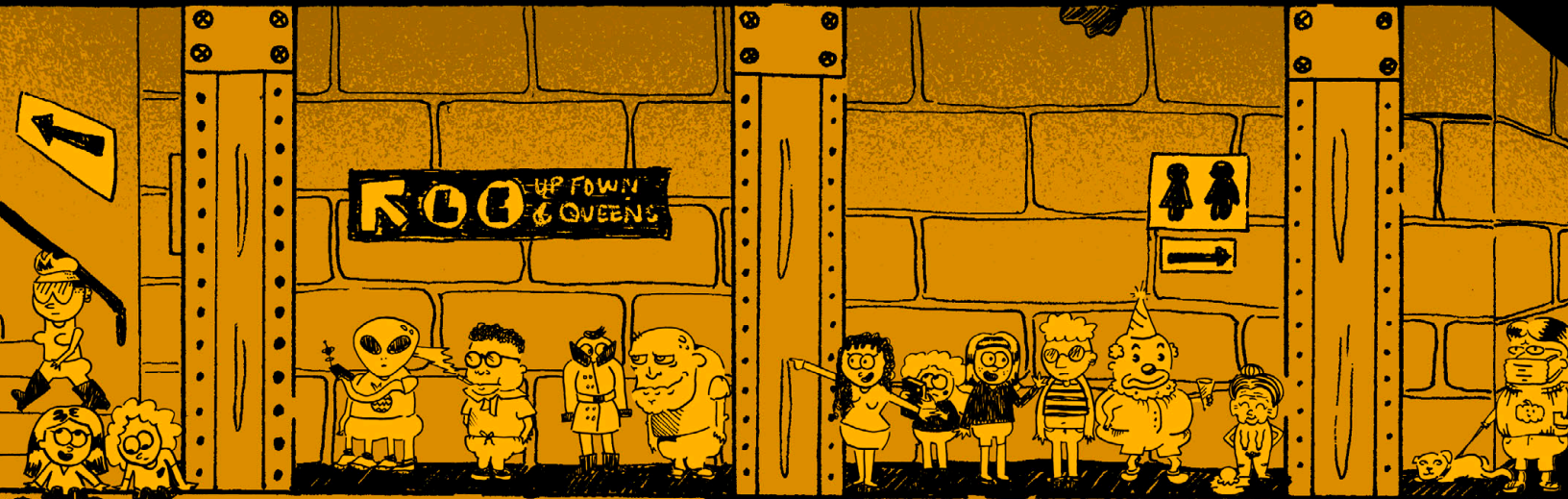
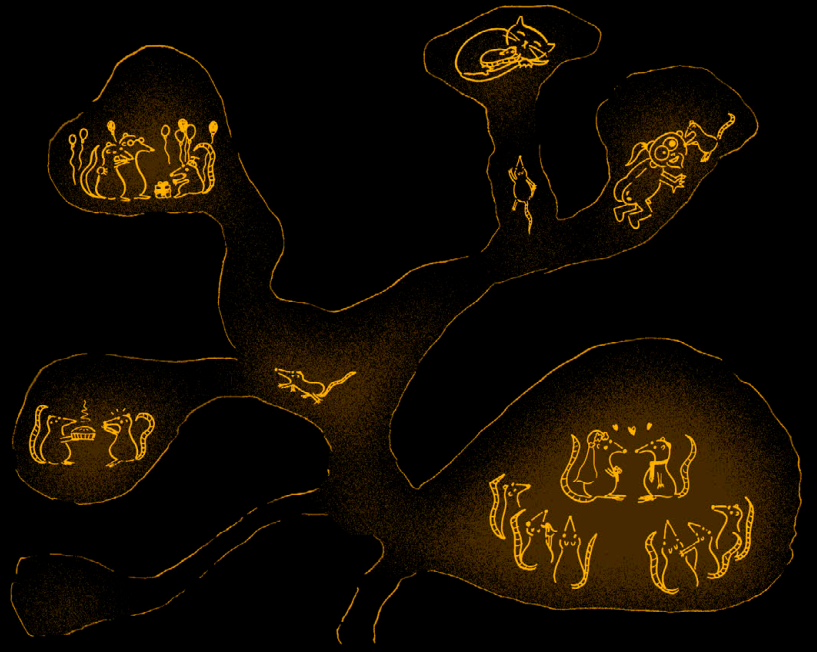




VOL. 43 ISSUE 1



**A C** DOWNTOWN & BROOKLYN

MIND THE GAP!



THE GAP!

**N B** CENTRAL PARK & MADISON SQUARE

**Anemoia**  
By Nick Wurm  
1

## NYC Reopens

By Elisha Asif  
5

**Perseverance and Curiosity:  
A Conversation with NASA  
Engineer Mallory Lefland**

By Sam Rowland  
11

**The Western  
Colonization of  
Pakistan's Atmosphere**

By Jeni Dhodary  
17

**Framing Your Husband For  
Murder Is A #Girlboss Move  
— Or Despicable**

By Melanie Navarro  
21

**Turning to Yoga for  
Environmental Sustainability**

By Melanie Formosa  
26

**Dancing Without Her**

By Janet Chow  
29

**The Legacy of Lisa Simpson**

By Emily Scott  
33

**What Do You Do When  
Someone You Love  
Doesn't Feel The Same?**

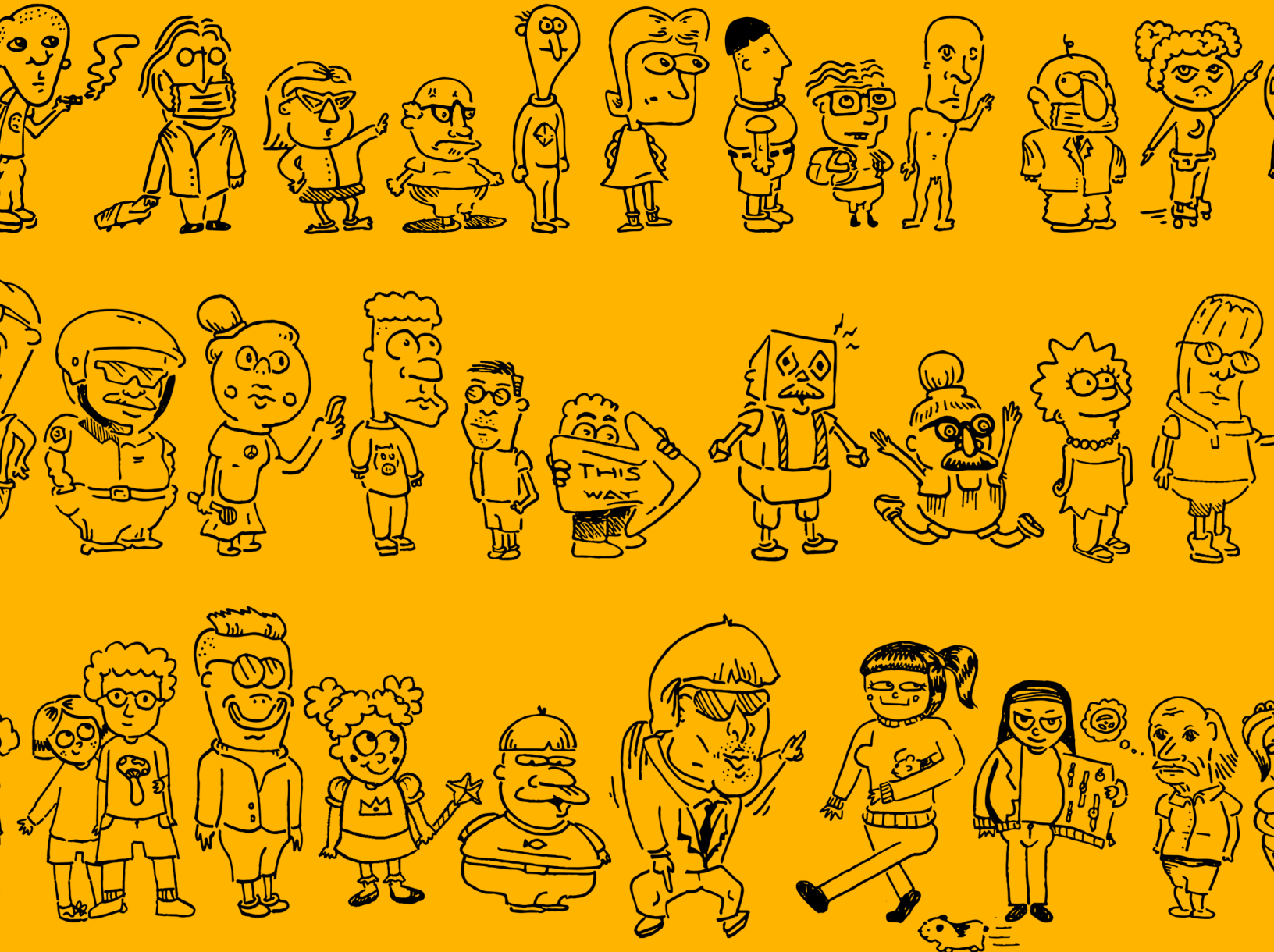
By Justin Ligasan  
35

**Promo Copy: Joey Skidmore  
and Beatle Bob**

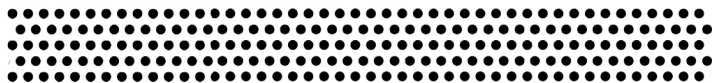
By Keating Zelenke  
and Josh Joseph  
37

**Ecstatic Construction &  
Sacred Observation**

By Jason Jenkins  
47



# Letter from the Editor



By Josh Joseph

I've been putting this off for a while, searching for what to say. I've been in the Peet's in the GLS (now deVries) Center, collecting fallen bagel seeds in the lid of my cup or slowly chewing the ice from the bottom of a latte. I've been in the passenger seat of my car, thoughts battling the road noise on a three-hour downstate trip back to campus. I've been in the Press office, full of people for the first time in a long time, laying out some of the pieces you see now.

But the time is finally right, I think — and not only because I've pretty much run out the clock. I just got back to my dorm, cold rainwater creeping up the back of my legs. It reminded me of a different rainstorm, the one I wrote about in this space last March, that ran through the pipe that stretches from the floor to the ceiling of the office as I sat there, alone.

So much has changed since then. Days and weeks and months and years seem to have passed in the long blink of the pandemic. More of our friends graduated. Vaccines gave us a glimmer of hope that the Delta variant snatched back in record time. But the change that hits me as I write this is a little less specific, and harder to pin down: that year-long isolation, the kind of pressure that pushed the sky flat against the ground and made everything seem futile, has been lifted, and in its place now sits a lovely, jittery chaos.

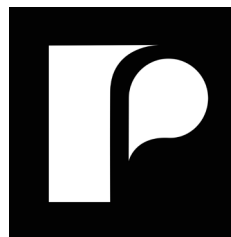
In the last few weeks, I've seen more people on campus than I thought possible. On the first Friday of the semester, we stood in the thick August heat for the first real, in-person involvement fair since the very beginning of 2020. There, we handed out the remainder of our March issues, about 300 magazines in total. There was a kind of bittersweet irony to what we were doing, handing out copies of something we cobbled together in another time. We met over 70 new, interested and interesting people that day, and I'm happy to say I've seen a good number of those faces at our meetings since.

This issue represents a step forward. The stories within have been collected in the months since last March, but together they are the first magazine made in this fresh hell of a semester. Sam talks to a NASA engineer, Elisha photographs the reopening of New York City over the summer, Emily writes about her connection to Lisa Simpson, and Keating and I talk about a rocker-auteur and an exotic dancer we discovered through the vinyl records in our archive. (I won't spoil it, but it might be one of the most fun things I've ever done, so please check it out.)

I love making magazines with my friends at the Press. It's my favorite thing about Stony Brook. I only have one year left here before I leave, something I can't believe even as I write it. Some of us here have just one semester, and I don't know what we'll do without them.

This week, I've burnt myself out a few times, rushing this issue to the finish line and wishing I could push back the hands of time. But the Press rattles forward, and so do I.

I can't wait to see what comes next.



## THE STONY BROOK PRESS

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2021

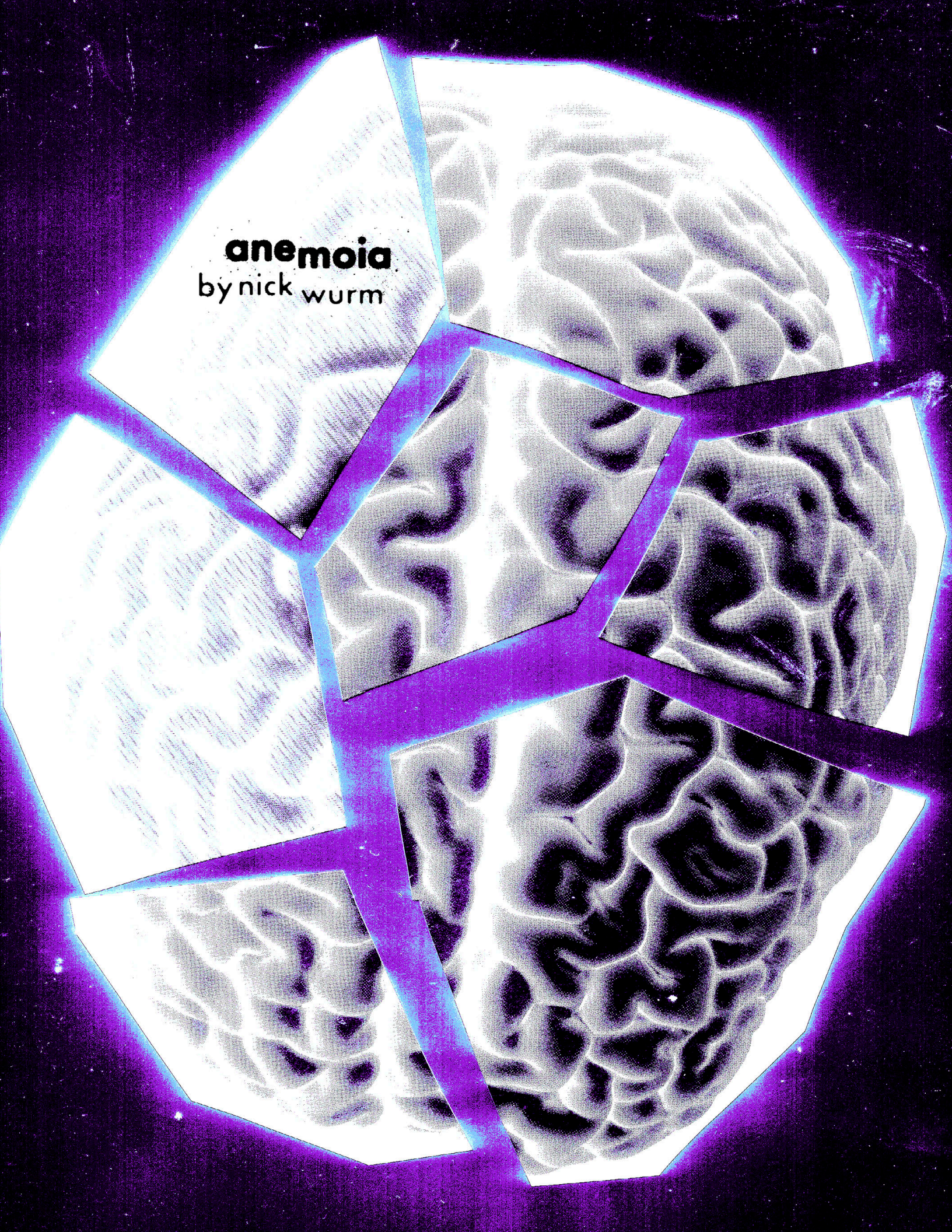
Executive Editor	Josh Joseph
Managing Editor	Nick Wurm
Associate Editor	Emily Scott
Business Manager	Elisha Asif
News Editors	Janet Chow Melanie Formosa
Opinions Editor	Falah Jalali
Features Editors	Sarah Beckford Keating Zelenke
Culture Editors	Sarah Beckford Julio Taku
Sports Editor	Anthony Leon
Music Editors	Emily Scott Julio Taku
Science Editors	Arun Nair Sam Rowland
Satire Editor	Tuhin Chakrabarti
Lead Copy Editor	Melanie Formosa
Multimedia Editors	Elisha Asif Falah Jalali
Graphics Editors	Komal Grewal Keating Zelenke Cris Zhang
Ombud Team	Jeni Dhodary Justin Ligan

## JOIN THE PRESS

The Press is located on the third floor of the SAC and is always looking for artists, writers, graphic designers, critics, photographers and creatives!

Meetings are Wednesdays in SAC 307K at 1PM and 7:30PM.

**anemoia**  
by nick wurm



# Remembrance

weighs on me sometimes in a way I struggle to describe — whenever I try to talk about it, I find myself tripping over words like an art snob in front of the Mona Lisa.

We all carry stuff with us wherever we go. Sometimes it's whatever mood we're in, sometimes it's a song we just can't get out of our heads and sometimes we're literally carrying something. Lately, especially after everything that happened last year, I find myself carrying around two words in particular: "the past."

I'm not talking about baggage or regrets — I have those too, same as everyone, but this is different. This is a kind of nostalgia, an inexplicable yearning for a time I've only ever idealized. Sepia-toned and washed out, grainy recollections haunt me — like my brain is less an organ and more an Austin, Tex. movie theater only showing stuff from the '60s, 1972 at the latest. These 8mm memories come and go at odd moments, bringing with them a warm, bittersweet, full-bodied feeling — almost as if I was watching the rain from a room with a well-fed fireplace.

I don't know where it comes from, what deep space inside my head it flows out of like a purple-tinged mist to color my day, but I've learned to recognize some of the triggers. Light songs with deep bass — later Tame Impala hits just right — and certain places and activities — the Press office, the Met, used bookstores, small downtowns, driving on a sunny day along winding roads — bring this feeling in spades.

It's hard to label — you might just call it nostalgia but that doesn't quite fit. I'm not so much reminiscing about things as experiencing feelings that, while familiar, are tied to something foreign. Nostalgia is associated with concrete time — a thing that happened, was personally experienced or just is. What I'm feeling, and imagining I'm remembering, is more fluid — like a heavily romanticized, pop culture-infused moving picture of a time and place that does not exist, and never did.





• And every time it leaves, every time I think about it, I feel that sweet sadness — not because it's gone, but because it's all that's left behind.

A new, old word I've been keeping in my back pocket is *anemoia*. Eight years ago, author John Koenig coined the word in his *Dictionary of Obscure Sorrows*, defining it as “nostalgia for a time you've never known.”

“Imagine stepping through the frame into a sepia-tinted haze, where you could sit on the side of the road and watch the locals passing by. Who lived and died before any of us arrived here, who sleep in some of the same houses we do, who look up at the same moon, who breathe the same air, feel the same blood in their veins — and live in a completely different world.”

**It's like when you're floating in the ocean; the water is calm at the moment, the breeze is warm, the sun's not too bad — but you know the next wave is coming.**

Things feel like they're ending, and I wouldn't say I'm anxious about it, but it does make me a little sad. It's like when you're floating in the ocean; the water is calm at the moment, the breeze is warm, the sun's not too bad — but you know the next wave is coming.

George Harrison once said “all things must pass,” and so too do those feelings. The washed-out colors of every nostalgic fantasy I've ever had must, at some point, fade away. ■

**Things feel like they're ending, and I wouldn't say I'm anxious about it, but it does make me a little sad.**

I feel less like a people-watcher than an active background character. I'm the guy driving past James Taylor in *Two Lane Blacktop*. I am out of focus in the audience while Hendrix burns his Stratocaster at Monterey Pop. I'm high at another fire while a drunk Jack Nicholson philosophizes with Dennis Hopper in *Easy Rider* — until I'm not; and try as I might to keep it, the feeling fades like a dream in the morning light.

As I've gotten older, this feeling has become more pronounced when it appears. I joke that it's just my mortality calling, like a slow-moving mid-life crisis, and tell myself flowery bullshit like “I'm leaving the springtime of my youth and entering the summer —” and maybe it is, maybe I am. COVID-19 has given everyone more time to think, and I've been thinking a lot about time — how much has passed, how much I have left, how much I've experienced, how much I haven't. Sometimes I wish I could go back and freeze everything for a few years, but I know I'd have to move forward eventually.



### 16mm Memories

Oh when I was young  
and time was still  
infinite

In those halcyon days  
of my Springtime  
youth

Before the bills and  
the spills and  
collapses

When I was still  
walking down the road  
to you

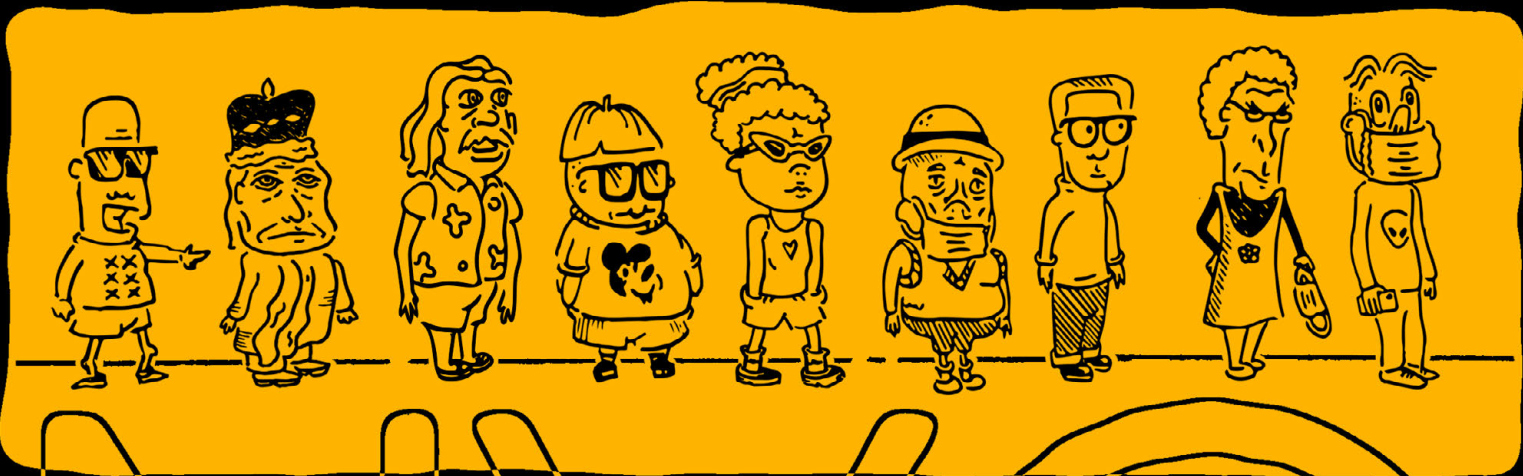
Now these technicolor  
memories  
are grainy  
and fading fast

But still listen close  
and you can imagine  
the soundtrack

It's the tune I  
was whistling,  
before you walked into  
the room.

I wrote this in  
Feb. 2020 when I  
was first trying to  
articulate things.  
It is the seed of  
this piece.





NYC

REOPENS







PHOTOS BY  
ELISHA ASIF  
ILLUSTRATIONS BY  
KEATING ZELEENKE  
AND JOSH JOSEPH



After a long year, New York City reopened for good on June 15 with the statewide lifting of all COVID-19 precautions. New York is embracing crowds once again; however, the remnants of the pandemic remain through occasional sightings of masked faces.







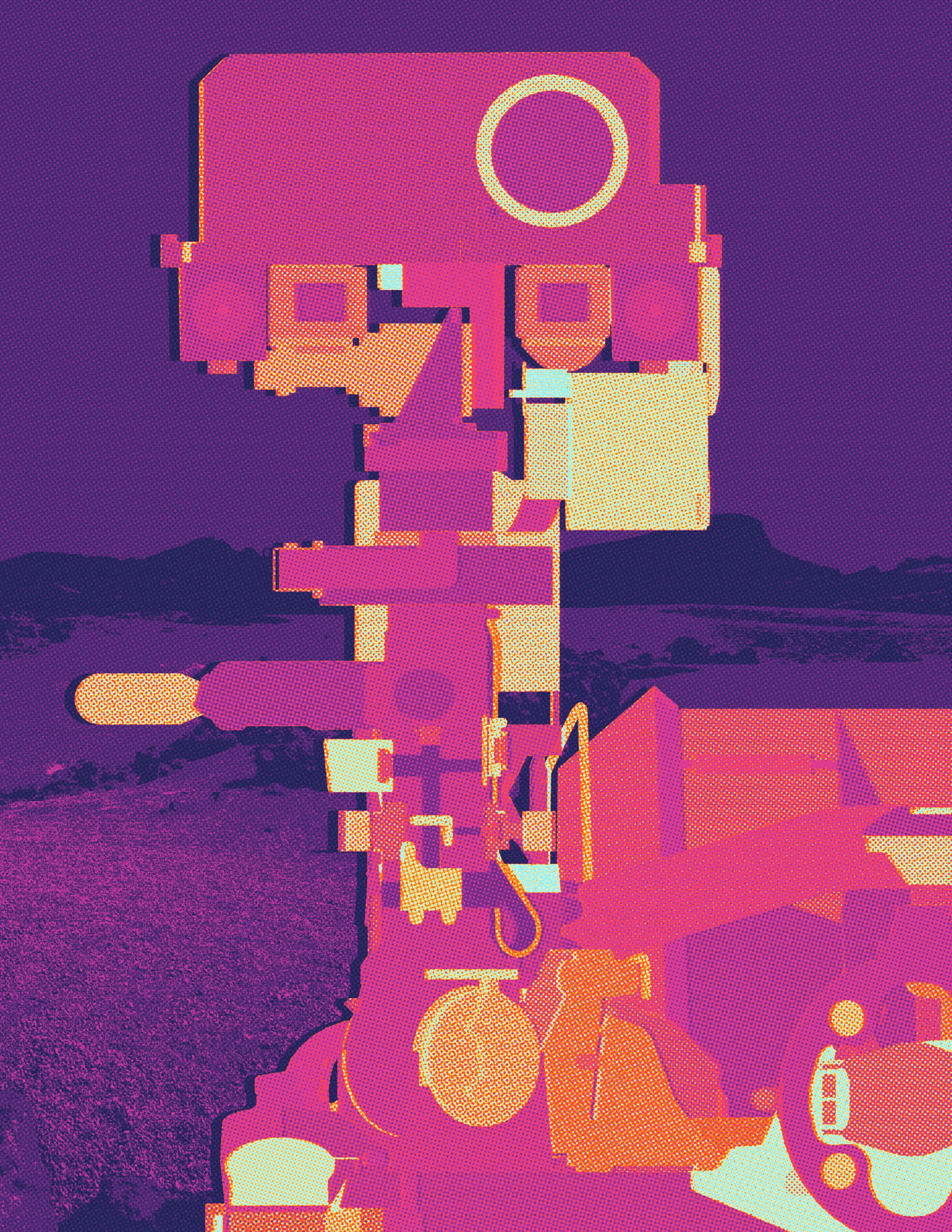


# PERSEVERANCE & CURIOSITY

## A Q&A WITH NASA ENGINEER MALLORY LEFLAND

BY SAM ROWLAND

**O**ver the past 7 years, Mallory Lefland has worked in various capacities at NASA's Jet Propulsion Lab (JPL) — most recently on the MARS 2020 project that celebrated the successful landing of the Perseverance Rover and Ingenuity Helicopter on the red planet in February. Her main jobs as an aerospace and systems engineer involved conducting multiple tests to find potential flaws and make improvements on the project. The Press recently sat down with Lefland over Zoom to talk about her career, her ambitions and how it felt to be part of NASA's latest Mars mission.



**What got you interested in aerospace engineering in the first place?**

I'm not really sure how I settled on aerospace engineering. Looking back, it seems pretty random — but I think it had to do with my love of airplanes, my love of flying. I also thought that aerospace engineering was really specific, and I wouldn't have to make a lot of career decisions after that point — which sounded nice. But as you get into any field, you realize how vast and varied every kind of job is. You really still need to pinpoint exactly what it is you want to do. So I don't know, I wish I had a great story for how I got here, but it all feels pretty random and fortuitous, to be honest.

I mean, I think there's a lot of people who can pinpoint it. I have friends who watched Star Trek and saw a specific thing and said "I want to do that." And then they have their sights set on NASA. And I definitely know that there were definitely a lot of people I was in college with who wanted to be pilots, or wanted to work for NASA and kind of had that goal their whole life. I just think there's an equal number of us who just sort of fell into it.

**I understand that becoming a professional engineer is a four-year program, plus four years of shadowing another professional engineer, as an engineering intern. Is that how it went for you?**

So, I'm not a professional engineer. There are some fields where you need to be a professional engineer, I think in civil engineering, in order to sign specific documents for buildings and things like that. For aerospace engineers, I don't know a single aerospace engineer who goes through an FE (Fundamentals of Engineering) or PE (Principles and Practice of Engineering) test\*. That's not like a requirement for any aerospace job I've ever seen.

**So you're saying you did a lot of undergrad internships, completed a bachelor's degree at Georgia Tech, and after that you were qualified?**

Yeah. I did a bachelor's degree in aerospace at Georgia Tech, and then was hired at JPL to be a systems engineer right out of college.

**How would you describe your role in building the new EDL (Entry, Descent & Landing) technologies used on Perseverance? I remember one of the big things that everyone seemed to be talking about was its ability to autonomously assess landing hazards. How would you describe your role in building those into the EDL technologies to non-engineers?**

So I didn't work on the TRN (Terrain-Relative Navigation) development. There was a team of people who were specifically working on developing the hardware and software that did that. My job mainly pertained to making sure that the overall EDL flight system could land properly and was safe under a variety of different software and hardware behaviors.

Once the TRN system was integrated into the March 2020 EDL system, my job included running a lot of landing tests to make sure we could land safely. And then I ran many, many — dozens — of off-nominal testing, where I would create faults in the TRN system to make sure that EDL could still be successful and safe — regardless of the kind of faults we've seen.



**I had a bit of a hard time realizing that it was real.**

**Still doesn't feel real, to be honest.**

Leifard watching the landing of Perseverance on Mars' surface on Feb. 18. Photo from NASA/JPL-Caltech.



Anytime you add a piece of hardware, or some amount of software that's new into the system, you have to create tests that target that specific area of hardware or software, to make sure that faults in those areas don't ripple through the rest of the system.

**So was this testing in simulations? Or was it prototypes of the rover being tested in similar conditions to Mars?**

We have a lot of different test environments starting out from, like, 100% simulations that I could run on my computer; then we have test bed environments — where we have copies of all of the hardware and the guts that are inside the rover and inside the cruise and descent stage, and you're able to test landings using copies of all of the hardware; all the way up to when we have the fully-assembled spacecraft — the real spacecraft that will go to Mars.

We have a program that's called ATLO (Assembly, Test and Launch Operations), which is where we run tests on the actual spacecraft before and after we send it to Florida, and before it launches. So, in that case, we could run a landing test on the real spacecraft. If you were to look at the spacecraft when it was happening, it'd be really hard to tell that it's going through landing because we're obviously not, you know, separating devices and it's not flying, but the computer is running through the entire landing sequence. We've just kind of stopped it from doing most of the hardware reconfigurations. I did tests on all of those different kinds of test beds.

**So it's actually the one that's going to be going into space?**

Yeah, so ATLO is when you're actually building the spacecraft. You start building it piece by piece — and along the way, as you're putting it together, you test it in a variety of configurations. But you are testing the hardware and software that...will be going to Mars.

**So you're testing it in a variety of conditions, to see if any flaws can be found.**

We test for a lot of different reasons. You first put a test campaign together to verify all the requirements you wrote on the system. So when we're designing a system, we start at the requirement level that says: here are the thousands of things that the spacecraft needs to do. You then have to either analyze or test and make sure that your final design satisfies all of those requirements. But requirements don't tell the full story — because when you have some system that's incredibly complicated, when you kind of add up all of the smaller pieces, you oftentimes get a system that doesn't behave exactly how you wanted it to behave. Because when you add up all of the little pieces, there's inherent, emergent behaviors that exist that you couldn't have predicted during the requirement phase.

We do a lot of large scale validation and system testing, just to put the spacecraft through its paces, and then we do a bunch of off-nominal testing — which is testing where you are trying to understand the limits of the system, how robust it is to any sort of external or internal fault. And if you find during that testing that there are faults that are unrecoverable, and you believe that they are worth preventing, then you would go in and try to make the case for fixing it. But sometimes you have to live with it and say, "We could get a really bad day, we could get this specific kind of fault at this very, very specific

time, and we wouldn't be able to land successfully." But here's so many of those little things that can happen and you can't prevent them all.

So as systems engineers, a big part of our job is going through a risk assessment of everything that can kill us. And understanding the probability that those things could happen, and what's the consequence of them and trying to make the case of which ones we fix and which ones we don't.

**So something could happen, but it's below the threshold of probability for things we can reasonably spend resources on.**

I mean, in a perfect world with unlimited resources and time and people and money, you would fix everything. But you'd keep finding things that could kill you, right? You'd keep finding little things that the spacecraft wouldn't be able to survive. But with unlimited resources, you'd continue to fix all these things.

We obviously don't have that. No one has that. Plus, any time you go into the system to make any kind of change, you're inherently creating some sort of ripple or butterfly effect where you're fixing one thing, and you're gonna cause a problem somewhere else. So it's hard to go in and spot fix these problems without being completely sure you're not causing problems in other places.

**Were you watching the live landing the same way that it was shown to the public?**

I was on the console during landing. We all had specific jobs in terms of what we were looking for, and what our call outs were and what our specific roles were on the day of landing. So I was watching the telemetry flow down, but the public's watching people both in the cruise Mission Support area, as well as [in] other rooms at JPL. They're watching people who are on console monitoring the telemetry. The people who are on console — we're not watching the feed, we're watching the spacecraft.

**How did you feel while you were watching your console once the descent started?**

I mean it's strange. It's a lot of emotions that are sort of rolled into one. I felt really nervous and scared, [and] obviously a big sense of relief at the end when we did land. The hardest part for me was the data that we were seeing during landing looks almost exactly the same as the data I see in all of the tests I run. I had seen that same telemetry hundreds and hundreds of times in the last few years — so I had a really hard time wrapping my head around that it was real. I would just look at it and think "Oh, of course, this is happening. This happens in every simulation and every test I run."

And I had to kind of switch my brain to say, like, no, this is for real, this is actually happening on the spacecraft. When I run a test and I see a message about cruise stage separation, it obviously means in my test that the cruise stage is separating, but nothing really is happening. So when I see that same kind of message on the day of landing, I had to tell myself, "Oh, that means we just actually, you know, initiated a bunch of pyrotechnic devices."

And now they're like, "we separated a piece of hardware." And that piece of hardware just flew off the spacecraft. Like, that happened for real, even though it looks the same as it did in every simulation. So I had a bit

of a hard time realizing that it was real.

Still doesn't feel real, to be honest.

**So, you also worked on the Curiosity rover. What's the difference between Curiosity's mission and Perseverance's goals?**

The Curiosity rover launched in 2012, and it brought with it a suite of instruments. It was looking for signs of what could have once been a habitable environment for life. What they tried to do on that mission was to take a bunch of science tools and experiments that you would have in a lab on Earth, shrink them down and put them in a rover, bring them to Mars and try to analyze rocks there. What they realized is there's so much more you can do in a lab on Earth than you can do on Mars.

One of the main goals of the Perseverance Rover is bringing a system with it that can core into rocks and put rocks into tubes, hermetically seal them and then leave them on the Martian floor for another future mission to come pick them up and bring them back to Earth. And the idea there is that if we ever want to determine if there's life on Mars, or if there was life on Mars, the easiest place to do that would be in a lab on Earth. So we have to bring the samples back.

**Are any of these missions for bringing back samples planned yet?**

There's currently a Mars sample return campaign that's in the works — it's in the early stages of development, intended to launch in 2026. And it has a lot of partners. It's a mix of NASA and ESA (European Union Space Agency) — a few different NASA sites and JPL have a big portion of that mission.

**What was your role in the Curiosity rover building?**

I didn't have any role in the development of Curiosity. I was in college when it landed, starting my final semester at Georgia Tech. I started working on the engineering operations team about six months after it landed on the surface of Mars.

I had a few roles during the year and a half that I worked on it. I helped analyze the data that came down from the spacecraft every day, I helped build the engineering plans on what we would do on the spacecraft. I developed activities and plans for how to keep a variety of hardware safe and checked out — specifically, the hardware that was redundant that we weren't using all the time.

And then kind of on the side, my major project was — there was a set of flight software capability involving controlling the thermal system that would make it much more efficient, but it hadn't been tested yet and it hadn't been approved for use on Mars. So I spent probably about a year putting that software through a full suite of testing to verify that it could be used, and then I built the first plans for it to execute on Mars, and now they use it. I think they still use it every day.

**That thermal system — is that for keeping the electrical components at the right temperature, because Mars is very cold?**

Mars is like a pretty extreme desert. It gets very cold and very hot. So depending on what device you're talking about, you need to keep it within some thermal range. This takes a lot of CPU (Central Processing Unit)

power — it takes a lot of energy to make sure that you're heating things properly. There's different algorithms that you can use and different monitoring systems to keep all of the hardware in the right thermal zones, and the one I was working on was just like a different type of algorithm, it just hadn't been verified yet for flight.

**So what have been the most difficult obstacles to overcome in your career, the points where you almost considered going into another field?**

The Georgia Tech aerospace program was really hard. They do that on purpose — weed people out and make sure that if you are graduating from the school, they're sure of your skills when you go into the workplace. There were definitely points in time where I considered changing majors and there are certain classes where you just think that you're never going to get this. There were certain semesters where I was studying for one class, I kid you not, 25 hours a week. But sometimes you just have to do that.

## If the mission wasn't successful, what kind of emotional damage would I have to work through?

**So the degree itself was an endurance challenge. What about your NASA work?**

Working on Perseverance, particularly, probably two things:

One is that you're asked to give a lot of yourself to the project, to make sure it can land safely. The schedule can be grueling for years at a time. There are certain things where you have to plan your life around the spacecraft instead of the other way around. It's one of those things where everyone on the project is doing it — but when I try to tell my friends about it, who don't work at JPL, it's hard to explain. It's hard to explain how much you have to give up personally in order to make sure that the mission is safe. So that can be a struggle.

And then I think for me, the harder part is you become very emotionally connected to the spacecraft. It kind of takes on a life of its own, because you're giving up so much of your time to it. Sometimes it's hard to have that separation in place between work and life, and you get really involved. One of the things I really struggled with was, if the mission wasn't successful, what kind of emotional damage would I have to work through? I'd put so much of my life into this project, I was so emotionally

connected to it, that the idea of it not succeeding would be incredibly difficult for me, both professionally and personally. That's just one of the things that's hard.

You work really hard on a mission, you get very connected to both the people and the spacecraft itself, and then you kind of have to work through stuff, if it's not successful, or even when you stop working on it. Like right now, my EDL job has sort of ended and it's strange.

**You get very connected to both the team and the spacecraft itself while doing your job, to the point where you can worry about the effects on your mental wellbeing.**

I worked on the mission itself for about 7 years, [and] I worked with the EDL team for the last 4 or 5 years. You're so focused on this specific 45 minutes and you're just striving every day to make sure that it's safe.

We have a lot of people who run a lot of different tests for years. It might be just you and the spacecraft for 8 hours, you're just sitting in there running a test. I probably racked up like 2,300 hours with the spacecraft, running tests on the actual hardware or running simulations on my computer. It becomes much more than hardware and software; you become more connected to it just because you're spending so much time with it. And with everyone around you, it's sort of the same way.

I've called people at 3 a.m. many, many times. I've been woken up at 3 a.m. many times because something weird is happening and they need my help. I've called people when they're on vacation. I've FaceTimed people at 2 a.m. You form this bond with everyone who's going through that for years, right? Then when you stop working on it, or if it was, God forbid, not successful, there's a real part of you that will struggle with that.

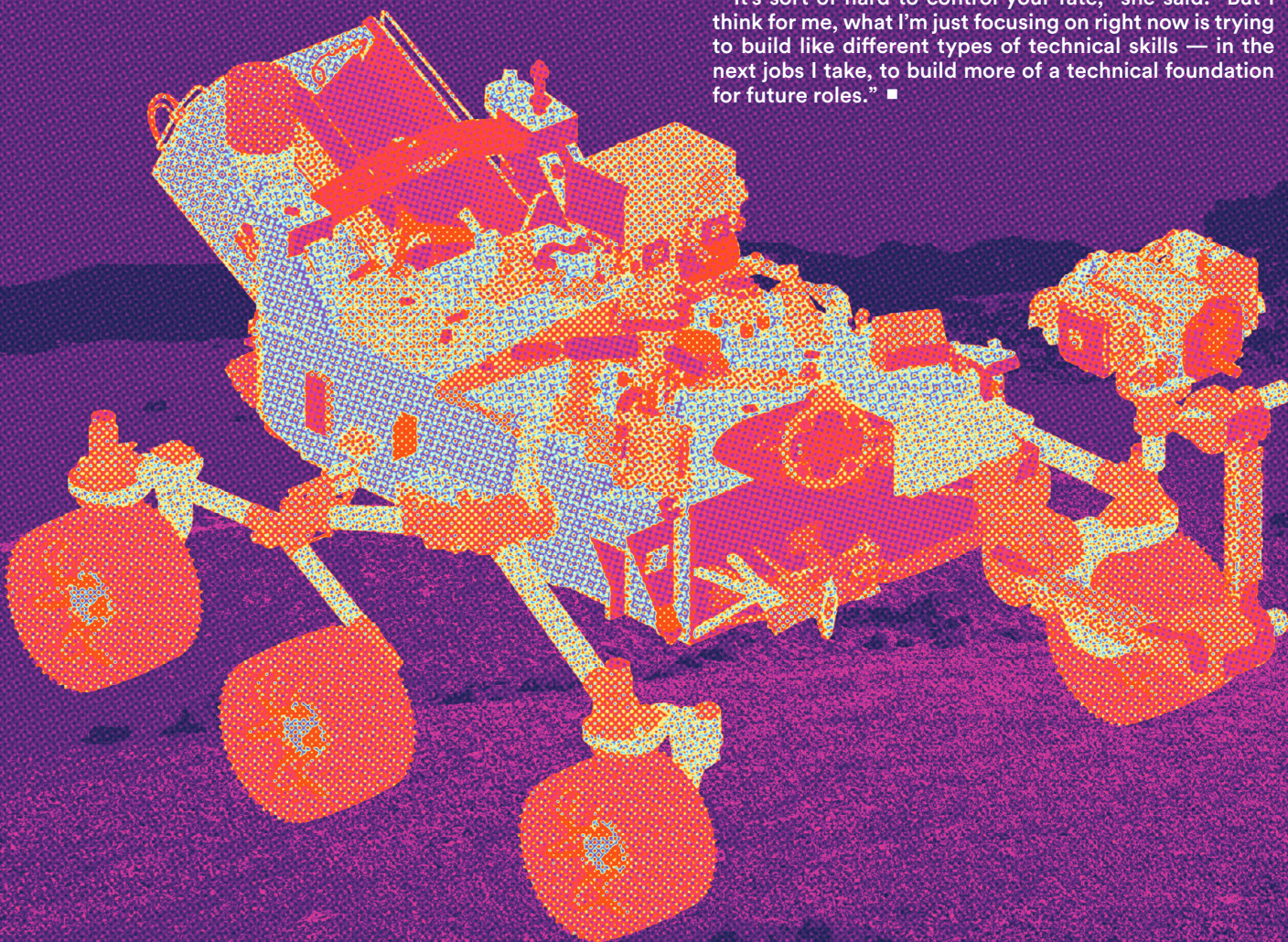
**Do you have any specific role models or mentors you want to acknowledge?**

No one in particular. There's just certain people who I worked with both on Curiosity and on MARS 2020 (Perseverance's mission). And also just people I see at JPL. No one specifically. There's people you see, and you really admire their leadership skills or their technical skills, or how they've managed to combine the two of them into truly powerful roles.

• • •

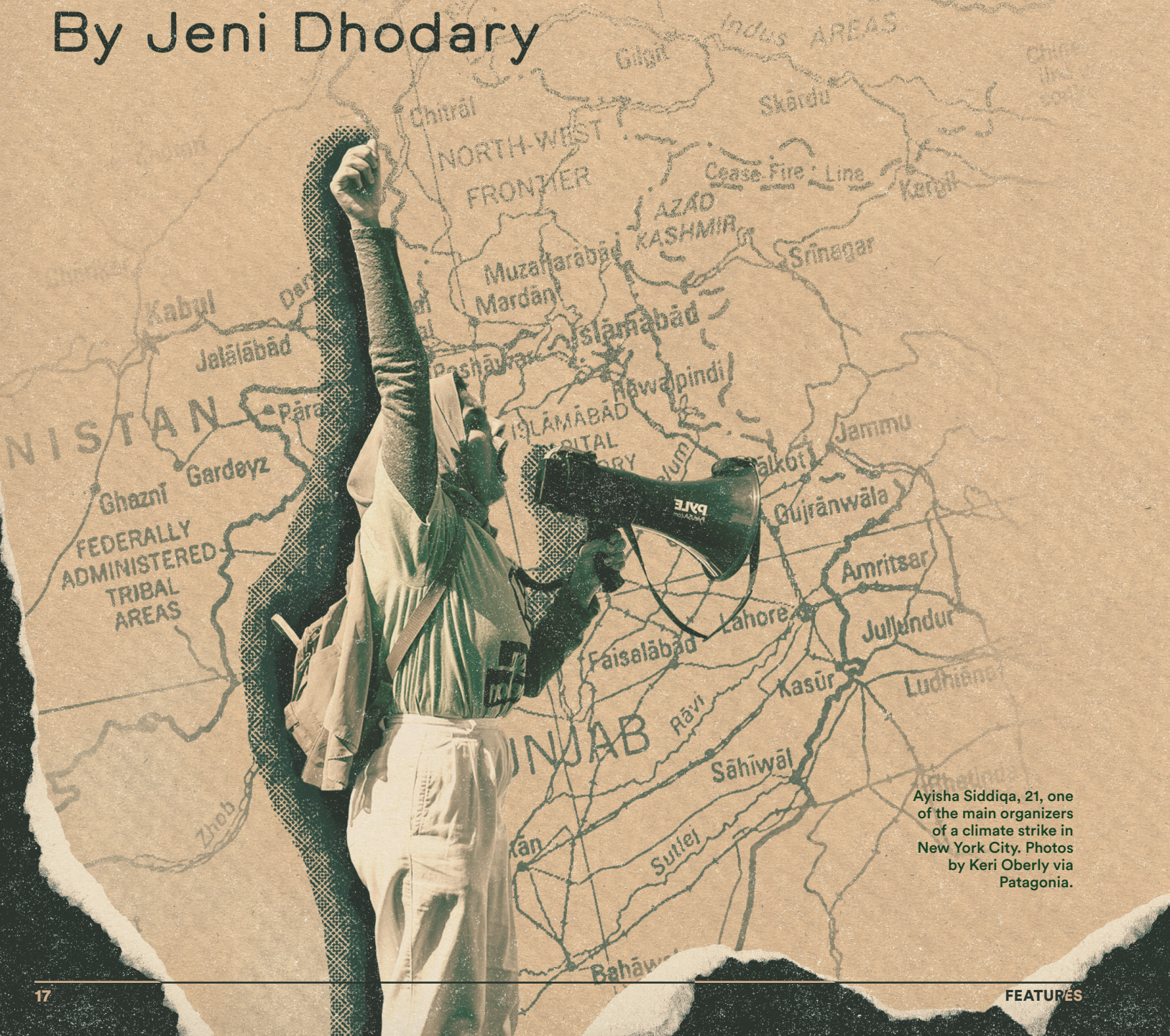
As of the beginning of September, Perseverance has been on Mars for 195 total days since it touched down at Octavia E. Butler Landing site in Jezero crater in February. On April 3, Perseverance deployed the Ingenuity helicopter, which is the first aircraft to fly on the red planet. As for Lefland, while she isn't sure where her career will take her next, she hopes to expand her skillset with an eye towards the future.

"It's sort of hard to control your fate," she said. "But I think for me, what I'm just focusing on right now is trying to build like different types of technical skills — in the next jobs I take, to build more of a technical foundation for future roles." ■



# THE WESTERN COLONIZATION OF PAKISTAN'S ATMOSPHERE

By Jeni Dhodary



Ayisha Siddiqa, 21, one of the main organizers of a climate strike in New York City. Photos by Keri Oberly via Patagonia.

**W**hen Western corporations outsource the brunt of their production to the Global South, they are a part of an international system deepening environmental racism.

This manifests through the placing of hazardous factories, power plants and other forms of unwelcome urban decay near marginalized communities — all of which contribute to the contamination of local air and water supplies. Intricate supply chains reinforce this Western colonization of the atmosphere, with transnational corporations deploying the strain of industrial agriculture to Global South nations like Pakistan. There, workers endure hazardous environmental conditions and unfairly low wages while only making the richest Western corporations richer.

“This has been happening for a very long time,” 21-year-old environmental activist Ayisha Siddiqa said. Ayisha is the co-founder of Polluters Out, a global coalition unifying youth leaders, environmental activists and scientists to call for a divestment from polluting enterprises. As we greet each other for the first time, Ayisha recounts her family history, beginning with her grandmother, who grew up in an especially impoverished region in Pakistan. Ayisha’s grandmother developed polio and gradually lost control over her limbs due to her lack of access to clean water.


“Environmental racism isn’t just this abstract concept to me,” Ayisha said. “It is tied directly to the destruction of people who look like us, who perhaps speak the same language as us and have the same religion as us... For me, it is beyond just ecology and the trees and animals dying. It is about white supremacy slowly killing humanity.”

While environmental racism comes in many forms, we see the adverse effects of textile production specifically in Pakistan. Pakistan produces a significant amount of the world’s cotton, synthetic fiber, filament yarn, art silk, wool and more. As the seventh-largest exporter of the world’s textiles, its textiles are high in trade demand. This seemingly innocuous fact belies a darker narrative of environmental racism that disproportionately fuels air, water, land and noise pollution within the country.

The air pollution comes in the form of dense spinning facilities littered with flies, dust and unfiltered particles, often in hot factories with poor ventilation. Frequent exposure to cotton dust has been linked to increased health defects for the local workers, causing shortness of breath and more permanent lung obstruction — but it doesn’t end there.

“FOR ME, IT IS BEYOND JUST ECOLOGY AND THE TREES AND ANIMALS DYING. IT IS ABOUT WHITE SUPREMACY SLOWLY KILLING HUMANITY.”



A woman wearing a white hijab and a dark top is holding a green sign with white text that reads "#Polluters Out". The background features a large, circular image of a turbulent, greenish-brown storm or flood, with a torn paper effect around the edges. The overall aesthetic is that of a collage or a layered image.

As cotton absorbs hazardous — often carcinogenic — pesticides during its cultivation, the chemicals trickle back into the land, depleting the soil and contaminating the nearby water supply. Textile production contributes to one-fifth of the world's industrial water pollution. In addition to utilizing unsafe chemicals that detrimentally affect the local water supply, the high use of water in textile production further accelerates water scarcity within the country. This means less clean water for future use. It also means increased dehydration and sickness.

Pakistan's increasing health crisis reveals that environmental justice is a socioeconomic issue just as much as it is an environmental one. The close dependence of Pakistan's poor on agricultural labor makes them especially susceptible to the detrimental health impacts of pollution. The Western exploitation of the nation's land for large scale textile production outsources the burden of environmental degradation to its soil, accelerating crises within the country.

At the same time, torrential rain, cloud bursts, flash floods and sea intrusion are displacing thousands in Pakistan's Indus Delta.

"Almost 40% of our people are expected to face drought or another form of natural disaster," Ayisha said. "In just the last two years alone, there have been hundreds of thousands of refugees due to the climate crisis. And my family lives next to the Chenab River in Punjab, where our water source and our access to rivers has either been polluted or limited... If you eliminate all of the biodiversity and allocate all of the land to fulfill the consumption needs of the West — and the United States in pertinent — then there comes a time when the land becomes unable to produce nutrients. You have difficulty growing crops. We have crop shortages all over the country."

This is the greater catastrophe, already unfolding in Pakistan. It is a catastrophe that must be subverted with collective action, for we do not need the sun to devour our planet whole to see that we are at the risk of a potential extinction.

UNLESS WE RAPIDLY  
TRANSFORM OURSELVES, WHAT  
AWAITS US IS CONTINUED  
DISINTEGRATION  
UNTIL NOTHING  
REMAINS BUT THE  
INVISIBLE LEGACY  
OF BEINGS  
FOOLISHLY  
CONVINCED  
OF THEIR  
INVINCIBILITY.

"I don't think as a collective we've really come to understand what the extinction of mankind means," Ayisha said. "It is the extinction of everything since the dawn of humanity. Every little poem that somebody has written to a painting that somebody drew to the things that are in museums to the monuments that we built. It's going to come to an end because there will be nobody to observe them, there will be nobody to talk about them... There will be nobody to love them. And when you grasp that, it's more than a huge loss. It's more than just a deliberate genocide."

So immersed in our lived experiences, the possibility of this self-inflicted genocide may elude us. We understand extinction only as an intellectual concept, failing to consider the true implications of our nonbeing. Even at the face of an imminent climate catastrophe, we have not yet grasped that it isn't just our own lives, but our entire species that may cease to be. The urgency of the climate crisis is that this may very well be our reality. Unless we rapidly transform ourselves, what awaits us is continued disintegration until nothing remains but the invisible legacy of beings foolishly convinced of their invincibility.

Is this the legacy we wish to leave behind — the legacy of ignorance and desecration? It is time to reconsider. It is time to construct economies of care. It is time to cultivate a relationship with the natural world that isn't embedded in exploitation. The alternative is extinction. ■



# FRAMING YOUR HUSBAND FOR MURDER IS A #GIRLBOSS MOVE — OR DESPICABLE



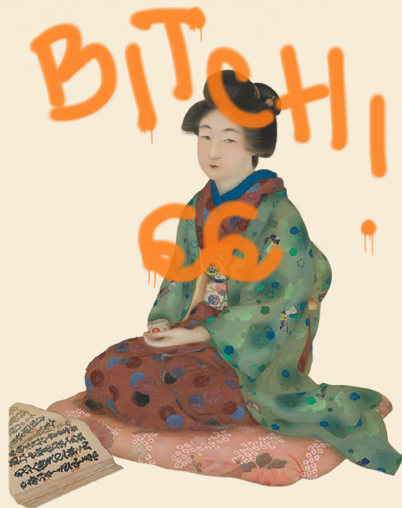
BY  
MELANIE  
NAVARRO

BITCH  
DESERVED  
IT

WHORE



# EVIL LIVES HERE. FATAL VOWS. NIGHTMARE NEXT DOOR. NIGHT STALKER: THE HUNT FOR A SERIAL KILLER. ABDUCTED IN PLAIN SIGHT. JEFFREY EPSTEIN: FILTHY RICH... AND THOUSANDS MORE TITLES AVAILABLE IN SECONDS.



Is the world obsessed with true crime? Have we been desensitized by listening to gruesome details of torture, scheming and abuse over and over? Most likely. And the TV industry will keep on pumping out material as long as it is profitable. But looking further, is it the torture we find captivating, or is it the stories? These stories — real or not — depict people we could never imagine meeting.

When we delve into these monsters, they are primarily male, spare a one-dimensional evil stepmother or rage-blinded ex-wife. We see wronged women in documentaries, movies and the news. *Silly lady, she was just ticked off one too many times and blew like Vesuvius.* These women are not people, only lesser facsimiles of more complicated male villains. They are either seen as absurd or clichéd tropes in most films and TV.

Or are they?

## I. LOVING THE SCORNE AND THE BEATEN



The one-dimensionality of women in film and television is no surprise in a world where they are usually made to fit into neat little tropes — the damsel in distress, the evil stepmother, the scorned wife — the list goes on. Whether she is portrayed as a saint or an evil hag, a female character's motives are usually surface-level and her demise is as predictable as her backstory. This issue did not originate with Amy Dunne, the protagonist of Gillian Flynn's *Gone Girl*, but that novel was certainly a turning point in how we think of female characters whose fates are up for debate. Is she a sociopathic villain for plotting to frame her husband for murder, or is she a justifiable femme fatale trying to get revenge on a cheating spouse? Looking at her "villianism" as a whole, it is important to assess why we could love, hate or even understand her.

In *Psychology Today*, psychologist Romeo Vitelli underscores three traits called the "Dark Triad" on which we assess villains — narcissism, psychopathy and Machiavellianism. In the novel, Amy is presented as a loving wife, a Harvard graduate turned New York City writer and the victim of a



cheating, abusive, lazy husband. In her diary, the police find she orchestrated everything in her favor to accomplish her first goals — to disappear and frame her husband Nick for murder. We find out she is a master manipulator, someone who has lied about sexual assault, and killed her stalker ex-boyfriend to maintain her plan.

In an article by Emma Henault in *Film Cred*, she acknowledges that Amy is flawed, but she is more than an angry vengeful wife seen in a Lifetime documentary. “Those that have tried to fit her in such a box are missing the point of the story,” she wrote. “Anger is messy, and that’s exactly what she is.” Amy is a scorned woman — she was wronged. She is not a hero, or a revenge fantasy, or a role model — she is a sociopath. Siding with her can be a raw inspection of what we might justify given the circumstances. In the novel, we see Amy’s perspective, the presumed villain’s side of the story, and can even feel for her due to this sense of righteousness. We see her flaws and her clear sociopathy, forming a three-dimensional depiction of a woman who is not a good person but also not completely condemnable. “The next time that you feel your inner Amy Dunne trying to escape, indulge her a bit,” Henault wrote. “Your anger is not shameful.” Just as there have been

way too many nasty, vengeful, likable yet interesting male villains, there can be more than Ursula or Cruella de Vil.

## II. “OFF WITH HER HEAD!” SHRIEKED THE PITCHFORK-CLAD VILLAGERS

So some people like Amy.

Some critics think she is a raging psychopath, which she might be, but some hate her with an almost personal disdain.

Why?

Perhaps the answer could start with the portrayal of women in modern films and who is making said films. In recent years women comprised 21% of all directors, writers, producers, executive producers, editors and cinematographers working on the top 100 grossing films, up from 20% in 2019, but it has been a long ride to this point. These kinds of statistics may point to why too many movies have depicted women, if we’re meant to like her, only in supporting roles for male protagonists, or, if we are meant to hate her, as a scrooge-like boss.

In an article in *The Huffington Post*, Monica Torres dissects why in the popular 2006 film *The Devil Wears Prada* Miranda Priestly is depicted as a villain, and as valid as that can be, is misconstrued as a trope by its audience. “To stay on top, Miranda is hands-on planning each page of *Runway*, keeps abreast of industry knowledge and offloads her rivals to faraway jobs with a smile. She is mean, and she has a limiting, fat-phobic standard of beauty, but you can’t deny her decades-long hustle to stay on top.” In a film in which the protagonist is a young intern who falls into the trope of a “tom-boy who’s never heard of Jimmy Choo,” the villain is an older woman in a position of power. Contextually, the movie pushes the message that ambition can change you for the worse, but it is at the expense of reducing the female characters to be mere opposites, black and white. These portrayals are a dime a dozen, and are paper-thin — likely due to the fact they are too often authored by men.



### III. “I USED TO THINK MY LIFE WAS A TRAGEDY...”

Over the past 20 years, more than 75% of the crews involved in 2,000 of the biggest grossing films consisted of men, according to film researcher Stephen Follows. That makes for a whole lot of varied perspectives among male protagonists: heroic, tragic, spiritual, fleshed out — almost ridiculously so. Why are there so many movies and documentaries portraying real-life serial killers like Jeffrey Dahmer and Ted Bundy? Analyzing their psyches could be interesting, but films often delve even deeper, looking at all the dimensions of these monsters — they even portray their real backstories. The amount of attention they get is almost alarming or glorifying. But what is evident is that they get a gratuitous amount of an audience’s appeal, an appeal for compassion and understanding, an urge that *you should understand their pain*.

In an article for Fansided, Byron Lafayette writes the film *Joker* “represents the id in its purest most primal form; he is the walking incarnation of our basest fears, desires, emotions, rage, wants, needs, and passion.” The Joker, or Arthur Fleck, is shown as a man at his tipping point, and he is treated as a nuisance to society; he lives with his aging ailing mother, works as a party clown and was abused horrifically as a child. Before going full “Joker,” the movie shows him killing people in cold blood and starting a riot that incites the city into chaos. Unlike Amy Dunne, he is mostly understood by the audience as a man who was shoved one too many times. His makeup and suit combine to make one of the most worn Halloween and party costumes and, with every Batman reboot, the question that always comes up is, “who will play the new Joker?” His faults are accepted and excused as male characters have been allowed that leeway for, well, forever.

### IV. SHE’S A FEMME FATALE: RED LIPS, SIX-INCH STILLETOS, AND A BAT!

Just to examine an example of past eye-candy and one-dimensionality, let’s look at another DC Comics character that continues coming back over the years: Harley Quinn. She appears alongside other villains in the 2016 film “*Suicide Squad*” and is mostly just the token hot girl who wields a bat in front of her enemies in sneaker-heels. As Jen Yamato writes in *The Daily Beast*, “*Suicide Squad* might not have come under so much fire from critics over its treatment of women if it had allowed even one of them to walk away with a greater measure of dignity. Instead, they’re all either hypersexualized (Harley Quinn, *The Enchantress*); hopelessly deferential to the love of a man, or subjected to violence either because they are bad (Harley) or because they’re not bad (the female officer with no name).” Harley was next featured in 2020’s *Birds of Prey* as one of the protagonists. The movie, which was marketed to promote ‘girl power’ instead fell flat and tactless. In the spin-off, Harley, who was



in an abusive relationship with the Joker, finally breaks it off and goes on an unmemorable mission, fighting comical bad guys and teaming up with other strong ladies. That is not to say movies surrounding female protagonists cannot be silly or messy, but it does cater to a more service-like, showy, ‘women can be bad villains too because of equality’ ethos, and was strikingly underdeveloped plot-wise compared to many other cinematic superhero/villain backstories.

Harley Quinn was the token bad girl opposite her counter female hero, Wonder Woman, both girls filling a quota. But what about female characters that are not only tropes but simply an eclectic caricature created only to bolster the male lead? That role has a name: “Manic Pixie Dream Girl,” coined by critic Nathan Rabin in 2005. Prime examples include  *Elizabethtown*,  *Scott Pilgrim Vs. The World* and tons more ranging from the beginning of film history to now. The Manic Pixie Dream Girl exists solely to help better a usually lost male lead and to encourage or inspire him while being effortlessly beautiful and unique. We see her through his eyes, a bubbly, optimistic girl with no problems of her own, who can help him get over his writer’s block and alcohol addiction with her wit and cute eccentricity. This trope has infected many women and men to enforce roles in which the woman should be bolstering a man up cheerfully at all times. Hugo Schwyzer expresses his thoughts in *The Atlantic* about these deluded ideals: “In art as well as life, the Manic Pixie Dream Girl ideal exists because too many men remain intimidated by women who will not revolve their lives around our needs and our growth. We need to let go of the glorious ladies of our minds, and start being fully present with very real women with minds of their own.” Art imitates life, but people imitate constant art, and keeping on this charade that men want women to put them and their dreams first is harmful to both parties involved.

What does make sense though is the film and TV industry’s motives. Above inclusion and good, accurate portrayals, there is one entity that controls all the players: money. What is going to break box office records, what do people want to see that will keep a show going for ten seasons while raking in the green? Ever wonder why the film

industry continues making remake after remake — seriously, how many times can the same superhero be played? The main priority is what will get fast views, and looking from what has worked in the past, studios may not prioritize accurate, sensitive, raw works that could appeal to people of all walks of life over the stories that sell. Not every project is full of heart, looking to leave a mark on someone’s mind when they leave a movie theater. The film industry is ultimately a business, and the goals are controlled by those who decide on what will make a profit. There can be a time and a place, or genre.

Circling back to the original premise, female characters being people and not props, fillers or tropes may be a novel idea, but what’s more, the novel thought is who those realistic, flawed women are. Representation in Hollywood has just recently become a more vocal issue. A 2016 study by UCLA reported that people of color accounted for 13.9% of film leads, 12.6% of directors and 8.1% of film writers, illustrating the racial gap in who dominates the film industry, which correlates to what we see. One-dimensional depictions of women of color in movies are even worse, as in many instances they have been delivered through racial stereotypes. Lead roles of complex women of color have seen an increase — for example, look to Annalise Keating, portrayed by Viola Davis on *How to Get Away With Murder*, a woman you could love to hate or hate to love, but ultimately see as a real, multifaceted person. Intersectionality should not be ignored when looking for more representation among certain groups, especially when just grouping by gender.

## EN FINE

If you think of your personal top five favorite movies, would your ranking be based on how happy, how fulfilled, how interested or how angry they made you? Do they have lovable characters you could defend, or more flawed people who may have hit someone with their car? Redemption and likeability are important factors for anyone — characters on-screen and people you meet in real life. But finding things, stories or people interesting is what drives curiosity and a craving for learning more.

So would I be scared to know Amy Dunne? Definitely. But the film and TV industry should nonetheless focus their efforts on diversifying who is writing the characters we all see, and who is playing them. They should look forward to giving female characters the chance to be just as gritty, evil, generous, kind or simply as multifaceted as male characters have been for decades.

**WHO KNOWS,  
IT MIGHT EVEN  
BRING IN MORE  
MONEY THAN  
THE ELEVENTH  
SEQUEL TO THE  
AVENGERS.**



**YOO**  
**GGIAA**

TURNING  
TO

FOR  
ENVIRONMENTAL  
SUSTAINABILITY

The image features the words 'YOO' and 'GGIAA' in a bold, rounded, sans-serif font. The letters are dark purple with a white double-line outline. The 'O' in 'YOO' contains a small, dark purple, six-petaled flower. The 'G' in 'GGIAA' has the text 'FOR ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY' written in white, uppercase, sans-serif font within its lower loop. The 'Y' in 'YOO' has the text 'TURNING TO' written in white, uppercase, sans-serif font within its upper right curve. The background is a light pink color with soft, darker pink wavy shapes at the bottom.

• BY MELANIE FORMOSA •

Here's a reason why granola-crunching, nature-loving hippies sling a yoga mat over one shoulder and a sustainably-produced backpack on the other. Being an environmentally-aware human often goes hand-in-hand with practicing yoga on a daily basis. Imagine this: you have decided to join your school's hiking club, and halfway up the mountain you're regretting every decision that led to your throbbing legs and overtaxed lungs. Out of nowhere comes along a lean, lanky hiker, neither out of breath nor second-guessing his choice to trek up the mountain. He passes you swiftly, and a look of envy furrows your brow. He's munching on some trail mix as he flies up the mountain, and you can't help but imagine him as a yogi balancing in tree pose.

If you're thinking this sounds like blatant stereotyping, you're right! It is. But there is quite a lot of truth in the correlation between practicing yoga and being in tune with the environment. I am not referring to sweating through that hot yoga class at the gym. The *asana*, or the postures, only make up one aspect of yoga. Written almost 2,000 years ago, the *Yoga Sutras of Patañjali* explains that yoga has eight limbs, or *ashtanga*, with the physical practice being the third limb. The first two limbs are ethical and personal guidelines for living to practice mindfulness off the mat; the remaining limbs refer to the union of the individual soul with the universal soul.

"Yoga" is derived from the Sanskrit root "yuj," meaning to join or unite. According to ancient scriptures, the practice of yoga "leads to the union of individual consciousness with that of the universal consciousness, indicating a perfect harmony between the mind and body, man and nature." This harmonious connection between the individual and the universe is essential to the future of the environment. People tend to view the universe as something out of reach, and therefore unnecessary for survival, especially in today's individualistic western society. Everything we do affects everyone else, and how one person or company treats the environment can affect everyone who inhabits it now and will inhabit it in the future.

Yoga can create a domino effect: once we begin to become more aware of our breath, we can begin to make choices that lead to clean air for all. And that might incite us to walk more or reduce our usage of aerosol cans. We must view humans and the environment as interconnected, not separate. Respect and reverence for nature are cultivated through yoga, discouraging us

from taking our existence, or our planet, for granted. If our society continues to view humans and nature as two separate hemispheres, Earth's future may not be so bright. It is necessary that people perceive nature and themselves as one and the same.

Henry David Thoreau was a yogi. Mindful living is at the crux of both yoga and Thoreau's life principles. In order to unite oneself with nature, says Thoreau in *Walden*, you should "sell your clothes and keep your thoughts." That mirrors *aparigraha*, or non-possessiveness. Ridding oneself of materialistic goods extinguishes all possibilities of distraction, and that in turn can increase one's awareness of the outdoors. Letting go of these attachments also helps the environment by reducing waste and preventing the ocean's destruction.

This theory of non-possessiveness, or *aparigraha*, does not mean surviving with the bare essentials. Rather it refers to re-evaluating "the way we ascribe meaning to things and consume them." We should avoid being pulled into consumerism and purchasing the latest products because once the trends are over, the items discarded never really go away. Microplastics from yoga pants have been found in the ocean, harming marine life and the people who consume the microplastic-infested seafood. Purchasing sustainable clothing may cost more in the short-term, but will even out financially and ecologically, for the money won't be spent on cheap, trendy clothes, and the environment will suffer less.

This small act of kindness translates to *ahimsa*, or practicing non-violence. Thoreau practiced this through civil disobedience with confidence that violence was not necessary in getting his point across. The ethical principle of *ahimsa* is a broader yogic discipline that can be applied to all facets of life. The "absence of injury" theory refers to the collective responsibility of humans to "minimize and end suffering." This can be attained through small acts of kindness. An example of *ahimsa* is refusing a dish with meat. While this may seem like a negligible decision to make, it can initiate a ripple effect. Eating less meat causes less harm to animals. An increased availability of grains that would be used to feed livestock can be redirected towards feeding the hungry. Together, these small acts of non-violence aid in achieving environmental sustainability. Every step counts.

The majority of people are clueless when it comes to the planet they've lived on for the entirety of their lives. In *Walden*, Thoreau puts it this way:

WE MUST VIEW HUMANS  
AND THE ENVIRONMENT  
AS  
UNBREAKABLE  
CONNECTIONS  
— NOT SEPARATE.

“Most have not delved six feet beneath the surface, nor leaped as many above it. We know not where we are.” This fact is central to understanding anthropogenic (human-caused) climate change. Yet the solution lies in yoga. Yoga increases awareness and appreciation for the small things in life, whether it be one’s own breath or a leaf that falls from a tree. Once this awareness is manifested, then people will be more likely to want to protect and respect their home: Earth.

Thoreau says “it is life near the bone where it is sweetest,” and this reasoning counts on living life simply and being one with nature. Yoga postures are deeply tied to the environment; it is generally believed that yoga originated in the woods. Some postures, like lotus pose, are named after flowers, while others, like tree pose, are named after plants. Yoga “came into existence by purely observing nature’s laws, the surrounding environment, animals and the balance between humans and the five elements,” according to an article in Replenish Living.

Traditionally, yoga was practiced in nature and yoga students cultivated gardens, looked after cattle and learned how to live in the wild. The environmental aspect of their retreat was an “integral part of their training,” according to David Frawley, a yoga practitioner and the founder and director of the American Institute of Vedic Studies. Yoga’s connection to nature in today’s world is “more relevant than ever” and is not merely dependent on urging everyone to practice *asanas*. Frawley says a yogic integration of “the outer and the inner, nature and spirit, on a planetary level” is critical at this time of environmental crisis. The mind, body and heart must be united with the world of nature, and until that relationship is established, the environment will be something to either use, conserve or preserve, rather than appreciate and respect. Yoga in the west has evolved into a personal, narcissistic type of fitness that removes the true essence of yoga.

Food also plays a major role in yoga. *Ayurveda* is a natural system of medicine that originated in India more than 3,000 years ago. The term is derived from Sanskrit and translates to the knowledge or science of life. *Ayurveda* encourages one to listen to their own intuition and eat what their body is telling them to consume. Once sugar, salt and highly-processed food addictions are shoved aside, the body intuitively desires whole foods, which not only work to help the body but the environment at large. Veganism or vegetarianism does not work for everyone, and though it is more sustainable for the environment, locally-sourced foods can be eco-friendly as well. The important part is increased awareness of everything in the foods we eat. Recognizing taste and freshness in certain products could lead to purchasing more locally-grown foods, which could in turn help the environment.

Yoga’s interconnectedness is apparent in the *cosmos* as well. In yoga, *cosmos* does not refer to the stars and planets only but rather the universe as a “unified system” that is “both ordered and beautiful.” Buddhist monk Thich Nhat Hanh has lectured and written about how in order to become aware of our universal system and the damage humans have caused to it, a “spiritual awakening is necessary to address the global ecological crisis and to bring about an environmental revolution.” If yogic principles were learned and followed, they could hold the key to a

better future.

The disconnect humans have with nature is quite new: “For the vast majority of our 200,000-year existence as modern humans, we have been nomadic hunters and gatherers, immersed in nature,” writes Mark Roule in a Kripalu article. Immersion in nature allows us to return to the blueprint of who we really are, and when an *asana* practice is combined with an outdoor setting, the benefits of yoga are magnified with increased immune function, reduced blood pressure and cortisol and a rise in overall happiness.

Silence, filled by breath, is one of the most healing ways to mentally restart and refocus. A foundational aspect of yoga, specifically the *asana* practice, is to become aware of the shell you inhabit: your body. Once you begin to understand the ways your body moves, the poses that feel good, the ones that cause you pain — all guided by your breath — you begin to live deliberately. You become an observer, first of your body and then of the planet around you.

If yoga was a more accepted and understood practice, if everyone practiced yoga in some way, people would begin to appreciate nature instead of taking it for granted. People can be incredibly oblivious to the world around them, especially in this digital age. Time outdoors is spent walking to and from their car, and even then they are swiping through Instagram. Littering has become a convenient and common practice. Driving is a necessity. Anthropogenic climate change is occurring because mindfulness has vanished from society. Yoga encourages environmental sustainability because of the practice’s innate mind-body connection, so people can begin incorporating tiny bits of mindfulness into their lives one step at a time —

POSITIVE CHANGE  
CAN NEVER BE  
TOO  
SMALL.





# dancing without her

*personal narrative by janet chow*

*I wrote this piece to bring myself closure. It was a way to show that I wasn't the reason it ended — even though I did blame myself for a while. It was for a bunch of reasons, and the lack of time and effort that built up to the day when I decided to relieve myself of the relationship. I decided to write this through my ex-boyfriend's eyes because it gives readers the chance to identify with both people in the story. You'll get to see how I fell out of love, and the process of how he lost me.*





## *One year, nine months and twelve days.*

By the end of our relationship, I could tell I wasn't what was best for her. I would ask myself, "What went wrong?" I knew I didn't deserve her. She would always prove her love and loyalty to me, but I still couldn't trust her.

I didn't see our breakup coming. We rarely fought — maybe that was a sign? Was she already done with me from the beginning? I was pretty terrible at communicating with Janet. She was always open with me, her family and her friends. She was the life of the party and I didn't know how I fit in. Our relationship was doomed from the start.

*I didn't see our breakup coming. We rarely fought — maybe that was a sign? Was she already done with me from the beginning?*



We met during Thanksgiving break in 2018. She added me on Instagram out of the blue and it instantly got my attention. After getting each other's Snapchats, I found out she was my friend's cousin, and that she lived in New York City. We started FaceTiming every day and we both wanted to be together. On November 30, 2018, we made it official.

Two months in and it felt like I could see myself with her forever. We still FaceTimed whenever we could and we made nicknames for each other. I was her "babie boybie" and she was my "bubble guppy." I was definitely too young to think this way, but it felt right. Being with her felt perfect. I wanted to be right by her side and to comfort her whenever she needed me.

The relationship wasn't always terrible. When we were together, we were inseparable. Janet came over many times to meet Cali, my dog, and I loved her excitement. She was the first girl I ever introduced to my family as my girlfriend. She was incredibly happy to meet everyone and she fit right in.

My birthday was on New Year's Eve and we had a party at my place. It was the best birthday I had ever had — because she was there and my family loved her. We took many photos together and we danced all night. We found our song, "Dancing in the Moonlight" by King Harvest. I loved her radiant energy. The party was for me, but she stole the show because she was the new addition. I felt like I could dance with her for the rest of my life. To this day, I still can't hear that song without thinking about her — and how different life is without her.

It was hard doing a long-distance relationship. I lived in Dumont, N.J. and she lived in Brooklyn, N.Y. I drove an hour and 15 minutes to see her. She didn't have a car — so she'd have to take two trains to the Port Authority Bus Terminal, and then the 167 bus to see me. This would take about 2 hours.




In the beginning, she made time to see me and we went on dates. We couldn't be there for each other all the time, and we would both be occupied with work and school — but when we were together, there was nowhere else I'd rather be. Her laugh made me feel so lucky to be her boyfriend and all I wanted to do was to make her happy.

But I didn't try hard enough.

One day, she brought up how worried she was when I forgot to text her before I fell asleep. I promised her that I would so she wouldn't stress about where I was at night. I couldn't keep my promise and it went on for months. At the end of the relationship, she seemed like she didn't care whether I texted her goodnight anymore at all. She just knew I was asleep if I didn't respond for a couple of hours. Making her worried was never my intention, but I never knew how to

*I felt like I could dance with her  
for the rest of my life. To this day,  
I still can't hear that song without  
thinking about her — and how  
different life is without her.*





*Her laugh made me feel so lucky to be her boyfriend and all I wanted to do was make her happy.*

change my schedule for her — nor did I try. I'd wake up the next morning feeling terrible — and I'd know that she wasn't fine.

Janet and I decided that we should give gifts to each other for our six-month

anniversary. I was terrible at gifts — I never knew what girls wanted. Honestly, I just wanted to get it over with. Gifts weren't that important to me. I just wanted Janet to be with me for our anniversary. On May 30, 2019, Janet came over and we were happy to see each other.

When it came time to give the gifts, she definitely put more effort into hers. She had one of her friends draw a portrait of us and it was perfect. Over those six months, she gave me a bracelet, a ring and a homemade book capturing our time together — and it was the cutest thing ever. She even got me socks with her face on them. Her gifts were insane, but they were very sweet. My gifts were terrible compared to hers. I felt so bad every time. I gave her lotion, lip balm and stuffed animals. At the time, I felt sorry that I couldn't think of a gift that would show her how great she was. Janet told me it didn't matter what gifts that I gave, but I felt as if she was slipping through my fingers. I wasn't hearing her and I felt as if I wasn't good enough for her.

Trust was one of the things Janet and I had trouble with. I always went on her Snapchat whenever I could. We went on each other's accounts for a while, until she stopped. I don't know why I always had the urge to check a guy's chats — I knew her love for me was strong. She always texted me and tried to reassure me that I was with her for a reason — but it never worked completely.

Snapchat's best friends list was pretty important to Janet. It showed who we were talking to most and although we were at the top of each other's lists, the rest of mine was full of girls and it concerned her. Some of the girls on my list came from Yubo, an app I used before I dated her to find friends and, on occasion, hookups. The girls on my list were good friends and I kept it that way — somewhat. Janet did have every right to be worried, but I wouldn't have cheated on her. Janet had guy friends but they were never on her best friends list. Every time she brought one up in a FaceTime call, I'd restrain myself at first, but later I would ask who the guy was. There was no reason for me to distrust her, but the thought was always in the back of my mind. I knew there were guys in her life. They were closer to her and I couldn't understand why she picked me.

By the end of the relationship, Janet was not one of my priorities. We both felt that way. I look back at texts with her and I see my mistakes: "Sorry that I haven't responded in a bit I've been just so excited for The Boys: Season Two and I'm binging the episodes that are out right now." Sleep was also very important to me and we had different sleep schedules. She'd go to sleep around 10:30 p.m. and wake up at 5 a.m. I'd go to sleep around 7:30 p.m., wake up at 2 a.m. then fall back asleep at 4 a.m. until 2 p.m.

*But I didn't try hard enough.*

I also didn't put her first on my days off from work. I was usually too tired and would just chill in bed. I'd forget to check my phone and leave Janet wondering where I was.

To this day, I still don't know why she stayed with me for so long. Janet knew what her priorities were. She set a schedule for herself and had a plan for her future. She knew who the right people were in her life. She had everything going for her at school. She was the girl who always wanted to try her best at everything, and wanted to make sure all her friends were happy and healthy. On the other hand, I had my bros — but they weren't my support system. Janet was my support system. Every FaceTime I had with her always made my day, and I wish I could have told her that.

Communication between the both of us was almost non-existent. Janet felt that it was like talking to a wall half the time, she'd say. She was always open and honest with me — with her desires for the future and with her feelings for me, but I couldn't reciprocate with the same transparency. Some of it had to do with the strength of her convictions — she knew everything she wanted. She knew she wanted to study journalism at Stony Brook University since her sophomore year of high school. She knew she'd want to live somewhere in the suburbs. She knew she'd want two dogs — one would be a chow chow and the other would be up to me. We had many deep conversations, but I had no idea what my future was going to be like. I feared that she'd be disappointed in me — it felt like she was so much further along in life than I was.

Eventually, we barely even texted each other at all. She had her schoolwork and her friends to worry about, and I had school and work. We both had separate lives now. As college started, I'd get mad every time she brought up a guy in her life, and I always wanted to be there with her. I wanted her to be in my future but I knew that she had bigger plans.

Months passed and I could tell that she had moved on. She's blocked me on social media. I wanted to get over her, but her clothes are still here. Her gifts are still close to my heart and I still think about the plans we made. She moved on because I didn't treat her right, but I still want the best for her. I'll always love her as my bubble guppy and I hope she finds someone that gives her the same love that she gave me.

From our one year and nine months together, I've learned to never take a girl as loyal and kind as she was for granted. I've learned to take time to focus on myself for now, because I truly loved Janet. I wanted to be there for her through it

*I still think about the plans we made. She moved on because I didn't treat her right but I still only want the best for her.*

all, but she couldn't handle my constant questioning. I started drinking and smoking again, trying to forget her, but the feelings for her were still there. I wish there was something I could do to fix what we had — but all I can ask is that she finds someone who appreciates and loves her as much as she does them.

I hope she finds someone who will have those deep conversations and dance nights with her. ■



♥ EMILY SCOTT

**T**he oddly comforting theme song of *The Simpsons* has been playing in the background of my life for the past few weeks. When my mom finally caved and got Disney+ last year, I was elated for a few reasons — one being that I could watch *Hamilton* when it was released in July. The other big reason was that I would have the entirety of *The Simpsons* at my disposal.

Growing up, my mom had weird rules regarding what TV shows I was allowed to watch. For example, I couldn't watch *Pokémon*, but I was allowed to watch *The Jerry Springer Show* or *Maury* if I was home sick. I wasn't allowed to watch *Power Rangers*, but I could watch *Beavis and Butthead Do America*. Needless to say, *The Simpsons* was on the "okay to watch" list because my mom grew up watching it.

*The Simpsons* first premiered in December 1989, almost 32 years ago. In the pilot episode, the Simpson family is getting ready for Christmas when Bart gets a tattoo and all of their Christmas present money goes to getting it removed. As the episode goes on, the family dynamic is quickly understood — Homer is the goofy, tone-deaf dad. Marge is the loving, yet somewhat reasonable mom. Maggie is the adorable baby. Bart is the rebellious, daredevil son.

So where does Lisa fit into the equation? Most family-oriented shows of the 1980s didn't have quite the dynamic the Simpsons has — the *Jetsons* is without a middle child, and *Full House* is...*something else*.

Lisa herself is an enigma. She is a spunky, smart, brash young girl who knows what she wants, and will not stop until she gets it. For the most part, television hadn't seen a female character like that until Lisa Simpson made her debut. As a wide-eyed child,

hell even now as an adult, Lisa Simpson is everything I want to be and more. She's an eight-year-old swinging around a saxophone as big as she is, she's running for class president — she's the animated role model girls like me have looked up to for decades. There was a boom of young girls playing the saxophone because of Lisa, and

**LISA HERSELF IS AN ENIGMA. SHE IS A SPUNKY, SMART, BRASH YOUNG GIRL WHO KNOWS WHAT SHE WANTS.**

according to my aunt, my cousin was one of them. Just this past summer, Vans released a Simpsons collection, featuring a pair of purple hightops sporting 'Lisa for president' on the side. My little sister picked out that pair for school because Lisa was on them, and "Lisa is the coolest!"

The first moment I knew Lisa Simpson was the real deal was in the episode "Mona Leaves-a," which aired as the

nineteenth episode of the nineteenth season back in 2008. While Lisa is not the core focus of the episode, she has her moments — including what could quite possibly be my favorite Lisa-ism ever, inside the Simpsons' universe Build-A-Bear, Stuff-N-Hug. Lisa makes a stuffed dolphin, and while picking out the outfit for her new dolphin pal, the worker at the store tries to push more “female-oriented” ideas onto her. Lisa says she wants a professor outfit, the employee suggests a kindergarten teacher.

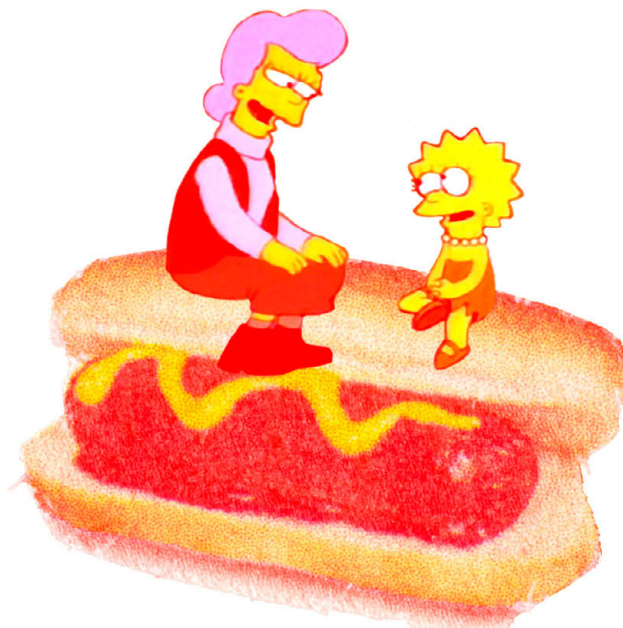
**THROUGHOUT THE SERIES, LISA HAS PROVEN TO BE THE MORAL COMPASS OF HER FAMILY, WHICH, AT TIMES, CAN'T BE EASY FOR A LITTLE GIRL — BUT LISA DOES IT IN STRIDE.**

Lisa says doctor, the employee suggests nurse. Lisa then tells the employee that her dolphin is a boy, and only then does the employee hand Lisa a doctor outfit. The worker turns away and Lisa grins before whispering to her dolphin, “We fooled her, didn't we Betsy.” Lisa wasn't going to allow Betsy to settle into a lesser role than what she wanted. If Betsy wanted to be a doctor, then Betsy was going to be a fucking doctor.

After her grandmother Mona Simpson dies, she leaves everyone something to remember her by. For Lisa, Mona leaves behind her “rebellious spirit —” fitting for someone who, in the plot of *The Simpsons Movie*, goes around town asking for support to help clean up Lake Springfield. Starting in season seven, she takes on a vegetarian diet and openly supports PETA. Throughout the series, Lisa has proven to be the moral compass of her family, which, at times, can't be easy for a little girl — but Lisa does it in stride.

An episode I rewatched recently, that made me realize there's a little bit of Lisa in all of us, is the season two episode “Lisa's Substitute,” which coincidentally is also the nineteenth episode of that season.

In the episode, Lisa's teacher Miss Hoover is out with Lyme Disease, so Mr. Bergstrom, a substitute teacher, takes over the second grade class. Lisa is immediately amazed by him, and throughout the episode, he praises her for her intelligence, and even has a heart-to-heart with Homer at the Museum of Natural History about Lisa and her future. As a student who read above grade level and was deemed smart by the public education system myself, this stuck with me. Mr. Bergstrom didn't judge Lisa for her niche



interests in dinosaurs and mummies, which, in turn, made me feel better about my weird obsession with period pieces (specifically, American Girl Doll period pieces).

When Miss Hoover returns to the classroom at the end of the episode, Lisa is heartbroken. During her subsequent meltdown, Miss Hoover asks the class what Mr. Bergstrom taught them, and Lisa says that he taught them “that life is worth living.” As he leaves Springfield via train after a tearful goodbye with Lisa, he hands her a note. The note reads “You are Lisa Simpson.”

**AND LISA SIMPSON SHE IS INDEED.**



WHAT DO YOU

DO WHEN

someone  
you love

DOESN'T FEEL

THE SAME?

BY JUSTIN LIGASAN



**W**hat do you do when the person you love says that they don't love you anymore? The girl who you made so happy for such a long time, but she just doesn't have the same feeling now? You can't really be mad, because nobody did anything wrong. You can't fix anything because nothing is broken.

One month you're holding the most important person in your life in your arms as you fall asleep; then the next time you finally manage to see her through a pandemic, working, dealing with your own personal demons and isolation — that one person who can make it all melt away and seem like nothing — neither of you can look the other in the eye. There's no big fight, no pent-up grievances, no accusations or begging — it's just gone.

Two years of your lives — two people who dragged each other out of the dark places and clung desperately to each other. You cried during a movie in front of her, you told her your worst fears and greatest aspirations, you had late night conversations about nothing, you cooked her favorite meal — the first time was an undercooked mess, so you made sure to nail it the next time. As time passed, the black tar of self-hatred that sticks under your nails and ferments between your teeth and ekes out in spurts of harsh words or sleepless nights evaporated.

You try to put on a brave face and acknowledge that this is truly for the best. After all, you can't sit around hurting yourself in a relationship that has no silver lining. There is genuine relief to be found in not worrying that you're awful over the phone, that you aren't doing enough to give her your time, that you have to find some way to get to the other side of the island — between everything else going on with one car for the five people in your house. It feels like someone sucked all of the doubt and fear out from every pore in your body.

That feeling lingers for about ten minutes before everything just kind of goes numb and you have to figure out how you're going to drive back home without sobbing. You want to believe that the space left behind by all of that doubt and fear was going to be light and airy and filled with self-confidence. But the reality is that the newly empty part of you has just left room for more tar to bubble back up — and it doesn't want to sit quietly in the places you can hide it. You melt back into it and let it crush and scald and choke and drown you.

Because you know that on a bed where you used to warm up her freezing hands and forget the world can be a series of chaotic cruelties, she's lying there. And she doesn't love you anymore. ■





is the standard mark for plug-in-connector type. Products carrying this mark are interchangeable among each other.

# PROMO COPY

by Keating Zelenke  
& Josh Joseph



**W**hen we found the key to the Press archives, I only remember finding a box or two of old magazines tucked away. The rest of the long walk-in closet was instead full of records. Boxes and boxes of old WUSB promotional records from the '80s and '90s — relics from when the radio station was affiliated with the magazine. The stacks of records, stinking of mold and mildew older than I am, occupy their own corner of the room, and scattered throughout are crates of old CDs packed so tightly you can hardly look through them.

Josh — the executive editor at the magazine — and I sifted through each box looking for new listening material for the hours we spent at the office working on graphics together. Each album was judged on the following criteria: 1) how absurd the album art is, 2) how absurd the band name is and 3) how absurd the song titles are.

It didn't start out as a music column, but we both quickly discovered that obscure musicians from 20 to 30 years ago are some of the most open (and interesting) sources to listen to and write about. Since then, we have listened to over 50 records and CDs and spoken to more colorful characters than I thought I would in a lifetime.

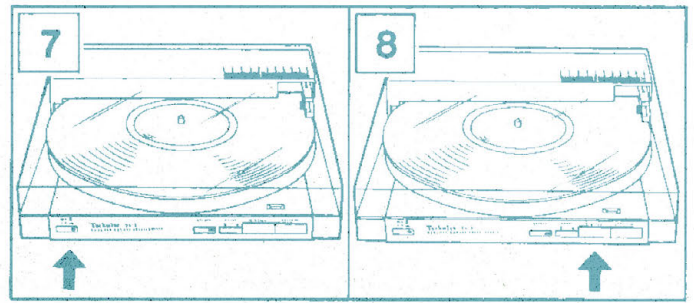
I found Joey Skidmore's album *The Word is Out* on our

first trip into the archive and almost thumbed past it. His name was normal compared to the Australian-vampire-goth-rock trio Steak Kave. The album cover was much more low-key than the 1989 Slack album *Deep Like Space* — which depicts three nude people walking across the Oregon prairie, skin and genitals sagging underneath the midday sun. However, a portrait of Skidmore on the back was what drew me in. A man with an overgrown mop top haircut wearing a white, ruffled pirate-style shirt. And, to top off the look, the photo had been taken from a comically high angle, emphasizing the moptop-iness of his hair and the intensity of his stare.

A spray-painted Mona Lisa portrait watched over the two of us as we lay on the couches in the office and listened to Skidmore's gravelly, deep vocals in the middle of the night. Immediately taken with him, our research of his many creative pursuits led us deep down a rabbit hole into the Midwest rock music scene (and eventually to the other subject of this piece, Beatle Bob).

We hope you enjoy learning about Joey Skidmore and Beatle Bob as much as we did. And expect more from the archives. In the words of one Joey Skidmore himself: "There's still a lot to be done in 2021!"





# JOEY SKIDMORE

by Keating Zelenke

Joey Skidmore, dressed in a tie-dye shirt and sporting shoulder-length blond hair, sits back on his couch and takes a quick sip of beer before sitting up again.

“There’s another one,” he says — another story about his days on tour.

It’s 2003. Verviers, Belgium — a manufacturing town between Holland and the Netherlands famous for textiles (although Joey mistakenly says they’re famous for door knobs and/or bed posts instead). Their resort is situated right next to the venue they’re slated to play the following night. When Joey walks inside, an eerie, familiar feeling washes over him — called *The Spirit of 66*, it’s a Belgian concert hall in the shape of kitschy American mythology: Harley Davidson motorcycles, Marilyn Monroe and James Dean portraits, American license plates nailed to the wall.

The night they arrive in Verviers begins like most nights on tour with the Joey Skidmore Band: eating, drinking, having a good time in a new city every few days. At the bar, a drunk guy harasses the band.

“He was just kind of fucking with us... I don’t know, he probably didn’t mean any harm.”

The band shakes it off and turns into their twin beds for the night.

In the morning, just as the sun is coming up over the Vesdre River, Joey is jolted awake.

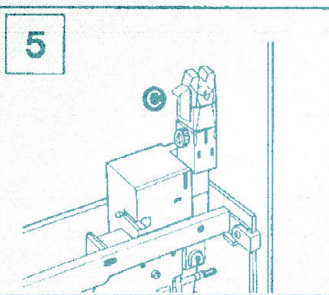
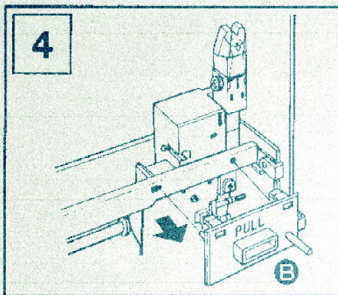
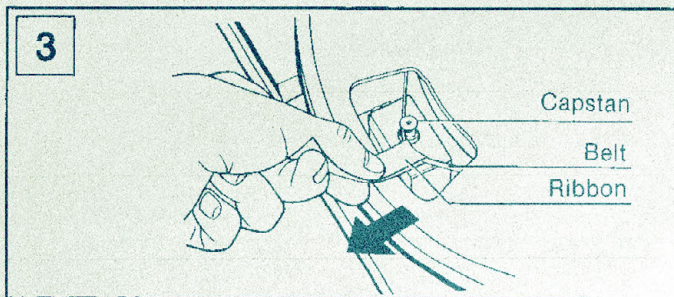
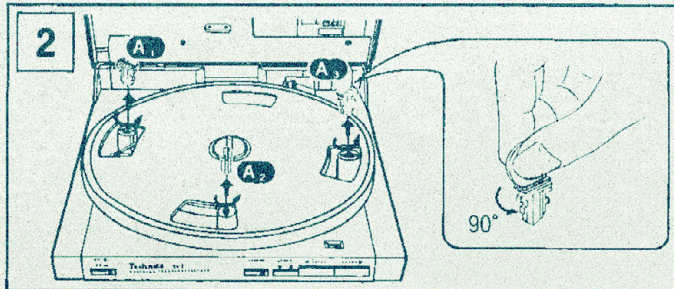
“It sounds like somebody’s outside our hotel room baa-ing like a sheep,” he says now, in 2021, from his home in Kansas City, Missouri — and then *baas* loudly to demonstrate. It’s clear that nearly 20 years later, he still can’t believe it.

Back in his hotel room, Joey is reminded of the guy at the bar from the night before. He hops out of bed “ready to punch the guy,” but when he swings the door to his room open, there’s nothing. He looks right, then left, then right again. The hallway is empty. He closes the door and turns to head back to bed until —

“BAAAAAA!”

(He again demonstrates this loudly.)

Now Mike Costelow, the band’s bass player at the time, is roused from bed and leans out the window to find a field full of sheep right outside their hotel room.



“All these sheep, just wandering around minding their own business,” Joey says. He laughs thinking back on it. “There was a running joke... I don’t think the farmer would like a naked American running after their sheep.”

Joey Skidmore is full of anecdotes like this one from a relatively obscure music career spanning several decades. From a weird amount of success in France to directing the horror-comedy film *Kiki Meets the Vampires* — in which the main character runs through the streets with his dick and balls out — Joey has amassed an array of eclectic experiences that not very many people can claim they’ve had.

Though the portrait on the back of his 1987 record *The Word is Out* may have pulled us into Joey’s orbit, the research really found us when a stack of papers fell out of the album sleeve along with his record. The papers were actually photocopies, yellowed after over 30 years in the archive, of nearly every single thing that had ever been written about his record up to the point he sent it to WUSB, mostly from various obscure college papers all over the U.S. On some of the pages, he has meticulously highlighted, boxed in and circled the parts specifically about him.

At that point, we needed to know more.

On Spotify, we found our first golden nuggets: “Butt Steak,” written and performed by The Skid (as one of the old college reviews called him), and “Teenage Pussy from Outer Space,” a cover of a song by San Francisco rockabilly band Buck Naked and the Bare Bottom Boys. “Butt Steak” is actually one of Joey’s most popular songs in America, thanks to airtime on some college radio stations.

Then we found his YouTube channel, which is definitely worth a watch. His film reel includes short films — like *Legend of the Shoe Man*, a mockumentary filmed in the Ozarks — and feature-length films — including the aforementioned

*Kiki Meets the Vampires* as well as a trailer for an unreleased documentary about 1970s rock legend Jim Dandy, who was known for crazy performances where he often mimed fucking a washboard onstage before destroying it altogether.

Joey’s father had been a promising opera singer before getting married and leaving his music dreams behind. Joey grew up on the classical music his father admired, as well as the classic rock albums from his childhood during a golden age for rock and roll.

“He thought rock and roll was kind of lowbrow,” Joey said of his father. “Unsophisticated, not high art.”

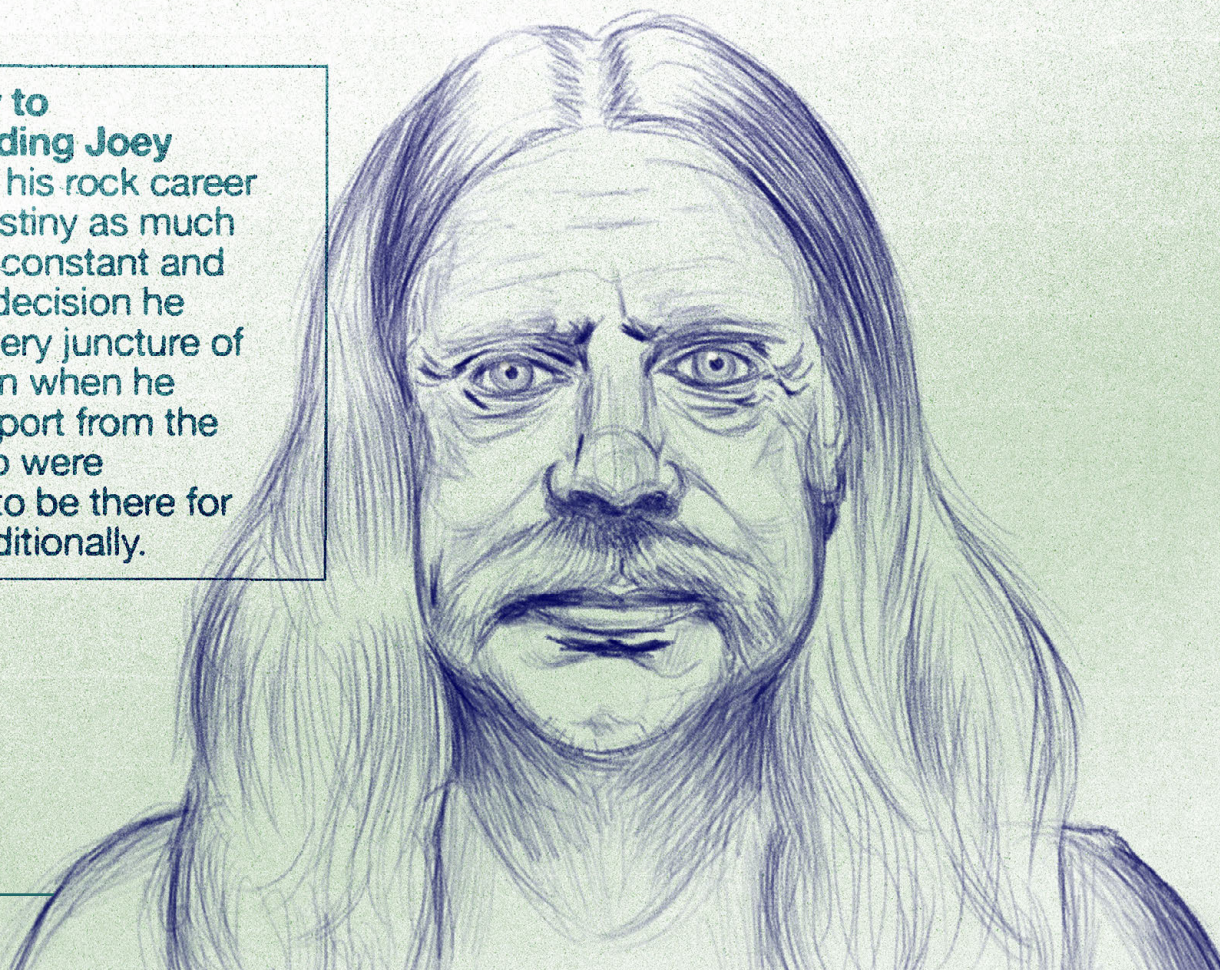
Still, he bought and listened to an endless stream of rock records, especially British rock bands — The Who, The Beatles, The Rolling Stones — plus the classic American legends that inspired those bands, like Chuck Berry (who he actually met twice). Though Joey’s father appreciated music as a career, it took him a while to come around to the idea of rock. Now, Mr. Skidmore Sr. attends all of his son’s big shows.

During high school, these records kept him company, alongside comic books, campy horror films and his childhood cat, Sigmund. As a scrawny kid in “redneck” Missouri, Joey was an outcast; now he’s a star at his school reunions. Though he says his childhood was hard at some points and fairly lonely, he never lost sight of his musical ambitions.

This is key to understanding Joey Skidmore: his rock career was not destiny as much as it was a constant and deliberate decision he made at every juncture of his life, even when he lacked support from the people who were supposed to be there for him unconditionally.

“About my mom, she was never supportive,” he said, and it’s clear that the rejection still stings. “She always thought I’d end up on drugs or something.”

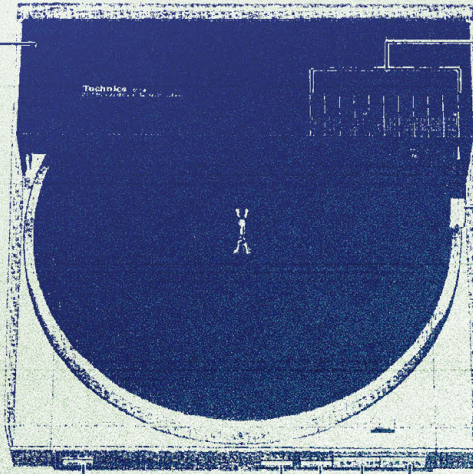
**This is key to understanding Joey Skidmore:** his rock career was not destiny as much as it was a constant and deliberate decision he made at every juncture of his life, even when he lacked support from the people who were supposed to be there for him unconditionally.



# Parts identification

1 Upper cabinet

3 Record groove scale



4 Cartridge

2 On/off switch

5 Stop switch

6 Start switch

7 Cueing control

8 Repeat switch



Sigmund the cat.



Joey before comic books.

Joey dropped out of college after a year or two and quit his factory job to work as a roadie for the legendary Springfield rock band The Morells, schlepping gear from venue to venue. Lou Whitney, the band's bass player and sound engineer, affectionately called Joey "the worst roadie" in Missouri. The Morells often invited Joey to play a song or two onstage with them at their gigs, and later, Joey would hire Whitney to record *The Word is Out*, which they did in Whitney's recording studio — formerly a dentist's office.

Later, after his album was released, he individually packaged and sent as many records as he could afford all over the world — from the Netherlands to France to WUSB here on Long Island — complete with those packets of highlighted reviews that would fall into our laps over 30 years later. It's funny how things work out sometimes.

Joey has never lost his determination, but he's not blind to reality either. Eventually he'd go back to school and get an MFA in theatre (focusing on sound design) and an MA in communications. He's been a professor and musician for the past several years, now chipping away at his dissertation to get a doctorate. Parallel to his teaching, he has put out an additional six albums in the past 30 years. When he taught at Avila University a few years ago, he took advantage of the film department and sat in on classes to learn the skills he'd later use to make *Kiki Meets the Vampires* and *Legend of the Shoe Man*.

This leads to what may be the most important lesson to be gleaned from Joey Skidmore: just show up. He did not wonder if people would listen to or watch what

he made, nor did he wonder whether he was capable of even making things at all. He just showed up and made them. At 20 years old, I am still trying to learn how to do that myself. I've spent so much time being afraid of looking stupid, time that I could have instead spent growing. I am still in awe of the bravery it has taken Joey to make things knowing he's not a *professional*, whatever that word means.

There's also a distinctly self-aware comedy to Joey's art. People try to use it against him like he gives a shit about what they think, as though he cares whether or not they'll take him seriously, or if they have the same sense of humor. These critics have warned him that his albums could be put next to Jerry Lewis in the comedy section of the record store.

"I got a damn solicitation from somebody called Picklehead," Joey said, referring to a comedy music website that's been running since the late '90s. He laughs when he says it though, and his face looks warm and red from reminiscing. He knows his projects are tinted



Photos of Joey and friends from the inner sleeve of his album *Welcome To Humansville*.

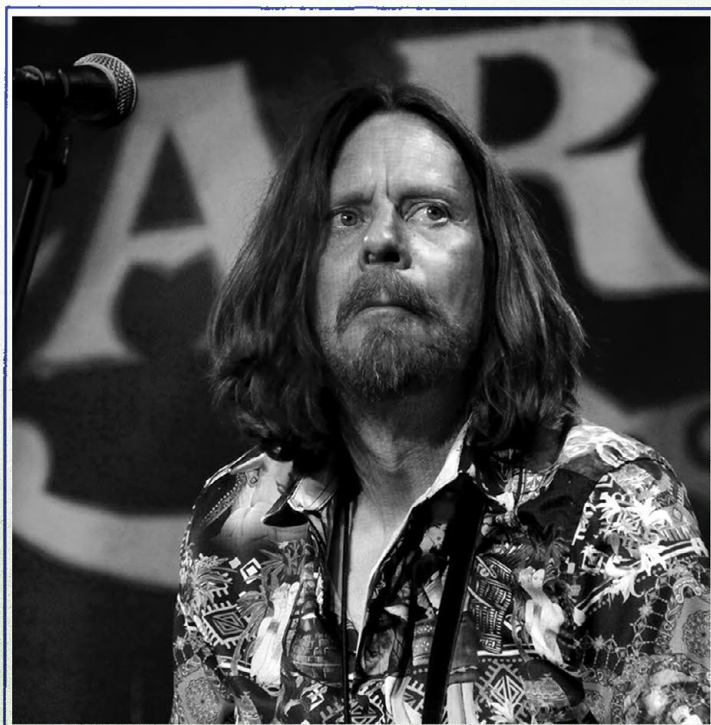
12 Record size detection lever

13 Center spindle

14 45 rpm adaptor

15 Speed selector

There's also a distinctly self-aware comedy to Joey's art. **People try to use it against him like he gives a shit about what they think, as though he cares whether or not they'll take him seriously, or if they have the same sense of humor.**



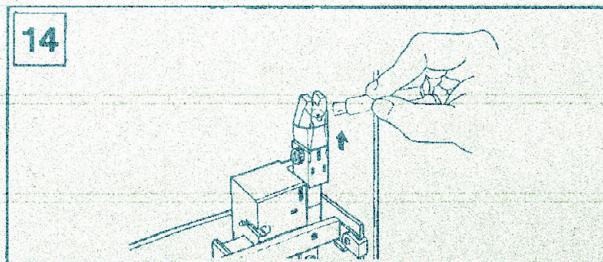
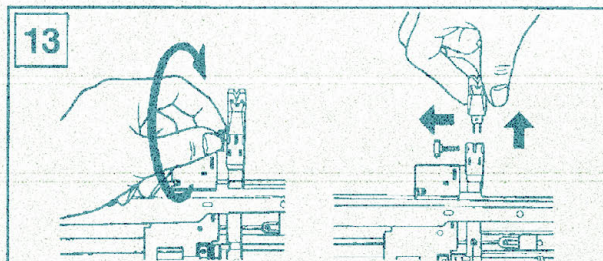
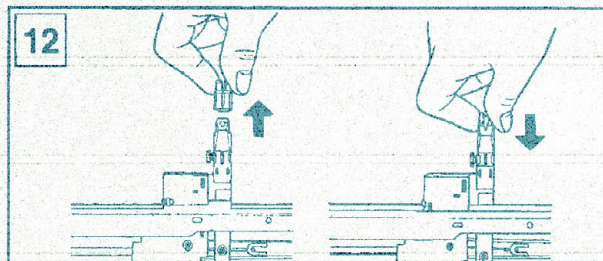
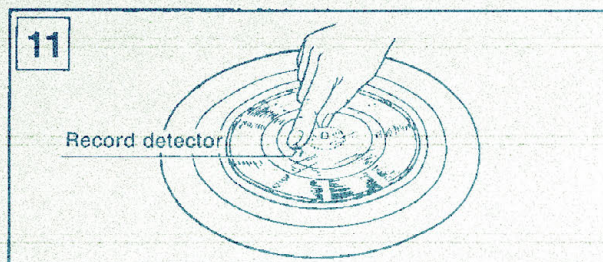
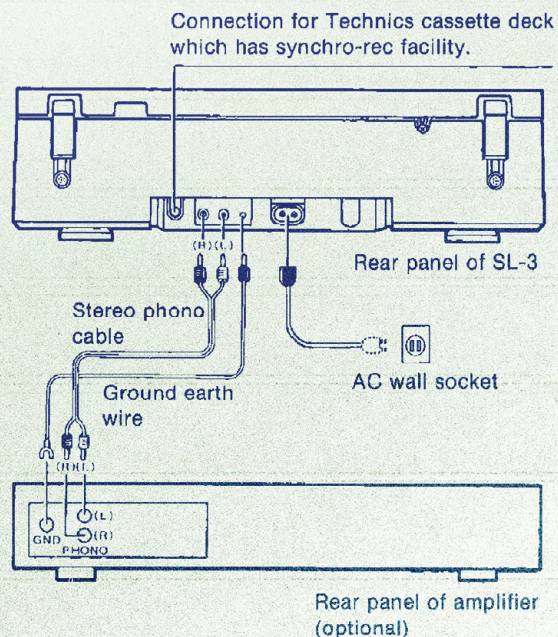
Joey playing at Skid-O-Rama  
2019 in Kansas City.

with humor, and he likes them that way. Comedy and art are not mutually exclusive, and what Joey does sits at a delicate intersection between the two — he has described his music on more than one occasion as “pure, unpretentious rock and roll.” We spoke about humor in music in the context of “Butt Steak,” in particular.

“It was just kind of a running joke between some of the guys I jam with like, *yeah, I’m gonna go home and my wife’s, you know, gonna cook up a big butt steak...*” he said, “but it had such a good groove to it.”

Our conversation eventually devolved into something more casual and friendlier than a press interview. I got the sense that Joey disarms people fairly easily with his warm accent and easy vulnerability. Soon, we were discussing the TV shows we were watching, and he was telling us how he “got fat” during the pandemic. He introduced us to his wife Iryna over Zoom and invited us to stop by sometime if we were ever in Kansas City. I’ve been waiting for an excuse to go out that way ever since — maybe for Skid-O-Rama, Joey’s annual music festival he holds right out of his backyard. Josh and I have also joked on more than one occasion about spending Thanksgiving with the Skidmores.

Joey’s currently working on a new project called *Nuclear Banana* with a supergroup of rock artists he’s befriended over the past several decades. Their new single, “Scooter Girl,” came out late last year. Give it a listen for a taste of his deep vocals and classic rock guitar riffs. Watch the music video to get a taste of his DIY feel, complete with archival footage and a very saturated Joey dancing in front of a psychedelic green screen. Joey and the other members of the *Nuclear Banana* project approach “Scooter Girl” with the same sense of freedom and humor that colors everything Joey makes and sets him apart from more mainstream musicians. ■



# BEATLE BOB

by Josh Joseph

He shuffles back and forth within a couple feet of space. He jerks his arms up and down like he's operating ten invisible typewriters, pivoting his hips to no particular rhythm as his hair sways in sync. Occasionally, he swings his arms out and then down again, sketching out shapes only he can see. He spins around as a few stray hairs fly upward, pointing and jabbing at the air behind him before facing forward again.

One thing that cannot be denied about the man — he is a consummate professional. Throughout his performance, his bottom lip is pushed up and his chin is wrinkled with focus. When he shows his teeth, he isn't smiling. It's easy to imagine his eyes, invisible behind a pair of black wraparound Oakleys, fixed on an arbitrary spot in the crowd, unfazed by his audience.

But who is this man, this dancing machine?

Born Robert Matonis in 1953, he goes by Beatle Bob, and as he sways and sashays across stages and through crowds, he attracts eyes almost magnetically. An oversized bowl cut swings around his stubbly square face, covering his ears and the arms of his Oakleys. His wardrobe is a rainbow of blazers that evoke the 1960s, accentuating his lanky 6-foot-4-inch frame. He looks less like a fifth Beatle and more like a Beatles-themed fever dream.

When I say he's a professional, I mean it. He has brought his jittery brand of dance to concerts and shows in the St. Louis area every night for the past 25 years. With no breaks. Whether he pays to attend, gets in for free or assumes the identity of a local radio station employee to get a press pass, Beatle Bob shows up, gets in and gets down.

Beatle Bob seems like he emerged from the womb and into the St. Louis music scene fully formed. He is the perfect crystallization of urban mythmaking, just obscure enough to avoid the public consciousness at large and just famous enough to garner a cult following. We first found him in a trailer for Joey Skidmore's documentary on Jim Dandy, the cherry on top of a series of increasingly bizarre discoveries that night. For a brief interview clip on camera, his look was intact: same frumpy suit, same bowl cut, same sunglasses — even in the hotel room where the interview was filmed. The lower third text described him as a "Musicologist & Exotic Dancer."

Soon we were fully in the weeds with Beatle Bob. There's a tribute song, interviews, mini-documentaries and clip after clip of his public appearances. And sure enough, no matter the venue, he's just offstage, shaking, spinning, poking and prodding in all directions. In a dimly lit bar, he's swiveling to a rocking cover of Bill Withers' "Use Me." At a St. Charles coffee shop's open mic night, he's hunched next to an acoustic three-man band. In a tent at Bonnaroo 2008, he's caught on a hazy camcorder video in front of a country act. In one clip, he appears in the back of what could otherwise be a funeral home, behind rows of empty chairs, clapping and swinging to "Mule Skinner Blues."

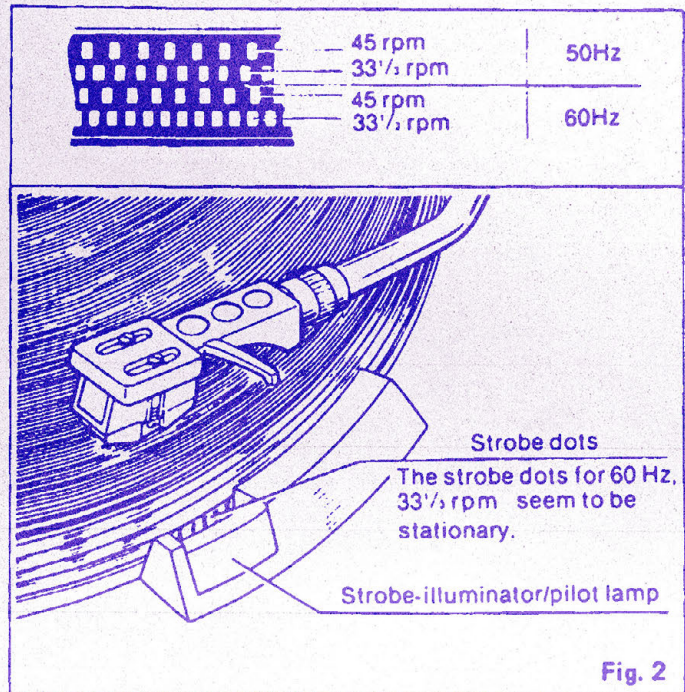
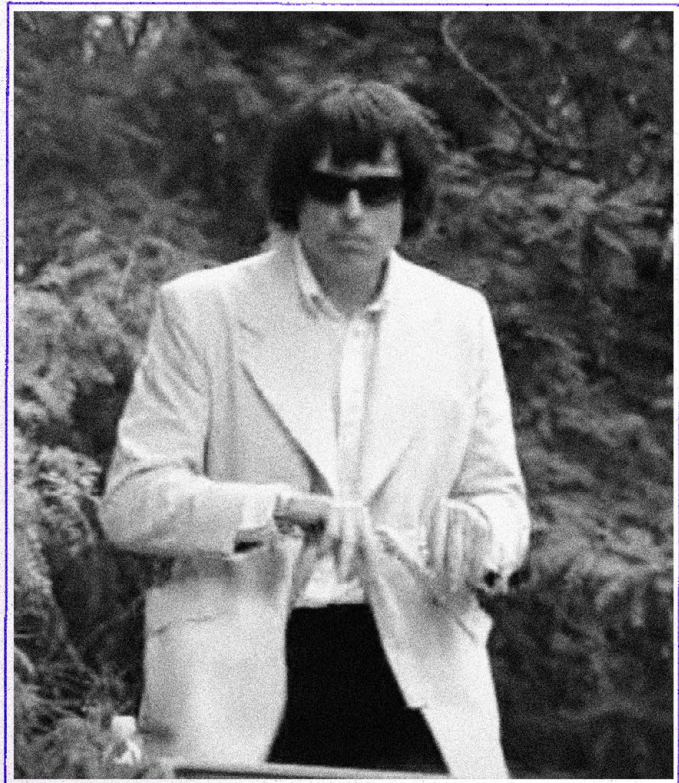
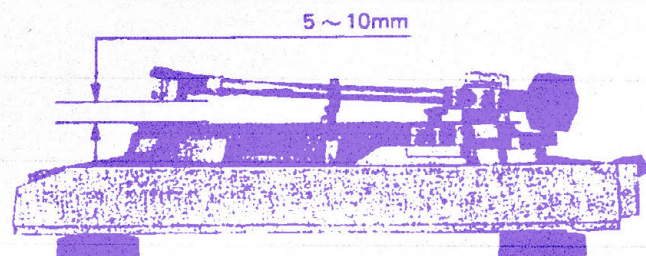


Fig. 2



Keating messaged him on Instagram that night, not expecting a reply. Her request was purposely stilted and flowery — “I have become enthralled with your arrhythmic kinesthetic expertise. I’d love to have a conversation with you about music, about dance, about life, about anything.” After twelve days of silence, he shot back a reply at 12:30 a.m.: “Yes I would be interested!”

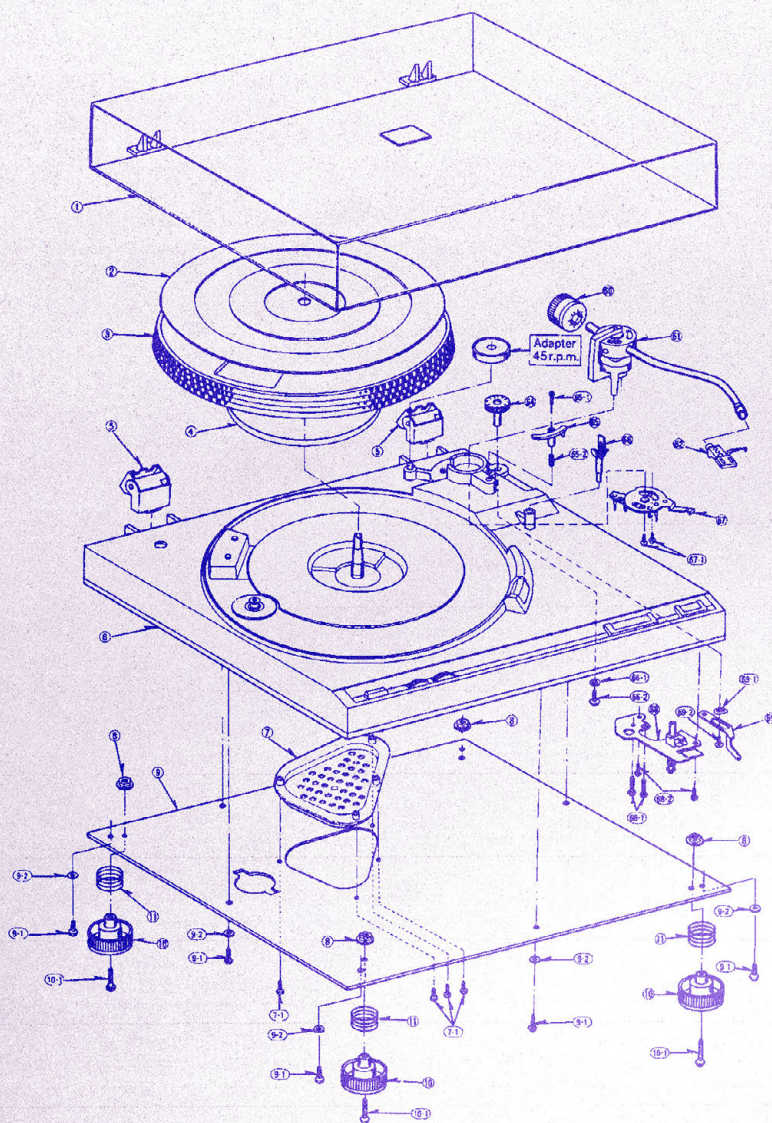
A month later, we’d be eagerly dialing his cell phone, prepped with questions about his childhood, his motivation and a slew of random curiosities.

• • •

Before he ever hit the dance floor, a young Robert Matonis was christened Beatle Bob by Sister Celeste, a particularly quick-witted teacher at Mount Providence Catholic School in Normandy, Missouri. Sitting in the back of his geography class, Robert had tucked a special Beatles issue of 16 Magazine into his textbook.

“She ran down the aisle and snatched the magazine out of my hand and, in front of the whole class, said ‘That’ll be enough of that, Beatle Bob,’” he told us. “And the moniker

#### ■ EXPLODED VIEW



Beatle Bob seems like he emerged from the womb and into the St. Louis music scene fully formed.

stuck.”

Although it was intended as a rebuke, it was a moment of pride for the newly-crowned future icon. At his grandparents’ house, he meticulously combed through his family’s collection of 45-rpm records, familiarizing himself with hit singles from Elvis, Chuck Berry, Little Richard and Lloyd Price. The date Feb. 9, 1964 is ingrained in his memory, even today — the night The Beatles first appeared live on The Ed Sullivan Show as he watched from home. Their pop musicianship, paired with their style and, no doubt, their matching mop top haircuts, solidified a life-defining obsession in him.

“I just think it all put together was an amazing alchemy of elements that transported me towards Beatlemania,” he said.

For Beatle Bob, it wasn’t just the music, but the world of stuff *around* the music, that was so enrapturing. He accumulated a collection of merchandise — magazines, pennants, cups. He even began wearing his hair like his idols, “a tricky proposition” at Mount Providence, where the principal once dragged him to the local barber to get it cut. Today his oversized tribute mop top has grayed, but more disposable income has allowed him to amass an array of Beatle-style suits — along with the occasional additional piece of memorabilia on eBay. He still has his original collection.

Young Beatle Bob was also an autograph hunter. He spent nights in the lobby of the Chase Park Plaza Hotel in St. Louis, the spot for musicians and sports teams when they came to town. There he started developing a strategy he’d lean on later in life, one familiar enough that it’s since become cliché — fake it ‘til you make it. He would walk up to the concierge desk and casually name-drop a member of a band (but not the lead singer, to keep it ambiguous). *Would he be checking in today? Yes? OK, great.* Then it became a waiting game, but one that often paid off. Some of his most coveted autographs include The Who, James Brown, The Rolling Stones and The Rascals. The thrill of meeting celebrities, people he was so taken with, *in real life*, kept him on the hunt.

He expanded his taste at KXOK, St. Louis’ local Top 40 station. He became a self-described “gopher” for DJ Johnny Rabbitt, assisting him in exchange for ice cream, six-packs of soda and, most importantly, stacks of 45-rpm singles.

Beyond that point, Beatle Bob’s origin story gets a little hazier — old profiles in local publications either gloss over or fail to explain what happened to him between his time in college and his first real appearances in the local music scene. He told us he’d traveled the festival circuit across the U.S., England, France and Spain — but beyond that, he didn’t elaborate. At some point, he became a social worker, inspired by the compassion he saw at a local summer camp. That became his day job, which, even now, he works part-time.

Sometime in the late 1970s he watched as his friend, rock-and-roll historian Paul Yamada, completely lost his shit at a Dwight Twilley Band concert.

“He just started shaking. He was shaking so bad his eyeglasses fell off and it took him a while to find them.”

Something about watching his friend, a reserved academic

and someone he described as being “built like a fireplug,” completely cut loose, stuck in his mind. Why couldn’t he do the same?

• • •

Beatle Bob couldn’t pinpoint for us the exact moment he committed his life to dance. Somewhere in the haze of late-70s new wave, he noticed more quality local acts in the St. Louis area, some even putting out singles and albums of their own.

“That helped me when it was a slow night for national acts coming through town,” he said. “That really inspired me.”

He began hitting clubs and festivals more and more frequently. Christmas Eve 1996 was his last true night off. Since then, he’s sought out a new show every night.

Sometimes he gets in for free, put on the VIP list by an excited band. Other times he sneaks in as a member of the press — he has previously been seen at festivals “representing” radio station KDHX, the now-defunct Jet Lag Magazine, his own internet radio show (which we haven’t been able to locate) and other music publications. Through some combination of sheer luck and fake-it-till-you-make-it trickery, he has evaded the wrath of all the outlets he has claimed to represent.

“I’m not poor, but I’m not rich,” he said. “I could never afford to go to all those concerts or festivals, you know, if I had to pay. So that is a blessing, in the truest sense of the word.”

Once he hits the dance floor, he tries to secure a spot as close to the front of the venue as he can. As soon as the music starts, he starts his own act — hunched forward, jerking back and forth, swinging his pointer fingers, occasionally thrusting his hips or twirling in a quick circle, never quite in time with the music. Sometimes he gets invited on stage to boogie down next to the performers. Other times he doesn’t dance at all.

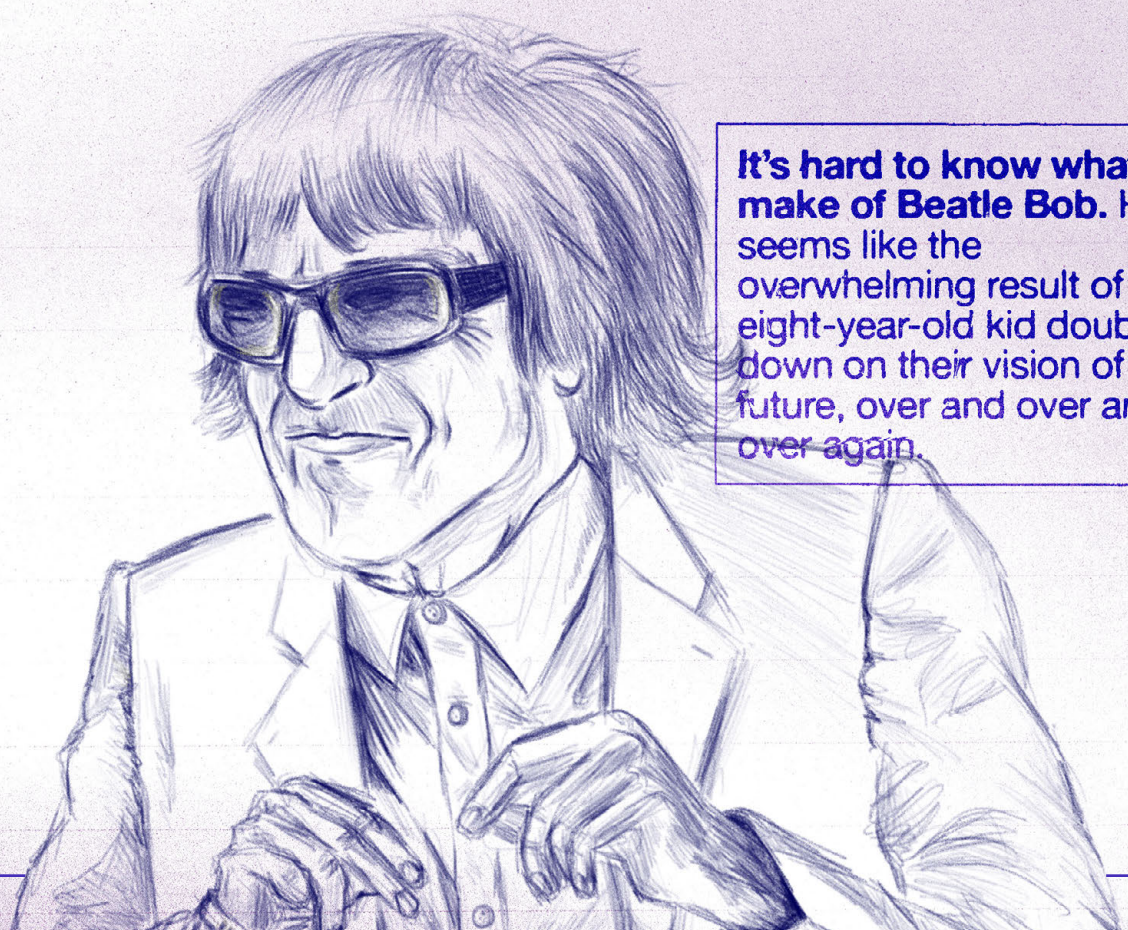
“There’s a few shows I went to where the opening band

wasn’t too hot, and I’m not gonna force myself to dance,” he said. “I’m not gonna boo the band or anything like that... but I would just kinda stare ahead, you know, and just keep my spot on the dance floor for the headliner.”

He documents each show in a collection of spiral notebooks he calls his dance diaries. The weirdest and worst he remembers dates back to 1972, a Ted Nugent and Bob Seger show in a cave so echoey he couldn’t make out a word sung or a note played. Some of the best were at the Sheldon Concert Hall, “a jewel of a place,” whose perfect acoustics draw globally famous acts to St. Louis. His notebooks are now filed away, numbering close to 70 in total. Although the covers have begun to fall off the older ones, he still references them in case he needs to call to mind a show he remembers even decades later.

Intentional or otherwise, there is an air of mystery surrounding Beatle Bob. The personal life section of his Wikipedia page offers a strange, brief cross-section of a biography: he is single, vegetarian, tall, abstains from drugs and averages four hours of sleep a night. He has a way of appearing at venues and then, immediately after a show, evaporating into the night air. He has no clear home address — when the Riverfront Times profiled him in 2000, his home had either burned down or flooded according to sources close to him. He never drives, relying on rides from friends to transport him to and from shows, and asks to be dropped off in public rather than where he lives.

His social media presence is equally perplexing. On Instagram under @beatle.bob or on Facebook, where he’s listed as “Bob Beatle,” he posts a stream of random music artifacts, some original and others lifting entire paragraphs from sites like Rolling Stone. He also has a recurring series on 1960s decor, posting 50-year-old photos of living rooms and asking his audience to “keep or change?” After our interview, he added Keating to his text newsletter, and nearly every day since, he’s been sending her paragraphs of decades-old rock



**It’s hard to know what to make of Beatle Bob. He seems like the overwhelming result of an eight-year-old kid doubling down on their vision of the future, over and over and over again.**





Beatle Bob dancing to the band Racketbox in August 2017.

trivia, often accompanied by three or four pixelated photos. Sometimes, he even gives us a preview of his next show in the third person:

“Beatle Bob is getting ready to rumble tonight...”

“Beatle Bob is shifting his dancing shoes into heavy gear this weekend...”

“Beatle Bob is preparing to be driven to levels of dizzying heights tonight...”

On the phone, he flatly denied that he’d ever plagiarized any writing, but these allegations are just the latest in a string of controversies that have followed him through the past few decades. He’s been accused of shoplifting from record stores and concert merch tables, incidents he’s previously explained away as “misunderstandings.”

“I wonder if he’s still spry enough to steal CDs from my merch table like he did 15 years ago,” one YouTube commenter wrote beneath a musical tribute.

Some of his detractors simply don’t enjoy his act. Beatle Bob Sit Down, a site created in 2004 to collect stories of aggravation at Beatle Bob’s antics, strung together anecdotes from people who were elbowed or shoved by him as he made his way to the front row, or otherwise had their view obstructed by the 6-foot-4-inch wobbling man in their way.

“There is nothing dumber in the history of rock and roll than Beatle Bob,” one commenter named Richard wrote in 2005. “‘Dancing’ like a demented arsehole, getting in everyone’s way, and relishing the fact that he is, when all is said and done, a complete and utter nutbar, who interrupts everyone else’s enjoyment of whatever he’s leaping about to.”

Beatle Bob told us he’s tried to avoid any media related to him, both positive and negative. He describes his mission



as a complete dedication to the pursuit of music, and everything else seems to fade into the background as a result — controversy, praise, fame and public curiosity pass into and out of his orbit, yet he jitters and shakes through it all.

In 2011, he achieved a particularly high honor — and one he said he still looks back on fondly: as part of a spoken-word album teaching children about nutrition, Beatle Bob was nominated for a Grammy.

One threat looms over Beatle Bob’s dancing streak: the COVID-19 pandemic, which shut down the live music industry for a year and a half. Yes, he technically broke his marathon in March of 2020, he admitted to us, but he was right back at it as soon as the first venues reopened in May, dancing with his mask on.

“I didn’t get depressed or angry or sullen,” he said. “You make up for it, you have more time to play CDs or records.”

He rationalized the gap with a reference to Baltimore Orioles player Cal Ripken Jr., whose longest streak of games played was broken by a baseball union strike in 1994.

“A friend said, ‘You know, Cal Ripken missed those last three months of the season ‘cause there were no games, so how can you say you missed a game when there was no games to attend?’”

• • •

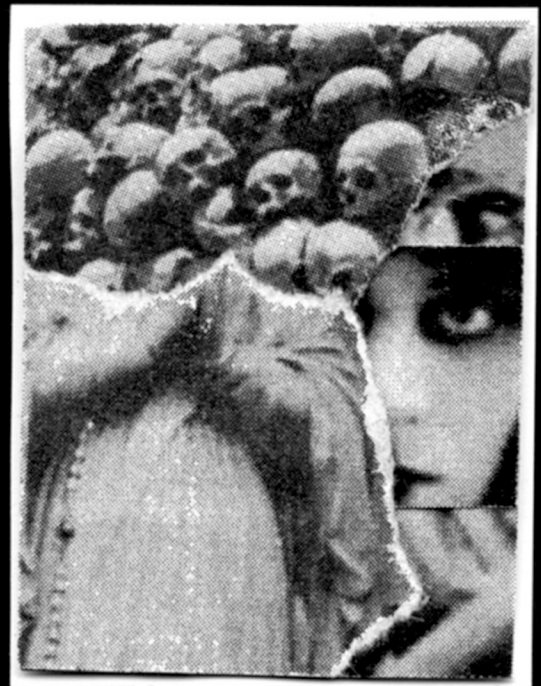
It’s hard to know what to make of Beatle Bob. He seems like the overwhelming result of an eight-year-old kid doubling down on their vision of the future, over and over and over again. He has, in a way, boxed himself in, but in such a specific way that lies outside of our standards of adulthood, work and life.

It’s also hard to separate Beatle Bob the myth, the one captured on all those videos, written about, loved and hated, from Beatle Bob the person, even after spending an hour and a half on the phone with him. I think it might be because he really is just as strange and just as committed as he seems at first glance. He so fully lives up to the caricature of himself in a way that makes him, as a person, almost fictional. We caught glimpses of the strength of his convictions — his passion for social work, his commitment to vegetarianism — but there’s something supernatural about his persona, which is what pulled us in at the very start.

He might have summed up his ethos best in the middle of our conversation:

“You may have had a rough day at work. You come home, and the bad day at work makes you feel more tired than you really are, but I tell people this: It happens to me once in a while. You drag yourself to the club, and when the music starts playing, it’s like a magic elixir. You plug into that and all of a sudden you forget how tired you were.”

The music, above all else. That’s Beatle Bob. ■



**“Ecstatic Construction”**  
Jason Jenkins

Artwork courtesy of Jason Jenkins (@astroboy racerx on Instagram) and Stony Brook’s Fine Arts Organization.

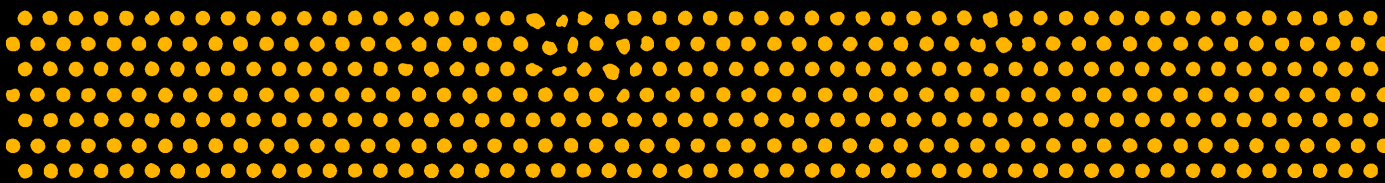


**“Sacred Observation”**  
Jason Jenkins



Create  
with us.

See your work  
in print.



## Join The Press

**Stony Brook's  
campus magazine**

We're looking for artists,  
writers, graphic designers,  
critics, photographers  
and creatives.

We meet on Wednesdays  
at 1 and 7:30 PM  
in SAC 307K.

SBPRESS.COM  
♥ @SBPRESS  
@ @THESBPRESS

Stop by and  
share your  
creativity.

Scan to  
sign up for our  
email list  
and follow us!

