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REPORTER

04.27.12 reportermag.com

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A SENSE OF BALANCE

At the threshold of Week 7, I see my fellow students deeply focused on the RIT community. With final projects, Student Government Elections, and registration concerns, our attention is drawn inwards.

Jon Schull, interim director of the Center for Student Innovation, is not. At 6 p.m. Tuesday, April 24, he will be presenting his vision for a bike path connecting RIT, the University of Rochester and Monroe County Community College. By connecting these three universities into what he calls a “multiversity,” Schull hopes to encourage exercise, innovation and economic growth.

While Schull’s speech will be long finished by the time this magazine hits stands, it’s worth mentioning for one key reason: It’s a truly fantastic idea. By expanding our horizons, we can grow — both as a university and a community.

As a freshman, I fell victim to the insular nature of college culture. I didn’t watch the news or read a paper; even at **REPORTER**, I wrote mostly reviews. College was a whirlwind of new experiences; between homework and friends, I felt content.

During my sophomore year, I became the magazine’s Leisure Editor; in turn, I gradually began writing news pieces and features. I developed a desire to connect with — and to explore — the greater Rochester community. And as I began to make friends at other local colleges, I discovered what I had missed by remaining insulated.

In my experience, exploration often leads to unexpected outcomes. There’s a risk, but there’s also an immense potential for reward. For example, take this week’s feature. Author Evan Williams ventured deep into the heart of the Flower City to uncover a vibrant musical subculture. His idea, as originally pitched, was to explore the culture of basement punk shows. While he did not discover what he originally expected to, he unearthed a powerful, emotional story involving a group of dedicated individuals.

As an RIT student, this kind of exploration presents challenges. As much as I love RIT, it often feels far removed from its namesake. Without a car, it’s even worse.

Recently, the Institute has taken measures to expand our transportation options. Earlier this year, SG introduced a pilot run of the Tiger East End Express (TE3), a Saturday night route which travels to Rochester’s East End. Regardless of the debates surrounding the bus’ use, it serves a key purpose: connecting RIT to a larger community. It’s an effort I applaud.

If anything, the TE3 proved RIT isn’t so far from the outside world. Ultimately, U of R is a walkable trip — provided you’ve got a comfortable pair of shoes and some serious free time. With a bike trail, it could be an even more feasible. Improving this ease-of-access would encourage students to explore their surroundings. And

There is a world beyond the Brick City. It’s high time we join it.

Alex Rogala

EDITOR IN CHIEF

TABLE OF CONTENTS

04.27.12 | VOLUME 61 | ISSUE 27



Bucky Townsend, a second year Human Computer Interaction graduate student, burns his beard on a Friday night. Bucky periodically burns his beard. | photograph by Jonathan Foster

NEWS

6. News Desk

The plus-minus grading system returns.

8. Student Loans Increasing

Economists, politicians express concerns.

LEISURE

11. At Your Leisure

Enjoy some movies.

12. Reviews

Redefining a genre and reviving a style.

15. Nostalgia Remix

8-bit musical beauty.

FEATURES

16. Behind the Scene

The lifestyles of Rochester’s punk rock community.

SPORTS

23. Men’s Lacrosse Trumps Skidmore in Senior Game

A strong showing at a final game.

VIEWS

25. Internet Service Deciders

Is our privacy under attack?

27. Smart Glasses and Sly Trade-Offs

Is technological convenience worth the risks?

28. Word on the Street

What would your RIT-themed gameshow be?

31. Rings

Naked bicycle gangs and hate mail.

cover photograph by Katie Thompson

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FIRST COMMERCIAL SPACE STATION TRIP PLANNED

California-based Space Exploration Technologies (SpaceX) plans to send an unmanned freight flight to the International Space Station (ISS) later this month. Named Dragon, the capsule will be launched on the Falcon 9 rocket in a mission tentatively scheduled for Monday, April 30. While Dragon is slated for cargo use, the BBC reports it can also be modified to carry humans into space.

The SpaceX expedition is considered a demonstration flight, since most of its systems and programs are not guaranteed to work. According to a NASA news release, the Falcon 9 has only been launched twice, and Dragon only once — but all successfully. If everything goes as planned, the capsule will be flung into orbit close to the ISS, and a robotic arm will pull it into the space station. Before returning to Earth, the capsule will transfer 1,200 pounds of cargo.

This flight is one step towards NASA's goal of replacing their own cargo flights — part of their now-defunct space shuttle program — with commercial flights. According to the BBC, a NASA program is currently funding the commercial development of these technologies. With the commercial development of short, near-Earth space flight, NASA's resources are freed up for exploration farther out into the Solar System.



NEW WORLD BANK PRESIDENT ELECTED

Since the World Bank was founded in 1944, its presidents have always been American. On Monday, April 16, this trend continued with the selection of president-elect Jim Yong Kim. However, unlike former presidents, Kim is a physician with no business or financial background.

The presidents — who serve five-year, renewable terms — are elected by the bank's board of directors. Kim won over Nigerian Finance Minister Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala and former Colombian Finance Head Jose Antonio Ocampo. This race was the first ever where opponents challenged the U.S. candidacy pick. Kim begins his first term July 1.

Kim is currently the president of Dartmouth College, but he has a strong background in improving healthcare in Third World countries, especially in regards to HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis. His experience puts him right in line with the World Bank's mission statement: reducing poverty.

IRAN SEEKS RELAXED SANCTIONS

Iran's Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Salehi recently suggested that the country might resolve the West's issues with its nuclear program, if only the West would ease up on their sanctions. However, neither the European Union nor the Obama administration plans to comply without seeing evidence of Iran's compliance.

Iran is currently working towards enriching uranium for reactor power, which requires 20 percent enrichment. While far from the 90 percent enrichment required for an atomic bomb, many of Iran's neighbors — as well as the West — feel threatened by an Iran with nuclear capabilities at any level. Israel is especially insistent that Iran halt its nuclear enrichment, because of the continuing strained relationship between the two countries.

In 2009, as a result of these concerns, the West proposed a deal to give Iran nuclear fuel already enriched to 20 percent in trade for low-grade fuel, Reuters reports. The deal fell through at the time, but is being discussed again. This would give Iran the fuel it wants for nuclear power without necessitating the development of technology to produce weapons-grade uranium.

The next talk between the two parties is scheduled for Wednesday, May 23 in Baghdad. **R**

SG UPDATE: 4.20.12

by Cadence Schwartz with contributions by Alex Rogala

PLUS-MINUS GRADING TO BE IMPLEMENTED

During the Friday, April 20, meeting of the Student Government (SG) Senate, Dr. Jeremy Haefner, provost and senior vice president for Academic Affairs, discussed the Institute's plans to transition to a plus-minus (A+, A, A-, etc.) grading system in fall 2013.

Approved by Academic Senate and President Bill Destler in spring 2009, the system was originally intended to become active during the 2010-2011 academic year. After the Institute made the decision to transition to semesters in early 2010, implementation of the new grading system was postponed.

Plus-minus grading will be optional to the professors, but in instances of classes with multiple sections, the choice will be given to the department. Under the plan, pre-requisites will be counted with a grade of C- or higher, though Haefner stated the weight of grades on the new rubric may be changed.

A study year was decided on after concerns of how the new grading system will affect financial aid and GPA. It will commence during the next school year with 10-15 faculty volunteers, mostly in engineering and technology fields, who will use both grading systems concurrently.

Classes using the plus-minus grading system during the trial year will not affect student grades; that is, the equivalent letter grade will be reported for the purposes of calculating GPA, without pluses or minuses.

Kate Gleason College Senator Richard Latham and Freshman Senator Paul Darragh expressed concerns that the study pool was too small, and should include more departments and students. Haefner responded that he would bring this concern back to faculty to evaluate the study parameters.

INTERSESSION CLASSES PROPOSED

Haefner also discussed plans for intercession (to take place during winter break) and summer session classes to go along with the semester conversion.

Currently, the planned goal of the sessions is to give students the ability to advance or catch up on their work, do distance learning, research partnerships and study abroad. The sessions will also be aimed at getting alumni re-engaged with the campus through various opportunities and retraining, and give non-RIT students a chance to earn transfer credits and college credits in high school.

Intercession, which will be three weeks long, will consist of a student taking one letter grade course with time available for study sessions and office hours with professors. Intercession will have separate tuition, and will be priced to offset the lower amounts of available financial aid available for the session. **R**

CORRECTION

The cover of **REPORTER's** Friday, April 20 issue featured a photograph of several members of the RIT Gay Alliance (ritGA). There was no corresponding article in the magazine. We apologize for any confusion this may have caused.

FORECAST compiled by Michael Roppolo

- FRIDAY 27** CAB SPRING FESTIVAL PRESENTS: FOOD, MUSIC AND PUPPIES!
Outside, Kodak Quad and Tiger Statue. 12 - 4 p.m.
RIT is bringing man's best friend back to campus to benefit Scottsville Veterinary Adoptions. Also enjoy barbecue and live music!
Cost: \$1.
- SATURDAY 28** CAB SPRING FESTIVAL PRESENTS: B.O.B
Gordon Field House and Activities Center. 8 - 10 p.m.
The long-awaited night is here: come out, dance and enjoy the hip-hop stylings of B.o.B!
Cost: Students: \$17, Faculty/Staff: \$26, Others: \$36.
- SUNDAY 29** CAR SHOW
Lots G and H. 9 a.m. - 7 p.m.
Do you live for horsepower? Speed? Wind in your hair? Check out the RIT car club's Car Show.
Cost: Free to watch, \$5 to show.
- MONDAY 30** ANAD AWARENESS WEEK
Lobby, Student Alumni Union. 10 a.m. - 3 p.m.
Help support Delta Phi Epsilon and the National Association of Anorexia Nervosa and Associated Disorders. Buy shirts, baked goods, crafts and CDs while learning something new!
Cost: Free.
- TUESDAY 01** BEACH DAY SHIRT PRE-SALE
Outside, Student Alumni Union. 10 a.m. - 4 p.m.
With Beach Day right around the corner, what better way to prepare to lie down on the Greek Lawn than by buying and tie-dying a t-shirt?
Cost: \$5.
- WEDNESDAY 02** CONABLE GLOBAL FILM SERIES: "INDIGENES/NATIVES"
Max Lowenthal Hall, 2230 (LOW, 12). 6:30 - 9:30 p.m.
Join COLA faculty for a stimulating conversation about racism and colonialism. Pizza and refreshments will be served to all who attend.
Cost: Free.
- THURSDAY 03** CAB THURSDAY NIGHT CINEMA PRESENTS: "SAVING PRIVATE RYAN"
Ingle Auditorium, Student Alumni Union (SAU, 04). 10 p.m. - 1 a.m.
Starring Tom Hanks, this historically accurate movie follows one squad as they fight through the hard decisions of war. How far would you go to save one life?
Cost: Free. **R**



STUDENT LOANS INCREASING

Economists, Politicians Express Concern

by Stephanie Beach with contributions by Amanda Imperial | illustration by Adrian Yablin

Student loan debt has reached record highs of over \$1 trillion, and it continues to grow. Each year, according to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), about 19.7 million high school students graduate and move on to a college education. Over two million of these students will graduate and move on into the world, finding careers. However, the average cost of the college education they have acquired is piling up. The cost of tuition for a four-year public school is around \$12,000, while at a private school, the average cost is around \$32,000. In 2010, the average student loan debt for a person pursuing higher education was \$25,250, which is 5 percent higher than in 2009, according to a study by the Project for Student Debt.

Recently, debt in the U.S. has come to the forefront as a major economic problem — it was exacerbated by the recession in 2008. At RIT alone, over 75 percent of the students have accepted federal aid. For anyone who can't pay for college out of pocket, this college path, and the debt that accompanies it, is unavoidable. However, in the face of potential increases in interest rates and proposed legislation, the student loan market may soon be undergoing a sea change.

A SECOND CHANCE

The government currently has no policies controlling student loan debt, unlike many other kinds of debt. Right now, the current bankruptcy laws do not forgive student loan debts; if a person files for bankruptcy, they are still required to pay off all of their student loans.

However, this may be changing soon: U.S. Representative Hansen Clarke (D-Mich.) proposed a bill that will cut student loan debt after 10 years. This Student Loan Forgiveness Act will forgive student debt of those who have paid 10 percent of their income towards their loans over a period of 10 years. It also caps the interest rate on federal student loans at 3.4 percent. In the interest of professions which are statistically lower paid — but are deemed to provide a public good — those who are pursuing careers in teaching, public service or practicing medicine in under-served areas may have their loans forgiven after only five years.

If this act is passed, students all across the country, including those from RIT, may be saved thousands of dollars of debt. According to the Huffington Post, the bill will forgive students for up to \$45,520, equal to the cost of a four-year degree at an average public university. In an attempt to help this act pass, an online petition has been established; at the moment, the petition has over 870,000 signatures. Clarke has been encouraging students and all those affected by this bill to get involved.

RISING COSTS

Adding onto the current financial burden is the continuous inflation of tuition rates add to this financial burden. College tuition increases between six and nine percent annually, far greater than the dollar's average inflation rate of three percent. Pairing this with a proposed increase in student loan interest rates, the price of education is rising faster than the value of the dollar would dictate. Current student loan interest rates are capped at 3.4 percent, but starting on July 1 this year, the interest rates on federally subsidized Stafford Loans are set to double from 3.4 to 6.8 percent. This will affect all college students nationwide who have these loans.

Senator Chuck Schumer (D-N.Y.) visited RIT recently to talk about a bill he proposed, which would lock the interest rate at 3.4 percent, preventing the increase. He was introduced by President Bill Destler, who spoke of how he too believes that college costs are getting too high.

At the presentation, Schumer explained how the bill will work and his reasons for backing the change. "When a student cannot afford a college they deserve to go to because the cost is too high, and they don't have the back-up to go, they lose," said Schumer. He promised to continue to press this matter forward until some change is made.

The current cap of 3.4 percent on interest rates was set up by Congress in 2007. Senator Jack Reed recently introduced a bill that would extend the cap for another year. If the interest rate is increased, it is expected that

the average student who receives four years of subsidized Stafford Loans will have to pay an extra \$3,798 more over a 10 year repayment term. According to Schumer's web site, this would directly affect over 8,000 RIT students, who may have to resort to acquiring private loans instead.

“

If this act is passed, students all across the country, including those from RIT, may be saved thousands of dollars of debt.

”

A CHANGING MARKET

The private loan market has also been shifting recently, as JPMorgan Chase & Co. recently announced that it is pulling out of the student loan market. Representatives from the company stated that they will start to only extend student loans to customers with an existing financial relationship with Chase. The date for this change, according to a Tuesday, April 10 Huffington Post article, is July 1 — the same date that the federal loans would increase their rates. The article also states Chase is following the actions of the U.S. Bancorp, a Minneapolis-based bank which stopped accepting student loan applications from non-members in late March.

This change comes as the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau increases its scrutiny of private student loan lenders. According to a Department of Education study, the percentage of student loan borrowers who have defaulted on their loans by the second year of repayment them has doubled since the reported 8.8 percent in 2007. This increase in defaults means the student loan industry is more risky, but also more profitable.

With the new legislation and policies that are currently in the works, the student loan industry is clearly a field of the finance world that may soon look very different from how it does now. As certain acts pass in the government, the industry will shift in profitability, which will cause the companies offering private loans to shift their policy. There is no way to predict the ultimate result of this industry activity, but it will affect each and every one of the millions of people who have borrowed money to pay for education. Where this will lead, only time will tell. ■

BoB



SATURDAY, APRIL 28TH

*Interpreted

RIT GORDON FIELD HOUSE
8PM (DOORS OPEN AT 7PM)

\$17 - STUDENTS

\$26 - FACULTY/STAFF

\$36 - GENERAL PUBLIC

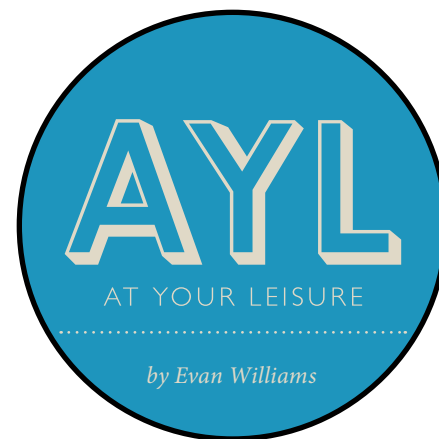
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STREAM OF FACTS

Sao Paulo, Brazil became the world's first major city to outlaw public advertisements. Billboards, building ads, taxi and bus signs were banned by Mayor Gilberto Kassab's Clean City Laws. The law was passed to combat what **people** described as "Visual Pollution."

According to a study by psychologists at the Royal College of Scientists in Ireland, approximately one fifth of young **people** aged 11 to 13 years experience auditory hallucinations, more commonly referred to as "hearing voices." They also found that 80 percent of those kids had a diagnosable psychological problem, such as **depression**.

To combat the **depression** of being executed by firing squad, convicted murderer James W. Rodgers made a grim joke on his last day. When asked for his last **request** he replied, "a bulletproof vest," according to a March 30, 1961 article in the Spokesman-Review.

According to articles in the Telegraph and China Daily, there is a trend in China of young people who **request** tattoos in English. It is a reversal of the trend that saw Americans getting Chinese tattoos in Chinese that were either incorrect or meaningless.

WORD OF THE WEEK

Edacious *adj.*

Of or relating to gluttonous eating

Definition taken from <http://merriam-webster.com>.

QUOTE

"In America,
Sex is an obsession.
In other parts of the world,
It is a fact."

- German Actress Marlene Dietrich

REPORTER RECOMMENDS

bmovies.com

"Bruce Lee Fights Back From the Grave," "Santa Conquers the Martians," "Blood Splattered Bride," "The Black Godfather," "Driller Killer," "Dear Dead Delilah," "The Rats are Coming, The Werewolves are Here!" It's hard to find a collection of crazier titles, or crazier films, all in one place and for free online than bmovies.com.

What makes these camp-tastic masterpieces so charming, besides the terrible production and over-the-top acting, is their pure unpredictability. In the days of cookie-cutter Hollywood scripts, pure WTF moments are hard to come by. These throwbacks from the 50s through the 80s supply them in spades.

The site is divided into the five main B movie food groups: Horror, Sci-Fi, Western, Kung Fu and Indie. The films load impressively fast, and there are hundreds of features to choose from. It also provides you the chance to see a number of stars like Bruce Lee, John Wayne, Charles Bronson and Sonny Chiba in roles I'm sure they'd rather forget. Now if you'll excuse me, I've got to get back to those poor defenseless coeds in "Satan's School for Girls."

FIRST WORLD PROBLEMS

That awkward moment when the spinning rainbow pinwheel of death pops up on the library Mac right as you decided to risk clicking on those sexy pictures of Emma Watson. Yes, fellow library-goers, it's exactly what it looks like.

OVERSEEN & OVERHEARD

"Drinking non-alcoholic beer is like
making out with your sister."

It tastes the same, but it's just wrong."

- World's worst brother

HAIKU

Good Samaritan
Lets drunk friend sleep in your bed.
Repaid in vomit.

COMIC by Emily DeVault



After a twelve rack of PBR and a pan of hash brownies, the arrival of his five Black and Blue Zonies revealed Tito's **edacious** nature.

**“Might I Suggest
The Satin Chaps”**

The Satin Chaps
Album | 35 mins. |
Soul/Classic Pop
by Nick Bovee

★★★★☆

TRY INSTEAD: INGFRID HOFFMAN, GERT WILDEN, LEFTIES SOUL CONNECTION

The Satin Chaps are a self defined soul band, created in 2010 by the ‘core’ members of Luke Strahota, Eric Hedford, and Peter Dean. With music reminiscent of 60’s dance music, the Chaps certainly succeed in creating and maintaining a vintage look, looking decidedly retro in matching suits and neckerchiefs. The Chaps carry the retro aspect over to their recording, using as much vintage equipment as possible to get closer to that old school sound.

Musically, ‘Might I Suggest’ is well rooted in its soul/go-go genre, heavy on the horns and bass guitar, with drums and organ mixed in, although a little tonally low.

The most disagreeable part of this album is its near complete lack of lyrics. For a lot of genres that can be a good choice, allowing the instrumentals to create emotions and feelings in the listener, but it just doesn’t seem a good choice for the Satin Chaps. While nothing is flawed in their playing or composition, nothing resonates from the purely instrumental tracks.

In fact, the most memorable song from the album “Pigtail Park” has nonsense vocals throughout the duration, but is much more memorable because of the range a female singer adds. She compensates well for the emphasis on the deeper notes, and brings a solid balance to the song.

The other massive issue with this album: it sounds safe. The songs aren’t interesting, they create no pull and no desire for a repeat listen. Nothing catches in my mind. While the old school look and feel is definitely authentic, that doesn’t mean anything when I don’t want to listen to it. This sounds harsh, but the thing to remember is that the early 20’s crowd isn’t exactly the audience this album is made for. **B**

**“Enamorado
De Ti”**

Selena
Album | 36 mins. |
Pop Latino
by Nilan Lovelace

★★★★★

FOR FANS OF: CAMILA, KUMBIA KINGS, AND GLORIA TREVI

On March 31, 1995 Tejano, Pop Latino and Cumbia Mexicana singer, Selena Quintanilla-Perez, known simply as Selena, was shot in killed in a Corpus Christi hotel. After news struck of her death, the hearts of many created a sullen blanket that laid upon the country. The singer released her first, self-titled album in 1989, was known for mixing authentic Mexican Mariachi and Tejano with pop undertones, much like her hit “Bidi Bidi Bom Bom.”

In her latest posthumous album, “Enamorado de Ti,” some of Selena’s biggest hits feature some of Latin music’s best artists as well as a few remixed songs. “Enamorado de Ti [Merengue Mix]” adds a lively, tropical tone to the original slow tempo love song. Though enjoyable, the song seems awkwardly paired when it comes to collaborating artists, who often clash with Selena’s voice and the overall sound, as much like in the album’s version of “Bidi Bidi Bom Bom,” featuring Selena Gomez. It is obvious that Spanish isn’t Gomez’s first language, and comes in a distant second. Gomez’s odd voice — which becomes much higher and very squeaky when speaking Spanish — doesn’t match the rest of the song and momentarily brings everything to a halt. Speaking of ill-chosen artists, “Como la Flor” could also stand a collaborator different than Cristian Castro. If you’re new to Spanish-speaking music, you’ll enjoy the mixes. If not, avoid them at all cost.

Besides those three, every other song on the Spanish-English album is excellent. It includes several songs, unchanged, by Selena, and a few select songs with a catchy and appropriate 2012-spin. One of two collaborations done right, “Amor Prohibido” featuring Samo, is an album favorite and sounds like the type of music that the singer would be making today. **B**

Skullgirls
Video Game

Xbox 360 | PS3 | \$15
by Nick Bovee

★★★★★

FOR FANS OF: MARVEL VS CAPCOM 2, BLAZBLUE, GUILTY GEAR

Fighting games are an exclusive genre, requiring weeks of practice to learn the fundamentals of game mechanics. As such, they often fall under the average gamer’s radar. Similarly, indie games often get overlooked for more blockbuster titles.

“Skullgirls” falls in both these categories. The product of an indie studio and a 2-D fighting game in the style of “Marvel vs. Capcom 2,” it’s gained major traction in the fighting game community due to the experience of lead designer Mike Zaimont. A well-known tournament gamer, Zaimont focused on eliminating many of the issues players see with current fighting game engines, like infinite combos, unblockable attacks and the “sameness” present in many of more popular fighters’ character designs. Only eight characters currently exist, but each one has a completely unique play style and move set, borrowing nothing from other characters. Zaimont also made sure that netcode for online play was airtight, considering recent issue with “Streetfighter x Tekken.”

Alex Ahad spearheaded the other side of “Skullgirls,” designing the game’s characters and setting. Loosely art-deco in theme, the game features sentient hairstyles, violent muscled hats, a Lovecraftian monster and even a character based entirely around cartoon violence. Unlike all current popular fighters, “Skullgirls” sticks to hand drawn frames, translated into high definition 2-D sprites. Just as appealing as the artwork is the musical score composed by Michiru Yamane, best known for her work on the *Castlevania* game series.

While stunning even in comparison to big name studios, “Skullgirls” is missing out on a few things that a team with a larger budget could have included. Although planned as free downloadable content (DLC), the move list for characters is not included — nor are controllable dummies in training mode. Also, although not egregious, the sexualization of a few characters may alienate some players.

“Skullgirls” has a paltry eight characters, but three additional ones are confirmed for DLC release and many more could be possible with the success of the game. With a better engine, art and score than any other game on the market, and a fraction of the costs, it’s well worth your money. **B**

“The Cabin in the Woods”

Film
Horror-Comedy | 95 mins.
by Vasia Ivanov

★★★★★

FOR FANS OF: BUFFY THE VAMPIRE SLAYER, SCREAM, THE EVIL DEAD

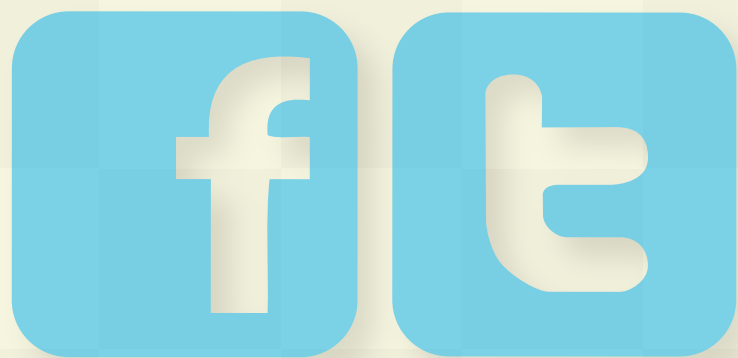
Some movies don’t care about rules. Some, in fact, throw them out entirely. Yet to say that “The Cabin in the Woods” has done this is a complete understatement, and does not give co-writers Drew Goddard and Joss Whedon enough credit for what they’ve truly done. “The Cabin in the Woods” has rewritten the rules.

Spoiling anything about the film would be a sin, but in its barest form, it is about five friends who take a holiday to the titular location. Their secluded vacation soon turns into what can only be described as a brutal skewering of horror conventions, with no trope left unharmed. But in addition to Goddard and Whedon’s hilarious, unpredictable genre rewriting, they also manage to create a captivating and touching horror film — an absolute rarity by today’s standards.

Considering the players involved, it is no surprise that the film works as well as it does. Whedon, the creator of the genre-defying and generation-defining television series “Buffy the Vampire Slayer,” adds his signature touches to the script, including his highly lauded witty quips. Goddard, in his directorial debut, proves himself a strong storyteller with an inventive visual mind. And Fran Kranz, as the lovable stoner Marty, is a revelation of comedic timing, easily standing out among a cast that includes a pair of Oscar nominees and a Marvel superhero.

If you’re tired of the unimaginative, boring horror movies coming out nowadays, good. Instead of laughing at the torture-porn perils abundant in the recent trend of horror films, go see “The Cabin in the Woods” — it’s among the most honest and inventive films you’ll see this year. **B**

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HOUSTALGIA ARTIST

by Cadence Schwartz

Screaming fans gather in a dark room in anticipation. As lights begin to flash, a musician takes the stage in front of a giant television screen. When the music starts pumping it's not the twang of a guitar that hits you, or even the scratches of a record, but rather the gritty electronic sound of an old Game Boy. Chiptune is a young music genre that manipulates the sound chips in children's toys into musical instruments and it's making noise right here in Rochester.

Chiptunes originated from 8-bit video game nostalgia. Outdated gaming platforms, such as the Game Boy and the Nintendo Entertainment System (NES), were used to create remixes of popular game music. Since then, chiptune has developed to be less about remembering the past and more about pushing the outdated systems as far as possible. The result is more raw and fresh than the common polished sounds of newer machines. "I always liked it," says Nick Maynard, a member of Rochester Chip, a local chiptune community. He had begun by making electronic music, and had ended up using the same sounds as chiptune. When he first heard Anamanaguchi, a chiptune band, "[He was] blown away. It was like, 'oh my god it's all I want to do'". Since then, he has been an active member of the community, including helping host a screening of the chiptune documentary "Reformat the Planet" on campus on Friday, April 13, which delved deep into the inner workings of the scene. Afterward, he led a lecture on how to program chiptune music on a Game Boy. Here's how it works.

THE NEW NEW WAVE

Due to the restrictive nature of the platforms, the music has to be very efficient. The chips in Game Boys, for example, only have four channels to draw sound from: Pulse One and Two, which give off square audio waves,

Wave, which can switch between different types of waves, and Noise, which is basically a white noise channel. In order to get full and complex sounding music, each channel has to be pushed to its capacity; even the Noise channel can be manipulated into resembling snare and bass drums. Besides selecting individuals notes, sound sets can be ripped from popular games such as "Castlevania," "Mega Man" and "A Boy and His Blob," and mixed into the music.

There are various programs that can manipulate the notes. Though usually used for techno music, the computer program "FruityLoops" can be used to compose chiptune songs. Because it can be used on a computer, some artists from "Reformat the planet" feel that it is easier to use than working directly on a Game Boy. The program "Little Sound DJ" can be used on both a Game Boy with an EMS cartridge (a programmable game cartridge which can connect to a computer via USB) or on an emulator. "LSDJ" has two modes: Sony, which plays sections of notes in a listed order, and Live, which allows the user to pick when music comes in for improvisational performances. It also has a feature that allows the user to hand draw the sound wave they want to create. As chiptune artist Nullsleep explains in "Reformat the planet", "It basically turns your Game Boy into a synthesizer and a sequencer." For hardware that does not take an EMS cartridge, such as the NES, a chip can be programmed with a song and soldered into

a game cartridge to be played on the console, a favored method of Anamanaguchi. Another way to create chiptune music is to hardwire various switch and plug connections straight to the motherboard and warp the sounds by hand, the preferred technique of artist Notendo.

HOMETOWN HARDWIRED

The Rochester chiptune community is also extremely united. Maynard stated, "I love everyone I meet setting up shows. It takes a specific kind of person to want to learn this pseudo code." The local community Rochester Chip, which recently celebrated its one-year anniversary in November, meets every month with various shows and screenings. While most shows are at the Bug Jar, they also happen on various campuses and in basements. Local bands include Chip's Challenge and Faking Amnesia (both from RIT), BC Likes You, and Danimal Cannon. Rochester Chip's next official show will be on May 17th at the Bug Jar and includes the bands Revengineers, Danimal Cannon, and Balto. In the closing remarks of "Reformat the planet," artist Glomag attests to the value of local scenes. "The community itself is its own reward."

For more information on Rochester Chip, as well as some song samples, check out rochesterchip.org.



BEHIND THE SCENE

THE LIFESTYLES OF ROCHESTER'S PUNK ROCK COMMUNITY

by Evan Williams

Bathed in the honest glow of a bare light bulb, I sat cross-legged on the concrete floor of an empty basement, surrounded by a half-dozen young people decked out in leather jackets, patched-up jeans and grimy sneakers. They were hungrily passing around a bag of jalapeño Cheetos and swapping cigarettes, joking as our eardrums rang from the heavy metal concert we'd just attended.

What began as an investigation of rumors about some kids who threw punk rock shows in a basement they called "The Meatgrinder" had landed me in the company of a group of fascinating individuals, and in turn, introduced me to a true American counterculture. The current company consists of young punk and experimental musicians who had forgone steady jobs and "comfortable" lifestyles. Instead, they commit to their passion of making highly marginalized music.

The lifestyle adopted by these young musicians is one that runs in almost direct contradiction to that of most college students, myself included. Instead of preparing for specialized careers through specific schooling, they've opted for a life of relative uncertainty and financial stress for the freedom to pursue their passions and cultivate a widely unacknowledged musical community. It's not music that will make you rich or famous, but the sense of community developed and the importance of the music they create so deeply stirs the hearts of those associated that it must be made. It's simply too loud to ignore.

"I DON'T THINK THERE'S ANYTHING MORE PUNK THAN NOISE. IT'S THE PRIMITIVE EXPRESSION OF WHAT THE SEX PISTOLS AND THE RAMONES WERE TRYING TO GET ACROSS,"

“DESTROY MUSIC.”

Dissonance is a weapon. It's a sonic device that can be wielded with precision or abandon, often times to the same effect. Sean Largey, front man for noise band Waves Crashing Piano Chords and drummer for grindcore (a genre of extreme metal) act Beard Without A Mustache, has found that a harshness of sound can express his appreciation for the rawness he associates with punk rock. "I don't think there's anything more punk than noise. It's the primitive expression of what the Sex Pistols and the Ramones were trying to get across," Largey explains. "They were like 'Fuck you. Destroy music.' But I don't think that's really what it sounded like, as much as I like them. They were more just blues-oriented rock'n'roll with a great image."

Largey performed guest vocals for a nine-minute noise set with synth-noise band Foot and Mouth Disease (FAMD) on Record Store Day at the House of Guitars on Saturday, April 21. The performance seemed to exhibit the rawness of sound he was looking for. Backed by his friends Lawrence Patti and David Voelkl of FAMD as they generated feedback with homemade synthesizers, he began a series of screams, both viscous and vulnerable at the same time. He intertwined chants of lyrics that he had written the night before. "You disgust me! Soul mate!" His body began to thrash and stomp uncontrollably as he channeled everything he could seem to muster.

There were no pre-rehearsed dance moves or choreographed head banging here, only motion for motion's sake. At one point, Largey even bashed himself in the head with his mic. But the instant the feedback ceased, it was as if a switch had been flipped and his charming, humorous personality returned almost instantly. I pointed out the fresh bruise blossoming on his bashed scalp, and he laughed it off. "That was a pretty tame performance compared to Wave shows," he would joke later.

This type of on/off fury was also evident when front man Adam Kramer's experimental hardcore band Endanger Youth performed after Largey's. Kramer's performance almost appeared as a challenge

to what little crowd meandered around the band. The previously mild-mannered 25-year-old would stand mere inches from others' faces, barking his strained vocals until he was red in the face. It was the kind of performance that most casual concert goers would never stand for, and most steered clear. He explained the shift in attitude when performing. "For the most part I am a pretty chill dude," he said. "But I guess you could say I have some demons and I try to use music as an outlet for the things that frustrate me or make me sad."

To watch Largey and Kramer perform is to witness first-hand a noticeable juxtaposition that runs through the scene; the image of incredibly friendly people making incredibly aggressive music. More than one person I met admitted to having anger management issues, yet they were all remarkably kind-hearted, especially to a stranger who wanted to write about them.

Endangered Youth bassist John Kiss offered his thoughts on why nice people would be attracted to such an aggressive style of music. "I think what attracts people to it is the sincerity of it. Our music is very moody, up and down," says Kiss. "And that is because we are human, and have a lot of different moods, emotions and frustrations that we want to express in our music." This was interesting to hear from Kiss, who is incredibly upbeat and charismatic. If you had to sum up the 25-year-old, "spunky" might be a good word to use. "For me personally, there's something about his kind of music that makes me feel like a rebellious, nihilistic 16-18 year old who is pissed off at the world."