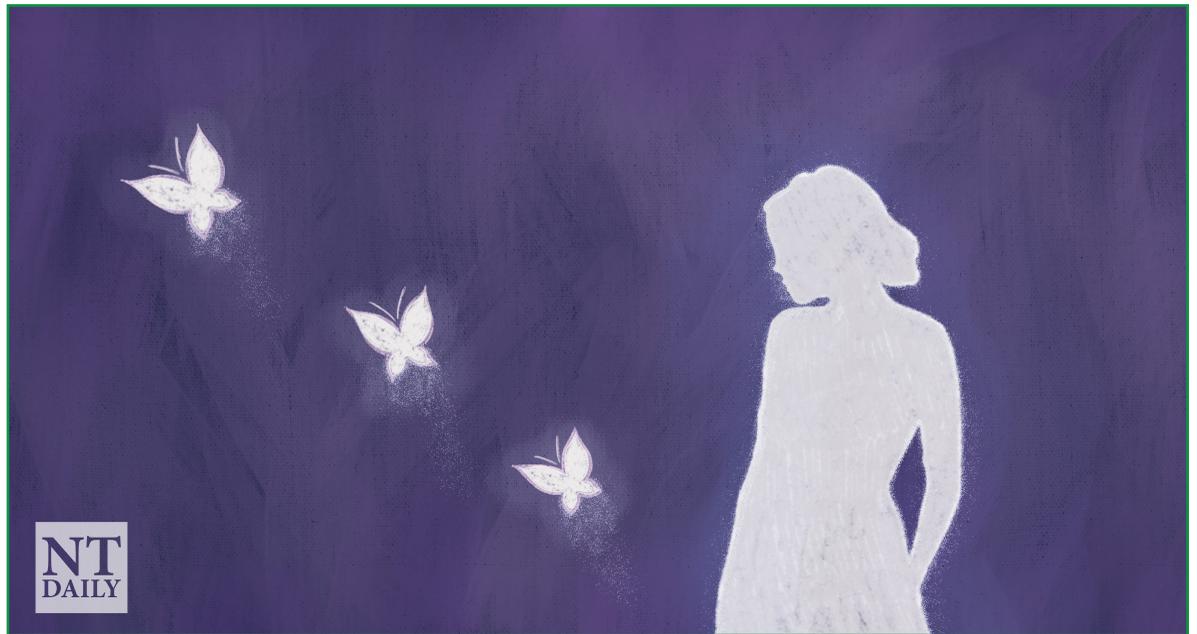


Illustration by Makayla Sanchez

and making comments as though she is in the crowd, scrutinizing the sermon.

Religious themes continue in “Grandfather please stand on the shoulders of my father while he’s deep-sea fishing.” The long-winded title exemplifies Del Rey’s praying style on the album. “God, if you’re near me, send me three white butterflies” she prays.

Family also finds its place on the album. “The Grants” is titled after Del Rey’s real last name and ruminates about her family who has departed, and what one might take with them after death. In “Fingertips,” Del Rey addresses her siblings, instructing: “Charlie, stop smoking / Caroline, will you be with me?” Del Rey longs for different aspects

of her life that are just out of reach in “Fingertips.” She pleads with numerous connections in her life and recounts painful experiences throughout her teenage years and career.

“Let The Light In,” featuring Father John Misty, is the album’s most replayable track. The lyrics seem happy, but the music and vocals feel doomed and melancholic.

While Del Rey questions her own relationships, the lyrics in her collaboration with Antonoff (as Bleachers) on “Margaret” show Jack Antonoff’s confidence in his love with his fiancé, Margaret Qualley. “When you know, you know,” the two sing, a sharp contrast from Del Rey’s own relationship

contemplations.

Fans looking for the old Lana Del Rey, reminiscing “Summertime Sadness” and “Diet Mountain Dew,” will be rewarded by waiting for “Peppers,” the album’s penultimate track. Del Rey samples Tommy Genesis’ song “Angelina,” repeating the catchy tune, “Hands on your knees, I’m Angelina Jolie.” A departure from the rest of the album, this song can be blasted in the car on a road trip.

Del Rey’s new album shows her lyrical mastery and artful dedication. The internalized, meditative songs will not be loved by all, but are best for someone with the patience to listen attentively.

Jack’s rating: 4/5

Melanie Martinez unveils Crybaby’s evolution in new album ‘PORTALS’

By Xander Weems
@NTD_KCW

After months of teasing and excitement, Melanie Martinez has finally released their third studio album, “PORTALS.”

The album picks up after the “K-12” film where Martinez’s character, Crybaby, decides between following Lillith or staying on the mortal plane.

First up on the tracklist is “DEATH.” As the song’s title suggests, “DEATH” explores themes of life, death and rebirth – literally and metaphorically.

On the literal side, the song talks about death as a natural part of life that should be embraced. Metaphorically, it discusses the death of Martinez’s career with the negative attention they face and their self-imposed hiatuses.

Immediately following is “VOID,” which expands on the themes the first track laid out. Like the theme of death, the void is used as a double entendre. In one sense, the void is what people are met with in the afterlife. In another, the void is the mental anxieties Martinez faces.

Martinez shifts away from the theme of death in the next song, “TUNNEL VISION.” Tunnel vision is a term used to describe the act of solely focusing on a single goal, blocking out everything else. In Martinez’s case, they sing about a lover who’s only interested in their body, not anything else Martinez could provide.

“FAERIE SOIREE” is a light-hearted, upbeat break in the album. It explores the theme of psychedelics and hallucinations. In the end, Martinez gives themselves over to the drugs and

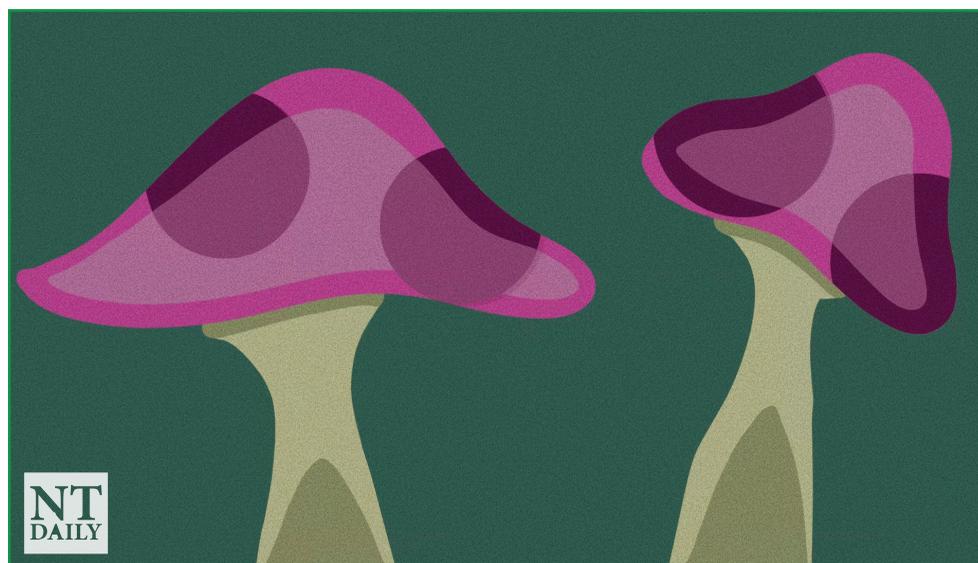


Illustration by Isabella Isquierdo

escapes the world weighing on them.

The sixth track, “LIGHT SHOWER,” is the slowest and softest of the album. Martinez sings about the cleansing love of their partner, which is like nothing they’ve had before. Despite the unfamiliarity of it, Martinez is content to soak in their love, like rays from the sun.

“SPIDER WEB” shifts the album’s tone once again, this time, toward publicity and fame. The song paints social media as an entrapping force that lures people in, only to devour them later. At first it may seem harmless, but once ensnared, you can never leave – which is especially true for celebrities.

“LEECHES” further expands on this topic, but narrows its point of view. Instead of

commenting on society as a whole, the track talks about society’s drain on celebrities, drinking them dry until they have nothing left to give.

Martinez further narrows the scope to themselves in their next track, “BATTLE OF THE LARYNX.” The pre-chorus specifically addresses the hatred Martinez has faced from social media, as well as negative allegations. Throughout the song, Martinez makes it clear that they choose their words precisely, and arguing with them would be pointless.

“THE CONTORTIONIST” and “EVIL” are the ninth and 12th tracks on the album. They each address the theme of toxic relationships.

In “THE CONTORTIONIST,” Martinez sings about bending yourself until you break to

fit another’s standards, while “EVIL” does the opposite. In the 12th track, Martinez sings about being fed up with toxicity. However, when they call their narcissistic lover, they are gaslit and accused of being the problem instead.

It would not be a Melanie Martinez album if there wasn’t at least one uncomfortable song for listeners. “MOON CYCLE” is meant to be a rib at misogynistic men who think that periods are something to be ashamed of. Martinez puts a spin on this by singing about their male lover that can’t get enough of them during their “moon cycle.”

“NYMPHOLOGY” expands on Crybaby’s reincarnated identity. While Crybaby is indeed a nymph, she refuses to follow the stereotypes of being weak and victimized by the patriarchy.

The final song of the album brings listeners full circle. “WOMB” is pretty much what one would think with the given title. The song focuses on the moments right before Crybaby’s rebirth – the uncertainty and excitement that comes with it.

The album ends in the same way it begins, with the final words of “WOMB” being “Life is death” and the first words of “DEATH” being “Death is life.”

Everything about this album screams Melanie Martinez. From the electronic pop tracks to the eccentricity of Crybaby’s evolution, the record fits right into Martinez’s discography.

While it was a great way to break their hiatus, Martinez has certainly left fans wondering where Crybaby will go next.

Xander’s rating: 5/5

Men's golf prepares for C-USA championship

GOLF CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

The Prestige in Palm Springs, Florida, shooting a 1-under 70 in the final round to tie for 32nd individually. The team tied for 18th out of 23 overall.

"We've been playing a lot better," Allen said. "We just have to finish off some rounds better and we're really close to putting together some good weeks. We need to do the things we need to do, keep it simple, and not get too far in front of ourselves."

The Mean Green will compete in two more tournaments before the Conference USA tournament. Marzilio said the team is trending in the right direction.

"We're really seeing improvement, especially at the beginning of tournaments," Marzilio said. "Several times we've been leading or beating some of the best teams in the country by the first or second rounds when they are literally the best players in the world right now."

Marzilio said the most important adjustment the team needs to make is staying mentally strong through the end of tournaments.

"We kind of end in the middle of the leaderboards, and those other teams keep on playing good and end up winning," Marzilio said. "We need to go into a mindset of 'we're going to win this,' and believe it. We came really close to winning [conference] my freshman year two years ago, so



Image source Mean Green Sports

we can definitely do that this year as well."

The C-USA championship will be held April 24-28 in Texarkana, Arkansas. The tournament features three rounds of stroke play, with the semifinals and finals being match play in the final two days. Stracke said he feels good about the team's chances of winning the conference tournament due to its format and preparation.

"It's really open this year — the way we do things, we play match play and that opens up a lot of doors," Stracke said. "You just have to finish in the top four of stroke play, and then it's anybody's ballgame from there in match play."

North Texas will compete in the Aggie Invitational in Bryan, Texas on April 8 and 9, and the El Macero Classic in Davis, California on April

14-16 before competing for the C-USA title. The team's goal will remain on finishing strong and working on mentality, Stracke said.

"What we've been focusing on the last month and a half is getting mentally stronger, getting tougher, and finishing the tournaments," Stracke said. "If we do those things, great things are gonna happen for us these last three tournaments."

ATHLETE of the WEEK

Taylor Perry



Image source Mean Green Sports

Senior guard Taylor Perry announced his departure from North Texas on April 3. He plans to enter his name into the 2023 NBA draft while retaining one year of eligibility and entering the transfer portal. Perry led the Mean Green this season with an average of 17.3 points per game and was named the Conference USA Player of the Year, as well as the National Invitation Tournament Most Outstanding Player.

AT A GLANCE

McCasland departs as head coach for men's basketball

Men's basketball head coach Grant McCasland departed North Texas to accept a six-year, \$18 million deal at Texas Tech University. The university named Ross Hodge the new head coach on April 2. Hodge has been the associate head coach under McCasland for the last six seasons. McCasland arrived at North Texas in 2017, and the Mean Green won the College Basketball Invitational in his debut season. The team also won three consecutive Conference USA titles from 2018-2021. McCasland led North Texas to its first NCAA tournament win in 2021, and its first National Invitation Tournament championship on March 30. Additionally, two standout players — junior forward Abou Ousmane and senior guard Tylor Perry — have entered the transfer portal and will not return to North Texas next season.



Credit Matt Iaia

Softball looks to improve after 2-7 run in last 2 weeks

By Reed Smith
@Reed_Smith25

Nearly halfway through its regular season Conference USA slate, softball has endured a slump, losing seven of its last nine games.

North Texas (21-19, 6-6 C-USA) sits even in C-USA play at 6-6, and is sixth in the conference standings. The Mean Green was projected to finish first in the C-USA preseason polls. After losing six straight, North Texas has won two of its last three games as it tries to recapture momentum.

"It's not there yet, but we're getting there," head coach Rodney DeLong said. "We've got to put things together, we have to have a little more success."

The Mean Green's losing streak from March 22-29 was the longest of DeLong's tenure at the university. Previously, a DeLong-led North Texas team only lost three straight. Junior catcher Kalei Christensen said the adversity the team is facing is indicative of the schedule being sufficiently "tough."

"I think we're in good shape for what's about to come," Christensen said. "At the end of the day, when you get on a hot streak, we're wanting to stay on a hot streak — now that we have our confidence, we will slowly get into it."

Errors have been a key issue for the Mean Green this season. Through 40 games, the team has 44 errors, which ranks second to last in C-USA. Under DeLong, North Texas has never finished in the bottom three of fielding in the conference.

Senior left-handed pitcher Ashley Peters has seen the effect of errors. Peters has appeared 19 times for the Mean Green this season and ranks second in earned-run average with an 1.87 mark. Of the 30 runs she has surrendered, only 20 have been earned.

Peters' co-ace from 2022, sophomore right-handed pitcher Skylar Savage, is 6-3 on the season with a 4.02 ERA. Savage gave up eight earned runs

during the Western Kentucky series — she did not appear in the following four games.

Savage picked up a win on Tuesday against Tarleton State University. She pitched six innings and surrendered two runs in her sixth victory of the season.

"I've just been working on my confidence," Savage said. "I'm not lacking anything but confidence lately, so I've just been working for outs, working for my team."

Christensen and junior first baseman Kailey Gamble lead the team in batting. Gamble's 13 home runs are tied for seventh most in Division I. The pair — who often bat next to each other in the lineup — have a combined 60 runs batted in 2023.

The next closest to Gamble and Christensen in team offensive production is sophomore shortstop Cierra Simon, who has a .307 batting average with 19 RBIs. No other batters on the team are above the .300 batting average mark as North Texas bats .260 collectively. During the team's six-game losing streak, they scored eight runs. Christensen said the

team is starting to come around offensively.

"We're piecing it together and a lot of us look competent in the box," Christensen said. "If that continues to keep rolling, we're going to be in good shape."

With a trip to El Paso, Texas this weekend, the Mean Green will try to capitalize on the midweek win they picked up against Tarleton State. The University of Texas-El Paso is third in C-USA in batting average at a .290 mark.

"It's going to be tough, always tough on the road," DeLong said. "[Texas-El Paso] swings the bat really well — the ball flies down there. We're going to have to figure it out offensively, because we're going to have to hit with them."

As North Texas looks to improve from recent play, Savage said the team is trying to keep spirits high.

"We're just trying not to stay down on ourselves," Savage said. "We know we're all kind of struggling a little bit — we just try to focus on the positives and hype each other up."



Ashley Peters pitches a ball toward Wichita State on Feb. 25, 2023. Maria Crane

Comic book movie franchises need to change their writing style to regain box office success

By Joaquin Fernandez
@FernaJustoo

This past year has been particularly hard for comic book films. With big releases like “Ant-Man and the Wasp: Quantumania” and “Shazam: Fury of the Gods” failing at the box office and receiving low ratings from movie critics, chances are we’re seeing the downfall of the comic book film genre in real-time.

If comic book film franchises like Marvel and DC Comics want to win back audiences and restore their previous successes, they need to diversify their films and go outside the box.

As highly anticipated as many Marvel and DC Comics films usually are, their box office results show that audiences don’t harbor the same interest they did in the past. “Shazam: Fury of the Gods” pulled in a revenue of \$102.4 million, making it the lowest-grossing film out of the DC Extended Universe after “Wonder Woman 1984” and “The Suicide Squad.” However, it wasn’t the only comic book movie to fail at the box office. “Ant-Man and the Wasp: Quantumania” also had the lowest revenue of its series, according to DigitalSpy.com.

Meanwhile, franchises like “Scream,” “Creed” and “John Wick” all managed to have very successful box-office openings due to strong word of mouth. Audiences and critics seem to favor other genres like horror and action over the typical superhero film.

Comic book franchises should take inspiration

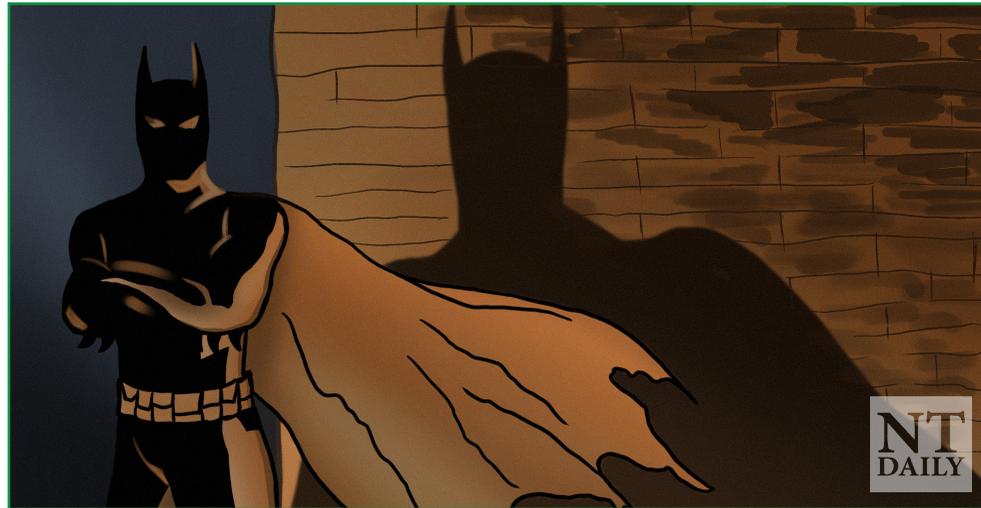


Illustration by Erika Sevilla

from the success of unique projects like “The Boys,” “Invincible,” “The Batman” or “Peacemaker.” These all hit well with audiences and critics because they strayed from the classic comic book movie. Well-established comic book franchises bombarded viewers with films built around the same format, where a hero always beats the bad guy with little to no consequences, all while cracking a couple of lighthearted jokes. Viewers are tired and want variety.

Not every movie or TV show must be rated R or overly dark, but there must be some balance in order to keep things fresh. Audiences and critics have had enough of the typical superhero film at this point, so the

only way to save the genre is to try new things.

There’s an increasing trend of lower box office numbers for each new Marvel release due to oversaturation. The Marvel Cinematic Universe released 18 films and TV shows between 2021 and 2022. The latest MCU films, with the exception of “Black Panther: Wakanda Forever,” produced a gradual decrease in revenue.

The latest MCU release, “Ant-Man and the Wasp: Quantumania”’s total box office revenue within its six-week release window was \$470 million, according to Varsity.com. This falls far below previous MCU entries’ revenues like “Doctor Strange in the Multiverse of

Madness” with \$955 million and “Thor: Love and Thunder” with \$760 million, which were both released less than a year before “Quantumania” debuted.

There’s no question that comic book moviegoers are experiencing fatigue and a dying interest with each new release. What used to be a special event has now turned into a simple routine. Marvel and DC Comics must stop pumping out so many films in a short time span and give audiences room to breathe.

Another reason for the comic book franchises’ box office failures is poor critic reviews from respected sites like Rotten Tomatoes. “Shazam”’s Tomatometer is 51 percent based on 219 reviews and “Ant-Man”’s score is 47 percent with 380 reviews. Casual moviegoers see low ratings and decide to skip the theater altogether in order to stream a month or so later. The subsequent high ratings for film franchises like “John Wick,” “Scream” and “Creed” convince viewers to buy a ticket and help word of mouth spread.

Both Marvel and DC Comics have to recognize audience and critic preferences with how their most recent entries have turned out. There’s no longer a guaranteed box office win for cookie-cutter superhero films with mediocre visual effects and plots.

The best course of action is for Marvel and DC Comics to cut down their film output to a few projects a year, so they have time to polish them before release. If comic book film franchises can offer viewers better VFX, acting and writing, audiences will fall in love with superhero films all over again.

Mean girl culture is fueled by societal pressures for female competition

By Gianna Ortner-Findlay
@Gianna_NTDailyMedia

While there is nothing wrong with a little bit of friendly competition, women are often encouraged or expected to compete for a man’s attention due to outdated female stereotypes.

The most recent conflict between “Only Murders in The Building” star Selena Gomez and model and socialite Hailey Bieber is an excellent example of misogyny-based societal pressures pitting women against each other.

When Gomez and “Baby” singer Justin Bieber broke up for the last time in March 2018, fans were devastated. Two months later, Bieber proposed to Hailey Bieber, formerly Hailey Baldwin, sparking a fan-based and star-fueled feud between the two women that peaked in March 2023.

Fans believed that Hailey Bieber stole her husband from Gomez, despite the two-month gap between the Biebers’ engagement and Gomez’s relationship with Justin Bieber. The controversy, which has recently led to Gomez defending Hailey Bieber from death threats, stems from the belief that women must fight for the affection of men.

Most women have to deal with a wide variety of stereotypes that set expectations for what their behaviors, personalities, occupations and appearances should be like. Modern society reflects these expectations on how women are depicted in media. As a result, women often suffer from symbolic annihilation, which is the underrepresentation of women with a narrow range of social roles, according

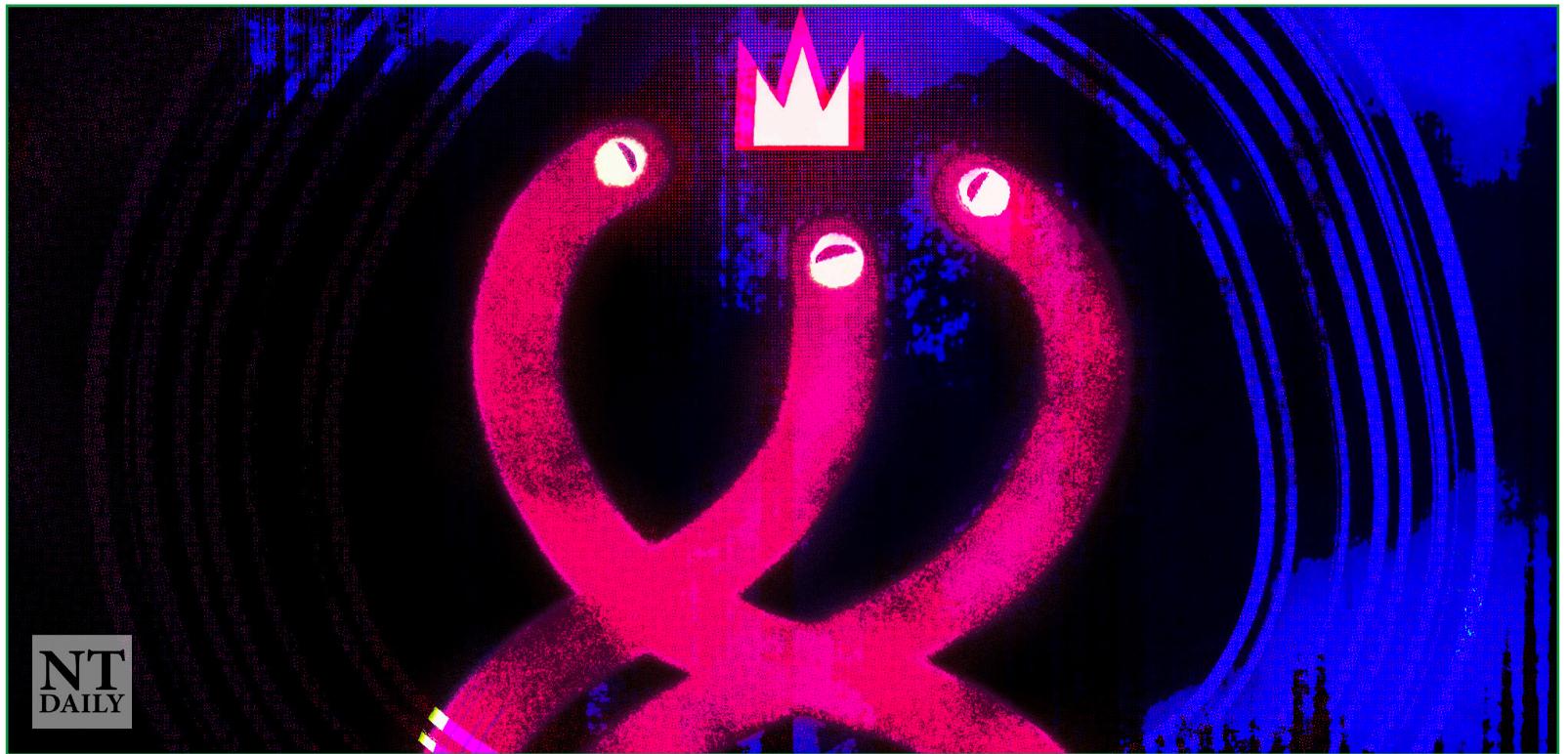


Illustration by Emaan Noorzaie

to Revise Sociology.

The over-representation of a single type of woman perpetuates a social standard for how women should act, leading women to believe that to be desirable, they have to meet the expectations set by the media.

Like Hailey Bieber and Gomez, the average woman is constantly pitted against other women. The constant competition to set oneself apart from other women to stand out and be considered desirable is rooted in the concept that a woman’s worth depends on a man’s approval. This outdated idea has negatively impacted how women and girls

view each other for hundreds of years.

Most, if not all, women have dealt with or been a mean girl, either in high school or college. This archetype fiercely competes and bullies to remain on top. This phenomenon is better known as mean girl syndrome or relational aggression, according to an article from the University at Buffalo. Girls who exhibit hostile attribution bias, which is the tendency to interpret others’ behavior as having an aggressive intent, are also more likely to engage in relational aggression with their female peers.

If women perceive a threat, they will

use relational aggression to implement an intrasexual competition strategy that focuses on making other women look bad as a form of competition, according to a study done by Tracy Vaillancourt, a psychology professor at the University of Ottawa.

While being competitive can lead to success and betterment of both parties, the type of competition perpetrated by mean girls can lead to bullying. That behavior often comes from a lack of self-esteem and a desire to bring others down.

Mean girl syndrome originates from the need for acceptance rather than a desire to

improve themselves through competition. That being said, this culture of competition is not only unnecessarily vicious but also completely unproductive and brings women down instead of building them up.

In the end, women are the only ones that can break the stigma against mean girl culture, and promote a culture of positivity in which women are no longer feeling the strain of perfectionism from society. Women need to support women, and in the words of singer and songwriter Doja Cat, from her song “Woman,” “I’m a be there for you ‘cause you on my team, girl.”

Incoming college coaches should not expect students to enter the transfer portal

By Jack Moraglia
@JackMoraglia

Incoming St. John's University head coach Rick Pitino wasted no time sharing his strategy for improving the men's basketball team: force current players out and bring in new talent.

College coaches who join new teams should remember that student-athletes are students first, and they chose their colleges for specific reasons. Forcing players to transfer is not a good way to lead the team.

Pitino's resume speaks for itself. He has a .740 career record from his tenures as head coach of Boston University, Providence College, the University of Kentucky, the University of Louisville and Iona University. He is a professional basketball coach working at the college level, who also has two NBA stints with the New York Knicks and Boston Celtics.

However, Pitino's successful resume and determination to win should not permit him to disregard the St. John's players in the midst of their studies at their school of choice.

In the first week since Pitino made his comments, at least three students entered the transfer portal.

There is little one can do to change the way college sports have trended toward becoming more professional

organizations. Changes to the NCAA transfer portal rules in 2021 removed the redshirt requirement that required transfer athletes to sit out one year at their new school before being eligible to compete. Another 2021 rule change allowed student-athletes to monetize their name, image and likeness.

These rule changes make sense. Why force athletes to sit out a year as healthy scratches? Why prohibit students from making money off their NIL as any other college student can?

The number of Division I student-athletes who entered the transfer portal increased from 10,129 in the 2020-2021 academic year to 11,902 the next year.

However, the increased ease of transferring doesn't mean coaches should openly encourage their students to transfer. People seem to forget that student-athletes make decisions about their education for multiple reasons, just like any other student.

College sports may feel professional, but only two percent of NCAA athletes continue their sport at a professional level. Treating student-athletes like professional sports players misjudges their situation.

Coach Pitino's press conference comments echo Deion Sanders' when he became head football coach for the University of Colorado Boulder in December.

"We got a few positions already

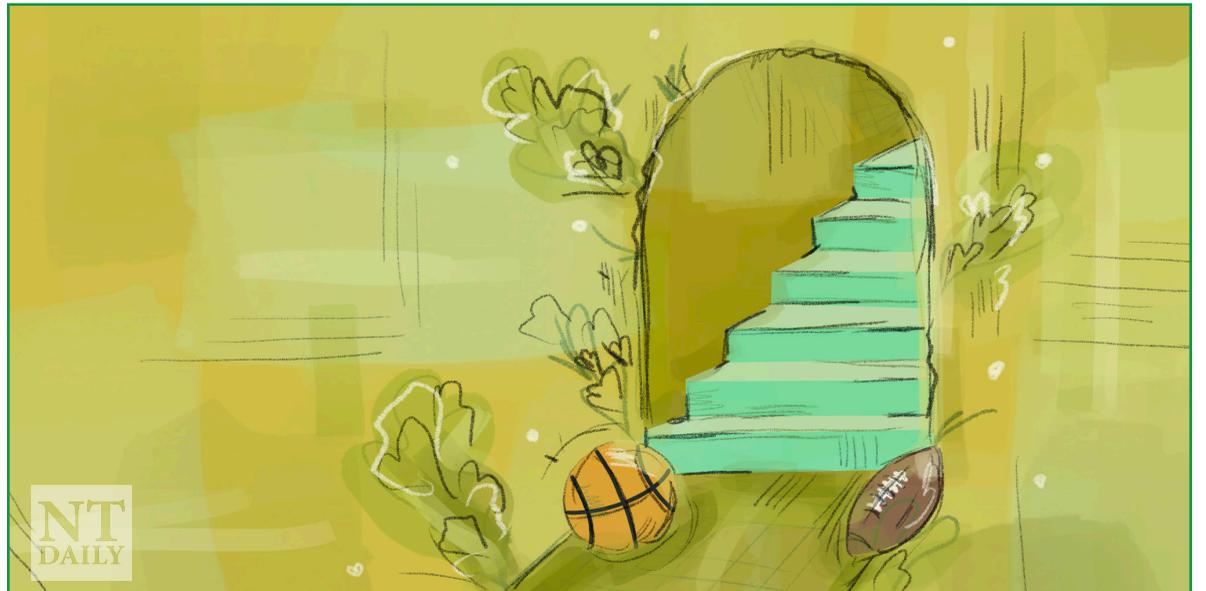


Illustration by Isabella Alva

taken care of, because I'm bringing my luggage with me," Sanders said in his first address to the team. "So, I want y'all to get ready to go ahead and jump in that portal [...] because the more of you jump in, the more room you make. Because we bringing kids."

Not the best way to make a first impression.

One part of Sanders' "luggage" is his son, Shedeur Sanders, who has already transferred to Colorado from Jackson State and is expected to be the Buffs' starting quarterback.

Certainly, there are reasons these

new coaches want a roster overhaul. In the 2022 season, the University of Colorado went 1-11. St. John's basketball had a better record at 18-15 overall but was just 7-13 within their conference. At 70 years old, Pitino's urgency to win makes sense.

A defining characteristic of college athletics is that rosters are automatically reset after a few years. Players graduate, high school recruits come up. Coaches will have a chance to build a roster of their choice through high school recruits, but not right away. By succeeding with the talent on the roster, they earn the

right to recruit their preferred players.

Imagine you have grown up your entire life with the goal of playing basketball at your dream school. It is close enough to home and has a program you like. The coaching staff there recruits you, and you are proud to don your jersey. You make friends your freshman year.

Then, a new coaching staff comes in and tells you to transfer to another school.

The NCAA is working toward professionalizing its sports product. In its wake, college coaches are forgetting something about their players: their humanity.

COVID-19 killed college club recruitment and retention

By Ethan Gillis
Staff Writer

In our post-quarantine world, clubs are far less important to the college experience. What was once a rite of passage for college students – joining a club or organization, maybe even founding your own – is now seen as a waste of time.

During the pandemic, most people realized their time is worth more than they had previously thought, which effectively killed college club retention and recruitment. COVID-19 set into motion events that forever impacted the workplace. Working from home allowed people more time to be around those they love instead of spending time commuting and partaking in office rituals like chats about nothing around the water cooler.

The pandemic also saw the dawn of The Great Resignation – the mass resignation of people from jobs due to increased cost of living or hostile work environments.

College organizations weren't immune to the cultural shift either. Students, too, realized their time is expensive and important. Why sit in a meeting every Tuesday in BLB 180 from 7 to 8 when they could be working? Hanging out with friends? Doing literally anything else?

The key here is the altruistic nature of college organizations – for them to function, students must volunteer their time. COVID taught us that our time is not something to be taken for granted. Now, we are far more intentional with how we use it.

College organizations give students that feeling of being plugged into campus and connected to others. However, in the post-pandemic world, students don't have to leave their room to be involved. Services like Zoom make it possible to host meetings from anywhere. Another software that blew up over the pandemic is Canva. Canva allows anyone to be a graphic designer, so when it comes to advertising your club, you don't need to walk around campus – all you need is an Instagram and a Canva account.

Creating connections on campus no longer relies on in-person meetings and word-of-mouth recruitment. These days, you can find a club on Instagram, go to its meeting on Zoom, run for office and be elected via Google Forms. You can

belong to a community of people you have never met.

COVID also forced us to live in a world where connections were few and far between. The pandemic forced many younger college students to spend their later teen years speaking only to their immediate family in person. Maybe a delivery person here, a neighbor there, but the last few years have been lonely. We survived two years without being part of something bigger than ourselves, so why start now?

Despite all this, one kind of organization continues to thrive in the world post-COVID – identity-based groups. Groups like the Black Student Union, the Latinx-Hispanic Student Union and the Pride Alliance still see high numbers

of engagement. They host huge events and give hundreds of students a family on campus.

This brings us to the third and final epiphany we had during COVID. Our identity matters. Who we are matters.

Summer 2020 will be remembered as a time of civil unrest in the nation. The killings of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor sparked massive outrage, and even during a lockdown, people flooded the streets across the nation to protest.

Anti-Asian hate was up during COVID, too. Disenfranchised communities were under attack, and as Generation Z entered our formative college years amongst this disarray, we became vocal.

We are loudly opposed to that which we disagree with. We don't sit idly by when injustice occurs. We aren't bystanders – we stand up. Groups intended for students who are Black, Latinx, Asian, Native American, LGBTQ+ and more allow students to be a part of something bigger than themselves and stand up for what they believe in.

With the looming threat of the Texas state government outlawing diversity, equity and inclusion efforts on campus, the future of college organizations remains unknown. One thing is certain, though – the world of 2019, which we look at through rose-tinted glasses and blissful nostalgia, is no more.

That doesn't have to be a bad thing though. Campus isn't worse, just different. Hopefully, one day, like a phoenix from the ashes, we will see college clubs return as a cornerstone of the undergrad experience.



Illustration by Allie Garza