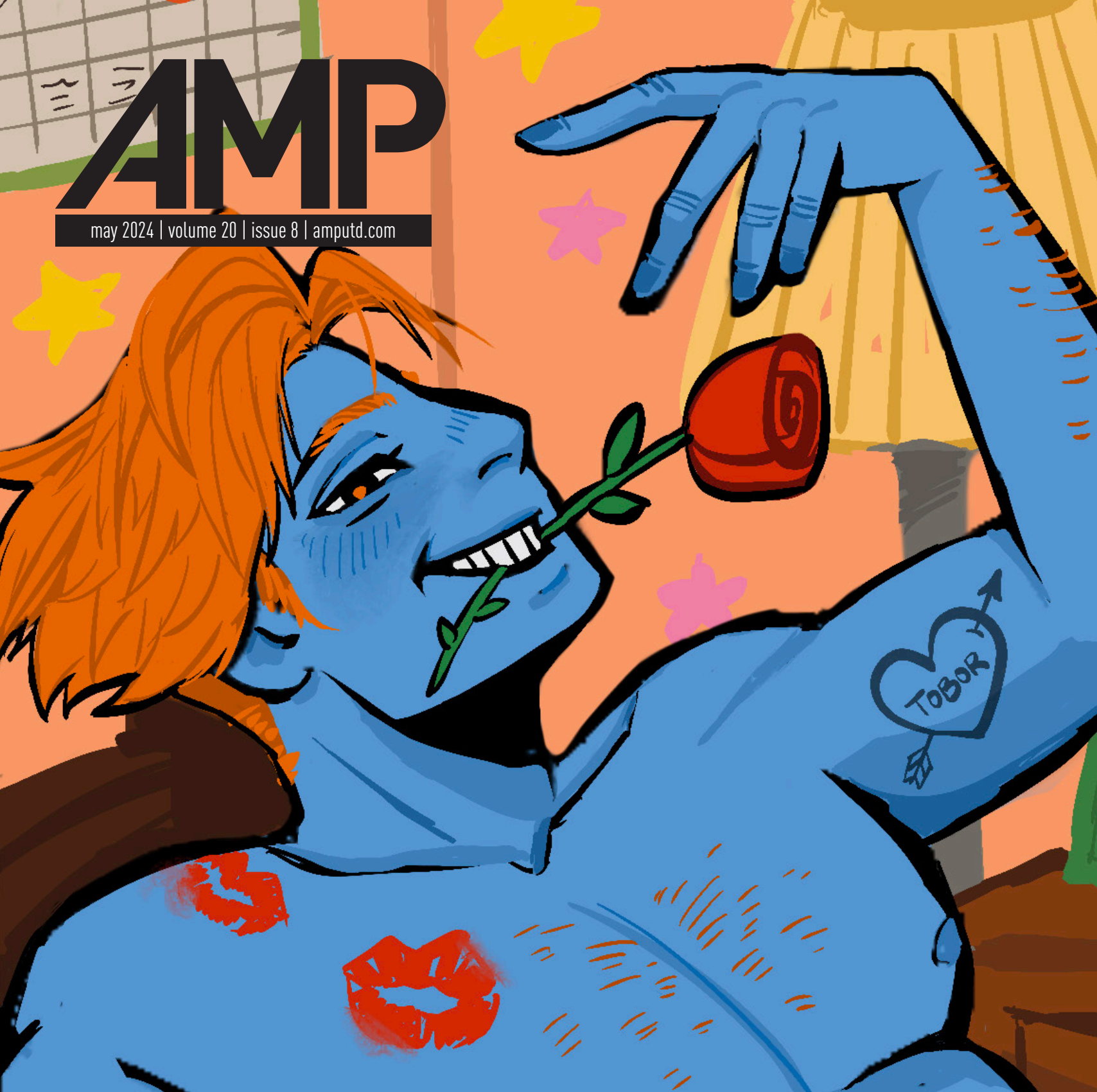


AMP

may 2024 | volume 20 | issue 8 | amputd.com



In Support of Keeping Comets Horny

Love the Craft, **HATE** Lovecraft

Storytelling **SUFFERS** from sequels

Paul the **MISOGYNIST??**

AMP

Editors' Desk

Sayonara Seniors

Gavin: It's crazy that I'm actually leaving AMP after letting this silly little magazine take over my life for two years. What am I supposed to do now, not think about sexy Temoc — uh, I mean, not think about magazine production every day? But seriously, working at AMP has been one of the best decisions of my life. I have no idea how I tripped and fell into the Editor-in-Chief position, but I'm so grateful. I feel like AMP and I have grown so much from when I first joined to now, and that's something to be proud of. Not just me, though; I hope all our Execs are proud, because this has been a group effort through and through. (I know you're reading this, and I love you guys!) And to our readers: thank you, Comets, for always supporting us. I hope you're as excited as I am for what our future Exec team has in store!

Agnes: It's really weird to think about leaving AMP. I can confidently say that working as the Web Editor and writing articles have been some of the best parts of my time here in college! I remember pitching my first article and being so surprised that someone wanted to publish a silly satire about how terrible stan Twitter is, and was just so happy to have found a place that lets people write about whatever interests them (something I certainly took full advantage of). I'm so grateful for the experiences that I've gained and the memories I've made while working here. I want to say thank you so much for supporting us, and I can't wait to see just how much AMP and our future exec team will grow in the future. I urge you to go ahead and pitch whatever article idea that pops into your head, because it just might be one of the best decisions you make!

Victoria: I can't believe it, AMP is ending forever... for me. I distinctly remember struggling to use InDesign for the first time and having the rest of my team surround my computer to walk me through it. It makes me wonder what my college experience would be if I never saw the Instagram post with 17 likes calling for new hires. Some of my best memories are from my time here — I might throw up a little bit with how much I am going to miss working alongside my amazing team. All the late night weekends spent with the funniest crew of people and learning some quirky fun facts to share with my other friends. I can already tell I am going to be the annoying old lady who only talks about her college student media memories.

Thank you all for bearing witness to all my growth and mistakes. Rest assured, the future of AMP is bright!

Gavin Arriaga - Editor-in-Chief

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Victoria Bruno - Art Director

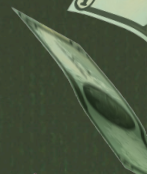
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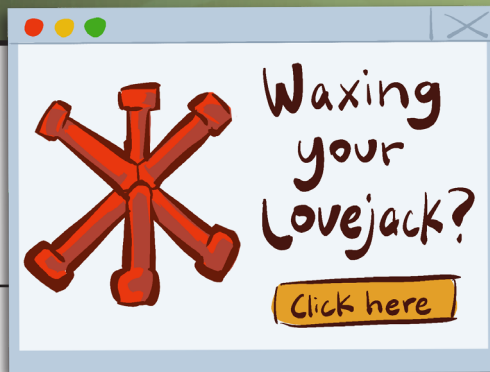
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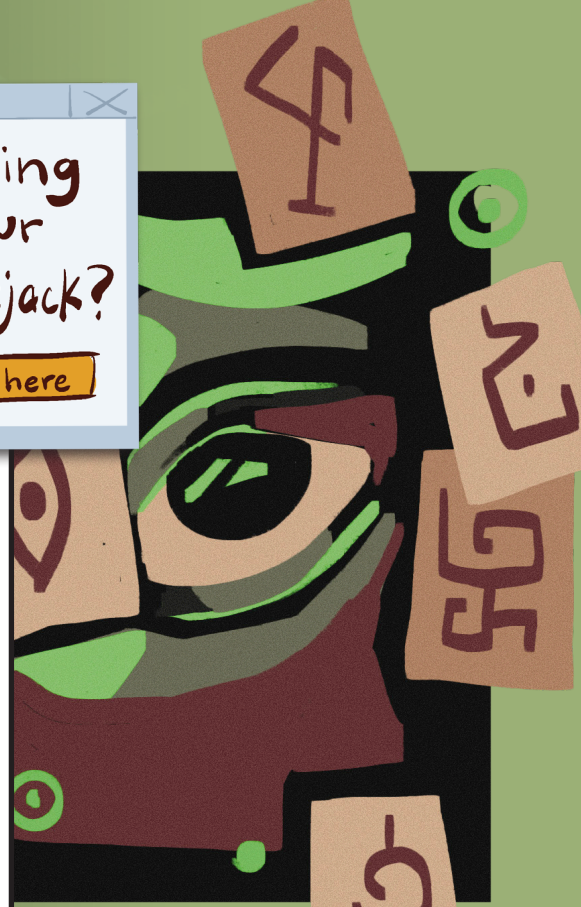
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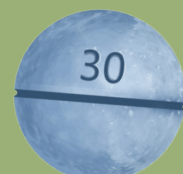
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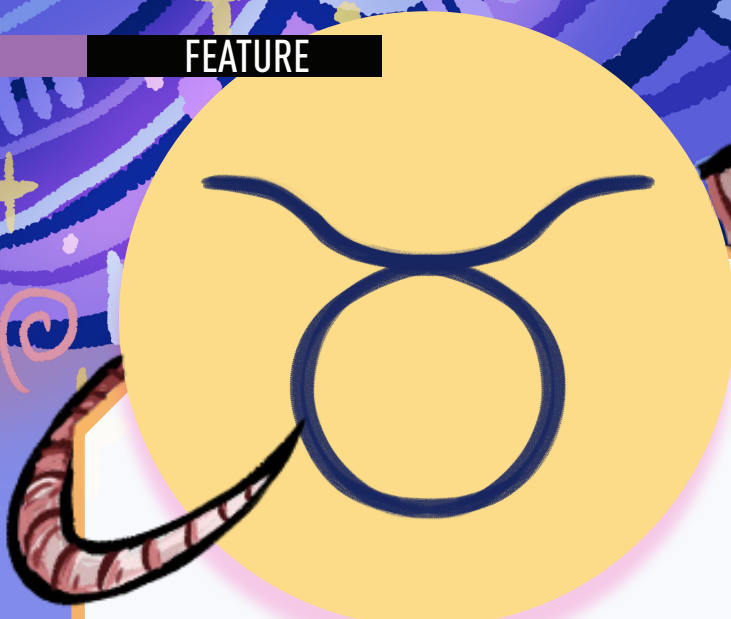
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Have an opinion?

Think you're funny?

Write for AMP! Contact us at ampatutd@gmail.com and follow us on social media @AMPatUTD for more information.



AMP HOROSCOPE



Taurus

The stars don't think you deserve anything good this month, but they're down for a deal. Make them an offer they can't resist.

Gemini

You will be cast into endless sleep. I hate you, because I want to be you.

Cancer

You're going to be overwhelmed this month. Now, I told one of you I'd give you a good fortune this month, so I'm gonna hope you're overwhelmed by sunshine and puppies and rainbows and not by the inexorable wheel of capitalist entropy.

Leo

The stars are sorry they called you a loser last month, but I'm not. Just be glad one of us gives a shit.

Virgo

You know that one movie where everyone's like, "Hey, this dog is great! This dog understands the concept of a well AND its inherent dangers to the children of our rural farming community! I love this guy!" and then the dog fucking dies, leaving you, me, and the rest of the audience feeling like we got hit by a sack of wet bricks in a Taco Cabana? That's how you'll feel all month.

Libra

All I'm getting is "insatiable bloodlust." I'm looking through my cauldron of mystic farsight soup for literally anything else, and there's like. Nothing. So good luck with that, I suppose.

Scorpio

Be the megalomaniac you wanna see in the world.

Sagittarius

If you don't get laid this month, the constellation of Sagittarius wants you to know they're personally disappointed in you specifically. If you're ace, you're fine, but you're on thin ice.

Capricorn

You will be incredibly depressed this month. So, the usual.

Aquarius

Either your situationship will become a relationship, or your relationship will become a situationship. I can't really tell which is worse, but keep me posted.

Pisces

Have you made any good life choices, ever? Survey says: not likely.

Aries

You win!!!!111!

SASHA WUU

sophomore | atec

Aries sun, Aquarius moon, Cancer rising

Food for Thought: Asian Cuisine

Gogogiri

I'm a huge fan of onigiri! I used to buy my onigiri from Mitsuwa Marketplace, but they started selling a different brand, which I've found to be a disappointment. When looking for an alternative to this savory, triangular rice ball, I discovered Gogogiri on Instagram.



The Dallas location is only 10 minutes away from campus. Not only was it easy to park, but the atmosphere was very relaxing and quiet. There were TV's set up around the restaurant, including at the booths. I watched some "Amazing World of Gumball" while waiting for my food.



The wait didn't take long! There were lots of smells in the air while things were being cooked, which really stirred up my appetite. I ordered a tuna onigiri and a fried shrimp onigiri. Both complimented each other very well, as they both offered something different. The tuna onigiri was very salty and the mayonnaise made it super creamy. Meanwhile, the fried shrimp onigiri was super crunchy and had a hint of spice. Although I loved both, tuna onigiri is always my favorite no matter the location.

Gogogiri is separate from campus and has booths to divide yourself from other people, and it also has free WiFi, which makes it a good place to work. Plus, if you're not in the mood for onigiri, Gogogiri also sells bao, burgers, and Hawaiian BBQ. Gogogiri has some of the best onigiri I've ever tried, so I'll definitely be frequenting here!

Food: 10/10 Atmosphere: 10/10 Price: 7/10

Uncle Zhou

Uncle Zhou is a Chinese restaurant in Plano, and as most Chinese restaurants do, Uncle Zhou had a lot of Chinese decorations including some lanterns and Chinese art hanging on the walls.



The restaurant had a wide range of options to choose from and I struggled to decide on what to order. Eventually, I ordered the shrimp fried rice and the roast braised chicken. I also brought a friend to come try the food with me, and they ordered the beef noodle soup. While we talked and waited for our food, the waiters were attentive with us and always ensured that we were getting the service we needed, asking if our waters needed to be refilled and if we were happy with our food.



First came my shrimp fried rice and the beef noodle soup. Although I love fried rice, there wasn't anything about this dish that really made it memorable, as it was mostly the same as many other Chinese restaurants I've had fried rice at. However, I really liked the soft yet squishy texture of the shrimp. Then

I had the chicken which, although I finished it, I wasn't a huge fan of. It had your standard chicken taste, but it was also cold for the most part. But since Uncle Zhou has many other menu options to choose from, it might entice me to come back here again with family so I can try more of their food.

Food: 7/10 Atmosphere: 9/10 Price: 6/10



VICTORIA STEINER

junior | psychology / child learning and development

Professional eater. Here's how: get the food, eat the food!

DJ SHOWCASE: JAKE MATZ

"I've had a lot of really sweet listeners, and one weird listener..."

Welcome to the "Wabi-Sabi Sleepy Cast," where DJ Jake Matz takes you on a journey intent on lulling you to sound sleep and sweet dreams – in the best way possible, of course. Join him from 9 PM to midnight on Friday nights to have your dreams interpreted, engage in conversation, and listen to smooth, relaxing soundscapes. Despite Jake's technical background as a sophomore Computer Science major here at UTD, he's passionate about music, radio, and everything in between. When asked about the inspiration behind his first full-fledged show, Jake explained that he used podcasts to battle insomnia in high school. He hoped his show "could be something like that, where I can just yap and people will listen, get tired, and go to bed." The "Wabi-Sabi Sleepy Cast" thrives on listener interaction, and features a Google Form on the show's home page to submit stories, dreams, and more.

"Wabi-Sabi Sleepy Cast" is Jake's first full-fledged show, and has a distinct soundscape of jazz, citypop, and slower, chill songs. This is a sharp turn from the part-time trainee

show Jake did before this one, named "Epinephrine and Horse Tranquilizers," which aptly featured metal and other stimulating music. "I named it [that] because they got you amped and chilled you out," he laughed. Aside from DJing, Jake is also involved in volunteer work at Radio and is often found at events around campus such as Comet Con, the UTD Health Fair, and most recently, the Eclipse Festival, where he played music to a variety of listeners from all across the Dallas area. As for future events, Jake wants listeners to stay tuned for DJ Fest, where anyone can go through training and host their own 30 minute DJ set.

Jake's idea for the show comes from his experience with music, as does his love for DJing and radio itself. His interest in music began as a child growing up in the Austin area, where freedom of expression and love for UT Austin's college radio station was ingrained into the culture. One of Jake's biggest musical influences growing up was an iPod that his uncle gave to him as a child. Finding himself unable to work the iPod, however, Jake

DJ Deets

Album on Repeat: The Dirt of Luck by Helium

Vibe of Your Show: Chill

Favorite Song Played Recently on Your Show: If You Hurt Me by Small Factory

Favorite Character: Marvin the Martian or Lumpy Space Princess

Go-to Coffeeshop Order: Latte or Chai

Soulmate Quiz Results: 50% Tobor, 50% Ratford

Temoc vs Enarc: Enarc

Best Pizza Topping: Basil, mozzarella, and tomatoes. A true Margherita pizza

Zodiac Sign: Sun, moon, and rising Leo

Favorite obscure animal: Macropinna microstoma, better known as the barreleye fish

resorted to listening to the pre-installed albums that came with it, which included Green Day and The Beatles. In addition to this, Jake reminisced about Pandora, which was an online radio station that he would use the school chromebooks to listen to. "I hate Pandora, there are much better options now," he laughed.

As a high school student, he was a volunteer at 91.7 FM KOOP Radio for six months and worked to help others with their shows. KOOP was a special experience for Jake as both a volunteer and a listener, as it was a place where he could tune in and listen to everyday people speak. "With a podcast, [it's] people that were already famous... but [with radio,] you're just tuning in to listen to some person that's going to talk about their day... and that's really special," Jake reminisced. "That makes me appreciate people like us."

Along with a love for radio, Jake also appreciates many different kinds of music. As a self-proclaimed "sponge," he loves listening to everything. "I try to pick up artists and musicians I get to interview or talk to, and I tend to like smaller artists," Jake explained. Two of his favorite artists, TANUKICHAN and Julie, both recommended a band called Bar Italia, who Jake insisted he wouldn't have heard about on his own. "That was a really good privilege," he said, "because I feel like people that are musicians usually know good music." International music is another one of Jake's passions, and he reserved an hour of his show last semester to playing Japanese music and honoring it with interesting tidbits about the songs.

As for RadioUTD itself, nothing is more special to Jake than the people he's met there: "I think that a big thing that got me into Radio was just the community, because I love everyone in Radio." One of these people is Zahra,

who was his mentor when he was a trainee, and who Jake quotes as his favorite person at RadioUTD. "[Zahra] has a lot of trainees, but is special to me," he said. But of course, one cannot mention Jake's love for RadioUTD without mentioning the love he has for his listeners. "I've had a lot of really sweet listeners, and one weird listener who sent us an anonymous comment last semester that was like, 'My family's listening and we love you, we hope you can be part of our family soon'," Jake laughed, "but I'm trying to interpret it as something sweet. Shoutout to whoever said that." This show is a testament to DJ Jake Matz's love for music, radio, people, and all the experiences he's had. As Jake said it best, "let's appreciate the little things before we go eepy, and listen to some music in between."



**Get into Your
Saltburn Summer Groove**

Finally, a good idea. I've had my eye on this one well endowed family for a while now. Life truly is beautiful.

SURF Some Sick Waves

Never thought someone would want to see me wet and wild.

Another school year has passed... luckily for me, time means nothing. I've lived through the black plague, and those summers were "dead af" as the kids say. That sucked, so I'm hoping y'all have some riveting ideas for me to try this summer.

Pickleball

How do you expect me, the 5 inch (girth) rat, to carry a paddle?



Get on the Ratchelor

You think I'm some hussy? That I need a TV show to help me find love? I can find true love whenever I want, it's just that my suitors can't handle my massive IQ.

Seduce UTD Interim Student Media Advisor Jonathan Stewart
Jstew should be begging me to seduce him, I'm literally such a catch.

RATFORD'S SabRAttical

Cry

My skincare would be in shambles. It's like you want me to be an ugly rat. Ugh, I can't deal with this right now... I'm gonna go eat an entire wheel of parmesan and get back to you.

Eat Cheese

Newsflash, buddy! Rats don't just eat cheese. It's honestly offensive how you keep commenting this expecting a reaction out of me. Well — you got it! Hope you're happy.

Get Sunburnt Yuhhh

Hahahahaha...
Cancer isn't a joke.

Cheese Tasting Tour

I'm sick of this stereotyping. You're done. You're canceled. You're never gonna work in the industry again.
Get the hell out.

Remarriage

Some of us need therapy before getting into a relationship. You wouldn't understand.



VICTORIA BRUNO

senior | marketing

Top contender of being the smartest person alive during the Paleolithic period.

The Eldritch Horror of Horrible Authors

What do we do when a thing we love turns out to have been authored by someone who sucks big time? We kill the author! Metaphorically. Nowadays, death of the author is a response to the trend of authors turning out to be The Worst™, a framework of thinking that lets people still consume the products of people they think are awful. The general idea is to treat the work as if it exists in a vacuum, ignoring the author completely.

If you've ever heard the phrase "Hatsune Miku created 'Minecraft,'" that's an example of death of the author. The original developer of "Minecraft" turned out to be a bigoted QAnon weirdo, but everyone still loves "Minecraft," so now no one acknowledges his contributions. Death of the author is useful for examining the impact of popular works without praising people who are objectively the worst, and it's also really tempting! It's tempting to be able to read and watch things we love without worrying about who they benefit.

Effective too – when was the last time anyone actually mentioned Notch while talking about "Minecraft?" It's also become more relevant as time passes. The moral standards of society improve, but the actions of authors before us remain the same. It's also become increasingly easy for anyone, including creators, to fall down the alt-right pipeline, transforming them into a disgrace to their still-loved creation.

At least, it's effective with exceptions. One big exception is horror media. Horror is based on the most accessible of human emotions: fear. Fear is a universal constant. It's theorized to be the first emotion to develop, and one of the only emotions shared by every organism that has a brain more complicated than a horseshoe crab's. Fear keeps us alive. That's why one of the most popular genres is horror: it speaks to a universal emotion. The driving force behind that emotion, however, is personal as hell. Sure, there are obvious fears – spiders, heights, a murderer running at you with a knife. But the real shit? The horror that stays with you? That horror is deeply, aggressively personal in a way that cannot be separated from its writer.

Look at H.P. Lovecraft. Maybe you've heard someone describe capitalism's inescapable power as 'Lovecraftian.'

Maybe you're a scholar who enjoys classic horror. Maybe you saw an iFunny meme in 2016 telling you to look up his cat's name. What you need to know is he was an incredibly bigoted pathetic loser. He grew up in the countryside with parents who were way too broke to be as classist as they were. He tried education but considered himself too sickly for math, which later gave him a fear of it. He was, in his own words, "prey to intense headaches, insomnia, and general nervous weakness which prevents [his] continuous application to any thing." Which – me too, but I still got into college. His family's destitution eventually forced him to live in a poorer part of New York City, exposing him to all of his least favorite things: immigrants, poor people, crowds, and air conditioning (yes, air conditioning).

These fears sometimes crop up in his writing in obnoxiously obvious ways. "Cold Air" is literally a story about a guy living in a broke, immigrant-filled apartment and the evils of air conditioning.

Lovecraft was also a notorious eugenicist, which is obvious in works like “The Dunwich Horror” where a poor albino woman gives birth to a pair of demonic twins, one of which grows larger than a barn and begins invisibly destroying a village, making Lovecraft one of the OG kaiju authors. “Call of Cthulhu” has a scene that lists out all the races of the (all non-white) devil-worshipping cultists found trying to sacrifice white women and children. Additionally, in the same book, several sailors are driven mad by the “non-Euclidean geometry” of the sunken city they’ve found. Too sickly for math, indeed.

Not all of his fears influenced his writing in such blatant ways, however. Lovecraft grew up in the countryside, and being forced from a family estate to a tiny apartment made him deeply agoraphobic — irrationally afraid of open spaces and large crowds — filling him with a sense of smallness. Entirely coincidentally, Lovecraft’s fiction is filled with vast, unknowable gods that dwarf all of humanity. In Lovecraft’s universe, the world is filled with concepts so massive and malicious they defy description. One of the most common devices he uses in his work is the idea that a given horror is too terrifying to describe, letting the reader’s imagination fill in the blanks. That’s what Lovecraft’s life was like — a paralyzing fear of the different and the unknown that caused him to fill in those gaps with rot, decay, and decline.

We can’t apply the death of the author framework to Lovecraft. Lovecraft’s myths couldn’t have been written by anyone but a pathetic, bigoted little worm, because those same fears are what he drew on to create the work. We cannot examine it in a vacuum, and the Cthulhu myths cannot be separated from Lovecraft’s life. It’s better when we examine it as an expression of how someone deeply riddled with fear saw the world. I’m not saying these works justify his bigotry. My point is that when we take on a death of the author viewpoint, the work becomes worse because it reduces a raw expression of how paranoia colors the world into an aesthetic.

Cthulhu is a lot scarier when he’s an avatar of Lovecraft’s fear of all the rotted, slimy things at the edges of his life rather than when he’s a big guy with a tentacle face.

Lovecraft isn’t the only horror author whose works are shaped by personal fears, and those personal fears aren’t always as objectively shitty as ‘the poor,’ or ‘science.’ Junji Ito’s “Tomie” was inspired by the death of his classmate, and Ito’s resulting questions of how a person could just disappear from the Earth, never to be seen again.



Horror as an art form is supposed to make you afraid as a form of catharsis. You consume it, you fear it, and then you rest easy. It is the job of a horror author to give you that fear, to make their fears relatable enough to give you that catharsis. Bigotry is a form of fear, so when bigoted horror authors attempt to translate their own fears into their media, bigotry shows up in it. With other genres, bigotry can fly under the radar, because fear isn’t the experience that the author wants to communicate to the reader. Horror is just a very special snowflake.

Should we leave these works behind? No. We can and should still read these works, especially because a lot of them are well-written and culturally relevant. But they’re important to read critically, especially when the author is sketchy as hell. Horror comes from personal fears, and when those fears are bigoted, it shows. By analyzing these biases and reading with them in mind, we can sometimes get a more interesting reading, and almost always a better one.

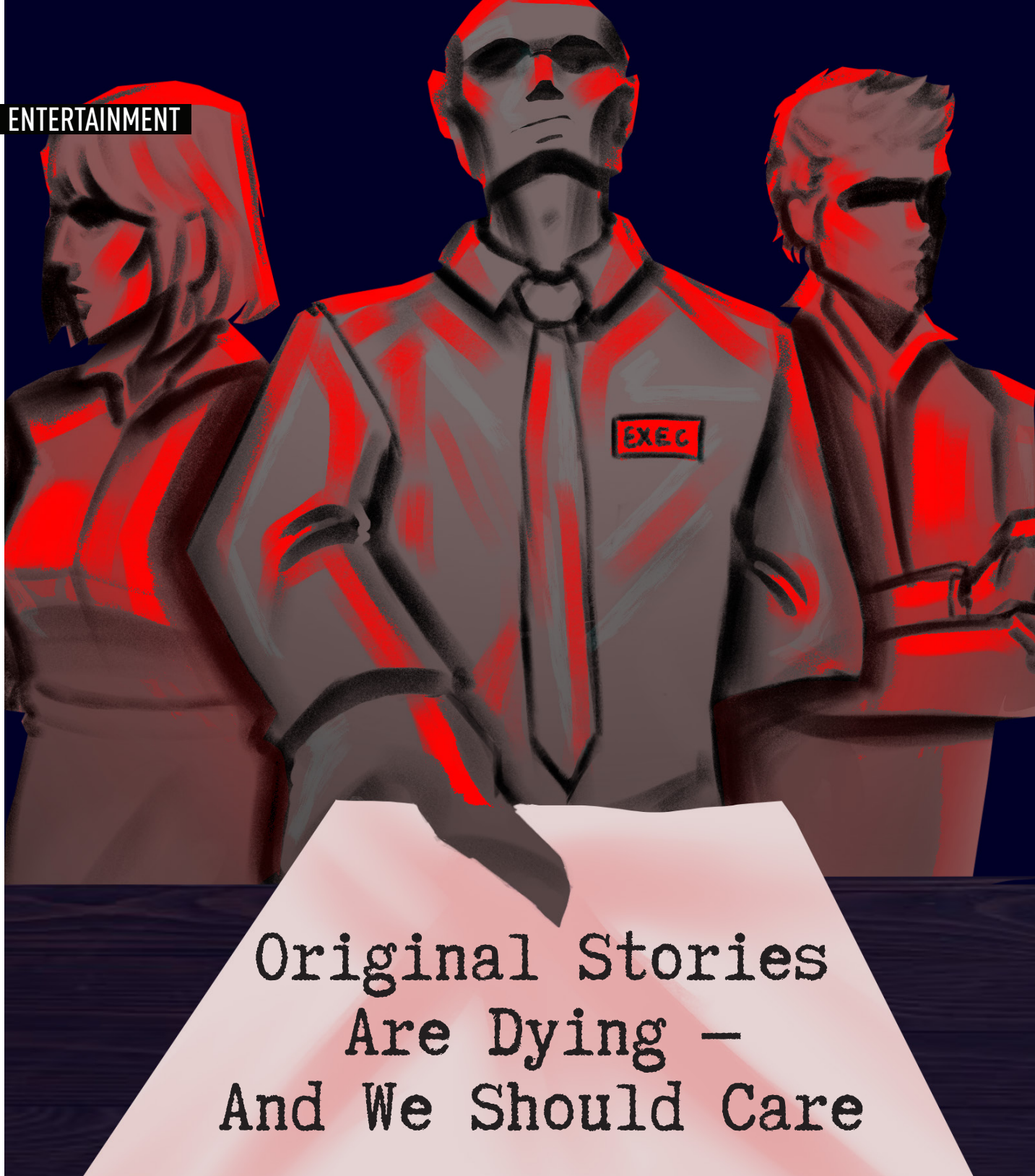


“I Have No Mouth And I Must Scream” by Harlan Ellison is rooted in his aggressive anti-war beliefs. These authors may not be problematic enough to necessitate taking the death of the author approach, but if we do, they lose value. Death of the author isn’t necessarily considered the best way to read media in any genre, but it’s even less useful when we read horror. The framework is designed to help reconcile bigotry with art, but in horror, the art is fear.



ELLIE MAGUIRE

sophomore | neuroscience
vibrating like a twenty-year-old chihuahua



Original Stories Are Dying – And We Should Care

When streaming usurped the spot that TV had carved out for itself in the entertainment industry, consumers rejoiced over an increase in variety, accessibility, and savings. Showrunners didn't have to wrestle with unrealistic demands from TV networks, and viewers could watch shows whenever they wanted for an affordable price. In addition to this, we also saw a wave of new, original stories that found their home on these platforms. It seems like a win-win scenario for both parties, until you consider that TV networks and entertainment corporations still own many of these streaming services. Their influence may not be as apparent as it used to be, but they still have the final say when it comes to big decisions like mergers,

policy changes, and marketing. They can also steer these services in whichever direction they want, i.e., deciding which stories get greenlit and continually invested in, and which ones get dropped or erased off the face of the earth. I'm looking at you, Warner Bros... I won't forget, and I certainly won't forgive what happened to "Coyote vs. Acme."

My personal beef with Warner Bros. aside, you may have a specific streaming service in mind when I say these things, or even several. The point is that despite our initial excitement over this new convenience, we're seeing some very repetitive patterns in what's being made and marketed to audiences. Many series now have

REJECTED

connections to existing intellectual properties. Marvel and “Star Wars” are some of the biggest names that come to mind, but we’re also seeing sequels to properties that haven’t been touched in years. One such example is “Megamind” and its straight to streaming sequel “Megamind vs the Doom Syndicate” and subsequent TV series “Megamind Rules!” (both of which are so half-assed it begs the question of why they exist at all). Although we saw a huge wave of original storytelling during the initial streaming boom, with extremely successful series like “House of Cards,” and “Orange Is the New Black,” that wave has since settled. For the past several years we’ve seen trailer after trailer for sequels, reboots, and spin-offs galore. I mean, we’re getting a fifth “Shrek” movie for Christ’s sake — people joke about it, but I bet most of you are gonna go see it out of sheer curiosity, and that’s precisely what Universal is banking on! “Shrek” isn’t even the worst offender of schlocky sequels; that honor goes to the “Despicable Me” series. Either way, you get the idea. We’re living in an age of cinematic universes, and I’m getting sick of it. There’s something honorable about letting your creation live out its natural lifespan and die with dignity, but of course the executives at these companies can’t accept that. They need to milk these properties for everything they’re worth, and the result of that is a major blow dealt towards original stories.

Now, that’s not to say that these platforms are completely devoid of new, popular original series. There’s still a steady stream of original content being released. But many of these original shows have a certain feeling to them, a certain vibe, if you will. A vibe that seems to say, “We did the best that we could with the limited time and resources that we had.” Full disclosure, this isn’t a knock on any of the cast, crew, or writers — they’re doing everything they can to make these creations a success and I applaud them for that. But when they’re backed into a corner by forces outside of their control, the final product certainly suffers. If an audience’s initial takeaway from a show is, “Oh wow, it would’ve been so much better if they’d spent more time on X, Y and Z,” rather than, “Oh wow, that was phenomenal!” then that’s a sign that something is wrong. The fact that so many originals now are miniseries consisting of 6-8 episodes instead of a fully-fledged season of runtime lends credibility to this. Why are we cramming so much story into such a brief timeframe? Why is the plot moving so freaking fast? Why are we allergic to having filler episodes nowadays?! A showrunner’s job now entails cramming as many essential details into a handful of episodes as they can and then praying that the network will bless them with another season, or multiple if they’re lucky. We’ve just reinvented cable. It feels like many stories are focused on speeding along to an epic conclusion rather than enjoying the ride there, when the ride is the very thing that makes the conclusion so epic.

Looking at the patterns described above, it’s clear that these companies are terrified of taking a chance on original stories and it’s becoming even more obvious as the years pass. Now they’ll hardly touch anything unless it has a connection to an existing intellectual property (IP) that they can use as nostalgia bait. You know things are bad when even renowned cartoonist Craig McCracken, known for creating several popular cartoons such as “The Powerpuff Girls” and “Foster’s Home for Imaginary Friends,”

can’t get his original pitches picked up. In October of 2022, McCracken replied to a series of tweets calling for Hollywood to invest more in original stories. “No one is really buying originals these days, they only want pre-existing IPs,” he said. “I pitched 16 originals to Netflix.” He then mentioned that normally studios would hear two or three pitches from him before settling on one, but 16 pitches from an established cartoonist with not even one picked up is insane. If he can’t manage to get his original ideas off the ground due to corporate interference, then where’s the hope for any up-and-coming showrunners entering the industry? Well, that answer may lie within a relatively new yet explosively successful entertainment company called A24.

A24 was established in 2012 with the intention of producing and distributing original films and television series, and by God, they’ve done it in spades. They’re responsible for films like “Moonlight,” “Lady Bird,” and “Everything Everywhere All at Once,” among many other notable examples. Their TV programs include hit titles like “Euphoria” and “Hazbin Hotel” as well. A24 has been continually dedicated to working with filmmakers to put underrepresented stories on screen and make them widely available for audiences. During the SAG-AFTRA and WGA strikes, A24 complied with every single demand that the writers and actors made, which allowed them to continue creating and promoting their films when other studios couldn’t due to their refusal to negotiate. This gave A24 an enormous advantage when it came to getting eyes on their work and garnering a positive reputation that encouraged writers and actors to flock to them. Clearly, if anyone is leading the charge in favor of original stories, it’s A24. Although I wish more companies would follow in their stead, it’s at least comforting that they exist and are doing excellent work in the entertainment industry despite all the repetition and cash-grabbing.

If we’re lucky, other companies might start taking notes. One thing is certain: original stories need to make a comeback so that we aren’t stuck in this infinite loop of nostalgic reminiscing and futile attempts to reclaim something that was. It’s true that these sequels, prequels, and spin-offs are profitable for the time being... but what about ten years down the line? How about twenty years? Will viewers be content with the same quality of entertainment, or even worse quality? You can only recycle an idea so many times before people start to get tired of it — people are already getting tired of it, clearly, otherwise I wouldn’t have felt the need to publish this. If an entertainment executive of some corporation is reading this — despite the odds of that happening — then I have only one request for you and your people: start being brave. Start taking chances on original stories again, because something’s got to change. Everything was an original at some point, so you never know what could become the next big hit.



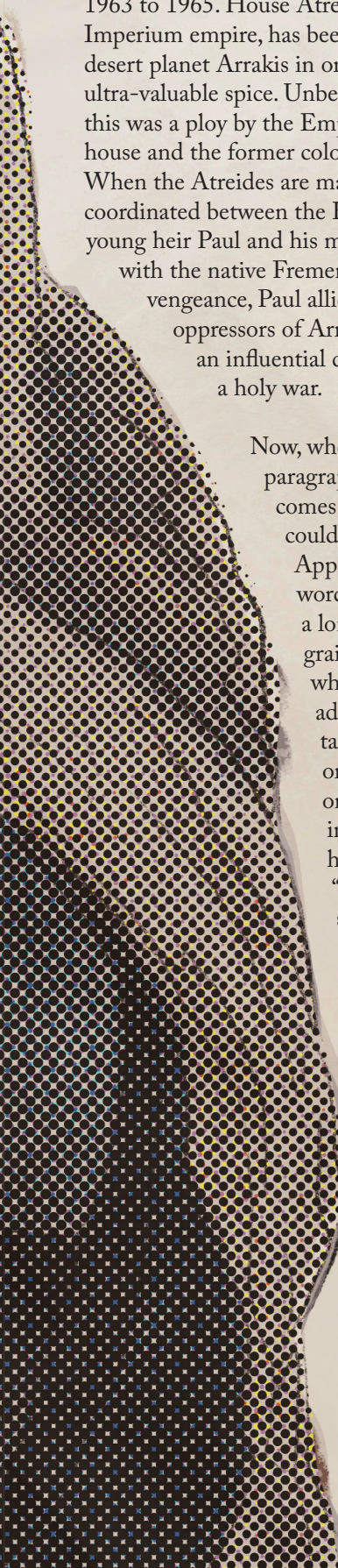
MICKEY DOLPHIN

junior | atec

Bloodborne (2015) made me transgender but not in a way that’s comprehensible

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SHIFTING
SANDS,
SHIFTING
STANDARDS



About two months ago, on March 1st, 2024, “Dune: Part Two” released in theaters to critical acclaim and smashing financial success. Following up on its 2021 predecessor, which was simply titled “Dune,” the film marked the continuation of director Denis Villeneuve’s theatrical adaptation of Frank Herbert’s novel of the same name. At its core, the main plot of “Dune” has remained largely unchanged since the book’s initial serialized release from 1963 to 1965. House Atreides, a powerful nation within the Imperium empire, has been given colonial control over the desert planet Arrakis in order to advance the harvesting of its ultra-valuable spice. Unbeknownst to the Atreides, however, this was a ploy by the Emperor to incite war between their house and the former colonizers of Arrakis: the Harkonnens. When the Atreides are massacred by a surprise ambush coordinated between the Harkonnens and the Emperor, young heir Paul and his mother escape and seek refuge with the native Fremen people. Now seeking justice and vengeance, Paul allies with the Fremen against the oppressors of Arrakis, while gradually growing into an influential dark messiah fanning the flames of a holy war.

Now, when crushed into a bite-sized paragraph such as that, “Dune” almost comes off as a relatively simple story. This could not be further from the truth. Approaching a whopping 188,000 words in length, the original novel is a long-running epic that leaves no grain of Arrakis sand unturned. That’s why when it came to the matter of adaptation, Villeneuve saw it fit to take a distilling approach to the original work. While still lengthy on their own (coming in at an impressive combined runtime of 5 hours and 20 minutes), “Dune” and “Dune: Part Two” cut numerous scenes out, streamlined several plot threads, omitted certain characters entirely, and did everything in their power to maintain and update the main narrative beats of the novel for a new, 21st-century audience. Works such as Villeneuve’s “Dune” films elicit an all-encompassing fundamental question about adaptations in general: just what exactly should they change, if anything? In this case, if the story of “Dune” worked perfectly fine in the novel, why bother making all these changes?

Should this be considered unfaithful from an artistic perspective? Is changing a story via adaptation inherently disingenuous to the original piece and its creator? Creative adaptations inhabit murky waters — some are praised for their innovation, while others are considered unfaithful for the same reasons. So what makes a change justified versus disrespectful? And where does Villeneuve’s “Dune,” this monumental adaptation of an even more monumental novel, ultimately stand?

All of these questions rang repeatedly in my mind as I dug into “Dune.” (See what I did there?) The new movies generally follow the outline of the novel to some extent, but many of the characters have been heavily re-written to play different roles than what they used to. However, I do not believe these changes come from a place of unfaithfulness or disrespect towards the original story. Instead, they simply reflect the major cultural changes we have experienced in the decades following the 1960s, especially regarding gender norms and the roles of women. Back when “Dune” was first written, women occupied a far more marginalized role in America (not to downplay the issues that persist today). While the ‘60s did show a rise in the representation and influence of women in the workforce and other areas of society, there was still a very commonplace and pervasive notion of them being peripheral and ultimately ‘second place’ to men. Since then, however, our society has undergone a dramatic shift towards the egalitarian belief in complete gender equality, and this is clearly a major driving factor in Villeneuve’s “Dune.” That’s right — “Dune” is feminist. The films take the story and retell it in a way that’s not only excitingly fresh, but also a brilliant example of making a narrative more accommodating and accessible given the cultural norms of modern audiences.

First and foremost, we must look at the character of Chani, who is perhaps the most dramatically changed character from the novel to the Villeneuve adaptation. A proud and loyal Fremen warrior, Chani generally serves as Paul’s main point of contact with the native people, as well as a close emotional confidant and romantic interest. Chani’s nature and demeanor, however, vary starkly between the novel and films. In the novel she was a passive, unquestionably loyal love interest to Paul and unconditionally supported him, even as he began his descent into darkness. By the end of the book, she had settled into her new role as Paul’s royal concubine, loving him while also understanding the two can never marry for political reasons. She’s still a relatively heroic character, and undoubtedly able and competent in her own right, but from a narrative standpoint she is little more than a romantic peripheral to Paul. Villeneuve overhauls her character, turning her into the token outspoken skeptic of the main cast. Despite loving Paul just as much as in the original, Chani faces a strong conflict between her loyalty to him versus her people and planet, which she believes are being corrupted by their fanatic reverence of Paul.

As Paul gradually comes to accept and weaponize his growing reputation as a religious leader, Chani acts as the audience surrogate, giving us a ground-level perspective on the damage and chaos caused by this progression. By the end of “Dune: Part Two,” she refuses to take any place by Paul’s side, instead striking out on her own. Chani’s character in the movies ultimately has much more agency and positive self-interest, not only making her a much more prominent actor in the story, but also making the story itself more dynamic and interesting via her conflict. Perhaps her predominantly passive, unconditionally subservient role from the novel was a better fit in the social climate of the 1960s, but I believe that it would be off-putting and frustrating for most modern audiences. In this sense, Villeneuve’s re-imagining of Chani doesn’t just introduce a compelling new angle to Paul’s conquest of Arrakis — it also goes beyond the scope of fiction by bridging the gap of culture shock between “Dune” and 21st-century gender norms, creating a more accommodating and immersive experience for the modern moviegoer.

Chani isn’t the only character in “Dune” whose adaptation reflects a shift in gender norms. This can also be seen with Princess Irulan, daughter of the Emperor. At the end of the novel, the Emperor is ultimately overthrown by Paul, who forces Irulan to marry him in order to cement his newfound political power. In that book and its first sequel, this is essentially her entire role, ultimately serving as little more than a plot device that gives Paul his political power, falls in love with him anyways, and then raises his children for the other sequels. Beyond that is a character with strikingly little depth, agency, or relevance to the story of “Dune,” or at least far less than what you’d expect from the Empress of the galaxy. While her overall impact in the story is mostly the same in the films, there are some noteworthy changes. Not only does Irulan have much more screen time, including scenes that better showcase her political savvy and role as princess, but her engagement to Paul is now somewhat on her own terms as well, as she only agrees to it under the demand that her father’s life is spared. Irulan’s ending is still rather unfortunate for her, as the former heir to the Emperor’s throne is relegated to a political trophy wife. But just like with Chani, her film portrayal makes the story more dynamic and multifaceted by emphasizing her unique perspective on the given conflict.

These changes don’t contradict or betray the original story and themes of “Dune.” Much of the book’s core remains intact, and is arguably enhanced by the changes made to these characters. Chani’s resistance to the growing cult around Paul, for instance, gives the audience a compelling, direct perspective to the

corruptive influences of systemic religion, which is a major theme of the book. On top of that, I also believe that the films’ expression of feminist gender norms is moreso an extension of the novel’s gender commentary, rather than a correction. In other words, I believe it’s actually a gross oversimplification to say that “Dune” was ever sexist in nature. Now, that’s not to say there’s no sexism present at all. After all, as I just discussed, it is true that many of the individual female characters in the novel are merely peripheral to and unconditionally accepting of the domineering, male decision-making presence. There is an undeniable suggestion of benign sexism (meaning sexist attitudes towards women that seem positive in tone, but still indicate inferiority/deference to men) in the novel, likely spurred by the social climate of the time and Frank Hebert’s own lack of perspective. But “Dune” is also a story of the dangers of that very same male authority, and the consequences of the typical masculine quest for vengeance, justice, and power. As was previously mentioned, Paul’s own “heroic” quest ultimately ends with him becoming a corruptive dark messiah, dragging the galaxy into a holy war that even he cannot stop. “Dune” is also a story about female-dominated societies and organizations, such as the women-only Bene Gesserit, a religious organization whose influence kickstarts much of the plot to begin with. Ultimately, “Dune” was always a story rooted in the exploration of gender roles and norms, and while it’s true that the original novel is unfortunately steeped with the sexist





attitudes of the time, I believe that's all the more reason that the changes brought upon by this new adaptation should be seen as a healthy step forward for the work as a whole.

The new movies aren't unjustified or unfaithful in their changes, and I think it's unnecessary to label change as unjustified in the first place. Instead, the Villeneuve films are actually exemplary of what an adaptation should strive to accomplish. It remains true to the central thematic messages and narrative beats of the source material, while adjusting the work to reflect the vastly different social norms of the modern day in a way that expands upon the original's fascination with gender commentary.


The result is a pair of films that are undeniably "Dune" in their presentation and nature, while also still being bold enough to plunge into new territory and find their own sense of identity. It ultimately is that search for a unique identity, that exploration of values, that 'justifies' an adaptation. After all, things would get awfully stale if adaptations did nothing but copy stories into other mediums. Some purists might say that's more respectful, but it's also creatively sterile. In practicing such rote reproduction, all an adaptation would do is discourage creative engagement with the original story and seeing how it can be adjusted and played off of. Ironically, I would argue that is a greater disservice to an original piece of creative media. Rather, examples such as Villeneuve's "Dune" movies exemplify how adaptations can, and should be able to, play with and expand upon the tropes and narrative of a work while still remaining true to its core values and themes.



RAYHAN YOUNAS

junior | psychology

Currently hard at work procrastinating



I'M SO PROUD OF ALL OF US.
WE WORKED SO HARD TO GET
TO THIS POINT...NOW THAT WE'VE
GRADUATED, WE CAN MAKE A REAL
DIFFERENCE.



THAT'S RIGHT.

I'M TRULY EXCITED...



...TO SEE WHAT THE FUTURE HOLDS!

5,000 YEARS LATER...



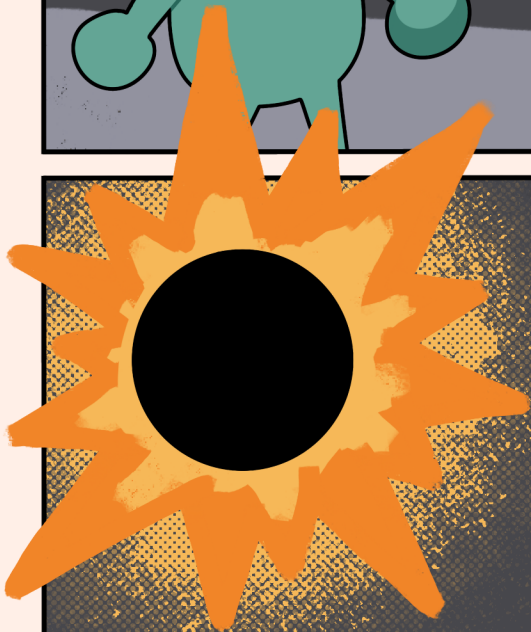
THINK THE
EARTHLINGS
ARE UP TO
ANYTHING COOL
TODAY?



shrug



I DOUBT
IT. NOT
THAT THEY
EVER ARE.



OH,
NEVERMIND.



Student Government Resolution 2024-05

In Support of CometLustPortal™ v1.0

The Texas state government has been on an anti-Comet crusade since last June, with legislation specifically targeting the state's access to scandalous content. Take one step into ECS South, a wasteland rife with the remains of Comet residue, and you will understand why this is such a clear affront to our student body. In a time of such crises, it is critical that our Student Government steps forward and provides students with new avenues through which they can access salacious content in an appropriate manner.

Recognizing

Puritanical Paxton has taken drastic steps by suing major porn providers for millions of dollars, forcing many to cease all operations in the state out of protest and/or fear. The most prominent platform affected is the eponymous Pornhub — progenitor of all porn. While the stated intent of the laws underlying Paxton's lawsuits is to prevent adolescents from accessing content the state deems inappropriate, the lawsuits and legislation fundamentally misunderstand how the internet functions. Any persistent internet user could appear as if they weren't in Texas through the use of virtual private networks, and if your law can be circumvented by downloading Nord VPN after hearing an advertisement for it for the 100th time, then is it even an effective law at all?

The issue Comets face is that the education system prior to college has failed them when it comes to sexual education. Texas' approach to sexual education serves as an active obstacle and detriment to the sexual health of the residents of the state, as well as anyone unfortunate enough to interact with those who only learned about copulation through the educational grapevine. Policies requiring parents to opt-in to sexual education and not including topics such as consent or LGBTQ+ identities within the curriculum, among other factors, leads to an uneducated and somewhat feral population who upon entering university are confused, scared, and perhaps even slightly aroused. Keeping people in the dark is a major disservice when sexual complications can so easily be avoided and overcome through open dialogue and communication, something the state currently works to stigmatize.

Whereas

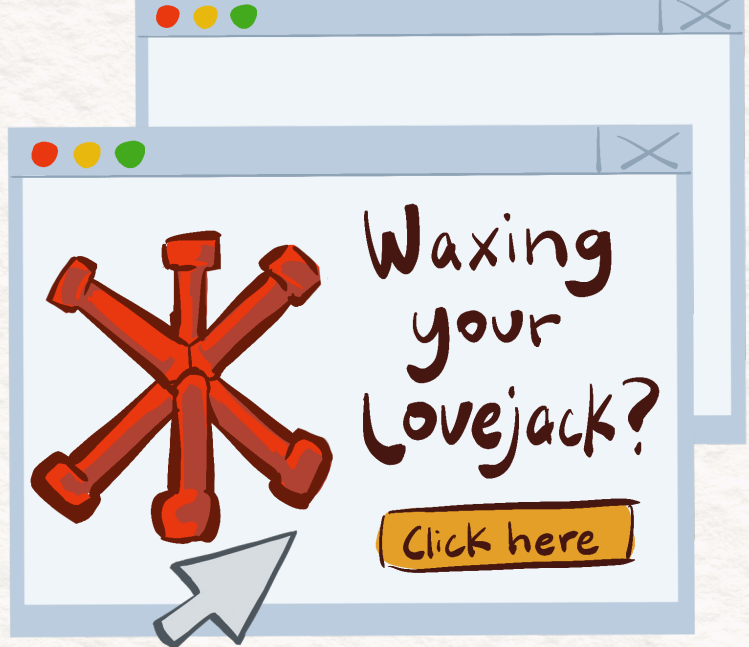
The mass exodus of companies like Aylo (parent company of Pornhub and other adult websites) from the state has left Comets in a barren wasteland devoid of explicit content, with nothing other than their beloved mascot left to satiate them. It is imperative that immediate action be taken so as to prevent the dangerous buildup of hormonal energy within the student body. Comets already struggle to touch grass because of how naturally they fly through space, and this ban will only lead them towards more esoteric and reclusive ends if nothing is done. It would be negligent for the voice of the students, Student Government, to remain silent on this major issue.

Many people are saying that UTD is the MIT of the South because of its extensive computer science (and adjacent) programs. With so many novice and expert coders alike, a new website could be brought forth from the ether to provide Comets with the sweet release Governor Abbott and his lackey Paxton have so cruelly denied them. A website by Comets, for Comets.

Be It Resolved

The immediate creation of the CometLustPortal™ must begin as a collective effort of the over 5,000 CS students on the UTD campus to create an informative and creative medium that best suits the needs of Comets during this trying time. To support the first version of the CometLustPortal™ and its development, Student Government ought to organize a \$400 fee referendum which would go directly towards the compensation, maintenance, and operation of the new website and its drafted employees. Obviously a student-majority committee would need to be created to oversee the operations of this new Comet forum, with a number of members no more or less than 69 in total. This CometLust Oversight Committee — hereafter referred to as the COC — would be tasked with curating the content of the platform and ensuring its compliance with the needs of students.

The students of UTD already sexualize the school mascot, Temoc, to an impressive extent, and a core part of the nouveau student-run erotica site ought to be Temoc himself. Temoc and his special friend Tobor could engage in all sorts of interesting acts, such as ‘delivering food’ to each other on a dark rainy night, covered only by the paltry protection of a fading overhead lamp. They could also star in short but informative videos about the human body, intercourse, information on the wide spectrum of identities relevant to sexual education, and tier lists of all the STDs Temoc has from best to worst.



In compliance with state law, the CometLustPortal™v1.0 could require that all users either access it through school computers or UTD’s already existing single sign-on system, which is associated with each student’s netID. This would allow President Benson to personally prevent any Comets under the age of 18 from accessing the website while also providing further use to the single sign-on portal. Use of the netID system would reduce the development period of CometLustPortal™v1.0 by building off of pre-established web infrastructure.

Of course, content placed on CometLustPortal™v1.0 would have to be in compliance with the Comet Creed, and determinations of this would fall upon the COC and any other subordinate review boards it elects to create with its budget of roughly \$12 million per semester. Past events such as the incredibly popular UTD Sex Bowl could also fall under the jurisdiction of the COC, which could use its funding to create the Sexiest Bowl that the great state of Texas has ever seen. Other projects and initiatives based on the CometLustPortal™ would have to go through the COC, but by allowing a level of discretionary spending, this new fund would allow students, faculty, and researchers to pursue all sorts of new projects which could potentially better the quality of sex education within the state as a whole. An old Texan adage says, “Different stroke for different folks,” and yet under Greg Abbott’s regime it will soon be impossible for Comets to do the tried-and-true Texan pastime of strokin’. This is the impetus for urgent action by the Student Government, and we trust that, in due time, all honorable Comets will band together in their crusade against touching grass by creating the inaugural sultry posts for the CometLustPortal™v1.0.



GREGORIO OLIVARES G.

freshman | political science and philosophy
How can I know that I am me when the perception of self I hold seems to be so malleable? Rather easily, I liked mangoes yesterday and I continue to like them today.

6'0

SATIRE

5'0

UTD's Most Wanted



UTD is famous for many things — our problematic alumni, our undefeated football team, our obsessive psychosexual attachment to Temoc and his oily abs — and now we have another achievement to add to the list.

For the first time, the U.S. News and World Report has ranked UTD as No. 1 for Most Villainous Student Body, thanks to the eccentric and outrageous criminals we've been collecting like "Genshin" characters. From students writing autobiographies that romanticize stabbing their dates to Comets kidnapping couples right after biology class, the MIT of the South has had so many odd crimes this past year alone that Comets ought to be proud. Read on to learn all the gritty details about the university's most iconic criminals who have brought diversity, danger, and excitement to campus crime culture. UT Austin wishes they were us.

BDSM ETIQUETTE: ★★★★★

What Happens in Vegas Doesn't Stay in Vegas: Nika Nikoubin

Starting off salaciously hot, we have UTD's most infamous failed-musician-turned-felon, Nika Nikoubin: a 23-year-old former Comet known for her poorly autotuned and plagiarized hit single, threats to sue the campus newspaper, and stabbing a guy in the neck during sex in a Las Vegas hotel. Nikoubin was charged with attempted murder and false imprisonment in 2022 but ended up with a mere probation sentence, after which she published a typo-ridden erotic BDSM reimagining of her crime — oops, I mean, an autobiography to raise mental health awareness. In her... "book," she describes hallucinating herself as Salma Hayek trying to seduce George Clooney before "running out of the room naked with a buttplug inside [her]," among other vile and obscene descriptions of the crime. That's without mentioning her excessive victim-blaming and the general clout-chasing vibe of speedrunning an autobiography and giving multiple tabloid-y interviews to skyrocket herself to fame.

Her positive reviews? Purchased. Her PR managers? Fired every two weeks — we would know! Her cease and desist letter to The Mercury? Written by her UTD professor father. She is truly a Renaissance woman.

PIECE OF SHIT: ★★★★★

I'll Treat This Cat Like Marie Antoinette: Shubhankar Kawle

Satan thinks this pathetic individual is too shitty for even Hell. Kawle, a 28-year-old grad student and former Testing Center employee, was sentenced to six years of prison for extensively torturing his then-girlfriend's pet cats, to the point where one needed a leg amputated and the other needed euthanasia. His crime shocked and disgusted the UTD community, bringing the Seven Kingdoms — Zionists, SJP members, TPUSA incels, gay people, ECS "students," financial fraudsters, and Dune 2 enjoyers — together in unified outrage. His Machiavellian rizz must have gone crazy, because while awaiting trial he got married to a woman who ALSO has a cat (whom she says he "treats like a queen," so clearly he's innocent). Kawle was arrested while in class, which must've been a relief for him since during his trial he claimed he "forgot" committing the crime due to the stress of graduate school. If he was struggling that bad in school, he must love prison!

Let's be real, though, are we surprised it was a Testing Center employee that did this?



KIDNAPPING SKILLS: ★★★★★

**Senior Citizen Enrichment Club:
Akash Tyagi and Jeffrey Fernando**

Next up we have Dumb and Dumber: Tyagi and Fernando are your typical biology student and alum pair, on par with the eternal fame of Phineas and Ferb. The duo and their UTD-unaffiliated ring leader were caught for failing to kidnap and rob an elderly couple from Midlothian, Texas, which is the biggest struggle of the century. How hard can it be? Their kidnapping attempt was such a colossal failure that the husband broke out of his restraints, grabbed a knife from the Airbnb-turned-kidnapping-house’s kitchen, and stabbed the ring leader before escaping with his wife.

The duo goes down in history as the evil henchmen in this badass grandpa’s hero origin story. Legend has it he is still roaming the streets, stopping embarrassing college criminals with one plunge of his silver knife.

This one gets some extra points in our book for being the most enriching thing Tyagi’s biology classmates experienced all semester. Thank you to this true public servant.

MADE TEMOC CRY: ★★★★★

**“IF I Did It — Confessions of a Killer”:
UTD Administrators**

Potentially the worst crime against the campus community was when administrators kidnapped and brutally executed our beloved Spirit Rocks. Administrators sent vague emails to students claiming that students’ right to free expression went too far when they used the rocks as a platform for political discourse — you know, the thing you’re supposed to do in college. In their quasi-confessional, they simply stated that the “Spirit Rocks were removed” — passive voice — and refused to elaborate. Though they did remind us that free speech is a fundamental right, they just personally don’t give a shit!

Despite their bold move, administration is as cowardly as ever. They love and trust students, you see, that’s why they’re flanked by 10 police officers at every pro-Spirit Rocks protest! They enjoy sharing lunchtime with students until someone asks a question, to which they respond with their favorite NPC responses: “How’s the weather today?” and “I’m standing here serving pizza, thank you.”

FAMILY VALUES: ★★★★★

**A Fountain of Knowledge and... Other Things:
Jeffrey Miranda**

AMP has produced a nasty criminal of their very own! AMP alum and UTD survivor Jeffrey Miranda was tried for sexting a teenager while he worked at Allen ISD, which he only got away with on a technicality. The courts might find him innocent, but he was out there texting a high school senior “tell me how do you know about cumming, lol, just curiously” with his whole chest. This fine example of an arts major proceeded to say he didn’t realize this was inappropriate when the principal confronted him, and he claimed he was vulnerable in the face of those lusty, conniving 18 year olds. He regrettably continues teaching at UTD today. Many are wondering if his marriage will survive him being old, dumb, and broke from legal fees.

ENTREPRENEURSHIP: ★★★★★

**Temoc, We Need to Cook:
Ross Ulbricht**

No crime list is complete without Ross Ulbricht, who is not only UTD’s most famous criminal, but arguably UTD’s most famous alum. Ulbricht followed his “Breaking Bad” dreams by creating the Silk Road, a dark net market where he facilitated the sale of millions of dollars in narcotics and other illegal substances. He was sentenced to life in 2015 for conspiring to sell drugs, laundering money, and hacking computers — but surprisingly not for using “Dread Pirate Roberts,” the name of a character from Princess Bride, as his pseudonym to hype himself up online. Despite being a physics student while at UTD, Ulbricht perfectly embodies the values of our student body, mixing the personalities of the libertarian CS nerd who aspires to repeal child labor laws and the crypto-banking JSOM bro who only has nefarious, untaxable income.

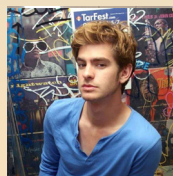
What haters seem to forget, though, is that Ulbricht played a vital role in facilitating UTD’s students’ successes through free Adderall. Extra style points to this king for getting us through finals.

TRAUMA DELIVERED: ★★★★★

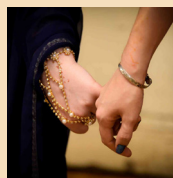
**Is Cold Taco Bell Even Worth All That:
The Students Who Stole Tobor**

Last on our list is the curious case of the Tobor thieves — just kidding, these students weren’t charged with anything. They kidnapped a Tobor and took it to their friend’s house to gawk at before immediately setting it free, but the campus hivemind crowned these students as the CEOs of devious licks when the video went viral on Reddit.

To be fair, how else is the student body supposed to interpret this Grand Theft Tobor? Those little creatures are fragile — would you kidnap a baby for even a few seconds? Poor Tobor is likely still recovering from the fright. Was it worth sniping the free Taco Bell?



FATIMAH A.
senior | psychology
Let’s play hide and seek; I will hide, and you will seek professional help.



MARIA SHAIKH
s*phomore | biochemistry
temporarily disgraced shounen protagonist

by: john mai



Have a great summer,
You've earned this!!!

AMP

ampatutd@gmail.com
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