



# The Talon

## Gripping News



Volume VIII

Issue II

Onteora High School

Boiceville, NY 12412

February 2026

## OCS Art Dept's Dive Inside A Beautiful Home Turned Gallery

By Alexa Hull, Senior

Every year, teachers Ms. Hamilton and Ms. Wentland make it their personal mission to ensure students gain experience related to the art world, often through field trips as it is the key to building passion and finding inspiration.

This year, the AP Studio class, Glass and Metals class, and Drawing and Painting class took a trip to the Al Held Foundation. Upon arriving at the foundation, students toured Held's original studio that is now refurbished as a collective gallery of many of his creations. Much of his work remains unfinished as a rough draft, or painter's sketch of the vision he had for his work.

Through this tour, students were able to fully embody the technical and emotional process he used when crafting. Although the studio exhibits only one completed piece, each painting takes on a very abstract feel, and displays his intricate and detailed painting style.

One can almost feel as if they are standing right inside each scene he creates. Much of his work revolves around geometric shapes and patterns. His paintings are extremely architecturally complex, and take on a great illusionistic effect.

As the students moved through the gallery, they were served refreshments while being thoroughly entertained with tales of Held's work and a mini-lecture on his artistic process, as well as what each piece meant to him.



After setting foot through various rooms—turned display setups—one begins a walk up the long cascading stairs of the artist's studio to reach the upper office. Once there, one can find several large pieces, some of which are up

to 10/90 feet. Each piece takes at least ten minutes to fully explore and comprehend.

Once returned to the classroom, Ms. Hamilton launched the project

part of this program. It has been an honor and a privilege to collaborate with the Al Held Foundation for the past decade."

Junior Izzy Wentland, working



idea of the students creating their own work inspired by Held's techniques and styles.

When asked about how this collaborative opportunity came to be, Ms. Hamilton gave the following overview: "About 10 years ago, Daniel Belasco, Executive Director of the Al Held Foundation, approached the high school art department to discuss how to continue Held's legacy by

*fostering an appreciation and understanding of modern art with young students.*

From that meeting, Daniel and I created a program that has grown into a rich educational project. Led by Daniel Belasco, students begin with a visit to the foundation, which is the former home and studio of Al Held.

Upon their return, students created artwork inspired by their experiences, which culminates in a group show at the foundation. This is a wonderful educational opportunity for students to explore the life and work of an influential modern artist.

Most importantly, students engage in lecture and discussion, art criticism, making art, exhibition preparation, and presentation. More than 80 students have been

through her 3-D design art portfolio, took a unique angle on the project. After the creation of a 3-D head, depicting Held's brightly colored shapes and patterns, followed by a multi-dimensional geometric outline of shapes cut and created from wood, one can see the great



Art by Junior Izzy Wentland

impact such a trip and exploration of Held's style had on the minds of Onteora students.

Upon the questioning of the Al Held Foundation and what role it provides in the community, Belasco stated the following: "Artist Al Held incorporated the Al Held Foundation, a 501c3 nonprofit, in 1990, initially to provide general support for art and art education. At the time of his death in 2005, the foundation also became the repository of his entire estate, consisting of artwork, archive, intellectual property, and real estate, which continues his legacy in the fields of modern and contempo-

rary art.

Since 2016, the foundation has run a variety of public and educational programs, including the partnership with Onteora High School to serve as a creative resource for the community of the Catskills and Hudson Valley.

These programs provide a public good as well as further Held's legacy by continuing to educate students, artists, and the public about his visionary painting within the inspirational setting of his historic studio."

A beautiful home turned gallery, although not a common concept, truly left an impactful collaborative sense on many students' work. Students worked from mediums and styles they felt familiar with and are deeply passionate about, using these forms as a launch pad for success.

When creating my own work I was greatly influenced by my experience in photography. I began shooting images along the plains of Stone Ridge, until I encountered a rustic barn that greatly reminded me of Held's studio. Once the image was shot and framed, I explored Held's abstract style of lines and primary colors. I swirled each design across the image to show the deep contrast between a black-and-white still life and freemoving 3-D lines. This project encouraged me to explore outside of my own comfort zone while still remaining in the medium I feel most connected to.

The process replicates the very art presentation experience one would have when majoring in the art field at a college or university. This not only allows for the exploration into a new design style, but allows for replication of a real-world art gallery, by studying Held's work at a matured and sophisticated level.



Art by Senior Alexa Hull

# Busy Work—a Revolution

By Jenny Albright, Senior

There are no two words that teachers fear more, that students spit with more malice, than *busy work*.

When we, as students, accuse assignments of being this form of work, we often use it as a free-floating, all-encompassing term to refer to class-work from teachers we are less concerned with, have too early or too late in the day, or have larger projects with.

But what we truly

mean by “busy work” is this: assignments that serve no purpose, do not further any skill, teach a new topic, nor make a complex topic easier to understand, and are merely assigned to fill just another 42-minute period within our days.

Practice essays, non-physical labs—and for those in advanced classes, a smothering of AP questions—are often unfairly classified as “busy work”, though

according to the aforementioned definition and my own standing, they are not. These assignments actually serve a purpose; they further a skill, they aid in clarifying a topic, and, in many cases, they are the building blocks necessary to complete that looming larger project.

When topics, especially those that bare absolutely no semblance to anything occurring in class, come loaded with assignments, now *that* is busy work.

While there are limited benefits of this type of task—mainly being that it will prepare for future jobs wherein

one does the same work day in and day out, and appears to get nowhere but the present—the main statement that can be made about busy work is that it is the ultimate negative within a student’s day.

So, to teachers, I propose this: Stop. End the busy work revolution and assign us genuine learning. Let us practice skills we may need past the final exam, let us understand topics the way it was intended,

and please, for the love of everything, let us work on looming projects. That is all we desire.



# The Future of A.I.

By Foster Knoche, Junior

Only in our world can a technology like A.I. become the subject of nightmares, where the dream of a life free from labor becomes a fear of unemployment. In the economy’s current structure, labor-saving technology will mean destitution for those with obsolete careers, and A.I. can be nothing but an anxiety for the workers of America.

A.I. anxiety is a logical response in many ways—especially when every startup claims their technology is sure to revolutionize the process of production. With these fears established, one must wonder: when is A.I. going to actually transform anything? When will A.I. make a profit for all that’s been invested?

It can seem strange that whilst every CEO in Silicon Valley is claiming they’re on the cusp of a

breakthrough, none of A.I.’s applications have been truly profitable thus far. The ratio of market capitalization (total dollar value of the company’s existing stock) revenue is completely out of sync for companies within the A.I. sector, and this will be corrected only by a market crash.

One such company is Palantir, with a market cap of \$400 billion, and a revenue stream of a mere \$4 billion. A price to sales ratio of 100:1 is terrible, and it would be extremely difficult to imagine a world where this ratio evens out through increased revenue as opposed to a crash in valuation.

At first, the question was, “will a crash happen?” Now the question is, “when will a crash happen and what will the consequences be?” Ratios like this simply aren’t

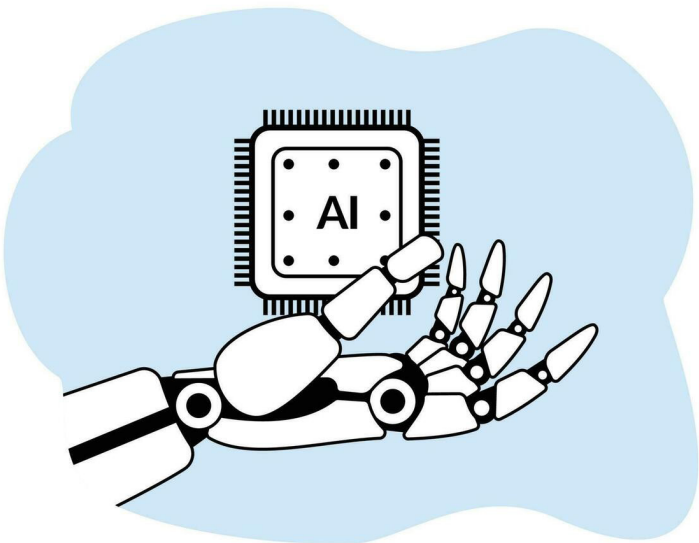
sustainable. With a ratio above 3:1 considered high risk and 20:1 being seen as pure speculation, what would you call a ratio of 100:1? This outright and speculative degeneracy is going to ruin society temporarily, and yet our government allows this to happen. People will blame all the market issues on Trump, but it’s genuinely absurd to place the blame exclusively on Trump while exempting every Democrat with actual power for the past 40 years when they’ve pursued the same financial policies.

Reagan and Clinton both played massive roles in the butchery of our financial system, slashing Depression-era legislation that was implemented for a pretty self-evident reason. Speculation used to be far more restricted, but that world is completely unknown

to those of our generation, and it’s highly unlikely any of our parents would’ve been cognizant of politics during the 70s to recall the weight of such a transition.

We experienced a crash during Covid, but, at least for me, I was too young to know about its occurrence or its ramifications. The economic aspect of Covid was certainly there, but for a lot of people I think the social isolation and uncertainty of the disease’s future spread overshadowed fears of financial instability.

The point is, the crash from A.I. and perhaps a few other factors will be the first economic crisis we truly experience. When this will happen still isn’t certain, so don’t get too nervous, but maybe tell your parents to be more mindful of their investments if they have any.



Courtesy of Creative Commons

# Austin's Safety Corner: Beware of AI Videos

By Austin Otis, Sophomore

Over the past decade or so, A.I. has grown significantly from chatbots to advanced image generation and even video generation capabilities. A.I. is growing (unregulated) by the day. This, as with all things, can cause issues, one of them I feel the need to address: A.I. video generation. A.I.

video generation, as I currently understand it, is A.I. combining noise, imagery, and denoise (denoise is basically unwanted noise), and turning it into videos. However, this has been used to generate A.I. videos of important historical figures saying “67”, Roblox YouTuber Kreekcraft stealing packages

off of porches, and make A.I. renditions of copyrighted music sung by copyrighted characters. These are some of the many issues A.I. video making has caused.

This is a reminder to stay safe on the internet and not always believe everything you see online.

# The Sweet Spot: Classic Chocolate Cake and Vanilla Buttercream

By Talula Kirschner, Senior

Simple baking shouldn't be so scary. No matter your level of passion for baking, knowing a few simple recipes would be a good trick to have up your sleeve. You never know when you'll need to whip up something last minute.

While box mixes are still just as satisfyingly delicious and sometimes even undetectable, there is a feeling of nonchalant pride that comes with being able to say, "Yeah, I made this all from scratch," when someone loves what you've baked. Next time, skip the box mix. Take just an hour or two out of your day, put on some great music, and bake a cake!

To start, preheat the oven to 350'. Boil two cups of water. In a medium sized bowl sift the flour, baking soda, baking powder, and salt.

In a large standing mixer or with an electric hand mixer cream together the sugar, eggs, cocoa powder, olive oil, and vanilla. Then, gradually add the boiled water. Fold in the dry ingredients. Bake the cakes for 35-40 minutes until the knife comes out clean, then let them cool.

For the frosting, in either a mixer or with a hand mixer, cream together the butter and vanilla. Gradually add the sugar. Add the milk as needed, making sure the frosting doesn't get too loose.

Once fully cooled, layer frosting in between the cakes (depending on how many cake pans you use). If you want to get fancy, you could then add sprinkles, jam, fresh fruit, or syrups in between the layers for an added effect. I don't have many decorating tips, as that is not my area of expertise, but I can guarantee it will taste heavenly. Enjoy!



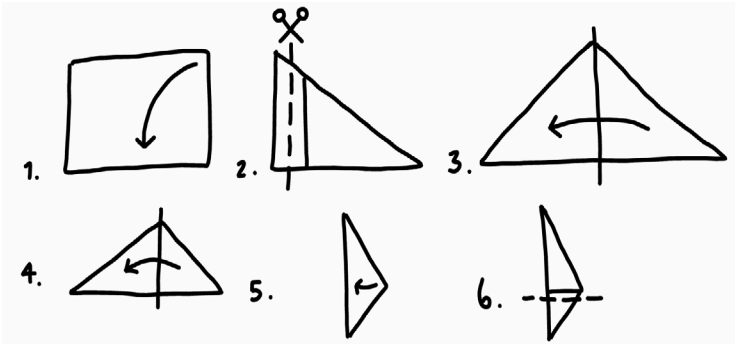
**Cake Ingredients:**

- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- 2 tsp baking soda
- 2 tsp baking powder
- 1 tsp salt
- 1 cup sugar
- 2 eggs
- 1 cup cocoa powder
- 1 cup olive oil
- 2 tsp vanilla extract
- 2 cups boiling water

**Buttercream Ingredients:**

- 1 cup salted sweet cream butter, softened
- 2 tsp vanilla extract
- 4 cups powdered sugar
- 1-2 tbsp milk (as needed)

When baking a cake, the best way to avoid the bottom sticking to the pan is by lining it with parchment. To cut out the exact size you need, don't trace out the pan, follow these steps. First measure out parchment paper so it just covers the size of your pan. Fold two adjacent sides so they line up and it makes an isosceles triangle and a rectangle. Cut off that extra rectangle so you're left with just the triangle. Fold the triangle in half to make a smaller triangle. Fold it in half again, the same way. Then fold one last time, lining up the shorter folded edge to the long one. Line up the tip to the center of the pan to measure the radius. Cut off the excess paper at the end. Unfold to reveal a perfect circle to fit your cake pan.



Visual step-by-step of how to fold the parchment paper

# Tradition: A Valuable Precedent or an Outdated Guidebook?

By Hazel Haynes, Senior

As I mindlessly scroll through Tiktok, a video catches my eye. The woman on my screen is clean, proper, and well-spoken. Her hair is perfectly coiffed, her white apron spotless. The background is tastefully minimalist, and her children, for lack of better words, are well-kept. She speaks calmly about her day with a serene smile on her face.

The woman is one of many so-called "trad wives", a modern take on housewife life reminiscent of the 1950s. I am intrigued. My vision of a stay-at-home mother role is full of stress and thankless labor, where unappreciated women are overshadowed by traditional gender expectations. Maybe I am just a pessimist; maybe this trad wife role is a fresh perspective, and perhaps a more appealing one.

But is this new fad as simple as it seems? It's almost impossible to tell from a minute-long video of edited clips, but the trend may not be nearly as

fulfilling as it appears. The truth is that this life is not only unattainable for most, but also calls into question whether the housewife role is being reclaimed by, or subtly forced upon, modern women.

In a world where women are continuously gaining independence and individual rights, the gender norms and classic game of "house" that were followed without question in the past are beginning to turn upside down. We must examine this new movement and wonder: is this the modern adaptation of family life, seeking to liberate both women and men from toxic cycles of years past? Or is this the antithesis of feminism, a more alluring, repackaged offer with the same lame contents? As always, one of many factors in this decision is money.

The ability to comfortably support a family on one source of income is a privilege. The influencers who promote the traditional spousal household always seem to fail to mention

or recognize the financial weight it creates, which most families cannot bear. The ignorance surrounding the economic burden of tradition places an idealistic, dreamy lens over the trad wife lifestyle, a honey trap that seeks to swallow the economically disadvantaged. Perhaps for those that can afford it, this life reciprocates, bringing the wealthy few to the promised land of simplicity and bliss.

However, it seems unfair to the masses for the "trad wife" character to be portrayed as attainable or realistic. For many, it is just another lavish lifestyle they will never experience, relatable only by the common role of wife and mother. Not to mention, with the rapidly changing climate of society, government, and economy, putting oneself in a position to be dependent upon another is a slippery slope, and should not be taken lightly, or, in my opinion, promoted subjectively and deceptively.

And so my final ques-

tion is: Are trad wives empowered, or is it just an illusion? Are we on a backslide, simply faced forward and unable to tell the difference between progression and regression? Who's to say, and what will come of this? As of yet, these questions remain unanswered, and hopefully prompt a cautious approach to those in or near this position.

That being said, I do not seek to demonize this way of living, or condemn those who dedicate themselves to it, but only to provide a critical lens through which we can scrutinize the benefits and drawbacks of tradition. I am only one perspective out of many.



# Green's Presidential Address

Hello my dear subjects,

I hope to find you all well in these dreary yet cozy months of winter! Though the skies may be gray and the air as sharp as a blade, Onteora’s student government remains welcoming and ready to help in these trying times. After all, spring sports are just around the corner and so are the season’s beautiful flowers.

In my first term as president, I have worked to improve student mental health, to include more feminine hygiene products in the bathrooms, and to create more comfortable hallway environments. I hope you all enjoyed our festive holiday decorations in the main hallway! A new tradition was born this past December: each graduating class will be able to decorate the Christmas tree with their own handmade ornaments. In case you missed it, the senior student government wished you happy holidays and a happy new year!

Our delegates are currently working on creating a more inclusive P.E. dress code, facilitating positive mental health changes, and hosting fun events for the end of the year! As always, let us know if you have any ideas to improve student life at Onteora, or if you just want to talk!

Sincerely,  
President Fiona Green

## Onteora Science Olympians’ Triumph: From Dedication to Distinction

By Shelby Buryk, Senior

Though winter break seems long behind us and we’ve already begun to look toward spring, the leisurely tendencies of these in-between months have not slowed the diligent members of Science Olympiad. With the team’s first competition taking place on the Saturday immediately following the return from holiday relaxation, there hasn’t been one minute of downtime; some members even came in to practice over vacation.

The Invitational Competition on January 10th demanded an especially quick spring into action, with the team’s coaches, Mr. Keenan and Mr. Sanders, staying after school every day the week prior in order to facilitate and support members’ preparatory efforts. The day began early, with a 6:30 a.m. departure from the high school to make it to The Mount Academy by 8 a.m. for impounds and the day’s first event at 9 a.m. After five hours of various events and circling in and out of Onteora’s designated classroom, all team members met back and restored the room to its former Academy-worthy glory.

Unexpected technical difficulties followed the very much expected—and eagerly awaited—talent show, a delay that slightly hampered the award ceremony process. Still, approximately 45 minutes of medal receiving and enthusiastic cheering rendered the team tired yet triumphant. On the bus ride home, the Olympians celebrated Mr. Keenan’s announcement of the Onteora A Team’s twelfth place rank out of 34 total teams. As they reflected on the long day’s victories and opportunities for further improvement, the team was already looking excitedly

toward the Regional Competition merely a month later.

As February 7th neared, Mr. Keenan’s classroom was again occupied from the school day’s last bell until 5:15 p.m. by team members building boomilevers, studying kinetics, timing hovercrafts, flying helicopters, dropping bungees, testing powders, programming robots, and more. The areas of focus range widely, though the Olympians’ dedication and coaches’ support are unwavering.



Prepared for a 5:50 a.m. departure on Saturday, the team was surprised when Mr. Keenan reported a snow-induced one-hour delay that quickly evolved into a two-hour push in the day’s schedule. Regardless, everyone adapted easily to the change and arrived at John Jay High School better-rested than expected. The delayed start meant that, rather than 9 a.m., the first event took place at 11 a.m., and, accordingly, the award ceremony began at a whopping 7:15 p.m. opposed to its usual 5 p.m. commencement.

The auditorium reverberated with victorious exclamations and applause for each displayed rank in the 23 total events. Onteora took home 22 medals; many members placed in the top eight announced teams, including one solo competitor, freshman Fern Bernhardt-Waldo, who medaled in Astronomy. An impressive first place

medal was achieved in Disease Detectives by Jenny Albright and Foster Knoche, who also placed in Anatomy and Physiology. Additional medalists include Connor Gierloff and Dylan Pace in Machines, Fiona Green and Shelby Buryk in Chemistry Lab, Finnegan Douma and Jake Slater in Robot Tours, Ruby Gahagan and Jenny Albright in Designer Genes, Jesper Peacock, Leo Sorbellini, Madison Murphy, and Rama Gabriel in Helicopters, and Fern and Lahnna Bernhardt-Waldo in Write It Do It.

Ultimately, the Onteora Science Olympiad team came in 6th out of 21 schools that attended the Regional Competition. In reflection upon the season, Mr. Keenan expresses, “Working with such a wonderful, enthusiastic group of altruistic young adults makes all of the hard work fun and extremely fulfilling!” After much dedication beginning in late September, the team members are now looking forward to an end-of-the-season celebration on February 13th—a Friday, no doubt, but the incredible luck of the season certainly overpowers any of that negative superstition.



**Editor-in-Chief:**  
Talula Kirschner

**Managing Editor:**  
Shelby Buryk

**Copy Editor:**  
Foster Knoche

**Graphics Editor:**  
Lexi Bruce

**Student Journalists:**  
Jenny Albright  
Yana Bennett  
Shelby Buryk  
Noah Drucquer  
Rama Gabriel  
Fiona Green  
Hazel Haynes  
Alexa Hull  
Foster Knoche  
Delilah Lieberman  
Lucia McDonagh  
Austin Otis  
Evan Pizer  
Azarax Tehrani

**Faculty Advisor:**  
Elaine Sniffen



Pictured to the left is the new and improved Visitor Entrance on the East End, or better-known as the Loading Dock Entrance. After months and months of constuction and the displacement of the teacher's parking availability, Onteora High School is back in action with increased parking spots for students, teachers, and visitors, and includes updated safety features.

# Movie Review: Ghost in the Shell

By Rama Gabriel, Sophomore

Walking into *Ghost in the Shell*, a movie written in the late 80s and released in 1996, I was not expecting to be in such awe. This movie follows the story of Major Kusanagi, a complete cyborg whose only human aspects are the human brain cells in her head and her soul, or “ghost” as referred to in the movie. She works with a government crew called “Section Nine” who works to find the “Puppetmaster,” a criminal who works in hacking the cyber-minds of people. However, I was not captivated by the plot of this movie, but rather the incredible animation and futuristic world building. The world imagined in this movie is placed somewhat far in the future, where most people have cyber-minds and cyborgs are a typical occurrence.

What had me immediately drawn to this movie was the quality of animation. The style utilizes a lot of hand-drawn animation which adds a lot to the charm of the movie. The fluid motions of the characters as well as the diverse color

scheme brings out the expression of each and every scene. One of my favorite parts of the animation is how detailed all of the clothing and style choices of the characters are. Each character has their own style of clothes and hair, creating individuality between characters in a media where it is often limited.

I quite enjoyed how Kusanagi was not seen and drawn as a stereotypical anime “robot-woman,” but rather as a battle-ready, skilled, and powerful soldier. Her hair is beautifully cut in a way that reminds me of the now-trendier shaggy bob, a hairstyle popular amongst many of the current younger generations despite the fact that the movie was released in the 90s. Her outfits are always perfectly suited for the situation she is in, varying from big jackets to military-like uniforms. The same goes for the other characters such as Batou, a man who often works

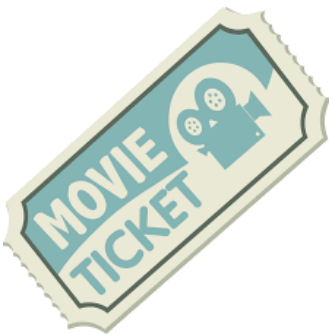
with Kusanagi, assisting her in many of her missions. He is also seen in various outfits and has a very distinct design.

*Ghost in the Shell* depicts a possible future for humanity in that it explores how far artificial intelligence can be utilized, and how the human body can be technologically advanced and enhanced. The way the movie displays AI constantly retrieving information for the characters and characters utilizing their robotic aspects without any extra attention to it. This allows the audience to see a possible future of technology without being horribly daunted by it. When someone dives into a cyberspace within their mind to see the location of their targets with no spooky sci-fi music playing in the background, it gives a sense that these are things within our reach, and may not be as frightening as we make them out to be.

A final part of the movie that

I feel well completes it is the soundtrack. There is a very distinct song used often in the movie that has a sense of something completely different from movie soundtracks often used today, but still does not come off as unfamiliar. Its robotic aspect gives the implication that it belongs to the future, even though it contains similar characteristics to more traditional East Asian music.

*Ghost in the Shell* mostly focuses on the perspective of Major Kusanagi, reflecting the idea that she has no care for the way others view and treat her, but rather the way she views herself. Caught between the identities of both human and robot, she is somewhat conflicted in how she feels she should approach certain situations. Despite this, she maintains an incredibly authoritative figure, and her intelligence and confidence supports her standing perfectly. The movie feels almost perfectly crafted when viewed from an artistic perspective, even if it may not be everyone’s cup of tea.

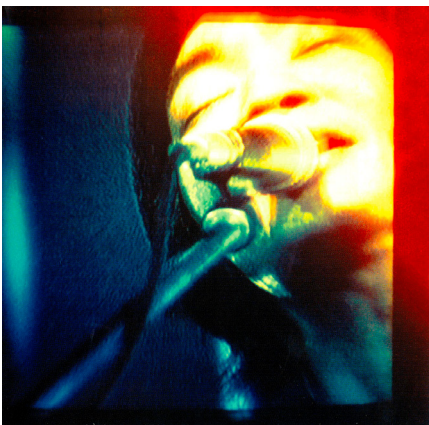


# Live Albums Review: The Better Way of Listening

By Yana Bennett, Junior

Have you ever been to a concert and loved it so much that you wish you could re-experience it but all of your videos are low quality and all you can hear is yourself screaming? I’m pretty sure we’ve all been in that boat. Unfortunately, there’s no way to actually go back. Sure, you can go on YouTube and try to dig up a different recording of that same concert, but it doesn’t look good unless the person recording it is at the barricade and has the newest model iPhone so everything is crystal clear. But, there is a way to preserve just the audio version of the concert, and a lot of artists have done that and released various shows as albums. This is what’s known as a live album.

In my opinion, live versions of songs often sound better than their studio recordings. Not only is the sound a lot more spacious and atmospheric and the vocals better, but there are often changes artists make to their songs when playing them live, and it’s always interesting to see what they alter. They can change instrumentation, lyrics, or even make the song longer. Live music can be enjoyed even without visuals. I’m going to present some of my favorite examples of live albums and explain what makes them so fantastic to me.

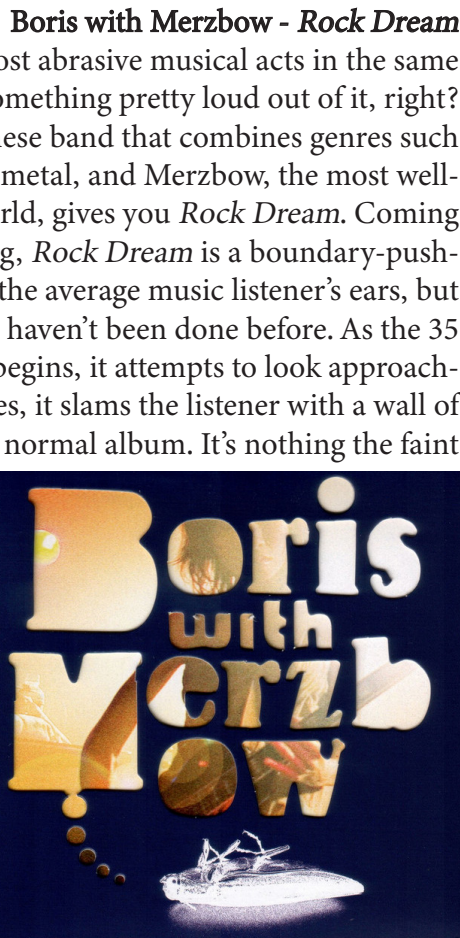


**Fishmans - 98.12.28 Otokotachi No Wakare**

Highly regarded as one of the greatest live albums ever recorded, the Japanese band Fishmans’ *Otokotachi No Wakare* is just over two hours of psychedelic bliss. The title roughly translates to “A Men’s Farewell”, which has several meanings. It corresponds with the name of the tour they were on (The Farewell Of Men tour), and it was the last show they played before bassist Yuzuru Kashiwabara left the band. It was also the last show they played with vocalist Shinji Sato, who unexpectedly died from heart failure just months after this performance. With that context, it brings a much more melancholic feel to the music, yet it’s still so full of life and passion. It gives an entirely new perspective to everything. The final track, “Long Season”, may scare people away with its runtime of a whopping 41 minutes, but it might just be the greatest live piece of music ever recorded. The entire album doesn’t exactly feel like an album; it feels more like an experience. It’s truly one-of-a-kind. I’d recommend it to anyone, no matter what kind of music they listen to. I feel like anyone could get enjoyment out of it.

**Boris with Merzbow - Rock Dream**

When you put two of Japan’s most abrasive musical acts in the same room, you’d probably expect to get something pretty loud out of it, right? Combining the likes of Boris, a Japanese band that combines genres such as stoner metal, noise rock and drone metal, and Merzbow, the most well-known harsh noise artist in the world, gives you *Rock Dream*. Coming out to be just under two hours long, *Rock Dream* is a boundary-pushing performance that tests not only the average music listener’s ears, but experiments and tries new things that haven’t been done before. As the 35 minute-long opener “Feedbacker” begins, it attempts to look approachable, but after around six minutes, it slams the listener with a wall of sound, and you realize that this is no normal album. It’s nothing the faint of heart would be able to tolerate for more than a few minutes. Feedback blares from the speakers throughout the performance. The psychedelic guitars fused with the screeching noise create sounds that are truly one of a kind. I really can’t place a finger on anything that sounds remotely close to *Rock Dream*. It’s not for everyone, that’s for certain, but those who feel they’re up for the challenge are in for a real treat.



# Horoscopes

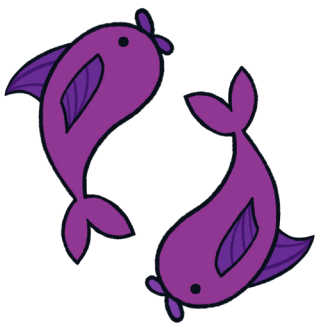
By Delilah Lieberman, Senior



Capricorn (December 22 – January 19)  
Capricorn, you will soon eat the best sandwich  
ever  
It will be crafted to perfection; making it was  
an endeavor  
When you take your first bite you will smile  
with content  
And feel as though your time eating lunch was  
well spent.



Aquarius (January 20– February 18)  
Aquarius, it's time to buy some new sneakers  
Your old ones are dirty and will surely be  
weaker  
Than the new shoes you purchase with your  
paycheck  
Now you can finally throw out that nasty  
wreck!



Pisces (February 19 – March 19)  
Pisces, you should go birdwatching soon  
You may see a bluebird as beautiful as the  
moon  
It's a forgotten hobby, and an art form  
So get outside and watch, even if it's not  
warm.



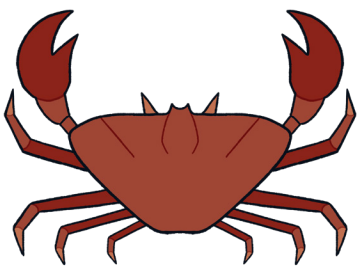
Aries (March 20 – April 18)  
Aries, oh Aries  
You gotta eat your berries  
Your fruit intake is low  
It's getting kinda scary.



Taurus (April 19 – May 19)  
Taurus, you've come so far  
Halfway through the year and you just  
got a car  
Appreciate what you have and what you  
have done  
Be grateful to your surroundings, and  
have some fun!



Gemini (May 20 – June 19)  
Gemini, watch your step  
When you're done at the gym and  
you've finished your reps  
You'll be clumsy on the ice and trip  
on your shoes  
Your fall will be so tragic it'll end  
up on the news.



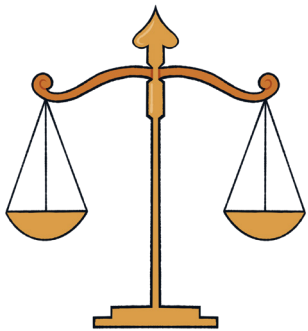
Cancer (June 20 – July 21)  
Cancer, oh Cancer  
What a wonderful dancer  
Stay light on your feet  
Like a magnificent prancer.



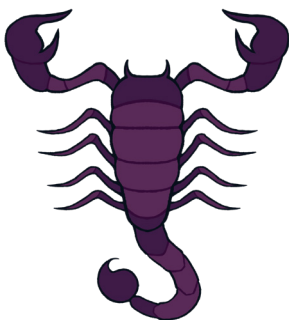
Leo (July 22 – August 21)  
Leos, make sure your standards are  
met  
Don't be splitting the bill, or going in  
debt  
Stand on business, be a boss  
And do a dance move, hit the floss.



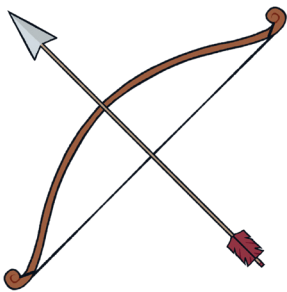
Virgo (August 22 – September 21)  
Virgos, you have some imminent deci-  
sions  
But I trust that you will solve them  
with precision  
Don't rush the process of deciding  
your fate  
It is okay to be patient, and it can be  
good to wait!



Libra (September 22 – October 21)  
Libra, we've seen some crazy winds this winter  
I've seen you run from the cold as fast as a  
sprinter  
But the answer to this frigid weather is in the  
palm of your hand  
You must wear your jacket when you're outside  
or on land.



Scorpio (October 22 – November 20)  
Scorpios, your outfits this winter have been elec-  
tric  
You come to school fitted up even when life is  
hectic  
So keep wearing the colors that make you smile  
And sit back and relax; your closet's set for  
awhile.



Sagittarius (November 21 – December 20)  
Sagittarius, you better do your language  
poster  
Get out your markers and a snack from the  
toaster  
And start creating an amazing design  
I believe your poster will be one of a kind!

# Onteora Voices on the Streets of Minneapolis

By Lucia McDonagh, Senior

As the sub-zero temperatures plaguing New York mirror those in Minnesota, I stand in front of City Hall in Kingston, joined by my friends and many Hudson Valley residents who are outraged by Immigration and Customs Enforcement’s (ICE) presence in the streets of our country. We listened to speeches, marched, and chanted in solidarity with Minnesota, a state whose sense of community carries all the way to New York where residents of small towns band together in support of a city 1,236 miles away.

As lawmakers battle it out in congress, fighting to hold ICE accountable, and the Minnesota National Guard attempts to aid and warm up the protesters and volunteers in Minneapolis, Onteora students found a way to get involved as well.

On January 30th, we joined Minnesota residents and allies across the United States and took to the streets, peacefully protesting in response to the killing of Renee Nicole Good and Alex Pretti. These U.S. citizens were neighbors,

friends, and upstanding community members in Minneapolis. Their deaths—a tragic result of ICE’s occupation of Minneapolis.

An Onteora student who attended the January 30th protest said, “It was really heart-warming to see the community that I grew up in rallying together in support of a cause I strongly believe in. I felt very proud to see how many people came together to support our fellow Americans in Minneapolis.” Another student, Cosimo Spiotta, who was also at the protest in Kingston remarked “I hope that more are inspired to join arm in arm.”

We are just over a month into 2026, and *The Guardian* has reported that eight people have



died in direct relation to ICE: six people died in custody and two people were shot in the streets of Minneapolis by ICE agents. According to PBS, there have been seven shooting incidents with two fatalities. This is following a record-high year of 32 ICE related deaths in 2025.

In July of 2025, the One Big Beautiful Bill Act passed allocating ICE \$74.85 billion over a four-year period. This funding is in addition to their annual budget of \$10 billion, which triples their budget. Four months after this funding increase, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) used the \$4.1 billion set aside for hiring and announced a 120% increase in ICE agents. Shortly after this hiring

increase, the training that agents receive was decreased from 16-20 weeks to 6-8 weeks.

The United States is a country that was founded by immigrants. America was created as a free country, a safe haven from religious persecution, and a nation that was built on the ideas of liberty and democracy. We are supposed to be an example of acceptance, a place where people can seek a better life and live out the “American Dream.” Immigrants make our country great, and in this great country, our diversity is our strength. Right now, we are in a moment where our government is targeting and dehumanizing immigrants who have come to America as honest working people trying to create a better life for themselves and their children. When government agents are murdering American citizens in our streets, it is a clear signal that these founding values have been forgotten by those in power.

## Zero Tolerance for Zero Tolerance!

Context Provided by Editorial Staff

*Following the failures of the 1970s and 80s War on Drugs, the 2000s brought about a rapid worldwide push towards the decriminalization of drugs and addressing problems of addiction with a therapeutic focus. In 2001, Portugal took the first step—decriminalizing all drugs, and creating a harm reduction environment in society and schools. Additionally, a School Health and Alcohol Harm Reduction Project (SHAHRP) has been implemented in schools in Northern Ireland, the United Kingdom, and Australia in order to address drug use and addiction through a more empathetic approach. As this mindset becomes a part of American public opinion, our country is, on a slower timeline, taking steps to provide rehabilitation, counseling, and recovery services as opposed to criminal consequences. Although the Drug Free Schools and Communities Act Amendment of 1989 dictates that schools have to penalize drug use by students, the discussion of implementing harm reduction strategies, similar to those being attempted throughout the world, has been brought to the country’s wider debating floor.*

By Azarax Tehrani, Junior

We need to stop the demonization of drug users; they have a disease, and every single person who has ever lived and will ever live could fall into the deadly clutches of addiction. We need to stop passing the buck. We need to stop enabling and we need to start helping students have a bright future rather than a dark one. We should have zero tolerance for zero tolerance.

**How does drug use start?**

Maybe it’s a moment of stress, maybe it’s at a party, maybe it’s to escape from a difficult home situation. Drug use can start in a number of ways, but it rarely starts with a kid waking up in a stable home and saying, “I’m going to do drugs because I want to be a social deviant and break the rules.” As stupid as that may sound, that is what zero tolerance drug policy assumes. However these problems start, we need to help the victims, not push them toward further unfortunate circumstances.

**What is the restorative justice movement?**

Restorative justice is a nationwide movement built around one core principle: misbehavior causes harm to people and relationships. It is not simply rule violation. This means, in the context of drug use in schools, those who are using drugs are not just breaking a rule; they are harming their relationship with the world, they are harming themselves, and they are harming everybody in the general circle around them. So if we follow this train of thought, how do we stop or reverse harm? Help seems like the most obvious answer. If somebody is caught using drugs, we need to help the most harmed party. The most harmed party is the user.

**How can we apply this to Onteora?**

I would like to propose a new radical idea: some of our rules be based on empathy. What I mean by this is that if we catch somebody doing drugs on school property, we don’t immediately suspend them and damage them for the rest of their year or even their life. We have a conversation with them about what’s going on

in their life and why they feel the need to use drugs. Then we have a conversation with them and their parents as to how we can help. And if issues seem to be severe, then we continue from there with counseling and, not to sound like a broken record player, empathy.

**Empathy.**

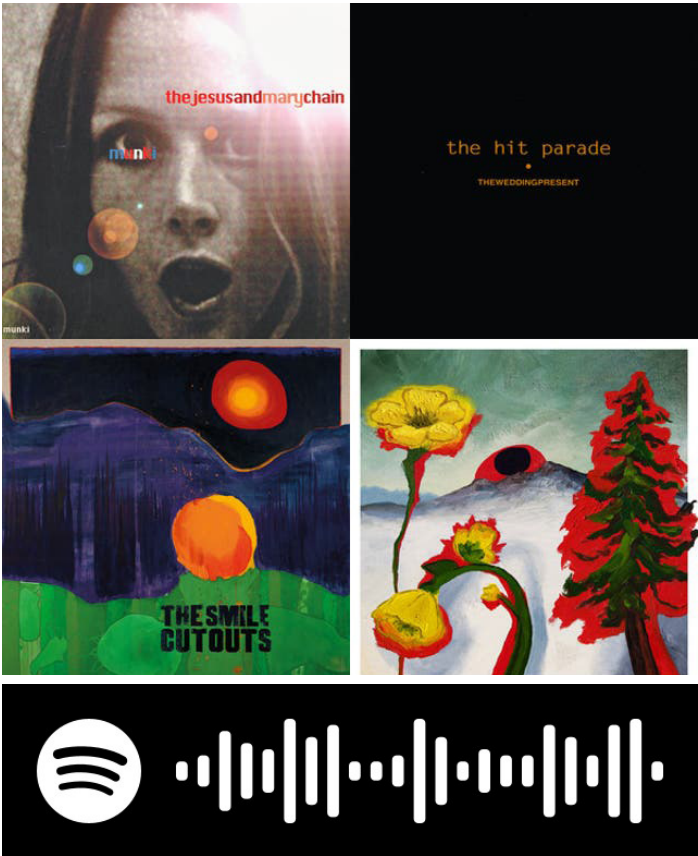
I keep using this word, so I feel like I owe you an explanation as to what I mean. Empathy I can simply explain as: when somebody is in a dark place, being there with them, listening to what they have to say, and understanding that everyone’s feelings are valid.

**Who can help?**

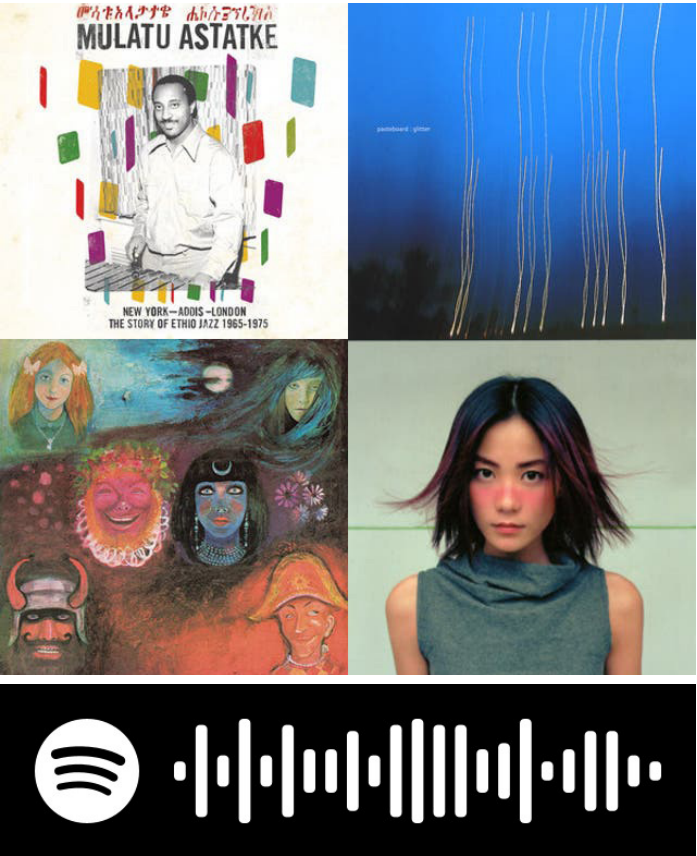
Everyone! Everyone can help in different ways, as a student or teacher who notices a friend going through tough times and letting them know they are not alone. Everyone, from the elected members of our school board, to the whole student body, has a place in acting with empathy toward students using drugs.

Playlists

By Shelby Buryk, Senior



By Noah Drucquer, Senior



Artwork Courtesy of Lexi Bruce

Crossword

By Evan Pizer, Junior

Grid Irony

ACROSS

- 1 Enemy of a keto diet (plural)
- 6 "\_\_\_ Brutus" Latin phrase supposedly uttered by Caesar
- 10 Bubbling, as water
- 11 Muscles, in gym lingo
- 13 Med\_\_\_, Fortnite item that grants full health
- 16 \*Jameer Maize's fall job
- 18 Obamacare, briefly
- 19 Societal mark of shame Harkin's health curriculum is helping fight against
- 20 "The world is your \_\_\_"
- 22 Neuro test
- 23 Beloved retired Onteora music teacher
- 25 Dogs do this with their tail when happy
- 28 \*Luc Millenson Wilens' or Lily Spada's fall job
- 32 Text me later, for short
- 33 Finishes
- 34 Tractor brand "John \_\_\_"
- 35 Engrave
- 37 The lowdown, briefly
- 39 Fall unexpectedly
- 40 "\_\_\_ of control" Psychological term taught by Mrs. Curlew
- 42 Large flightless bird
- 43 Radio Corporation of America, abbreviated
- 44 \*Vivienne Lamb's winter job

- 46 Celebratory shout from a student after Onteora calls another snow day
- 47 Close friend, often in politics
- 48 Animal's living space
- 51 Igloo cousin
- 54 Animals that may spit at you.
- 58 Julia and Liam Young will both win this end-of-season award for their swim teams
- 59 \*Lucia McDonagh's and Julian Roeckl's fall jobs
- 63 Tire pressure unit
- 64 Tiny blue guy
- 65 Rodgers of the Pittsburgh Steelers
- 66 Psychological selves (Freudian term)
- 67 Toys that go down during the winter?

DOWN

- 1 Movie with Lightning McQueen and Mater
- 2 Border on
- 3 Pizza topping at Onteora "pepe\_\_\_"
- 4 Marathon (TV or food) session
- 5 Phrase a crash out might utter: "I'm gonna \_\_\_ you out"
- 6 Cracked item of Humpty Dumpty
- 7 Key to the left of "Q" on the keyboard



- 8 Aunt en español
- 9 Pop open, as a bottle of wine
- 12 Called on Microsoft video chat app
- 13 Female singer of "California Gurls" and "Firework"
- 14 Zamboni target
- 15 Pavement goo
- 17 Pestered
- 21 Only item necessary for a ghoulish Halloween costume
- 23 Seized the opportunity
- 24 Onteora is in this county
- 25 Puppy
- 26 Playground retort to "Are not!"
- 27 Brand replicated on Canal St.
- 29 Consequence of a single homer in baseball
- 30 Sister of Lucas in Stranger Things
- 31 Settle, as a debt
- 36 Gut feeling
- 38 You need this to ride a horse in Minecraft
- 41 Plays, as a guitar
- 45 The moment of truth
- 49 They, in Spanish (fem.)
- 50 Tennis's Rafael
- 51 Small mischief-maker
- 52 Pharmacy in Woodstock
- 53 \_\_\_ Pen, tool for allergic reactions
- 55 Only
- 56 Nickname for 65-across
- 57 Govt. IDs
- 60 Vibed with
- 61 Michael Jackson's famous do, for short
- 62 Hypotheticals