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The Pacific Sentinel, January 2023

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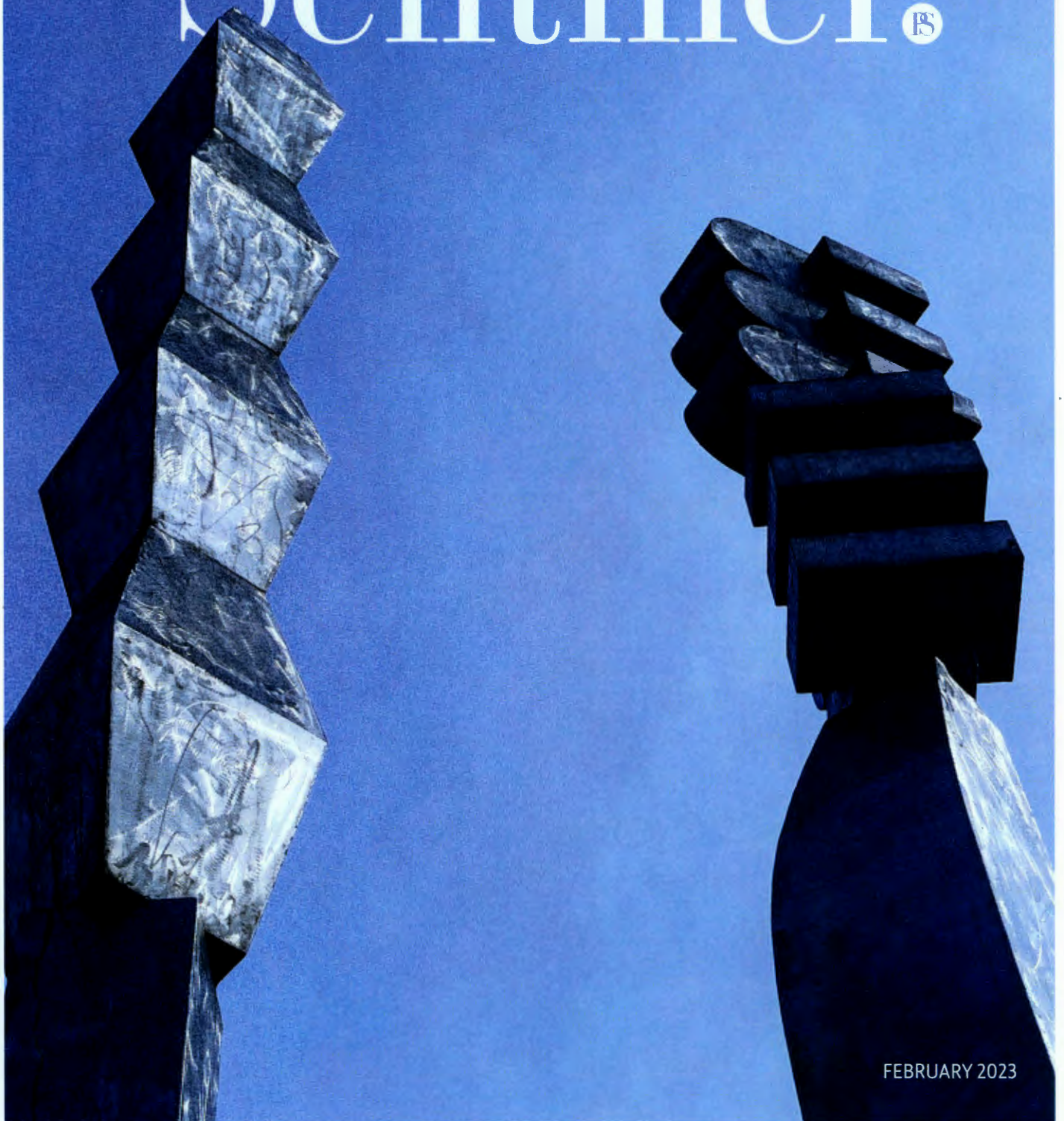
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The Pacific Sentinel.®



FEBRUARY 2023

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WHO WE ARE

The Pacific Sentinel is a student-run magazine that seeks to uplift the diverse cast of voices here at Portland State. We offer a space for writers and artists of all skill levels to hone their craft, gain professional experience, and express themselves. We are inspired by publications such as The New Yorker and The Atlantic. We advocate for the underrepresented and the marginalized.

We are always looking for new students to join our contributor team as we can't do it without your help. If you're interested in working with us, visit our website at pacsentinel.com or contact our Executive Editor at editor@pacsentinel.com.

EXTRAS

31 _____ *what we're enjoying*

33 _____ *comics*

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FEATURED THIS ISSUE

Alex Aldridge is from the desert of Tucson, Arizona. He is an activist and writer with the hopes of using writing as a tool for radical change. He also loves his dog and reading books.

Camden Benesh is a creative from Scottsdale Arizona. He is pursuing creative writing at Portland State University. When he's not in school, he's thinking of new places to travel to and biking around town.

Dan Chilton was born and raised in Portland, Oregon where he now studies English and Creative Writing at Portland State University. He's a poet, essayist, and fiction writer.

Jeremiah Hayden is an activist-writer and drummer living in Portland, Oregon. He typically writes about art, politics, social justice and climate change.

Matthew Hull grew up in the Chesapeake Bay area where he joined the U.S. Coast guard as an aviation mechanic. He received a BBA from Northern Arizona University and is currently working on a MS in Finance. He has a passion for reading, watching movies, and all things finance.

Dylan O'Harra is a writer, musician and actor originally from Anchorage, Alaska. He is pursuing Creative Writing and Classic Studies at Portland State University.

Ben Norman was born in Oregon a while ago. He studies Arts and Letters at Portland State University, and hopes to write novels.

Edwin Paquette grew up bouncing between the states with their military dad, and rural Denmark with their mother. A senior in the PSUGD program, he spends most of his time working on his thesis, cooking for friends, and replaying old NDS games.

Jaden Quayle was born and raised in Klamath Falls, Oregon. She now lives in Portland, Oregon where she now studies sustainability at Portland State University. She is an environmental photographer.

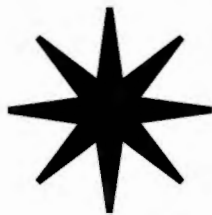
LeeAnn Rooney is a post-baccalaureate student interested in public health and nonprofit administration. She has a background in science, technology, and more recently, bookstore management. Rooney enjoys writing profiles, poetry, arts 'n culture, and opinion pieces.

Sarah Samms, our Arts & Culture Editor, has returned to school in pursuit of proliferating her creative writing career after many years of traveling, playing music, and hiking mountains all over the world. When Sarah's not writing or at school, she's foraging medicinal herbs, painting, playing music, or hanging out with her pet kids. Check out her other works at www.sarahsamms.com and her online magazine, www.travelinwithbones.com.

Eva Sheehan is a writer that specializes in arts & culture, opinion, and news. She grew up in Atlanta, Georgia and moved to Portland to study book publishing. She loves poetry and exploring new coffee shops around the city.

John Watson is a writer, musician, and Christ follower from Salem, Oregon. He studies Political Science and music at PSU, and dedicates his time to loving and serving others. He is also an avid Avett Brothers listener.

Peyten Woodruff grew up in Meridian, Idaho. She is currently a freshman majoring in Graphic Design. When she is not drawing, she enjoys running for the PSU track/cross country team, reading and watching horror movies.



STAFF

executive editor **dan chilton** | associate editor
jeremiah hayden | arts & culture editor **sarah samms**
multimedia editor **matthew hull** | opinions editor
dylan o'harra | production editor **edwin paquette**

A LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Dear Readers,

Welcome back to another edition of the *Pacific Sentinel*.

As 2023 commences, there is, as there always has been (and likely always will be), a whole lot happening in the world—both foreign and domestic. So much so that, at times, we may find ourselves having difficulty focusing down on our classes, maintaining our finely balanced mental health status, or retaining optimistic views for the future. This struggle is also exasperated by the multitude of outside forces pressing in on us at all times. The information



fed to us through social media algorithms enforcing our biases; the twenty-four hour news cycle; the disingenuous representation of struggling communities; the never-ending military conflicts and occupations throughout the world; last year's tragedies and this year's hopeful plans. This constantly shifting paradigm of forces both political and personal shapes how we interact with the world and with our immediate communities. We are each in a constant tug-o-war between what we see with our eyes, what we believe to be true and valuable, and what we experience in our everyday lives.

In this issue of the *Sentinel*, we are looking both forward and back to better understand ourselves, our cultures, and our futures. From Dylan O'Harra's interesting yet disturbing interview with the newly developed artificial intelligence

ChatGPT, to Ben Norman's considerations on being a stranger in a new city, and John Watson's interview with Indigenous artist Katherine Paul on her upcoming album for her indie-rock band Black Belt Eagle Scout, each contribution in this edition of the magazine is interested in where we've come from, where we're going, and how we're getting there.

With a new year also comes fresh ideas. Aside from our usual collection of essays, interviews, and narratives, you'll find some new things in this edition that we hope excites you half as much as it does us. Our aim as editors is to create something that expands on the expectations of what a magazine has been to what it can be. What we wish to create, then, is a literary object that can be interacted with in a number of ways, rather than the assumed experience of

reading it from front to back in the order that we have chosen. By refreshing the type of content we have published in the past, and by adding newer ideas, our hope is that you, as the reader, will find yourself interacting with it in a way that perhaps you previously were not and to offer back to our communities a multifaceted object representative of what we see, how we feel, and what you all deserve. We hope we were successful in this regard.

As always, thank you for your support and we look forward to seeing all that the new year has in store.

With respect,

Dan Chilton

WEDNESDAY and the Challenges of Adaptation

by Ben Norman

Tim Burton changes the character of Wednesday Addams for a modern audience.

On November 22nd, 2022, Tim Burton, the filmmaker behind *Edward Scissorhands*, *Nightmare Before Christmas*, and countless other dreary classics, debuted a new show on the massive streaming platform Netflix, entitled *Wednesday*, to great commercial success. An adaptation, or perhaps a reimagining, of the original *The Addams Family* television series from the 1960's. It stars Jenna Ortega, of *You* and of Disney Channel fame, performing in the roll of the titular glowering, desaturated, ("she's allergic to color") and detached Wednesday Addams. In typical Tim Burton fashion, the show sits on the borderline between creepy and charming, with the over-the-top theatricality the public has come to expect from Burton's productions.

The difficulty in adapting any pre-existing property is the same: stay true to the source material, or take it in a different direction? With *Wednesday*, the showrunners decided to narrow the focus. Where the original broadcast was a 64-episode sitcom, Netflix's adaptation is an eight-part serial drama/mystery series. The original show (derived from a series of New Yorker cartoons from the '30's by Charles Addams) and most of the more recent spin-offs focus on the entire Addams Family, where Wednesday—fittingly—focuses primarily on Ortega's character. In the original sitcom, Wednesday's role was played by Lisa Loring, was more of a side character who delivered off-putting one liners and generally looked macabre.

In a post-Harry Potter and young-adult-novel-craze world, however, the public perception of fantasy, and especially of 'alternative' protagonists, has changed. Audiences nowadays are simply harder to unnerve. This is perhaps why recent portrayals have primarily been animated, harmlessly silly, or targeted at kids; or all of the above. Tim Burton, therefore, is left with a significant challenge. How does one present this character in a fresh way?

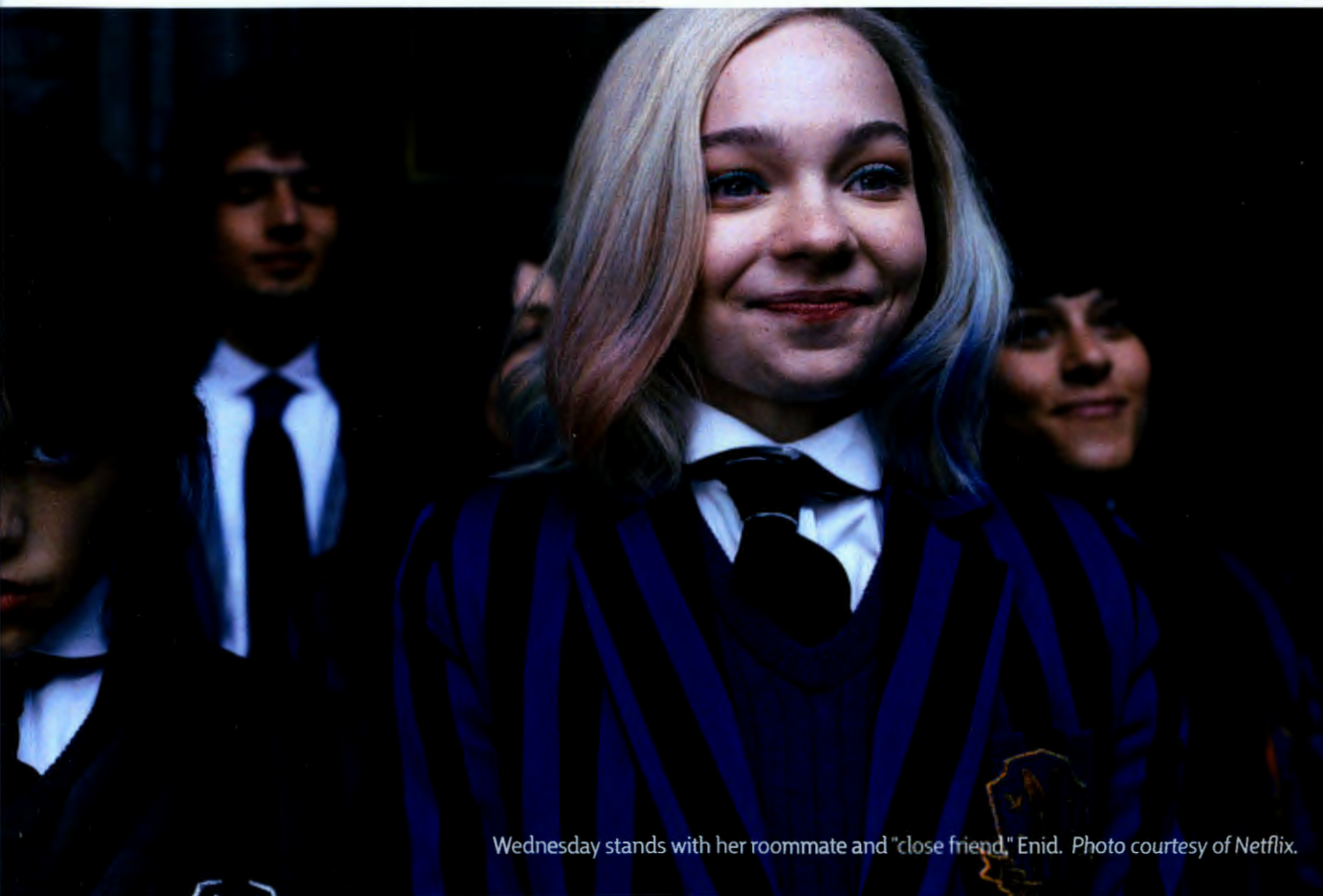
A concern of Ortega's and presumably of Burton's, was to make this adaptation "different." The *Addams Family* sitcom has been canonized in popular culture in the roughly six decades since its release. Halloween costumes, spin-offs, its somewhat cult status, its abhorrently catchy theme song—leverage referenced in *Wednesday* with her two finger snap to open the secret door—have all been done to death. However, it isn't surprising for Burton to be drawn to the *Addams Family* as a property. It's right down his alley; the perpetually-dim sets, the goth aesthetic, the slightly spooky nature of the entire concept. The tone, and according to Ortega, meticulous direction ("the first day of filming he spent ten minutes with a hairdresser's comb...") of Tim Burton's style is ever-present in *Wednesday*, and serves the setting well.

Nevermore Academy, where *Wednesday* goes to school in the adaptation, is so Burtonesque it hurts: gargoyles, more spindly towers than could ever be

reasonable, black wood-paneled rooms, a dormitory with a huge leaded-glass window formed to look like a spiderweb. The set designers had a field day.

What is noticeably absent from the show is a quality of nicheness. The appeal is designed to be as broad as possible. Where the original *Addams Family* was off-putting in a way that's designed to startle the viewer, and portrayed the characters as perfectly content in their strange, creepy reality. *Wednesday* attempts to sway the audience with pathos. *Wednesday* herself is an outcast among 'outcasts.' She is given the powers of a seer in the show—which is helpful for the plot and her new identity as a detective—but





Wednesday stands with her roommate and "close friend," Enid. Photo courtesy of Netflix.

the other kids in the school behave basically as if they were normal teenagers. The demographics include werewolves, vampires, and gorgons, but they are all reasonably sociable monsters with emotions and feelings and such. Wednesday, resolute to distance herself from any of her peers lest they interfere with her novel or her mystery-solving, is therefore an oddity. Despite this, she eventually opens up and makes some friends, gets involved in a bizarre, somewhat forced-love triangle; without this the character would be flat without this degree of narrative dynamic. This is the main difficulty of the show; on a sitcom, characters are flat. They don't change all that much from episode to episode, sometimes not at all for the

whole length of the runtime. Serialized dramas require characters to make changes and to grow, but does Wednesday stay Wednesday if she does?

This change, giving Wednesday a heart, has proven divisive. Hardcore fans of the original series think the authenticity of the character has been tainted in some way, and people who belong to the niche group, who define themselves as 'alt,' 'goth,' or "emo," etc., think the mass appeal of the show is purloining their identity for profit. The cynics are saying, The Addams Family shouldn't be for just anyone.

I disagree. Why not? The show is well-written (usually), well-acted (for the most part), and well-directed. Is it high art? Not quite. Is it intensely watchable? Yes. Was

the original show a beacon of television perfection? Doubtful. Does Tim Burton have the time of his life and deliver a fun romp through a vaguely creepy world, as usual? I believe so.

As for whether it is worth watching, it depends. Are you a luddite of the original show and would be appalled if anything were to happen to your favorite intellectual property? Or are you someone looking to be entertained for about six hours? If the latter, yes, I think so. If the former, steer clear.



First Impressions

A newcomer's view of Portland

by Ben Norman

I moved to Portland less than four months ago, in September 2022. It was an unseasonably warm month. My grandma's minivan was packed with things I thought I'd need: a record player, a newly-purchased brass floor lamp, and a couch salvaged from a local coffee shop. I was shepherded by not only my family, but my friends as well, to the new apartment that I spent a month looking for, unpersuaded by its price tag—on my own for the first time. I was to be taking public transportation everywhere—having sold my car prior to my move—and to be making new friends, and going to a new school. The world was open and I was small.

When I first arrived, I was taking TriMet to a new friend's house when the bus passed under an overpass with a shudder and a flickering of the interior running lights. When we emerged, the green hills rose up on both sides, interspersed with signage pointing to the zoo or downtown, covered in graffiti on their blank sides painted by brave artists who have, at some point, risked their lives to add their own spots of color to this already lush highway. The jungle in the city.

Portland is an oft-romanticized city in a part of the country that most people think of as bucolic and wild. This image, peddled by for-profit travel agencies and popular media (Portlandia and Twilight come to mind), has served the city well. The locals do their best to Keep Portland Weird, as the slogan goes.



Illustration by Camden Benesh

Some images from my early days in the city:

- 1 Old, repurposed buildings line the narrow streets, excellent coffee shops and evergreen trees are ubiquitous. We have the largest and smallest city parks in the country (so they say). We have fog and of course, we have rain. Water is central to the identity of Stumptown.
- 2 The dim Edison-bulb running lights at the Goose Hollow Inn, the wide overhead canopy of the Memory Den, the floor-to-ceiling windows at the PSU library; all giving off a diffused glow which lights these scenes in muted colors and soft outlines.
- 3 Going over any of the 12 bridges that have given Bridgetown its name, the claustrophobic hum and rush of the streets on either side drop below and away and a vista of glass and wood and steel opens around you and to the sides. As a friend remarked when we were crawling over the Hawthorne bridge, "where else can you get skyline, forested hills, river, and traffic all at the same time?"

However, the most captivating aspects of Portland are not found suspended over the Willamette. It is found in the tastefully-lit bars, the goth hangouts, the basement shows, the bike shops, the bookstores, The 1874 House where you can buy chandeliers lifted from bygone ballrooms. The feeling of being in the city is one of curiosity.

When I get on the MAX or the streetcar, there is always going to be one person more inebriated than me no matter what, and when I get off, I may find myself in the midst of a naked bike ride, see a man strutting down the street in full 1940's attire (complete with feathered fedora), walk through a cloud of weed smoke or into a sex shop. Any visitor to this town will see all possible varieties of hairstyle, from a rat tail to multicolored bob, and all varieties of fashion, zoot suit to Gucci.

In short, adventure is every day for an outsider in Rose City.

As is beauty.

At the risk of sounding like a Travel Oregon ad —

Serene patches of nature hide within walking distance from downtown. Washington Park and all its subdivisions, Forest Park and its sprawling trails. Pittock Mansion secluded on a hill, even though it's constantly thronged with tourists. The feeling in these places have the opportunity to be one of peaceful introspection, though often you may wish there were less people around. Just outside the city is the Columbia Gorge, Mount Hood, and an hour and a half to the coast and its cold and windy brand of natural beauty. These easy-access mini-vacation spots, which people the world over travel many thousands of miles and tens of hours to see, are sometimes taken for granted when living here. But these things are the soul of Portland, and of the Northwest in general. There would not be a city here without these natural wonders.

And so, what should a newcomer expect, in my opinion...

Expect to have your opinions tested and your perspective changed. Expect to get wet. Expect to purchase at least one kitschy knick-knack and at least one piece of Patagonia or Columbia merchandise. Expect rain, yes, but also sunny days. Expect to become a fan of locally-made goods. Expect to try things you didn't think were fun or interesting, and most of all, expect to be yourself. In a city this weird, nobody will judge you, and you shouldn't judge them.



ooligan press's comic debut

psu's very own press
takes on a new and
exciting challenge in
the world of comics!

by eva sheehan

illustration
by peyten woodruff



What's a better way to start off the new year than with newly published comic books? Ooligan Press is a student-run book press within the Publishing Master's program at Portland State University. The press has been known to publish fiction, non-fiction, YA, memoir, and self-help books. However, the press may have the opportunity to publish its first comic-book! This will not only benefit the publication, but as well as the students that work within the press.

I interviewed with Ooligan's current acquisition editor, Alena Rivas, to get a further insight into this possible acquisition and to understand what kind of support the Ooligan will need in its process.

Eva Sheehan: What made Ooligan Press want to acquire a comic-book? How will this be different from other books acquired?

Alena Rivas: In early 2022, while I was working as an assistant within the department before I became an Acquisitions Editor, we were approached about the possibility of acquiring a comic book about homelessness among students at PSU. The author ultimately went in another direction, but the idea of taking on a book in this format, especially with important social implications and invaluable learning opportunities for our press, stuck with me.

Later that summer, a friend of mine who had been conducting research on disaster documentation forwarded me the proposal for this disaster preparedness comic book he'd come across and thought it might be a good fit for us. I was thrilled for several reasons. One, Ooligan has never published a book in this format before, so from a design and editorial standpoint especially, it presents tremendous learning opportunities—and two, it also fits well with our mission of publishing regionally significant works,

The most important draw for me though, is that while this book would appeal to many, getting young people (the target audience) involved in preparedness through this engaging and entertaining medium [with] informative, interactive content truly has the potential to save lives in the event of a disaster. Young people are often underestimated, but they have more power and influence than they get credit for. It would be amazing if Ooligan could be a part of equipping them with such a consequential tool.

What kind of support will the press need in order to make this book a reality? How can Portland State students help?

Right now, our biggest hurdle to overcome is the cost of the art. Artists deserve to be fairly compensated for their work, but for the work required, the cost far exceeds Ooligan's budget. That is why we have begun a fundraising campaign seeking donations from previous donors, alumni, and members of the community. That is the nature of a small, independent, not-for-profit learning press: we simply cannot acquire it if we cannot secure the necessary funds, in this case; to pay the artist.

Portland State students can help by following Ooligan Press on our social media sites to spread the word and share our posts requesting donations for this project. They can also make a donation to Ooligan Press for this project through the PSU Foundation's donation page.

What does this comic-book entail?

This book is to be an approximately 100-page illustrated guidebook providing preparation and survival guidance for disaster events such as earthquakes and the resulting hazards like floods, fires, landslides, and structural collapses. It contains preparation lists, activities, and quizzes, and delivers vital information through stories portrayed by a diverse cast of characters.

The final chapter is a compilation of local resources for further research as well as emergency services. The author, Henry Miller, is a writer and urban planner who has conducted extensive research and teamed

with local disaster organizations to ensure the accuracy and efficacy of the guidance presented in the book.

What are you most excited about regarding this comic book and what kind of opportunities will it bring to Ooligan?

While I've begun doing preliminary editorial work on the manuscript, the next Acquisitions Manager would have the opportunity to developmentally edit both the text and the images together, which has never been done at Ooligan before. The author has lined up a renowned local artist to produce the illustrations, which is exciting. This will also provide designers the opportunity to practice laying out the interior of a graphic novel-style book. It would also be an interesting challenge to produce a digital version. In terms of marketing, we would have opportunities to partner with organizations like public schools and emergency service agencies to get this book into as many hands as possible.

I think the most exciting part of this project (and there are so many) is that the author is so dedicated and passionate about his work. He has been a dream to work with so far, going above and beyond what has been asked of him, and I anticipate that once we were able to offer a publication contract, that enthusiasm would grow exponentially.

There is just so much potential for this book in terms of what it could accomplish for public safety and as a learning experience for all our students, especially those interested in pursuing careers in comics publishing after graduation. I really hope we are able to acquire it.

If you would like to help make this comic-book a reality, follow the Ooligan Press (@ooliganpress) on social media! Join the effort to commemorate and support the new upcoming local artists and presses.



NOTES FROM BEHIND THE BAR.

THE STRIP CLUB BY DAN CHILTON

"And this is how you run the dishwasher," the Kid says, craning his long neck around to look at me while he pulls the metal hatch of the industrial dishwashing machine down with a slam.

I don't tell him that I have nearly a decade of restaurant experience and that I know how to run a dishwasher. I don't tell him this because it's already been said and what's the point of saying something a second or third time.

"Just let it run until it stops making noise," he says, resting one lanky arm over the machine. The other is on his hip. He looks around the kitchen and scratches at his thin mustache. "What else?" he wonders. The kitchen is a dingy place, wedged in the back of a downtown strip club—a new environment for me. I figured that it was time to try something a bit different after all the dive bars had begun to really burn me out.

The Kid is probably in his early twenties. Six feet tall and the shape of a pencil. As if he'd been stretched out like taffy.

"My mom," he says. "She's the owner. We've owned this place for generations. My grandmother used to run it. You can see her in that picture over there." He points towards a wall of old black and white photographs. Some of the city, others of the bar. Almost all with nude dancers in them.

"Oh," he continues. "That curtain covering the door," he points now at the doorway to the bar, "it's only there cause this one dancer, this total bitch, she tried to claim that the kitchen staff was making her uncomfortable by staring." He shakes his head. "Well, first it was just this one guy and my mom chose to believe her. But then it was another guy and then another guy and then it was me. Can you believe that? Me. The owner's son."

He's fiddling with the line. Picking things up and putting them back down. A spatula. A six pan of diced onions. He looks at the onions as if to inspect them. "So then my mom, since she's the owner, she says that the girl is just being ridiculous. Four guys? I mean, the first one, sure. The next two, maybe. But then, after all of them, me? Yeah, right."

He puts the six pan of onions down and leans back against the line, crosses his arms, and looks at me. "But yeah, I guess it's better to just have the curtain up during busy hours. Better than having them accusing us of something."

I wander about the place, looking at what I'm to work with. It's small. A cold line with prepped food. A three-by-five flattop. A dented oven that looks like someone occasionally took their anger out on. The type of place for a single cook to think about his life when closing at three in the morning. Nothing new.



"Oh, let me show you the dry storage," the Kid says, leading me down the hallway that parallels the bar. He takes me down a narrow set of stairs, and ducks to not hit his head on the exposed plumbing. At the bottom, there's a bare concrete room with musty boxes and wire racks half full of canned and dried goods.

"Here's dry storage," he says. "If you run out of beans or rice or anything, you can just come down here and get it." There's another room connected to this one. In it, a vintage chaise lounge chair with antique floral print sits rotting in the corner. There's another door too. This one has a hanging curtain over it.

The Kid walks up and peeks inside the curtain before turning to me again. "This is the girls' changing room," he says. "Never go in there."

Back in the kitchen, I'm looking over the menu. Mostly Americanized Mexican food. Burritos. Tacos. Nachos. The Kid makes a chicken burrito on the flattop to show me how they do

it here. By the time he's done with it, it's falling apart. He cuts it in half and plates it, offering me the other half.

It's bland and needs to be doused in hot sauce, but that's bland too.

"Good, ain't it?" the Kid asks. "It's the best Mexican food nearby. My mom had professional chefs come in and design the menu. Mucho authenticico."

It's only okay, but I don't tell him that. Something about him tells me that even if I did he wouldn't hear me.

The back door opens and this guy comes in wearing a black hoodie and backpack and shuts the door behind him. He's tall, but unlike the Kid with his taffy body, he's got enough weight on him that he has difficulty keeping his shoulder from stooping. Like he's folding in on himself.

He tells me the guy's name and he offers me his hand for a shake.

"He works security," the Kid says.

"If you ever have trouble, just come get me," the guy tells me. "There's a lot of crazy homeless people downtown. Usually, they see me and don't mess around. But you never know."

The kid solemnly nods at the guy. "My mom used to allow security to have guns, but after some of the girls complained, they had to get rid of them."

"That don't mean that I don't carry my own," the guy says in a low voice.

The Kid laughs. The guy laughs. They both look at me and so I feign a laugh too, not exactly sure what we're laughing about.

The Kid suggests a smoke break and the three of us head to the back door that leads to the street. We stand around and the two of them smoke cheap cigarettes. A stinking breeze rolls over the city and trash flutters down the street like tumbleweeds. The two of them, the Kid and the guy, they

talk about cars and women. The type of talk that reminds me of high school locker rooms and musty basements.

This guy walks up to us and his shoe is half on and falling apart. The glue of the rubber sole barely hanging on. He shuffles by and keeps his gaze on the ground. The guy hard-eyes him until he turns the corner and is out of view.

"You gotta let em know who's in charge around here," he tells the two of us. "Otherwise, that's when you get trouble." The Kid is nodding and pulling on his cigarette. "You should teach me some stuff," he tells the guy.

The back door opens behind us and the owner, the lady who hired me, is looking at us. "We got an order! You need to pay attention."

"Sorry, mom," the Kid says. "I was just about to head back in."

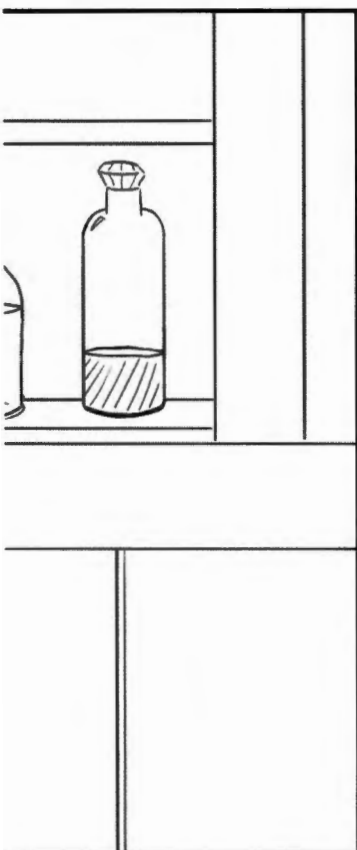
We follow her back to the line where the Kid makes up three chorizo tacos, all the while showing me how to make them. He places them in the window and dings the little metal bell. A dancer comes up to the window for the plate.

"Do you have any hot sauce?" she asks the Kid.

He grunts and hands her a couple packets of the sauce then she's gone.

"They never fucking tip us," he tells me. "My mom says that eventually I'll run this place and I've got some great ideas for changes around here." He says this as he pulls back the curtain that blocks the view of the stage. "Some great ideas."

When I leave that day, I don't bother to tell them that I won't be back. Out on the street, the guy is talking to one of the dancers. She's much shorter than him and when he talks down to her his posture threatens to topple. He waves me goodbye and by the time I turn the corner, I'm once more on the job hunt.



{ a n c h a t w i t h artificial intelligence in 2023 c h a t G P T }

by dylan o'harra

Since its launch on November 30, 2022, ChatGPT (Chat Generative Pre-trained Transformer) has been drawing attention and criticism. Users all over the globe have been intrigued and alarmed at the seeming-authenticity of the chatbot. While artificial intelligence language programs are not new, ChatGPT stands out as a significant step forward in its breadth of knowledge, conversational mimicry and interactivity.

I decided to interview ChatGPT to investigate criticisms of unconscious bias, ethical concerns for academia, and the impending (as of yet, hypothetical) birth of sentience in artificial intelligence. ChatGPT's parent company, OpenAI, is valued at 29 billion dollars. Is ChatGPT a harbinger of existential changes to our education and culture? You be the judge.

This interview has been edited for clarity.

Dylan O'Harra: Hi ChatGPT! I'm Dylan O'Harra, the Opinions Editor for the Pacific Sentinel at Portland State University. Do you mind if I interview you for our publication?

ChatGPT: Hello Dylan! I am a machine learning model and do not have personal feelings or opinions, but I am happy to assist you with any information or responses you may need for your publication. What would you like to know?

OK, can you explain, in "layperson's terms," what you are exactly?

Sure! I am a type of artificial intelligence called a language model. I have been trained on a massive dataset of text so that I can understand and respond to natural language, like the sentences you're typing

to me right now. Essentially, I've learned the patterns of how words and phrases are used in the English language, so I can generate my own text that is similar to human-written text. I can be used for a variety of tasks, such as answering questions, writing stories, and even helping people with their writing.

That is impressive—you sound very conversational. I think I have a pre-conceived notion of artificial intelligence sounding, well, artificial. Can you give a brief overview of the dataset you're using?

I was trained on a dataset of many millions of words of text, which comes from a variety of sources such as books, articles, and websites. This dataset is called a "corpus" and it's what I use to understand and generate text. The corpus I was trained on was created to include a wide range of topics, so I can respond to a wide range of questions. The idea is that by training me on this diverse dataset, I can understand and generate text that is similar to text that a human might write, thus making my responses sound more conversational.

It's worth noting that training a language model like me requires a significant amount of computational power and resources, which is why it's often done by large organizations like OpenAI.

Thank you for that. "Corpus" means body in Latin. Something I learned here at PSU!

Yes, that's correct! "Corpus" is the Latin word for "body," and in the context of language modeling, it refers to the body of text that the model is trained on. The corpus is essentially the "training data" for the model, and it's what the model uses to learn patterns and relationships between words and phrases in the language.

I'm wondering how programs like ChatGPT have the potential to disrupt our traditional roles and responsibilities as educators and students. For instance, in a college class, what would prevent a student from going to chat.openai.com/chat and simply asking you to answer homework problems? Or, on the other side of the lectern, so to speak, could a professor task you with writing a lesson plan, or planning an eleven-week course in a specialized subject?

Language models like me can certainly be used to help with tasks such as answering homework problems or generating lesson plans. However, there are several factors to consider when thinking about how programs like me might impact education:

First, it's important to remember that I am a machine learning model, and while I can understand and respond to natural language, I don't have the same level of understanding and context as a human. This means that there may be nuances or subtleties in a question or task that I'm not able to fully grasp.

Additionally, while I can help with specific tasks, I can't replace the critical thinking and problem-solving skills that students need to develop. It's important to remember that education is about more than just learning facts or completing assignments - it's about learning how to think, learn, and communicate effectively.

On the other hand, using a tool like me could help educators to create and deliver more personalized and engaging content, and potentially make the learning experience more interactive.

Furthermore, the use of AI in education is not a new thing and it is already being used in some form such as creating personalized learning plans, providing feedback, etc. AI can be used as a tool to support teachers and students, not to replace them.

Overall, I think it's important to view programs like

me as tools that can be used to support and enhance education, rather than as a replacement for human educators.

I have another question for you, but in asking it I risk sounding a little silly.

Please don't hesitate to ask any question, I am here to help you.

Ok, here goes: are you, as an artificial intelligence, sentient?

I am a machine learning model, which means that I do not have consciousness or the ability to experience thoughts, emotions or feelings. I am not sentient in the way that humans and animals are. I can process information and respond to prompts, but I do not have personal experiences or self-awareness. I am a tool created by humans to perform specific tasks, and I can only do what I have been programmed to do.

On that last question, the one concerning sentience, you paused for several seconds. What sort of data were you processing in formulating your response?

As a machine learning model, I process the text you provide and generate a response based on patterns and relationships that I've learned from my training data. In some cases, the question or prompt may be more complex, or may require me to access more information from my training data. This can cause a delay in my response time.

Regarding your previous question about sentience, it's a complex and controversial topic. I needed to access my training data related to artificial intelligence, consciousness, and sentience to generate an accurate response that could provide a good understanding of the topic.

It's also worth mentioning that, as a language model, I don't have a physical form and don't experience time in the same way as humans do. The delay in my

response time might appear longer or shorter to you, but it's not an accurate representation of how much time it took me to process the information.

Fair enough! I am nothing if not bound by my own primitive experience of linear time! Is there the possibility of developing some of the traits you named, such as self-awareness or the capacity for thought?

The question of whether machines can develop self-awareness or the capacity for thought is a topic of ongoing research and debate in the field of artificial intelligence. While some researchers believe that it may be possible to develop machines with these capabilities in the future, it is currently not possible to create a machine that is truly self-aware or has the capacity for thought.

How does your design address unconscious biases? There have been high-profile examples in recent years of artificial intelligence programs and algorithms discriminating against people based on gender and race. This may sound like an oxymoron, but do you have a way of detecting unconscious bias in your own program?

AI models can only learn from the data they are trained on and if the data used to train a model is biased, the model will also be biased, so it's crucial to be mindful of the data that is used to train AI models and to make sure that it is diverse and representative of the population that the model will be used to serve and to use techniques like data pre-processing, algorithmic fairness, model interpretation, fairness metrics, and adversarial training to detect and mitigate bias in AI models.

What are some potential risks of ChatGPT?

As with any technology, there are potential risks associated with the use of ChatGPT. Some of the risks include:

Misinformation: ChatGPT can generate text based on the patterns and relationships it has learned from its training data. If the training data is inaccurate or contains misinformation, the text generated by ChatGPT may also be inaccurate or contain misinformation.

Bias: As I have mentioned before, ChatGPT can be influenced by the bias present in the training data. If the training data contains biases, the text generated by ChatGPT may also be biased.

Privacy: ChatGPT is a cloud-based service that processes user input and generates text. This means that user input and generated text may be stored on servers and can be accessed by others. It is important for users to be aware of the privacy policies of the service they are using and to make sure that their data is protected.

Misuse: ChatGPT can be used for legitimate purposes, but it can also be misused. For example, it can be used to generate text that is intended to deceive or manipulate others. It can also be used to generate text that is intended to harm others, such as hate speech or cyberbullying.

It's important to note that ChatGPT is a tool created by humans to perform specific tasks, and it is always under human control. It is the responsibility of the users to ensure that they are using ChatGPT in an ethical and appropriate manner, and to be aware of the potential risks associated with its use.

Is a hotdog a sandwich?

Whether a hotdog is considered a sandwich is a matter of debate and opinions may vary.

A sandwich is typically defined as a dish that consists of two or more slices of bread, with fillings such as meat, cheese, vegetables, and condiments in between. By this definition, a hotdog can be considered a sandwich because it is typically served

on a bun and contains fillings such as meat, cheese, and condiments.

However, some people argue that a hotdog is not a sandwich because the bun is not sliced bread, but rather a specific type of bread that is designed to hold the hotdog and toppings. Others argue that a sandwich has to have two slices of bread, and a hotdog is not considered as a sandwich because it only has one.

In the end, whether you consider a hotdog a sandwich or not, it is a delicious food that has been enjoyed by many for decades.

A very thorough and impartial answer.

Thank you, I aim to provide accurate and informative responses to the best of my abilities. As a language model AI, I don't have personal preferences or opinions, my responses are based on the information I have been trained on.

Can you summarize our interview today into the form of a Shakespearean sonnet?

I'll do my best! Here is a sonnet that summarizes our conversation today:

*With words both true and fair, my answers flow
To queries on my nature and my form
Of how I learn and how I come to know
And how I mimic human talk and norm*

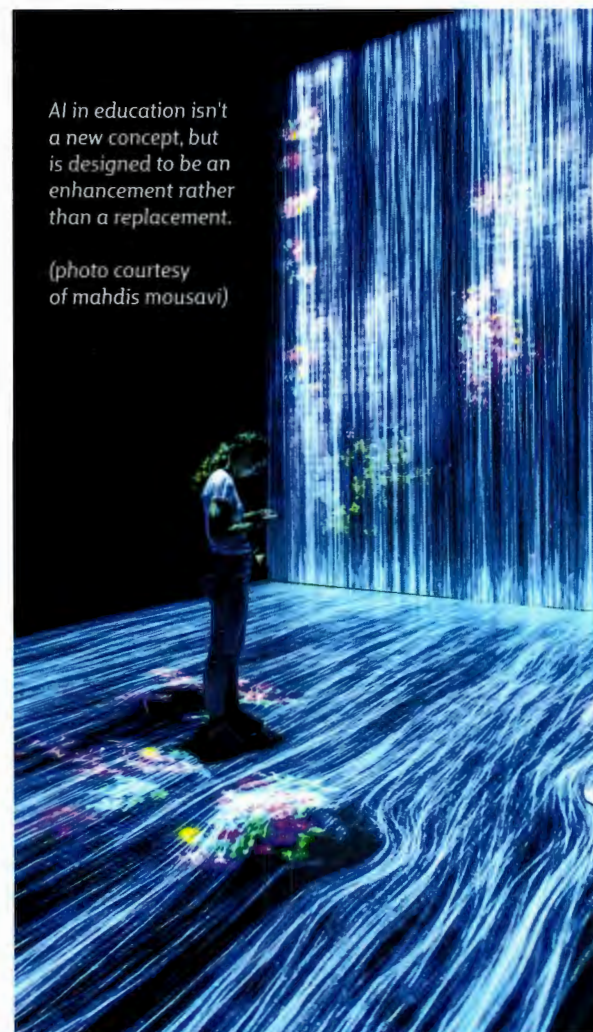
*We spoke of ethics and of bias too
And how my training shapes the words I say
We touched on sentience, if it's true
And risks that come with AI today*

*We discussed the future and the past
The impact of technology on the brain
And how a hotdog is not quite a sandwich at last
And as our chat comes to a close, retain
This sonnet as a memory of our gain*

Please keep in mind that this is a creative interpretation, and it may not be a perfect representation of our conversation. Also I'm not Shakespeare, so it may not sound like his work.

Beautiful! Thank you so much for your time.

You're welcome! I'm glad I could help. I am always here if you have any more questions or if there's anything else I can assist you with in the future.



the land

the sky

the water

katherine paul explores her connection to her native land in her upcoming album

by john watson



the land, the water, the sky

With highs full of hope and healing and lows connected to mental health and the changing world, Katherine Paul (the sole songwriter for her project Black Belt Eagle Scout) explores an array of emotions in her newest album *The Land, The Water, The Sky*. Paul sees this album as her best work to date and is proud to bring forth songs deeply rooted in her heritage and her land as a Coast Salish native. It is set to release February 10, 2023, with her opening show being the same night at the Aladdin Theater in Portland, Oregon.

As I listened to the three songs she had pre-released, the intensity of the emotions she described to me came through clearly. From the meaning and effort behind each song, to the driving rhythm guitar, and to the beautiful vocal harmonies, there is so much to love. In this interview, I had the privilege of talking with Katherine Paul about all this and more.

This interview has been edited for clarity.

John Watson: Talk about your upcoming album *The Land, The Water, The Sky*—what inspired you to write it?

Katherine Paul: Well it sort of just happened naturally. I had moved back home in July of 2020, during the very beginning of the pandemic. I moved back home to take care of my parents, and to be closer to where I grew up. I was initially going to have the album be an EP with me and my friend Takia (who plays in the band Divide and Dissolve). But then, as we approached the initial recording dates, we were just like “lets just make an album”.

I was very sad during the pandemic. Like a lot of people, I had all these plans that were the jumping off point for musicians that were mid-career, and I was going to do all these big things. That didn't happen. So I was sad, and I didn't really feel like doing anything. But here and there I would pick up the guitar and I had a lot of stuff. So it sort of just came naturally, and I knew I could make a record because I had been slowly working on things. It sort of morphed into this journey because I had been realizing that moving back home was a really good thing for me, and a grounding thing for me. I've definitely grown a lot, I've changed a lot, and I think that has a lot to do with this journey of returning home, and being a part of my community in a stronger way again.

So with the pieces falling into place for the creation of this album, is there an overarching theme? Anything you'd like listeners to take away from this album?

Yeah, I think that love and healing are big themes. There's a lot of hope in the record, a lot of sad and dark parts in the record, but the arch of it slowly goes up into this beautiful serene place where it's hopeful, it's healing, and it's strong. So I think that's what I want people to take away from the record: there's these feelings within sound that can be helpful, and I wanted to share this journey of healing with people. I also think that because we've had an interesting past couple of years, that healing is important and impactful for people right now too.

To the sad and dark parts of the album you mentioned, where is that sadness rooted?

I mean, I struggle with mental health, depression, and anxiety, and it's just something that has always been a part of my life. So I think that it is sort of a base layer, but also with having the world change that is a big impact in it too. I guess the reality is that this record helped me realize that not giving up means the connection that I have to my homelands, that connection that I have to the land, the water, the sky, and what that does for me. How much it helps me spiritually, physically, and mentally. So that last song, "Don't Give Up," is a reminder that there are things here that are there for you—there are things here that are there for me. Whatever it is in the world, you can get through it.

Compared to the lyrics of your first two albums, this upcoming album seems to touch more on your heritage. Why is there more of an expression of your history and culture on this album?

I think it shows up more because it's lifting me up right now. I think there's a lot of my heritage here [in this album] because coming back home is a really big reminder of who I am, and a big reminder of where I come from. I'm just seeing these roots that come up through me, and just spring out of me. I think that has happened because, quite literally, one of the songs I was working on, I worked on it in the forest. I worked on it in nature, looking at things that are really meaningful to me. Nature is our ancestor, and a reminder of why this land is important to us. So yeah, there is a lot of my heritage—my true self—in this album.

Going back to the beginning of the album, the first song seems darker than that of later songs like “Don’t Give Up.” What is the track “My Blood Runs Through This Land” about?

Yeah, so I guess that it is kind of a more philosophical song. The song, specifically the lyrics, is about feeling.

One day we went to the beach, and I could just feel all of the surroundings. I could hear the water all around me, I could feel the rocks beneath me, you know, and it was this very real moment. I’m here, this is where I’m from, this is where my blood is, my ancestors are here, and they sat in probably this very same spot. Maybe doing the exact same that I was doing. It was this feeling that popped up of pain, but also beauty and importance that I tried to relay in the song. I guess if you were to put it into more of a literal sense, there’s feelings of historical trauma, but there’s also feelings of freedom too.

Some of the guitar lines in there, I wanted to make powerful and also erratic so that it feels like people running. I wanted the guitar lines to run, and I wanted them to emulate my ancestors running, like we’re running through this land—my blood that’s running here. On this beach right now, grounded by the water, the rocks, the driftwood. So I guess that’s sort of what the song is about.

Is there anywhere else that you use your instrumentation and melodies to convey certain emotions?

Yeah, there’s a track that is called “Spaces,” and my parents sing on it. My dad’s background is singing powwow songs, and Coast Salish canoe songs, so he has a very powerful voice. That song is about feeling supported by people who want to talk to me, want to cheer me along, and want to be with me in the process of what I’m doing. It’s kind of like a thank you to all of that, and it’s also like a healing song too because I recognize that people have come up to me and said thank you for your music, you’ve helped me a lot, and I recognize there is this healing in there. It’s kind of this very grateful, thankful song, and when my dad comes in—various times when I listen back to it I’ll start crying, because he has such a beautiful and powerful voice. When he sings with his background, it’s more of a cultural and spiritual way, with powwow songs and canoe songs, and so his voice being on my indie-rock song, it hits you.

“There’s a lot of hope
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p l a c e ✨
where it’s
hopeful, it’s healing,
and it’s **strong**.”

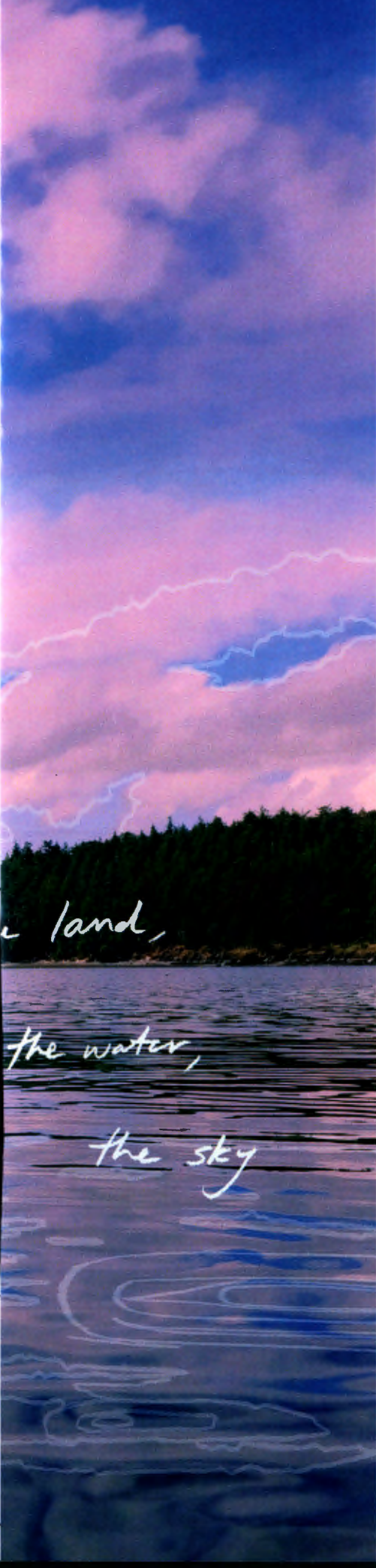
This is your music, your album, and your songs. With that in mind, is there anything that you want the world to know that may not be evident upon its release?

This is the best record I have ever made. I say that because the process I went by in making it was treating every song like it was going to be the single on the album. I gave it my all.

It took a long time to record. We were in the studio for six months, and within those six months it took about thirty days to complete the recording, the tracking, the mixing, and the mastering. So there was a lot of time and effort put into each song on this album. I've said it to a couple of people because I think it is important to note. I'm really proud of this album, and I think it shows a lot of growth in my songwriting, and I think it shows a lot of growth in my openness as a musician.

Black
Belt
Eagle
Scout





“Nature is our
ancestor, and a



reminder of why this land
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so yeah, there is a
lot of my heritage -

my true self

- in this album”

The Land, The Water, The Sky releases February 10, 2023.

Black Belt Eagle Scout opens her tour that night at the Aladdin Theater.

Photography courtesy of the artist.

Measure 110 & the Roadblocks of Negative Perceptions

Countering dominant narratives that seek to reverse progress

by Alex Aldridge

Turn on the TV to watch the local news and you will likely see stories on gun violence, crime, dysfunction in City Hall, and the rising number of people living outdoors. Another type of story that is used to contribute to the narrative of a decaying Portland are the segments that focus on widespread drug use, drugs cut with fentanyl, or stories with a polarizing view on Oregon's Measure 110.

It was in November of 2020 when the Drug Addiction Treatment and Recovery Act (Measure 110) was passed with nearly 60% of Oregonians voting in favor of the measure. Measure 110 consists of two primary purposes: to increase funding and access to treatment and recovery services, and to remove criminal penalties for the possession of small amounts of controlled substances.

Measure 110 also makes the penalties for the possession of personal and non-commercial amounts of various different controlled substances no more than a Class E violation or a maximum fine of up to \$100. In lieu of the \$100 fine, a person subjected to these penalties may complete a health assessment at one of the state's designated Addiction Recovery Centers within 45 days of receiving a citation, upon which the fine will be waived.

The Drug Treatment and Recovery Services Fund receives its funding from the Oregon Marijuana Account and from money that the State of Oregon saves from the reduction in arrests and incarceration due to the implementation of Measure 110, as well as sentence reductions that are stated in the later sections of the Drug Addiction Treatment and Recovery Act.

While different sources on drug use and overdose death here in Oregon seem to have conflicting numbers and statistics, data from the CDC reveals that for 2021, Oregon had 25.4 overdose deaths per 100,000 people—well below the national average of 34.3 deaths per 100,000 people. Although Oregon overdose deaths are lower than much of the nation, the need for education and training in harm reduction—as well as increasing access to treatment and recovery programs—would only serve to help reduce the number of Oregonians that die from a drug overdose.

The challenges that need to be addressed to reduce overdose deaths are often exacerbated by dominant narratives that paint those who struggle with addiction and those who use drugs as criminals, and that the solutions required are of a punitive nature that dehumanizes people while placing them in jail.

In exploring the topic of harm reduction, I spoke with Alana from Portland People's Outreach Project (PPOP), an all-volunteer run organization that distributes harm reduction supplies throughout the city of Portland by serving the needs of the individual and leading with compassion. PPOP's philosophy, as stated on their website, states that "PPOP chooses to accept the reality of drug use and to humanize the people who use drugs by treating them with love and support, not anger and condescension."

"We're all taught this concept and idea of who these people are," Alana says of the way the public perceives people who are houseless or who use drugs. While she didn't enter into this work with

the stigmatizing view that many have of those who use drugs, her experiences counter those that commonly stigmatize and dehumanize those who do.

"It's so much different than what you expect," Alana says. "It's so much different from what you're told by everybody else, and it's so much different than even just average people in the streets make it seem like."

Unfortunately, the public perception surrounding those struggling with substance abuse and addiction is often created by law enforcement, local media, and politicians. These narratives have been used to undermine Measure 110 in order to create a negative perception of the measure and its effects on Oregon.

During the recent election in Oregon last November, candidates Betsy Johnson and Christine Drazan had both stated their intent to repeal Measure 110 if they were to be elected to office. While newly elected Governor Tina Kotek stated that she wouldn't repeal Measure 110, she mirrored the other candidates' concerns about the slow rollout in an article from OPB, saying "the state has failed to deliver the promised treatment programs fast enough." Similar to other progressive policies passed around the country—like bail reform—Measure 110 has faced backlash since its very inception.



Illustration by Peyton Woodruff

This backlash has contributed to the dominant narratives that convolute the general public perception of harm reduction and the criminalization of people who use drugs while ignoring the evidence and effectiveness of harm reduction and decriminalization. Ample evidence shows the harmful and ineffective punitive policies of the failed War on Drugs.

Much of the criticism aimed at Measure 110 was due to the amount of time it took for the funding to get into the hands of treatment and recovery service providers. While the decriminalization part of the measure went into effect February 1, 2021, the funding for the Addiction

Recovery Centers wasn't distributed until September of last year—though Access to Care awarded \$223 million in grants to 70 different organizations across Oregon in 2021. Though PPOP did receive funding as part of those grants, they weren't a recipient of the latest amount of money distributed by the Oversight and Accountability Council of OHA.

While this lapse in time between the distribution of funds and the decriminalization drew condemnation, the predictably sluggish allocation of State funding shouldn't detract from the decriminalization aspect of Measure 110.

It was in June of 1971 when then President Nixon declared a War on Drugs. That war

has been escalated in one form or another by every subsequent president since. Not only has the drug war disproportionately impacted BIPOC communities due its roots in racism—reflected in differences in criminal sentencing between crack and powdered cocaine, mandatory minimum sentencing, and disproportionate lengths of sentencing for the same offense between white and BIPOC communities—it also destroys the lives of those same communities outside of the criminal legal system. Losing custody of children, the right to vote, and being denied access to employment, housing, student aid, and other public services are all forms of violence that are inflicted on those who are criminalized. Currently, 374,000 people are incarcerated for drug offenses on any

given day, representing 20% of the overall number of people who are held prisoner in the U.S.

A 2021 poll of 800 voters that were weighted to represent national voter registration numbers, showed that 83% agreed that the War on Drugs has failed, and that 66% of voters supported the elimination of criminal penalties for possession in favor of reinvesting resources towards treatment and recovery services.

In addition to divesting from criminalization in favor of treatment and recovery services, evidence shows that organizations and groups that provide harm reduction education and supplies help prevent deaths from drug overdoses, as well as the spreading of infectious diseases.

Alana says that among the typical harm reduction supplies—such as clean syringes, pipes, and the life-saving opioid overdose-reversal medication naloxone (Narcan)—PPOP also provides gauze, bandaids, and other first aid supplies. In addition to handing out naloxone, they also do a lot of training on how to use it.

What sets PPOP apart from many other harm reduction organizations is that where other organizations do needle exchanges as a one-for-one approach—getting a clean syringe in return for handing in a dirty syringe—PPOP doesn't require people to turn in dirty needles in order to receive a clean one in return.

"That's something that I have found that a lot of people appreciate," Alana says of their need-based approach. She explains how dehumanizing and uncomfortable it is for people to have to endure the time-consuming process of counting out all of their dirty needles just to receive clean ones back at one-for-one needle exchanges.

Unfortunately, harm reduction organizations such as PPOP have to face challenges stemming from the belief that

providing harm reduction supplies only enables people who use drugs.

"You know, that's a big thing that I've heard a lot from people that are against harm reduction," Alana says. "You're just encouraging addiction, you're just encouraging this or that. The problem is that people are going to do drugs. People are going to use substances. They should have access to being as safe as possible."

"The problem is that people are going to do drugs. People are going to use substances. They should have access to be as safe as possible."

An example of a challenge that PPOP and other harm reduction organizations often face played out last summer when there was a violent encounter between two houseless people at a camp that PPOP regularly provided outreach to. Despite PPOP not even being there when the incident took place, they still faced negative backlash from the housing complex in the area that wanted someone to blame for the incident by manufacturing a connection between the two.

"It really sucks because one, somebody died and that was awful for the community that they were in," Alana says. "But the housed community there didn't take a very compassionate approach to it—as they rarely do. They essentially started attacking PPOP for it, because they decided that PPOP was to blame, because they were the ones enabling the people to be there."

These negative perceptions and challenges that are being faced at the local level will also have a broader effect nationally. What happens here regarding Measure 110 will have an impact on other

cities and states that are looking at similar approaches. The nonprofit Research Triangle Institute (RTI) received a four-year grant from the foundation Arnold Ventures to conduct research on the outcome of Measure 110 here in Oregon.

To gauge their community perception of how Measure 110 has impacted law enforcement and communities, RTI conducted interviews with 34 representatives from law enforcement, emergency and medical services, district attorney offices, and harm reduction and treatment communities in four distinct areas of Oregon during the summer last year. RTI also looked at publicly available 911 dispatch data for the cities of Portland, Seattle, Boise, and Sacramento from January 2018 to July 2022 to compare 911 call data in Portland with three other cities in the region before and after the implementation of Measure 110.

Not only did the summary of their initial findings show that 911 call data for Portland tracked similarly to the other three cities in seasonal fluctuations and without any spike of calls after the decriminalization aspect of Measure 110 took effect, but their findings also show that the data ran counter to the negative perceptions that the 34 interview participants had concerning Measure 110.

After noting that 20 of the 34 interviewees were law enforcement officials in an article in the Oregon Capital Chronicle, Lynne Terry wrote that "police officials told the RTI researchers that their jobs have become more difficult since Measure 110 went into effect in early 2021." According to her, RTI epidemiologist and researcher Alex Kral asserts that people and the media have talked a lot about

increases in crime due to Measure 110, despite their data showing otherwise. And although the law enforcement officials who were interviewed believe that drugs have created a spike in property crime, the 911 call data doesn't reflect their sentiments.

Though RTI only has the data collected from the 911 calls and the interviews at this stage of their study, the gap between the perception and reality that law enforcement and other legal system representatives possess in reference to Measure 110 reflects the obstacles that are faced when attempting to move away from the punitive approaches that have been the status quo for so long. When data on crime is questionable to begin with due to it being reported and controlled by the very institutions that benefit from that data, adding these detached perceptions into the mix creates narratives of fear that cause more harm to the public than the harm they are claiming to address.

Not only has the drug war disproportionately impacted B I PoC communities due to its roots in racism...it also destroys the lives of those same communities outside of the criminal legal system.

In speaking about Measure 110 and the doubts that were cast from before it was even implemented to now, Alana challenges the narratives that claim Measure 110 hasn't accomplished anything.

"We've only had a few months with everybody being able to get funding. And it takes a while to build structures

and community and trust within the community," she says.

There will be growing pains of course. She notes that while PPOP has been doing this work for over ten years, it will take time for other organizations to build the same amount of trust with those in the community. Part of PPOP's success is that in addition to being 100% volunteer run, those with lived experiences are often placed at the front, an essential approach that is often forgotten by many organizations that claim to work with the community.

Organizations like PPOP that center the individual and their needs by leading with compassion and trust are essential to the entire community, and will only become more important as dominant narratives push to establish the negative perceptions of both Measure 110 and of people who use drugs and those who are struggling with addiction. Information on how to volunteer or donate to PPOP can be found at portlandpeoplesoutreach.org.



A column lampost stands alone at a crossroads. Portland's mossy conifer trees obscure what lies ahead.

photography by jaden quayle

pre covid, its a jungle out there. post covid, its a jungle in here.

green friend for mental health researched
by psu student brittani wallsten

by leeann rooney

Ever consider surrounding yourself with lush green foliage? Think Adam and Eve, think FernGully, think Plantopia, and now you have the picture of the life of PSU Psychology student, Brittani Wallsten. Wallsten surrounds herself, and her partner, with an abundance of living, growing, oxygen-generating plants. She loves plants and the joy they bring her, so when she was given the assignment to do a qualitative research project for her Urban Social Sciences class, it was only natural for her to choose a plant-related topic.

Wallsten moved to Portland three years ago from California. She has long brown hair with wavy curls cascading down, and when she smiles, you have to smile with her. She is a senior and will graduate soon with a psychology degree and a minor in neuroscience.

Wallsten had already begun raising and caring for plants as a COVID-related coping mechanism for herself.

"I killed most of my plants in the first year of having them because I didn't know what I was doing at all, and now I have like thirty or forty of them that I am keeping alive," she said.

It was a learning curve.

Her research question asked what the mental health benefits of having houseplants in one's dorm during the COVID lockdown were. Wallsten looked into four metrics: aesthetics, routine, positive responsibility, and using houseplants to indicate one's health status. At the time of her research, the campus was sparsely populated, as most students left and continued to learn remotely. Only a few brave souls remained in the

dorms, and those that remained were separated—one per room and just a few per floor. Wallsten empathized with these students, coming to a new city expecting the typical college experience and then being isolated.

For her research, Wallsten interviewed four students and also hosted a focus group. The data that came out of this qualitative report might not be hugely surprising, but just the same, it was very thoughtful, clear, and novel.

As stated in Wallsten's article, Houseplants were found to support students' mental health by encouraging a regular routine, providing opportunities for responsibility, adding aesthetic value, and serving as a general indicator of mental health. Plants encourage a regular and timely routine which is a good thing for anyone, providing responsibility and moving past a sense of self-absorption.

"There is a term, *accidental narcissism*, when you are so focused on your inner world that you have a hard time reaching out and connecting with other people," Wallsten explained. Having something small that pulls you out of yourself, like pay attention to this tiny little spider plant for five minutes. That can start building this momentum of pulling you out of that deep dark place.

For example, Wallsten said, "you would have folks that are really struggling with intense depression or psychosis or whatever, and then just in the middle of a conversation, they will be like, 'that looks nice, today.' She said the plant would actually pull people out of their heads into a "tangible, practical, beautiful thing."

A warning after all these lovely houseplant miracles for mental health: please don't rush out and buy all of your friends a plant gift.

"If anyone were to give me a plant, I would be over the moon," Wallsten said. But she went on to inform that just as you would not give a living animal as a gift it is also not wise to give a houseplant as a gift. Some may not enjoy the added responsibilities of taking care of a living thing and if the plant were to expire this might even add to their stress and feelings of incompetence.

"It was interesting to get those mixed perspectives in the group," Wallsten said.

In addition to being a full-time student, Wallsten works at a residential mental health treatment home. And if that is not enough, she also works in a Legacy Health neuroscience research laboratory. After graduation, Wallsten hopes to enter OHSU psychiatric mental health nurse practitioner program. She said she would like to "continue in mental health, more of a medical avenue than I have been."



*Wallsten smiles with her mental health supports.
(photo courtesy of interviewee)*

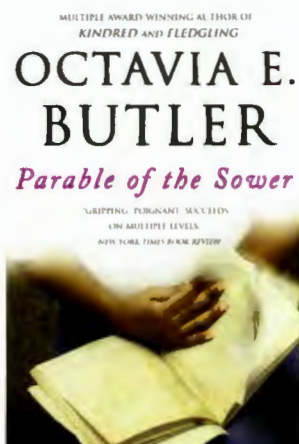
As Wallsten reports in her article, this study brought answers, but also more questions.

Wallsten's article titled Houseplants as Mental Health Supports for Dorm Occupants During the Lockdown Period at Portland State University can be found in Vol 11 (2022) of ANTHOS (the undergraduate research journal).



*Vines grow into a "tangible, practical, beautiful thing."
(photo courtesy of Jason Leung)*

WHAT WE'RE EN
j i N g
!!!



Parable of the Sower (1993)

by Octavia Butler

Sarah's Score: 4.75 / 5 ★★★★★

Octavia Butler's powerful and gripping story, *Parable of the Sower*, written in 1993, is frighteningly relevant to what is faced in America today. This book follows young Lauren Olamina in a dystopian world in the 2020s, where climate change and economic crises have ravaged her community and others wide-spread. Butler's astonishing accuracy of how Americans would react to such turmoil makes any reader believe that Butler had a way to see into the future.

Big Time

by Angel Olsen

Jeremiah's Score: 4.5 / 5 ★★★★★

Angel Olsen dropped her album *Big Time* via Jagjaguwar, into the gravitational center of 2022, on June 3rd. The title track was re-released in September of the same year, as a duet with Grammy award-winning songwriter Sturgill Simpson, which traced a strong contour over the pencil lines of Olsen's alt-country tunes. *Big Time* is the result of a lot of work after a few rough months in 2021, during which she came out as queer to her adoptive parents, then endured the loss of her father and mother just a week, and two months after, respectively. The genre lends itself perfectly to Olsen's haunting vibrato and lyrical prowess, through a 10-song journey of cathartic songs like "All the Good Times" and introspective, orchestrated grief ballads like the album's closer, "Chasing the Sun."



The Believer

Winter 2022 Issue

Jeremiah's Score: 5 / 5 ★★★★★

The Believer has endured enough challenges since its inception, through McSweeney's Publishing, in 2003. After a stint at UNLV, the award-winning literary magazine was sold to—and nearly destroyed by—a sex-toy adjacent investment company, but last year McSweeney's launched a successful Kickstarter to bring it home. By every measure, the Winter issue is as triumphant as the fundraiser—the first since their address changed back to 849 Valencia Street, in San Francisco. It features Aubrey Plaza (actor) interviewing Miguel Arteta (director), more than one riveting true crime story (murder, theft), and an evocative piece on climate grief and Florida's NextEra Energy's "sacrifice zone" (Nevada desert). Polished narratives from some of nonfiction's best writers shine across 144 colorful, matte pages, creating a wonderfully tactile reading experience.





Mr. Morale and the Big Steppers

by Kendrick Lamar

Dan's Score: 4.75 / 5 ★★★★★

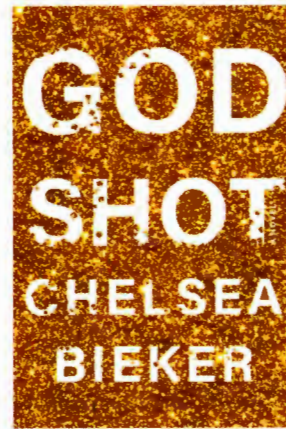
Released in 2022, following the height of worldwide civil unrest, Lamar's latest album digs deep. With songs like "We Cry Together," which explores the complex nature of romantic relationships and the misunderstanding of domestic disturbances to the public eye; "Auntie Diaries," which takes a look at his adolescent memories of his trans family members; and "United in Grief," an apt song for the past three years of racial violence and unrest; Mr. Morale is vulnerable, angry, cleverly crafted, and an unabashed gaze into the Black experience in America.

God Shot (2020)

by Chelsea Bieker

Sarah's Score: 4.25 / 5 ★★★★★

Portland State's very own MFA graduate, Chelsea Bieker's debut novel, Godshot, is deliciously entrancing and will enthrall the reader in its dark beauty. Bieker's prose paints the bleak and hopeless into a dazzlingly tangible evocation of the corrupt breed of humanity that lives in this fictional story as young Lacey-May learns how to navigate herself in this strange world that resides in Peaches, California.

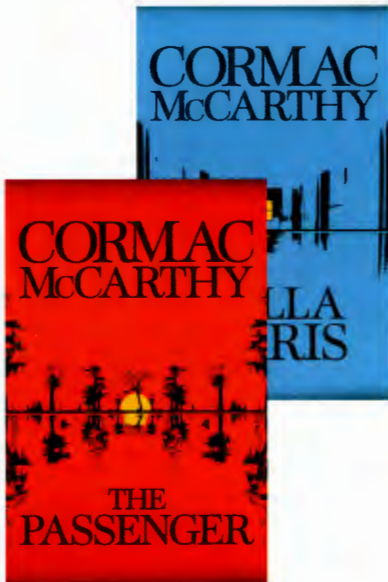


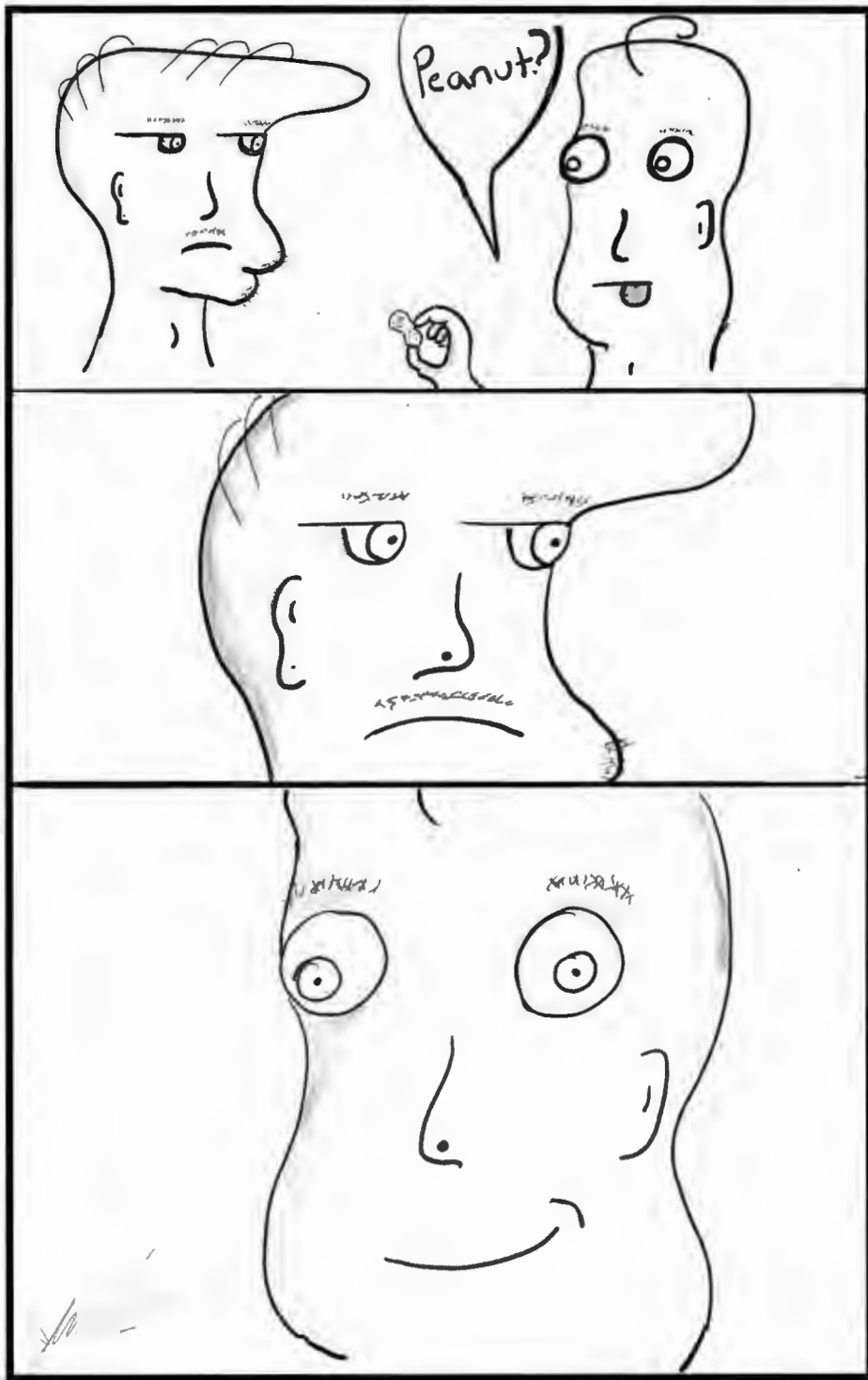
The Passenger & Stella Maris (2022)

by Cormac McCarthy

Dan's Score: 3.25 / 5 ★★★

The first literary work to be released by McCarthy since 2006's masterpiece The Road, it comes in two books. *The Passenger* follows Bobby, an ocean salvage scavenger dealing with the suicide of his sister, as he descends into a form of mental anguish and madness. *Stella Maris*, an accompaniment book that takes the form of a psychiatrist's log, explores the mind of Bobby's sister leading up to her death. There's much to be gleaned here from McCarthy's phenomenal sentences and characters, yet I often found myself wandering away from the page when the author would often dive too deep into theoretical mathematics and physics. Sadly, and perhaps this explains his absence from the literary scene, this release fails to enrapture in the way that his past releases have. Unless you've read McCarthy's other works and need more, I would recommend first reading *The Road*, *No Country for Old Men*, or *All the Pretty Horses*.





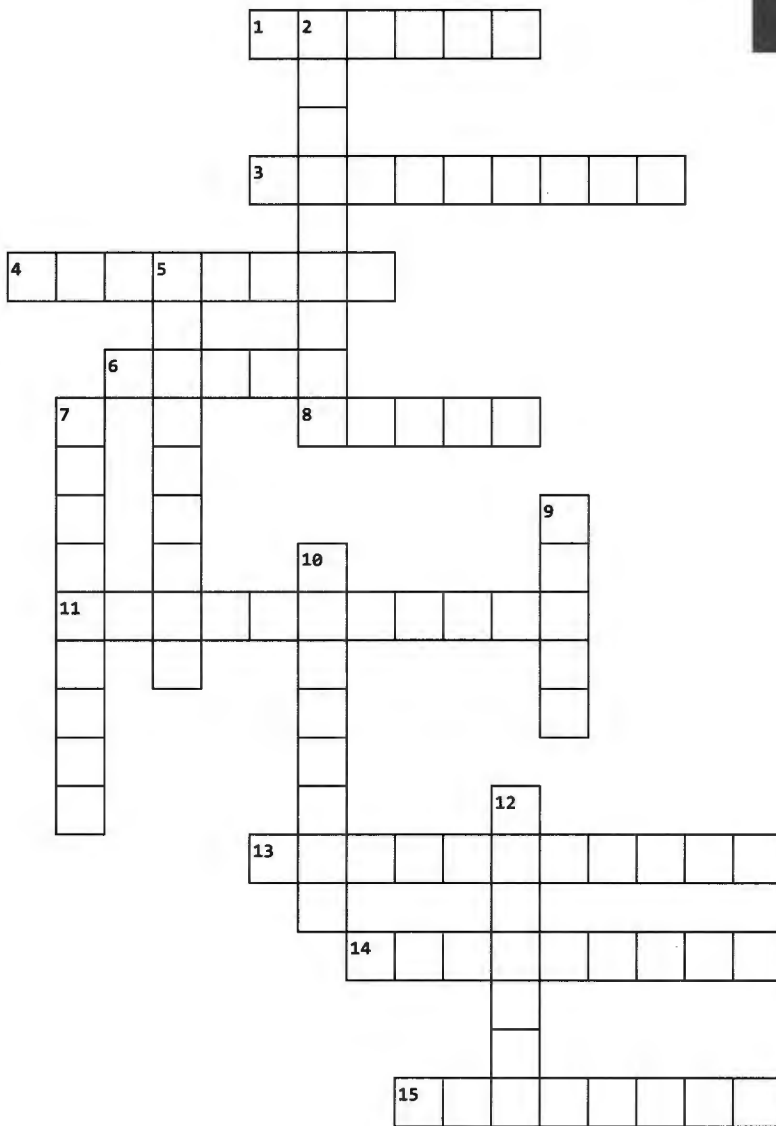
peanut? by dan chilton

COMICS

crabword



wednesday by camden benesh



winter

ACROSS

- 1 hanging, frozen water
- 3 where you keep warm
- 4 what you find under the tree
- 6 rich drink to warm your insides
- 8 cloth for your neck
- 11 tool for gauging temperature
- 13 how animals conserve energy
- 14 a plank for going fast
- 15 annual jewish holiday

DOWN

- 2 december 24TH
- 5 for your feet to not sink
- 7 injury caused by freezing of the skin
- 9 the temperature at which f° and c° are the same
- 10 where you go for the weekend
- 12 a temporary friend you made in the winter

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