TABLE OF CONTENTS

3 CALIFORNIA WATER CRISIS
By Nathan Anderson

5 PUT A BIRD ON IT
By Corinne Hutfilz

8 RELIGIOUS FREEDOM RESTORATION ACT
By Alexandre Pomar

10 PATRIOT ACT’S UPCOMING RENEWAL
By Charles MacLeod

12 VINYL: A DYNAMIC RESURGENCE
By Jeremy King

15 PSU TUITION INCREASE
By Mike Bivins

17 A PRIMER TO DAVID LYNCH
By Alex Skousen

ON THE COVERS:
• FRONT:
  • The Swan and the Stork,
    by Wenceslaus Hollar (1607-1677) date unknown.

• BACK:
  • The Basilisk and the Weasel,
    by Wenceslaus Hollar (1607-1677) date unknown.

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The Portland Spectrum serves the student body by facilitating thought-provoking discussions. We are dedicated to upholding a diverse forum of debate; we seek to establish voices for those in the student community who are otherwise unheard, and create an alternative avenue to publish new angles in current political or PSU community-related conversations, for the purpose of testing institutions already in place and expanding the minds of our campus.

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The California water crisis came to head recently when Governor Jerry Brown signed an order—the first of its kind in the state—that puts severe restrictions on water use. Starting on January 1, cities and other municipal governments were required to adhere to a 25-percent reduction in water use or face hefty fines from Sacramento. Unsurprisingly, the immediate effects of this order will be felt by Californian citizens but there is a significant chance that it won’t end at the state borders; California’s drought will have a severe ripple effect throughout the western United States—and perhaps the entire nation. If it ever was a regional problem, it is no longer so contained.

The effects of sustained lack of water are already being felt in the nation’s supermarkets. Recent droughts in Texas and Arizona have been the catalysts for an increase in the price of beef over the past few years. As water diminishes, farmers are forced to cut their herd as there is simply not enough cattle feed to meet demand. It is not only possible but likely that farmers in California will face similar hardships, and the struggles of farmers in the Midwest may very well pale in comparison to what Californians may face.

It is important to note that the new regulations do not require that California’s farmers cut back on water use; they are simply required to report these amounts to the state. Farmers are, and have been for quite some time, drilling wells to compensate for lack of surface water. Wells, however, pose an altogether different problem: the aquifers are running dry, and that correlates with the increased use by the farmers who utilize them to fuel their livelihoods. When the aquifers run dry, the only option will be surface water—and the chances of there being enough surface water to continue to supply both municipal water systems and the agricultural industry is essentially nil. The lack of surface water is playing a large part in the current drought.

Much of this country, and indeed much of the world, relies on Californian farmers for certain foods. In the United States California produces almost the entirety of the nation’s almonds, walnuts, pistachios, figs, dates, apricots, and olives. Additionally the majority of the country’s avocados, strawberries, grapes, peaches, plums, and lemons come from California. When (and it will be when, not if) the ability to sustain agriculture at current levels no longer exists, the cheap oranges and almonds and Napa chardonnay that are so easily found at any neighborhood grocery store may become a thing of the past. While other parts of the country may pick up some slack—Georgia has peaches, for instance, Iowa could abandon subsidized corn for other vegetable crops and almonds could be grown in the Mississippi Delta—any decline in Californian agriculture will be felt across the nation.

What is known is that 80% of water use in California is used for agriculture. Experts agree on two things: one, this is unsustainable and two, that residential water restrictions are not the answer to this growing problem. Admittedly, some farmers are preparing for the inevitable loss
of water and switching to “dry farming” methods, but even with these changes California’s thirst for water is hard to quench— which brings home one of the hardest truths about this crisis: it is not a crisis in the traditional sense, it is the new “normal” for California, and its residents (as well as the nation) will have to adjust accordingly. Governor Brown made a similar statement when he signed the water restriction bill.

It is unknown what the future of California water will be. Groundwater is in steep decline, and without that groundwater California faces a crisis that makes the current iteration look mild. Part of Jerry Brown’s water restriction order calls for California aquifers to reach sustainability by 2040, just 25 short years from now.

The problem is, the aquifers sitting under California will likely not last that long.

**Visual Representation of the Drought**

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**USGS Water Watch Maps – Streamflow Comparison**

August 2008

May 2015
We ought to know a bit about birds, considering Portland's semi-famous apothegm. The avian world is a fascinating one, full of morphological beauties, behavioral quirks, and other neat evolutionary tricks. There's never a wrong time to learn ornithology. Let's start doing justice to the city's unfounded phrase.

The cassowary stands out as a magnificent bird in several regards. It is the world's third-largest bird, and displays a tall brown casque on top of its head, brilliant blue and pink coloring its neck. Cassowaries are flightless - somewhat resembling an emu -, and so have evolved a set of compensatory traits that, when combined with the bird's massive size (up to two meters tall), grant it the esteemed title of World's Most Deadliest Bird by the Guinness Book of Records. Most notably, cassowaries get about at speeds up to 48 kph (about 30 mph) and use their signature three-toe claws for self-defense and fighting during mating season. While they generally shy away from confrontation, each cassowary claims a sizable territory for itself and readily threatens anyone entering its perimeter. Cassowaries emit deep huffs and booms in communication, the very same sound terms applied to the horrific rumbling noises made by crocodiles and, once upon a time, dinosaurs.

The cassowary becomes even more fantasy-esque on observation of its devastating fighting tactics: the cassowary doesn't merely poke - well, stab, I suppose is a more appropriate description -, it slashes and rips. It kills by knocking its foe to the ground with a heavy, downward strike from its clawed foot, and proceeds to dig in the victim's gut until satisfied. The cassowary might also utilize its impressive running speed to perform a jumping kick (not unlike a martial arts film) for a faster kill. Well-equipped as they are, cassowaries generally prefer to eat seeds and fallen fruits.
Female cassowaries are also unique in being one of few species who fight each other to claim male mates, then leave the male to nest and raise the young alone.

The Kea, a large (~46 cm, or 18 in.) alpine parrot species native to New Zealand, is especially remarkable for its curiosity and intelligence. Kea are both creative and destructive, known regionally for their aptitude in dismantling cars, satellite dishes, electric cables, and more. Kea are ingenuitive, tool-making birds that can recognize and solve puzzles, cooperate and analyze—reported numerous times by different studies presenting the birds with complex apparati to be operated successfully in order to receive bits of food upon completion. Tourists unaccustomed to the birds’ antics often fall prey to theft. Villages mountainside to the Kea, in contrast, are prepared with ridiculous setups including thick nets over their cars, wrapped wires, and enclosures over anything Kea-destructable (which is most things).

Interestingly, a group of Kea is called a circus, while a group of crows is a murder. The common crow is on-par—or better—with the Kea in terms of intellect. The crow’s resourcefulness has been recorded since ancient times, written as a symbol of ingenuity in Aesop’s fable The Crow and The Pitcher. The story, entailing a crow who placed stones into a pitcher until the water level was high enough to drink from, has since been empirically corroborated by replicating the scenario using wild crows. Many other tests, utilizing various apparati similar to the tests on Kea, have demonstrated the amazing problem-solving abilities of crows. Even out of constructed, laboratory setting, the common crow can be seen for its inventiveness: around the world crows have long been noted to fly above busy crosswalks, and drop shelled nuts into traffic. The birds then wait, just like the pedestrians on either side of the street, and retrieve their tire-cracked nuts once the walk signal changes.

Also similar to the Kea, crows will create tools to aid their collection of food. Such manipulations involve bending wires into hooks and sharpening sticks with their beaks. Untrained crows even understand analogical reasoning (e.g. Dog is to ground as bird is to what?), as determined by Smirnova et al from University of Iowa. In the study, crows accurately judged series of images for likeness and unlikeness, where no image was the same as another, per se, but some images correlated to others by analogy. The birds are emotionally developed, as well, displaying examples of both grudge and gratefulness. In a University of Washington study conducted by Marzluff et al, several researchers wearing unique (and mildly creepy) rubber masks of human faces captured, banded, and released wild crows. For several weeks beyond the initial banding, the campus crows would immediately recognize the researchers’ masks, start shouting in numbers much larger than the amount of birds initially captured, and dive-bomb the offending scientists. This suggests a sort of gang mentality among the crow community—violent word spread quickly about the crow-taggers. A friendlier account of the same mentality exists for Gabi Mann, who, having fed local crows daily for four years, has accumulated an assortment of crow-sized gifts from the crow community. These include shiny trinkets such as earrings, paperclips, beads, buttons, pieces of glass, washers, and more.

The list of fascinating avian specimens is endless. Behavioral characteristics aside, there are physiological aspects common to many birds that warrant appreciation. By now it might be well-known that most bird bones are hollow. It has long been postulated that this was evolutionarily favorable for flight by reducing weight, but through a study conducted by Elizabeth Dumont of the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, bone density of birds is highly relative to similarly sized families: rodents and bats. Dumont reasons that the ductility of the bones is made up in density where it lacks in solidity, effectively making the bird skeleton about as heavy as those of bats and rodents. So, while light-weightedness might not be the reason for having hollow bones, Dumont offers a comparison between birds and planes: both have hollow designs of high strength/stiffness-to-weight ratios, bent and fused in such ways that contour air pressure to their advantage.

The real prize of avian architecture, however, is the respiratory tract. Bird lungs are rather rigid and do not
expand nor contract. Instead, they are fed a continuous, unidirectional supply of air. In effect, they inhale and exhale simultaneously and continuously. Have you ever seen a bird panting for breath? The rigidity of the lungs allows for a high respiratory surface area conducive to the gas-exchanging “air capillaries,” similar to our mammalian aveoli, but much, much more efficient. Aveoli are spherical sacs inside mammalian lungs that harbor inhaled air and serve as the sites for gas exchange, oxygen for carbon dioxide. The sad thing is, aveoli tend to keep air quite stagnant. It takes approximately eight to ten deep breaths to fully renew all the air inside. Avian air capillaries are able to more fully coat the lungs because of the tissue's rigidity-- contraction would, speculatively, bunch the sites together and preclude proper breathing. As blood serves to shuttle oxygen and carbon dioxide, birds have a leg up over mammals in that regard, too. To quote Maina, “The total volume of blood in the bird lung constitutes as much as 36 % of the lung volume, with 58–80 % of it being in the blood capillaries. The pulmonary capillary blood volume in birds is 2.5–3 times greater than that in the lung of a mammal of equivalent body mass, where only 20% of it is found in the alveolar blood capillaries.”

Air moves through birds’ seven-to-nine lungs by pressure gradient- high air pressure in one lung will travel into the lower pressure of another. The series of transfers through the many lungs located all throughout the bird’s body will ensure a widespread distribution of oxygen. In combination with the more efficient air capillary system, it becomes easier to rationalize how birds are able to fly for days -sometimes weeks- on end during migration.

Feathers are another sleek, evolutionarily gifted feature of birds that contribute greatly to the overall magnificence of the avian class. Unfortunately, in consideration of the many different types of feathers, variable in important ways even species-to-species, it seems feathers might require a page or two on their own to adequately explain. Reaching again to Dumont’s comparison to airplanes, it should at least be noted that each facet of a feather has its place in the aerodynamic properties of a bird in flight.

Birds are fantastically unique in more ways than were counted off here; surely most of us appreciate the pleasant variety in birdsong (the crow is my personal favorite), not to mention the singular morphology of birds such as the hummingbird and the birds-of-paradise. They even hail from the proud, prehistoric lineage of phorusrhacids, otherwise called the terror birds. The terror birds were huge, flightless and carnivorous, putting the cassowary to shame in both speed and brawn. They donned long spikes on their dwarf wings, coincidentally just as the cassowary wields today. Though they’ve been extinct since the Mesozoic Era, I like to think the best of them still funneled through in small ways. In conclusion, evolution has turned out a great many designs for countless creatures—though I daresay it dumped the best bits into the Aves class.

In 1990, the Supreme Court held in the case Employment Division v. Smith, that the government no longer had to show a compelling interest that justified the overriding of an individual’s freedom to religious practice. In response to the ensuing anger that followed that decision, in 1993 Congress drafted and implemented the Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA), which was signed into law by President Bill Clinton. The law required that governments “…not substantially burden religious exercise without compelling justification,” and furthermore, that “…the compelling interest test as set forth in prior Federal court rulings is a workable test for striking sensible balances between religious liberty and competing prior governmental interests.” Then, in a 1997 case, City of Boerne v. Flores, the Supreme Court ruled that the RFRA could not be applied to the states. The majority opinion led by Justice Kennedy believed that Congress had exceeded its constitutional authority, for it was not within their power to decide the way in which states could enforce the restrictions within the RFRA.

While much contention continues to arise as a result of Arkansas and Indiana’s Religious Freedom Restoration Acts, there are currently nineteen states (excluding Arkansas and Indiana) that have drafted and implemented versions of the RFRA law, although those states otherwise classify LGBT individuals as a protected class of citizens. On March 26th, 2015, Indiana Governor Mike Pence signed Indiana Senate Bill 101, otherwise known as the Indiana religious freedom bill. SB 101 was approved by an almost unanimous vote of 40-10. After this enactment, a public outcry ensued with regard to the limitations the public believed to be imposed by the legislation on the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community. Due to the public outrage, Governor Pence amended the legislation a few days after the initial signing, where he extended protection to the LGBT community from discrimination under the law. For the first time in the state of Indiana’s history, LGBT individuals were acknowledged as an assumed protected class.

SB 101 explicitly “[p]rohibits a governmental entity from substantially burdening a person’s exercise of religion, even if the burden results from a rule of general applicability, unless the governmental entity can demonstrate that the burden: (1) is in furtherance of a compelling governmental interest; and (2) is the least restrictive means of furthering the compelling governmental interest. [SB 101] provides a procedure for remedying a violation.” Additionally, the bill specifies that the law “…applies to the implementation or application of a law regardless of whether the state or any other governmental entity or official is a party to a proceeding implementing or applying the law. [SB 101] Prohibits an applicant, employee, or former employee from pursuing certain causes of action against a private employer.”

Despite the number of states that currently have a version of the RFRA, the recent public outrage is directed almost exclusively at the Indiana state government. While supporters of the bill suggest that it merely prohibits the state from making individuals provide services that are otherwise contrary to personal religious beliefs, opponents of the bill suggest that it is precisely this aspect that would allow businesses to turn away LGBT customers with impunity.

There are many companies that intend on doing less business with Indiana. Some of those that plan to halt business, or that have expressed the most concern, are the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA), GenCon, an annual gaming convention, and
Salesforce, a company located in California, among others. Other businesses and executives, such as Yelp and Apple, have urged other states not to follow the initiatives undertaken by Indiana. In an “open” letter, Jeremy Stoppelman, the CEO of Yelp, stated, “[t]hese laws set a terrible precedent that will likely harm the broader economic health of the states where they have been adopted, the businesses currently operating in those states and, most importantly, the consumers who could be victimized under these laws.” Despite the controversy there are still individuals who believe the bill closely follows the federally enacted RFRA, in accordance to the other states that implement the same.

Governor Pence, responding to the backlash, said of SB 101, “[it is] to help protect churches, Christian businesses and individuals from those who want to punish them because of their Biblical beliefs.”

Similarly, on March 31st, 2015, Arkansas State Senate passed HB 1228, also a religious freedom bill. Arkansas’ bill is directed toward the heightening of judicial scrutiny in course with religion discrimination. Governor Asa Hutchinson, who initially praised Governor Pence on signing Indiana’s religious freedom bill, vowed to sign HB 1228 once it reached his desk. However, the Arkansas state government also began to receive public pressure to scrap or amend their own bill. In a statement released by the CEO of Wal-Mart, Doug McMillon asks of Governor Hutchinson to veto the bill. In the statement, McMillon said, “Every day in our stores, we see firsthand the benefits diversity and inclusion have on our associates, customers and communities we serve. It all starts with our core basic belief of respect for the individual. Today’s passage of H.B. 1228 threatens to undermine the spirit of inclusion present throughout the state of Arkansas and does not reflect the values we proudly uphold. For these reasons, we are asking Governor Hutchinson to veto this legislation.”

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For the past fifteen years, four simple syllables have rattled around and around inside the heads of Americans the country over: Patriot Act—two small words that have become synonymous with the perma-suspicious, ever-ready state of the US post-9/11.

Signed into effect by former President George W. Bush on October 26th, 2001—just a few short weeks after the September 11th attacks that rocked the country—The USA Patriot act (itself an acronym for: Uniting and Strengthening America by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism Act of 2001) set into motion a plan for defending America from future terrorist attacks, be they domestic or foreign. Outlined through ten distinct titles, the Patriot Act’s guidelines provide protocol for securing America’s safety through increased domestic surveillance, allowing the government more freedom in regards to measures such as communications interception and border patrol. Several of the policies discussed in the act, mostly pertaining to the government’s collection of surveillance, were set to expire or “sunset” on December 31, 2001. However, the months proceeding the provisions’ expiration saw two revisions of the act. A much-modified version of the act was passed by the Senate in July of 2005, while a version that sought to keep the act’s original language was passed in the House. Ultimately, a meeting was held to consolidate the two reauthorized acts into one, though the emergent act left most of the Senate-passed stipulations for surveillance on the cutting room floor. Former President George W. Bush again signed this new bill into effect in early 2006. In May of 2011, five years after the reauthorized bill’s initial signing, President Barack Obama signed the PATRIOT Sunsets Extension Act of 2011, which extended the Patriot Act’s reach in regards to wiretapping, business record searches, and “lone wolf” terrorist surveillance for another four years.

Most of the key provisions extended under Obama’s
signing have to deal with Title II of the Patriot Act—the section the deals with government surveillance procedures, especially in regards to electronic records. The law’s scope allows for interception of any communications, via trap-and-trace or pen register methods, which may aid in the prevention of future terrorist attacks. These surveillance procedures are generally carried out “ex parte,” meaning that from the investigation’s start, the impetus for the search and seizure of records may not be disclosed so as to not jeopardize the investigation. These provisions have drawn ire from vocal opponents of the act who attest that Title II undermines the civil liberties of United States citizens and contributes to a totalitarian-state of fear mongering. This backlash has widened in recent years in part because of Edward Snowden.

Snowden, a former NSA contractor, sparked unbelievable controversy in June 2013 when he released thousands of classified documents gained during his time as a contractor for Booz Allen Hamilton as well as Dell to various media outlets. The leaked files, which revealed a large global surveillance operation, run through the NSA with the cooperation of telecom companies and various European governments. Formally charged with violating the Espionage Act and stealing Government property, Snowden sought asylum status while holed up in Moscow’s Sheremetyevo International Airport for twenty-one days until being granted one-year’s asylum in Russia. This asylum has now transformed into a three-year residency permit that allows Snowden travel permissions, both foreign and domestic.

Snowden’s leak sparked controversy not only because of what it uncovered, but who was complicit in the activities as well. Among the documents released by Snowden to the press in 2013 was a government court order, secretly issued, requiring Verizon to present the NSA with millions of American phone records daily. Further documents revealed that the NSA had been searching contact lists, email content, and had even secretly tapped into Google in an attempt to accrue user data. Lauded as a revolutionary hero by the left and derided as a slanderous traitor by the right, Snowden and his practices appear to have no middle ground.

Snowden’s leak came at a critical time, as the three provisions extended by Obama in 2011—wire-tapping, business record searches, and “lone wolf” terrorist surveillance—are set to expire this year. The past months have seen congress race to reform the provisions in time for the June 1st expiration date. Reform rather than expiration has gathered strong opposition from an increasingly technology-reliant public who feel the government’s surveillance methods go too far and in many cases prove extraneous. As the 2016 Presidential race gears up and uncertainty looms in the Patriot Act’s horizon, it increasingly appears that the public are calling for a more transparent, accountable government.

The Portland Spectrum urges students, if they are so moved, to contact their senators with opinions regarding the upcoming renewal of The Patriot Act. Contact information for Oregon’s Senator’s may be found below:

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You may or may not have noticed that Vinyl has made a bit of a comeback within the last few years. As of 2006, Vinyl sales were at an all-time low, selling 0.9 million units across the United States in total. In the years following, sales steadily rose, with the largest increase occurring between 2013—in which 6.1 million LPs were sold—and 2014, which topped out at 9.2 million units. While these numbers still pale in comparison to those of digital albums, CDs, and revenue generated through music streaming services, the question remains: why? Why now? Why the renewed interest in a technology that, by and large, hasn’t been considered commercially or technically viable for more than two decades?

As Bob Dylan might say, “The answer, my friend, is blowin’ in the wind”. Some could argue that it’s the product of counterculturalism in an era in which everything is digitized. Others might attribute the Vinyl renaissance to “Record Store Day”, a movement pioneered in 2007 by producer and technician Michael Kurtz to reinvigorate LP sales and simultaneously keep independent music stores in business. “If you want to hear what the recording is supposed to sound like, you pretty much have to have it on vinyl”, Kurtz said in a 2012 interview with Forbes.

And thus we arrive at perhaps the most feasible, albeit the most muddled, explanation for Vinyl’s triumphant resurrection...dynamics. Chances are that if you’ve ever known anyone who loves Vinyl, you’ve heard it said at least once: “It just sounds better”. Or maybe you’ve heard that Vinyl has a “warmth” to it that other audio platforms simply don’t. But what is the basis of such comments? Is there any merit to these insinuations?

Well, yes. And no.
By all technical definitions, compact discs boast numerous indisputable advantages over Vinyl records. CDs have a wider dynamic range than Vinyl, meaning that they’re inherently capable of rendering audio with more exacting precision than Vinyl. CDs have a signal-to-noise ratio, or SNR, of 90 decibels on average, whereas the average SNR of Vinyl is situated at around 70 decibels. Simply put, a higher SNR value means less undesirable ‘noise’ is factored into the end result. In a nutshell -- CDs are by all means capable of producing a more ‘pristine’ rendering of the source material.

As an Analog format, Vinyl is capable of reproducing frequencies higher than 22kHz, which is the cutoff of the available frequency range on any CD. This might seem more desirable on paper, but the vast majority of humans are only capable of hearing frequencies up to 20kHz, so there’s no real benefit there. Unless you want to drive your cat, who is capable of hearing almost two full octaves higher than you are, to the point of mental anguish.

That signature Vinyl “warmth” that remains beloved by so many is really just harmonic distortion brought about by any number of factors. From stereo equipment to the inherent limitations of the format, Vinyl playback is subject to more audible ‘surface noise’ and harmonic distortion than CDs, which, subjectively speaking, can create the perception of added richness or warmth to the human ear.

So, with all the points in favor of the Compact Disc, why, then, is Vinyl making a comeback?

Somewhere down the line, music started getting loud. With the advent of the CD in the mid-to-late 80s and its greater capacity for dynamic range, along with the new audio mastering techniques the format made possible, the industry began to pump out albums that were louder...and louder...and louder still. The thing about Vinyl records is that they could only get so loud, and CDs could get a lot louder. And that’s what became the norm; rather than maximize the potential of the CD’s wider dynamic range, it became commonplace to maximize loudness instead, effectively drowning out the dynamic range entirely.

Through increasingly heavy compression of any given audio track, producers began pumping out albums engineered to pack a loud and consistent ‘punch’. The difference between the ‘quiet’ and ‘loud’ parts of songs grew less and less noticeable. Nearly equivalent loudness across the spectrum became the standard practice. Take just about any modern track from a big-name artist and import it into a free audio software platform such as Audacity and you can see exactly what this looks like. The waveform will appear ‘squashed’, chunky, and almost entirely even-leveled throughout.

The average consumer might not be able to place their finger on why, exactly, the latest album from their favorite artist sounds “better” on Vinyl than its CD or Digital counterpart. The plain and simple truth is that, more likely than not, what they’re hearing is the presence of a dynamic range that we have become almost unaccustomed to in modern times. Despite Vinyl’s recent popularity, its demographic is still small enough that ‘risks’ can be taken in regards to sound engineer-
The album doesn’t have to be compressed to hell and back to sell, which gives the music ample room to breathe. It re-introduces a natural element to the listening experience that’s been drowned out in the ‘loudness wars’ of recent years.

It’s not that Vinyl sounds better, but that the process of crafting a record hasn’t been entirely tainted by the absurd notions of modern mastering techniques.

And while there are certainly sloppily done Vinyl records sourced directly from the digital master with no effort to differentiate, many records are mixed and mastered to decidedly different standards than their CD or digital counterparts; standards that hearken back to a time when a track didn’t need to bombard the listener with a wall of sound. Each individual component of a song was treated lovingly, accordingly, and separately. And that’s something special.


Higher education costs, coupled with a steady uptick in the cost of tuition, are putting some students under financial duress. On average, Oregon public universities’ tuition and fees have increased by 41 percent since 2007, according to O-Live.

Due to the PSU board of trustees voting on March 12, 2015 to raise tuition rates, the long-standing trend of tuition increases will continue unless Oregon’s seven public universities’ request to the Oregon Legislature for $755 million is approved, The Oregonian reports. PSU’s tuition is scheduled to rise by 4.8 percent for in-state PSU undergraduate students, 3.2 for resident graduate students, 3.1 for out-of-state undergraduates, and 3.2 for out-of-state graduate students for the 2015-2016 school year.

Out-of-state PSU undergraduates, with their tuition and fees for 2014-2015 at $18,723, attend PSU at a relative bargain when compared to the out-of-state tuition and fees of neighboring University of California Santa Barbara, whose out-of-state tuition and fees of $36,738 is nearly twice PSU’s. For an out-of-state student, PSU is a bargain even compared to Washington State University, whose out-of-state students will pay $25,480 in tuition and fees for the 2015-2016 school year.

I spoke with PSU’s Communication Director Scott Gallagher, regarding why PSU decided to raise the tuition for in-state students by a higher percentage than out-of-state students. “Who wants to study on a beach in the sunshine?” jokes Gallagher, speaking of how PSU justifies its pricing for out-of-state students, and the stiff competition faced by PSU in attracting that demographic. “Out-of-state students being driven away by too-high tuition is always a concern,” says Gallagher.

Some have pointed fingers at PSU’s administration, claiming it makes too much money. The person bearing the brunt of this criticism is generally President Wim Wiewel, whose total compensation package totals $513,000. Portland State University Student Union and their supporters singled out Wiewel and his compensation at the 15 Now protest on April 15th that shut down the Smith cafeteria. "Being the president of PSU isn’t an easy job or a 50- or 60-hour-a-week job," says
Gallagher when justifying Wiewel’s compensation. “It’s a twenty-four seven job.”

Other members of administration are also frequently singled out. Currently there are 95 PSU administrative staff making more than $100,000 each. Unrepresented PSU employees haven’t had a raise in 2 years, however, quoting Gallagher, noting that every department at PSU has had to increasingly do more with less pay. Gallagher also pointed to the rising costs associated with SEIU- and AAUP-represented staff. According to the PSU Board of Trustees, between 2013 and 2015, the cost of AAUP-represented employees’ salaries increased by 6.52 to 8.93 percent. For those years, the salaries of SEIU-represented staff increased by 3.5 to 10.61 percent. All unrepresented staff salaries increased by 0 to 4 percent during the same time period.

However, a recent letter from Wiewel details a plan for salary pools for such unrepresented employees. According to Wiewel, the pools –effective July 1, 2015– will be set up by each division, totalling 3 percent of unrepresented staff total salaries. The extra funds, whose sourcing remains ambiguous, are to be allocated based on merit and equity.

I spoke with an in-state business major (requested to remain anonymous), whose family immigrated to the United States when he was very young. “If PSU were to help him find a job when he graduates, then he would not mind the cost of tuition rising,” he said. “Like how after you graduate from Harvard they have jobs lined up,” he said. “If you’re gonna ask to raise the money up, guarantee you’re gonna help me find a job afterwards like those Ivy League schools.”

He goes on to say that another problem facing students is the built-in quarterly fees, such as the student health fee, which is currently a quarterly charge of 119 dollars.

“I understand that some people cannot afford it and are trying to help those people out. We don’t live in a communist society. I work hard for my money. I only work 30 hours a week, [and] books cost too much. This is how I see this country, everywhere you go everybody is trying to milk you. When is it going to stop? If [tuition and fees] don’t stop going up, people will go crazy.”

Anonymous PSU Student

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Anonymous PSU Student
Born January 20, 1946 in Missoula, Montana

The words “cult following” are practically synonymous with David Lynch, whose career has polarized audiences more consistently than perhaps any other director to date. His filmography boasts ten feature-length pictures, several shorts, and several more TV series. Besides film he has dealt with nearly every artistic endeavor imaginable, from his Industrial Symphony No. 1, which he co-produced with Angelo Badalamenti, to the nightclub he opened in Paris, named Silencio. He was even originally offered to direct Star Wars VI: Return of the Jedi but turned it down because he “…never really like science fiction…” and “…Star Wars was totally George’s thing.”

Lynch started far from the stardom he enjoys now however. His first major feature, Eraserhead, was funded in part by his parents and spanned several years to create as he repeatedly ran out of money. With limited funds and freshly out of college the director created many of the sets himself. “You just work until you get it to feel correct,” Lynch said about his work on the film, “I knew what I wanted because of the ideas I got.”

The TV series Twin Peaks in particular has garnered a devout cult following despite the series short-lived (2 seasons) existence. Showtime’s announcement of a reboot of the series featuring Lynch back in the director’s chair this past October generated a lot of excitement, which was dashed earlier this month when Lynch announced he would be unable to do the series.

“I love the world of Twin Peaks and wish things could have worked out differently.”

– David Lynch

“I left because not enough money was offered to do the script the way I felt it needed to be done,” Lynch tweeted on
April 5, later stating that, “I love the world of Twin Peaks and wish things could have worked out differently.” Showtime released a statement shortly after Lynch’s announcement stating that, “...we believed we were working towards solutions...SHOWTIME also loves the world of Twin Peaks and we continue to hold out hope that we can bring it back in all its glory with its extraordinary creators, David Lynch and Mark Frost, at its helm.”

Twin Peaks originally aired in 1989 on ABC and quickly attracted a strong cult following. The show is an eerie murder-mystery revolving around the death of a high-school prom queen named Laura Palmer, and is set in a small northwestern mill town that bears the same name of the series. Lynch co-wrote the series with Mark Frost after the moderate success of his controversial film Blue Velvet.

“We started with the image of a body washing up on a lake,” Frost said about writing the original script for Twin Peaks, “We knew the town had a lumber mill, but the specifics we weren’t sure of.” Frost and Lynch discussed the narrative in depth for three months before they wrote the script in ten days.

By 1990 Twin Peaks ranked among the most critically acclaimed series on television. Its juxtaposition of the bizarre and macabre against cheery small-town America disturbed and delighted audiences, but the show’s devout cult following was not enough to save it from an untimely end. As viewer ratings declined mid-second season the series’ end was in sight and Twin Peaks aired its final episode on June 10, 1991. A feature length prequel film titled Twin Peaks: Fire Walk With Me followed the show, but both critics and audience members received it poorly.

David Lynch continued making films and furthered his reputation as surreal and quirky. Following Fire Walk With Me Lynch directed Lost Highway, a “psychogenic fugue” that uses fever-dream logic, rather than conventional narrative structure. It starred Bill Pullman and Patricia Arquette with bit roles from musicians Henry Rollins and Marilyn Manson, the film was also Robert Blake’s final role. The film’s lack of narrative structure and striking scenes of sex and violence create a baffling film that Roger Ebert compared to kissing a mirror, “you like what you see, but it’s not much fun and kind of cold.”

After Lost Highway Lynch would go on to direct The Straight Story (widely considered his most conventional film), Mulholland Drive (which was originally set to be TV series and stars Naomi Watts), and Inland Empire along with several other short films and documentaries. Each of his projects (with perhaps the exception of The Straight Story) are brilliantly bizarre, vivid, and hypnotic. Hopefully he and Showtime can reach a consensus so the auteur can continue to wage his war on all things conventional.
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