

THE ACADEMY

TORCH

A CHRISTIAN BROTHERS ACADEMY NEWS PUBLICATION

DECEMBER 2017 ISSUE

**PREMIERE
ISSUE**

**WOMEN AND
THE BILLBOARD CHARTS**

**ALSO IN THIS ISSUE:
SURVIVING THE POST
STRANGER THINGS SLUMP**

**PLUS
STAR WARS FEVER
AT CBA**

Letter from the Editor / The Academy Torch

Second Issue / December 2017



LETTER FROM THE EDITOR
JACK BUTTERFIELD

Welcome to the second edition of the Academy Torch News Publication! The first edition was a huge success, as we took a new approach to the design and publication of the Academy Torch.

This publication will feature a spread from Joe Sandbach '18, as he covers Women and the Billboard Charts. Other featured articles include American gun violence, written by Joe Broehl '18, and women in gaming, by Brian Hack '19. We've really been trying to integrate the interests of the CBA community and focus on CBA-related activities while also covering pressing issues that are affecting our country today.

This will be a fun issue, filled with music, sports, CBA news and American news. Shout out to seniors Joe Broehl, Jack Coleman, Connor Cassidy, Quinn Kiernan, Aidan Picadio and Joe Sandbach, as they put in a lot of hard work and dedication to this newspaper over their Academy Torch careers.

Keep reading the Torch, and talk to Ms. Biloholowski or any of the editors if you want to write for the Torch. We can always use new writers and editors!

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#WE ARE CBA

In This Issue 12.2017



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The Last Jedi and the Hype Surrounding It

Francisco Roig '19

With the upcoming release of the new “Star Wars” movie, many fans are “extremely excited,” as Mr. Nunan put it. The saga’s previous entry, *The Force Awakens*, was nothing short of a success in making hardened fans of the series, pumped for the rebirth of this classic franchise. One would expect nothing less from this next film, “*The Last Jedi*,” which comes out December 15th. In this next installment of the series, Rey seeks out Luke Skywalker to learn how to better control her newfound abilities to harness the force. Meanwhile, the Resistance plans to fight back against the First Order. The film is set to be the longest in the series. This title originally belonged to the “*Attack of the Clones*” with a length of 140 minutes (2 hours and 20 minutes), while “*The Last Jedi*” is estimated to be about 150 minutes.

Many fans of the timeless series reside within the CBA community. Many of our teachers were raised on these movies. “It’s exciting whenever a new “*Star Wars*” movie comes out. No matter how good or bad it is, it is just so nostalgic, it allows me to escape to my childhood,” said Mr. Fales. Well known “*Star Wars*” fanatic, Mr. Speidel said, “I am happily looking forward to the release and I hope that it is better than the last one.” Unfortunately, he will not be rocking his Stormtrooper helmet to the premier, but he will certainly be there. Millions of Americans across the country are adamantly looking forward to this film and cannot wait for its release.

At the movie’s release, there were many CBA students and faculty who made their way to movie theaters for the midnight showing. While many in the CBA

CBA community will wait until the Winter Break to take in the movie, there’s no denying that the school has been focused on the premiere, with students buying tickets weeks ahead of time.



Senior Retreats

Conor Cassidy '18

A retreat can be defined as a small getaway/vacation with a community of co-workers or others interested in becoming more spiritually involved.

Since the beginning of their academic career at Christian Brothers Academy, students have attended a retreat each school year. Sophomore year incorporated the first retreat completed, followed by the Junior Year retreat. Both retreats are similar as they both were located at Christian Brothers Academy and both were completed in only one day.

Unlike the sophomore and junior retreats, the Senior Retreat took place in West Long Branch (right near Pier Village) and was held over two days, including an overnight stay at the San Alfonso Retreat House.

During the senior retreat, the students and the chaperones watched numerous videos/movies including an ESPN 30:30 "Unguarded" documentary and "The Way" a movie about making friends during the journey of life. Other than watching movies, students and chaperones attend multiple Prayer Services, Life Discussions/Presentations, and Confession.

While the seniors spend a lot of time together at the Academy, these smaller, overnight retreats allowed the students to facilitate stronger relationships between each other and the faculty moderators. As the seniors look to college, the retreats are a memory to look back on. This memory will recall another example of the cultivation of the CBA brotherhood and emphasis on building community.



Is 2017 the Worst Year for Women in Music?

Robert Joseph Sandbach '18

Why is 2017 proving to be one of the worst years for women in music? While music sales have been consistently declining throughout the growth of the streaming era, women have seen the impacts on a more serious scale. This past year, huge stars like Katy Perry and Taylor Swift have released projects, yet sales are still down. Is it that women are producing poor content, or is it just an under appreciation? It's time to get to the bottom of these shrinking sales.

First and foremost, women are at a disadvantage. According to Spotify, men get the benefit of both male and female listeners, women tend to have more exclusively female audiences. This is important to keep in mind when discussing the downward happening right now. 2017 did not see a woman lead the Billboard 200 Chart until June 24th when Halsey's "Hopeless Fountain Kingdom" was released. Over six months into the year, there were no women running the scene. Since then, only Kesha, Lorde, Katy Perry, Pink, Lana Del Rey, Taylor Swift, and Shania Twain have hit number one. There are 52 charting weeks in the year, yet only ten were ruled by women. The Billboard Hot 100 fared even worse than the albums chart. No woman rose to number one until Taylor Swift did on September 16th. Women only held six of 52 weeks on there.

These numbers raise an unfortunate question. Are women just producing poor content? Most of the women named above have had exceptional reviews on their work. Lorde for example had one of the most acclaimed albums of

the year. To add on, some artists like Taylor Swift may have received their lowest Metacritic scores to date, but they are still positive reviews. These women — besides Katy Perry — have had generally favorable remarks left on their releases, illustrating that women are not producing lower quality content.

In addition to the women already named, some women released albums receiving high praise that just could not crack the top spot. One of the most notable was SZA. SZA released "Ctrl," a story of her life that includes her mother's and grandmother's voices. It was met with enormous critical acclaim. It has been nominated for four Grammy Awards and received two certified platinum records. How did she do in the Hot 100? Her peak was 32. Apart from powerhouse singers like Taylor Swift and Adele, the only female artists who are climbing to the top of the charts are female rappers. Cardi B's "Bodak Yellow" received critical and commercial success unimagined for a female rapper's debut. It also led for three consecutive weeks. Why is it that historic acclaim and praise are not enough to bridge the gap between men and women?

Even though women have produced some of the most highly regarded music this year, the fact is sales are still down, so it's time to look at the men. How has 2017 treated male artists? The only words for it are unprecedented success. The "Despacito" remix featuring Justin Bieber spent a record-tying 16 weeks atop the Hot 100. "Shape of You" by Ed Sheeran spent 12 weeks at number one. As of December

Billboard



9th, Post Malone's "Rockstar" is holding strong after seven weeks. The rise of the streaming era has not only hurt most female artists, but it has benefitted many men. Artists like Kendrick Lamar, Migos, and The Weeknd shattered records this past year running almost entirely on their streaming. Not to mention they all hit number one. Do the men take a more creative approach to their music? Are there more factors like timing, and uniqueness that give men an edge? Ed Sheeran's "Shape of You" sounds like a knock-off Sia hit to most, and Justin Bieber doesn't even know the words to "Despacito." Men are pulling ahead because of a larger audience coupled with a society streaming everything. A more rap centric music scene has emerged, and women are struggling to find their niche when it comes to sales. Sales ultimately define success.

So, is it all over for women, and are we only going to hear Justin Bieber songs for the rest of time? Luckily,

no. As alluded to earlier, timing is an important factor in a song's or album's success. 2017 happens to be a year without Beyoncé, Lady Gaga, and Rihanna. When so many big names are on a break from their album cycle, it is understandable why women are being decimated in the charts. Opportunely, some newer artists have emerged, and tried to defend the feminine presence on the chart. Camila Cabello, Dua Lipa, and the previously introduced SZA are working on shifting the meta back into women's favor.

All in all, there are countless pieces in motion surrounding the success of music at any time. 2017 may have been one of the worst years in history for female singers, but this could change in the blink of an eye. The accessibility to streaming platforms has not only made it possible for men to find their fame, but for women too. As long as women continue producing powerful projects, women could begin dominat-

ing the 2018 charts, reminiscent of the 90s MTV era. Women are not producing lower quality music and while they may be under appreciated by the masses, those who are listening know the strength they command.

2017 Billboard Number One Singles

"Starboy" - The Weekend
featuring Daft Punk

"Black Beatles" - Rae Sremmurd
featuring Gucci Mane

"Bad and Boujee" - Migos
featuring Lil Uzi Vert

"Shape of You" - Ed Sheeran

"Humble" - Kendrick Lamar

"That's What I Like"-Bruno Mars

"I'm the One" - DJ Khaled featur-
ing Justin Bieber, Quavo,
Chance the Rapper and Lil
Wayne

"Despacito" - Luis Fonsi and Dad-
dy Yankee featuring Justin Bieber

"Look What You Made Me Do" -
Taylor Swift

"Bodak Yellow" - Cardi B

"Rockstar" - Post Malone featur-
ing 21 Savage

"Perfect" - Ed Sheeran and
Beyonce

Gun Violence Desensitization

Joseph Broehl '18

In recent years, there has been a major rise in the number of mass shootings, bombings, and other terrorist attacks; and as more and more happen, more often, it appears that people are starting to care less and less. After the first major school shooting, at Columbine High School on April 20th, 1999, people have grown more fearful about doing simple tasks, such as going to school, going to work, to the movies, shopping, etc.; now however, people are fearful, but they seem not to care when another shooting happens — it happens, people care about it for a day, then they forget it — but it has not always been this way.

At first, immediately following the Columbine Shooting, everyone was in an uproar about how someone could even think to do such an atrocious act. This began the debate about whether or not people should still have the right to buy and own guns. To some, people should not have the right to buy any kind of gun; others feel that people should only be barred from buying powerful automatic weapons, such as assault rifles; and others feel that by limiting who can buy what gun is a serious infringement of the second amendment. No matter which side you stand on, most can agree that it is a serious conversation that has to be had, and the best way to talk about such a serious issue is by actually discussing it, not simply bickering back and forth between opposing sides.

As time progressed, more and more terrorist attacks and mass shootings occurred, sparking similar, but even more heated debates. After the massacre in Aurora, Colorado, during a screening of *The Dark Knight Rises* in July of 2012, the debate was sparked yet again, but even stronger and more aggressive. Following this massacre, people were terrified even more so of continuing with familiar tasks and having fun with friends: after the shooting, there was a significant drop in movie ticket sales for many different films, especially for *The Dark Knight Rises*.

Most recently, in Las Vegas during October, a gunman shot into a crowd of people during a concert, from a hotel window, resulting in hundreds of victims. This time however, it seemed as though nobody really cared as much. Now, that is a strong statement, and a bit of an exaggeration, but it is definitely clear that people have become desensitized to mass shootings and terrorist attacks. After the Vegas shooting, not many people seemed to care: the news covered it for a week or so, but then everyone seemed to just get over it. This is no way a jab at society or individuals themselves, it is just an observation that more and more people seem to be having. It appears that, as more and more atrocities happen, the world is getting used to them. It's crazy to see how much the world has changed in 5 years from the Aurora Shooting; just the

difference in reaction following the *The Dark Knight Rises* massacre, and the Las Vegas shooting. It is even crazier to see how much the country has changed since the Boston Bombings, 9/11, Columbine, and many many others. Unfortunately, we, as a society and as a species, have become desensitized to such horrific acts.

Although it seems as if people are moving on faster than they have in the past, it is disheartening to see how the majority of people (who were not directly affected by these acts) seem not to care at all, where as there are hundreds of families who were effected by these shootings, and have to live with the consequences of an individual's actions for the rest of their lives. Living every day without a brother, without a sister, without a father, without a mother, without a son, without a daughter, without a friend must be so insanely difficult for so many people, yet most people forget that these attacks have even happened, and that is such a shame.

At the end of the day however, it is clear that many people do care, and that people do want to have the discussion and decide on what to do with the gun problem in America and in the world. My only hope is that we, as a society and as a species, move towards more peaceful options for dealing with issues in the world, and that one day we don't have to worry about living our day to day lives in fear.

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Girl Power: The Evolution of Women in Gaming

Brian Hack '19

Ever since the 90s, the video game industry has largely appealed to male audiences. In fact, the common gamer stereotype is the antisocial male. Because of this, it seemed as though women had no place in the male-dominated gaming world.

Well, move over boys! In recent years, women are increasingly being represented in the video game industry. As of 2017, Big Fish Games reports that 41% of all gamers are women. They also report that the average range since 2010 has been 45-48%. Most people would think this number is much lower; however, the statistics show that gaming is approximately 50/50 between women and men.

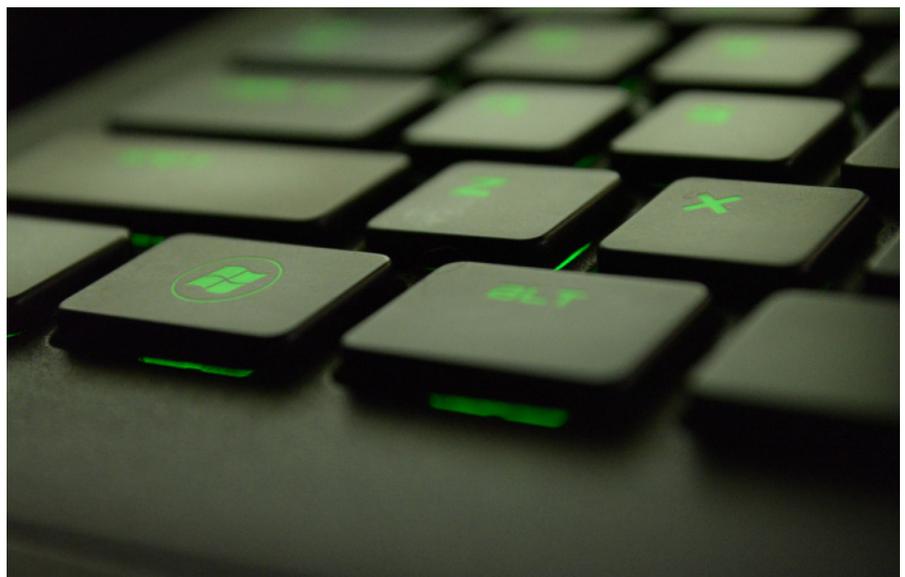
Women characters in video games has been a rising trend as well. Back in the 90s, if there was a female character in a video game she would have been portrayed as a sex object to appeal to male gamers. Such designs have changed over the years to better respect the female gender. One such character is Lara Croft from the "Tomb Raider" series. Since the first iteration of the game in 1996, Lara Croft's attire became much more modest than her original design. Other female characters are starting to have much bigger roles in games once dominated by male characters. A prime example comes from the "Warcraft" series, specifically the MMO "World of Warcraft." In its upcoming expansion, "Battle for Azeroth," two female characters who have had some development in the past are being put on the front lines. Sylvanas Windrunner, the once isolated leader of the Forsaken undead, has stepped out of the shadows to lead the Horde to victory. Lady Jaina Proudmoore, whose story was abruptly interrupted in the current expansion, "Legion," returns to aid the Alliance against Horde aggression. The iteration of women characters in the past has

led to many other great titles such as "Horizon: Zero Dawn" and the highly acclaimed "Last of Us."

Women have also gained ground in the rising attraction of Esports and as developers. A "Starcraft II" player who goes by the name of Sasha Hostyn earns \$197,595.83 according to ESports' official earnings records. Other women have earned tens of thousands of dollars by climbing to the top of male-dominated games like "Counter Strike: Global Offensive." A report from the International Game Developers Association (IGDA) states that 11.5% of game developers identify as female. This number is a huge increase over the past five years. So boys, give props to the women who influence your favorite games.

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"The iteration of women characters in the past has led to many other great titles such as "Horizon: Zero Dawn" and the highly acclaimed "Last of Us."

The Real Slim Shady Takes a Stand

Jack Coleman '18

Marshall Mathers, better known to the public as Eminem, has been noted as being not only one of the greatest rappers of all time, but also a lyricist on par with greats like Bob Dylan and John Lennon. Since his last album, *The Marshall Mathers LP 2*, released in 2013, Em has avoided the limelight aside from a few stadium tours and the occasional feature on another artist's song.

It is within the past year, and especially the past few months that another "Shady craze" has stirred up in the country, and one would question if it has something to do with the recent political and societal tensions sweeping the nation.

As the country was witnessing the icy debates between Hillary Clinton and now President Donald Trump last October, Eminem was at work looking to both profit from the tension and release some of his own pent up anger surrounding the country's terse political climate.

On October 22, 2016, Em dropped a track titled, "Campaign Speech," in which he sounded almost as if he was giving a freestyle or cypher and directly attacked Donald Trump and countless other political and media personnel. This was the beginning of Eminem's return to popular culture and his initial attack on political affairs.

Em has never been one to shy from discussing politics, as seen frequently in his album, *Encore*. It is this same yearning to protest and fight for the American people through song that continues today and was seen almost a year later from his "Campaign Speech" track when he did a freestyle on the BET Hip-Hop Awards this past October. In the speech, which almost instantaneously blew up on Twitter, Eminem attacks Trump and his many policies, specifically by making a mockery of his "wall," and even saying that he would use the same tactic to divide himself from his fans if they wished to continue supporting Trump over Em. Another key aspect of the freestyle was his support of Colin Kaepernick.

With Eminem in the forefront of everyone's minds, his attack on the President making national news, it seems like an album is imminent. He released a fake ad campaign for a prescription called "Revival," which hints at the album relating to his previous albums, *Relapse* and *Recovery*. In the ad it talked of music helping the patient, as well as an audio recording, that would play when the number provided was called.



"Eminem attacks Trump and his many policies, specifically by making a mockery of his "wall," and even saying that he would use the same tactic to divide himself from his fans if they wished to continue supporting Trump over Em."

1967: The Most Influential Year in Music?

Quinn Kiernan '18

“It was fifty years ago today, Sgt. Pepper told the band to play...” 1967 America was a time of political and social upheaval. The growing counter-culture plateaued with the infamous Summer of Love in Haight-Ashbury, San Francisco. Music festivals drew millions. Fifty years ago rock and roll changed forever.

Right away the year welcomed releases from major powerhouses. January saw releases from The Doors, The Rolling Stones, The Monkees, Roy Orbison, and Miles Davis. The Doors re-released their self-titled debut record that featured “Light My Fire” and “The End,” among many others. The Rolling Stones’s “Let’s Spend the Night Together” also touched upon taboo subjects, as well. The Doors, however, took their anti-establishment tone to the next level by refusing to censor lyrics on The Ed Sullivan Show, paving the way for future musicians.

Psychedelic and experimental music topped the charts. The Jimi Hendrix Experience, Grateful Dead, and David Bowie all released debut albums. Pink Floyd’s debut, “The Piper at the Gates of Dawn,” released in August. These four bands all began their journey into rock and roll legends the same year. Further, music festivals sprouted across the country, specifically the Monterey Pop Festival. The festival

boasted major American appearances by The Who, Jimi Hendrix, Otis Redding, Janis Joplin, Jefferson Airplane, and Ravi Shankar. This festival foreshadowed the success and influence of Woodstock two years later.

And, of course, there was the Beatles. The Beatles had already taken over the world. 1967 saw two new Beatles albums: “Magical Mystery Tour” and “Sgt. Pepper’s Lonely Hearts Club Band.” The former had three number one hits: “Penny Lane,” “All You Need Is Love,” and “Hello, Goodbye.” The latter is widely regarded as one of the greatest albums of all time with many placing it at the top of the list. The Beatles embraced the psychedelic times, but they influenced the counterculture as much as it influenced them.

Not everyone, however, took part in the hippie revolution. Another band quietly made their debut in Manhattan, releasing possibly the most significant album of the year. Produced by Andy Warhol, Lou Reed’s “The Velvet Underground & Nico” initially sold only 30,000 copies, but as Brian Eno famously said, “everyone who bought one of those 30,000 copies started a band.” Punk, indie rock, and alternative music are all indebted to The Velvet Underground. Their debut album alone

profoundly changed music’s future.

There were also, of course, defining singles like “Respect,” or “Somethin’ Stupid,” but a brief article is not enough to illustrate all the chaos and greatness of 1967’s music. Yet, only a look at the charts or albums from 1967 is needed to understand how crucial it was to the development of rock and roll.

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Surviving the post Stranger Things

Depression Kieran Leister '19

If you're like me, within the past month, you took a weekend to grind out the second season of Stranger Things. While it was completely worth the wait and the watch, you now are disappointed that it's over and you have to wait about another year for more. You don't know what to do with yourself in regards to television. If this is you, I'm here to tell you not to worry and to not let this post-Stranger Things depression bother you. To hold you over until the next season of Stranger Things, I have some shows that will keep you occupied and that you may even enjoy more. Before I get to those, I want to shortly recap this past season just to remind everyone how great it was. If you haven't watched this past season of Stranger Things, I would suggest you stop reading now, but if you must read, I will try to give as little detail as possible. By the end of the first episode, we learn that Eleven is in fact back, but little did we know that she was back in a major way. She absolutely dominates every scene that she is in this season proving that she is one of the coolest characters on television. My favorite scene from her this season was when she opens the lock of the Byers home with her mind and walks in with her new clothes. All I could do after this was click the "OK" button on the remote to start the next episode as quickly as possible. Eleven was not the only awesome young, female character from this season; we were also introduced to Max this season. At first, I was like Mike when Max first made her appearance and introduction to the characters; I wasn't sure how I felt about her and sometimes I just did not want her there. But once again, little did I know how much I was going to like her by the end of the season. Because of the introduction of Max, we saw much more of Dustin and Lucas in this season, which made us love the characters we loved even more than we did. There's a bit of inner group struggle over who can try and date Max, but ultimately Lucas gets the girl. Although Dustin did make a dumb mistake taking in Dart,

he made up for it in the end by solving the mystery with Will. Besides Eleven, the character that I think stole the show was Will. Will, when possessed by the shadow monster is absolutely horrifying. He felt like a completely new character. The biggest change in my attitude towards the show is that I am now on Team Steve. Steve becomes the best babysitter and mentor of all time which made me have mixed feelings about the fact that Nancy is now with Jonathan. The season ended with me being pretty satisfied and really excited for what they could produce for next season. Now I know it is basically impossible to find a show that will satisfy everything that Stranger Things does, but there are some shows that are similar in some ways, but are great in other ways that you may enjoy. Sticking with Netflix shows, one show I would highly recommend is Narcos. Narcos is the story of Colombian drug lord Pablo Escobar and his rise and fall in power. The show takes place in the 80s and has many references to the decade which Stranger Things resides. The show however is great on a different level. Narcos is based on real history, but still manages to tell a story that you may not know what happens next. It is much darker and much more serious than Stranger Things, which may be a turnoff for many people, but may attract others. The show is fantastic and is one of Netflix's best and I extremely recommend it. The number one show I recommend if you liked Stranger Things is Game of Thrones. Game of Thrones is my personal favorite show. There are seven full seasons for you to catch up on if you have not watched it already. Game of Thrones is a medieval fantasy that follows several families that are competing for the throne of the king who rules over all of the land. While this may sound simple, the show is so much more. Game of Thrones makes you attached to characters, but immediately takes them away from you. Game of Thrones has the likable characters, violence, and fantasy elements that would satisfy any Stranger Things fan. By the time you finish it, you will have another season of Stranger Things to enjoy.



Metallica's Master of Puppets is Reissued

Michael Wittich '19

On March 3rd, 1986, Metallica released their 6x Platinum album Master of Puppets. The album had many of Metallica's most popular songs, such as Damage Inc, the HP Lovecraft inspired The Thing That Should Not Be, and the song the album was named after, Master of Puppets. The tour for this album marked Metallica's peak in popularity. However, it wasn't all fun and games. On September 27th that same year, their bassist Cliff Burton died when their tour-bus crashed. To this day, this album is still a fan-favorite.

Now, 31 years later, a limited edition box-set of the album has been released. This set contains vinyls, CDs, DVDs, a book, and more. When you first open the set, the first thing you see is the album itself, remastered and put onto vinyl.

Next is another vinyl, Live in the Aragon Ballroom, Chicago, IL. Under the records is a poster made for the previously mentioned Damage Inc., and under this is a book full of pictures from the studio during the recording of the album, the subsequent tour, tickets, lyrics, and much more. The book also contains some facts about the recording of the album and the tour. After this is a small lyric book, with scans of the original sheets James Hetfield and Lars Ulrich wrote them on.

Beneath all of this is a collection of CDs and other material. The CDs include rough mixes of the songs from the album, outtakes, demos, interviews from the tour, and three lives shows. One of them even includes Jason Newsted's (the bassist hired by the band after Burton's death) audition and first concert with Metallica. There are also DVDs of three concerts and two interviews. There's even a cassette. The cassette is a fan-recording of Metallica live in Stockholm 1986. Finally, the set also comes with a set of six buttons (all of which were immediately pinned to my jacket.)

Since the concerts are all from the same tour, they obviously have very similar setlists. All concerts contain songs from the album and older ones. Many of the setlists include Battery, Welcome Home (Sanitarium), Damage Inc, and of course Master of Puppets. Many contain For Whom the Bell Tolls and Ride the Lightning, both from their previous album Ride the Lightning (1984). Most of them even have songs from their first album Kill Em All (1983), such as Whiplash, Seek & Destroy, and (Anesthesia)-Pulling Teeth. Two of the concerts even open with The Ecstasy of Gold, a song from the film The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly.

Some time between 11/20 and 11/28, the boxset has been taken off of Metallica's official website. However the set is still available on Amazon. If you like Metallica, or even just this album, I'd highly recommend buying the set. It's worth the money.

“The tour for Master of Puppets marked Metallica's peak in popularity.”



Secularization of the Holiday Season

Alistair Hackett '19

Has Christmas become a secular holiday? Well if one looks at it objectively, the upcoming holiday has become noticeably secular. According to the Huffington Post, over 90% of Americans celebrate Christmas, while only 70% identify themselves as Christian. So there alone, shows that there are a vast amount of Americans who do not identify as Christian, who celebrate Christmas. The secularization of Christmas could be attributed to the rise of the religiously unaffiliated seen amongst the youth in America. As seen in a 2015 Pew Research study, 25% of millennials identify as non-religious, a strong increase from just recently in 2007, when the percentage was 16%. So as these millennials are growing up and having families, there are going to be a great deal of them not influencing their children with a religion.

A reason for this rise in secularism amongst millennials could be explained by the fact that they are growing up with the internet at their fingertips. The internet makes it so easy to learn about scientific fact, that often makes people question religion as a whole. That luxury was not available to these millennials' parents, who grew up without the internet, and for many, followed the religion their parents raised them under, without giving any critical thinking.

Another example of Christmas becoming secular would be the commerciality involved with Christmas. Many Americans and people around the world are focused on the buying/receiving material goods during Christmas, rather than the religious aspect of the holiday. This is something seen in people who do in fact consider themselves Christian. Back in the 50s and 60s, the more traditional age, fewer non-religious people celebrated Christmas and it was more religious oriented. With all the advertisements, deals, and

convenience of gift buying in the present day, it makes it easy to get caught up in that.

One more reason, a possibly the simplest, would be the fact that it is very unlikely that the birth of Jesus Christ actually took place on December the 25th. According to TIME magazine, scholars have pointed out that in Luke's gospel, there were shepherds in the fields on Jesus' birthday, which makes it very unlikely that he was born in the winter. A less important reason, but a notable reason for the secularization would be the fact that the day of December 25th was actually the concluding day for the Pagan Saturnalia festival. Christians were very critical of Pagans, so it is understandable why people in the present day see this as a contradiction and choose not to embrace the religious aspect of Christmas. So considering all of these facts, it is easy to understand why Christmas has become so secular in

today's age. Although the holiday has been celebrated in these ways for many years, the current generation is perhaps seeing the other side of the holiday.

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“According to the Huffington Post, over 90% of Americans celebrate Christmas, while only 70% identify themselves as Christian.”

The Evolution of Christmas

Matthew Vaccaro '19

To over a billion people, Christmas is “The most wonderful time of the year.” Every year, people condemn the over-secularization of the holiday season. However, this clash between the Christian and secular aspects of Christmas is far from new. Few who decry Starbucks’ blank red coffee cups realize that for decades the celebration of Christmas was outright banned in America! The birth of Christ was not celebrated by Christmas until the 4th century AD, after Christianity became the state religion of the Roman Empire under Constantine.

As any of Mrs. Whall’s students know, the Romans celebrated a seven day festival similar to Christmas known as Saturnalia, which celebrated the Roman god of the Harvest, Saturn. Saturnalia was a very public celebration during which gambling was made legal, and rapid over-eating and drinking was rampant. Traditional roles between masters and servants were also reversed during Saturnalia, with slaves being given gifts by their masters and seated at the head of the table, a practice the British would later adopt for Boxing Day. The end of the celebration, which fell between December 23-25th, was known as “dies natalis solis invicti,” or the birthday of the invincible sun, which celebrated the passing of the Winter Solstice and the return of longer days.

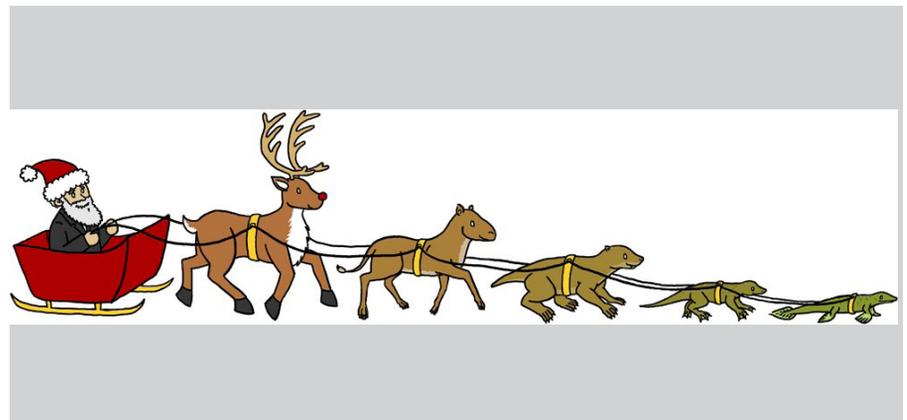
Furthermore many modern holidays can be traced back to Yule, a festival celebrated by Druids and Germanic Pagans across Western Europe. The Yuletide was named after the god Jólner, an alternate name for Odin. Some traditions adapted from Yule include carol singing, decorative candles, and kissing under the mistletoe, which honored the Norse goddess Frigga. Perhaps the most famous borrowed tradition is the practice of decorating one’s home by dragging an entire tree trunk into one’s house; what we now refer to as the

Christmas tree. According to a popular account, evergreen trees became associated with Christianity after the missionary Saint Boniface chopped down the so called “Oak of Thor” in Geismar, Germany, building a chapel out of its wood. Astonished that Boniface had not been struck down by lightning for the deed, many in the area converted and began to use fir trees as a symbol for Christ instead.

Because of the various pagan roots for the holiday, and because for centuries celebrations of Christmas were associated with excessive drinking, eating, and promiscuity, the holiday was denounced as both superstitious and heretical by more stringent Protestant sects that arose in the early modern era. In Massachusetts, from 1659 to 1681, a person could be fined five shillings for celebrating Christmas, and ministers holding Christmas services could be arrested. Additionally, during the height of the “Reign of Terror” in Revolutionary France, all religion and holidays were banned, causing December 25th to be rechristened as a “festival of reason.” The celebration was still considered taboo in the United States until 1870, when President Grant declared it a federal holiday.

Around this time, with Christmas’ popularity surging thanks to Charles Dickens’s classic A Christmas Carol, an influx of immigration from Germany and the Netherlands set the stage for the biggest icon of secular Christmas, the legend of Santa Claus, to be born.

Saint Nicholas of Myra was a bishop who lived in Lycia, modern-day Turkey, during the fourth century. Although few verifiable historical details are known about him, he became renowned throughout Europe for his generosity, especially towards children. According to one story, he snuck three coins, or gold balls depending on the account, into three young girls’ stockings, which were drying besides their fireplace, in order to pay their wedding dowry. The modern character of Santa Claus evolved from stories brought over by American emigrants, with the name Santa Claus being a portmanteau of of the Dutch translation of Saint Nicholas, “Sinterklaas” and the German “Sint-Nicolaas.” Santa’s association with reindeer, elves, and the North Pole is a result of such poems as Clement Clarke Moore’s A Visit from St. Nicholas, also known as ‘Twas the Night Before Christmas, while his costume was based off of both the traditional red robes of a bishop, and various ad campaigns ran by the Coca Cola Company in the 1920s.



Yankees Hire Aaron Boone

Aidan Picadio '18

The New York Yankees surprised many people this past season by not only making it to the postseason, but also coming back from a 0-2 game deficit to beat the Cleveland Indians and then pushing the eventual champion Houston Astros to 7 games in the American League Championship Series. The Yankees have improved greatly from the previous season where they did not make the postseason and were looking towards the future with optimism. The one problem that the Yankees face now is that they need a new manager. As many know, previous manager Joe Girardi had his contract expire at the end of the season and it was mutually decided that he would not return. This came as a surprise because Girardi had helped the Yankees playoff run; however, he made some questionable decisions, most recently in the playoff series against the Cleveland Indians. Although there were clearly problems with Girardi, few were expecting him to actually leave the club after this past season. Because of this, the Yankees have spent the last few months searching for a new manager to take them deep into the playoffs like last season, and hopefully to a World Series victory. After interviewing several candidates, the Yankees decided to hire Aaron Boone as the new manager of the team.

Aaron Boone played in the MLB from 1997-2009 for several teams including the Yankees in 2003. He is most remembered for hitting the famous home run in game 7 of the 2003 ALCS against the Red Sox. After his retirement with Yankees, Aaron Boone went on to work in broadcasting at ESPN. Many saw Boone being hired as a surprise, due to the fact that there were many other qualified candidates being interviewed. Other candidates included Rob Thompson, Eric Wedge, Hensley Meulens, Chris Woodward, and Carlos Beltran. Most of these names have experience either in managing or coaching

at the MLB level, whereas Aaron Boone has not. Even Carlos Beltran, who just retired this past season, has some leadership experience with the teams he has played for and used his experience to help guide the team and become a leader in the clubhouse. At first glance, Aaron Boone being hired makes no sense, but Brian Cashman's previous choices have generally panned out.

The lack of experience in Boone was partially the reason why he was hired by Cashman. Aaron Boone is quite young for a manager, being only 44 years old, and the Yankees are hoping his youth will pay off. If all goes well for the Yankees in the immediate future with Boone as manager, he will have this job for many years. The Yankees are preparing for the future in this hiring and they would rather have Boone do a good job for many years than have a much older and experienced candidate manage for much less time. This hiring isn't just meant for the Yankees to continue on their recent success, but also for the success to come years from now. One key reason why Girardi left was because of the lack of communication between him and the rest of the Yankees management and players. The Yankees are hoping that Boone will

have a much better relationship with the management and the players. This is more than just good communication, however, as the Yankees are also hoping for him to be compliant and willing to do what Cashman tells him to do. The Yankees are looking for a new fresh perspective to make quick decisions to put the Yankees over the top to win, but at the same time they want someone who will know when it is best to just do as he is told. Due to a lack of communication, Girardi didn't always make the best choices in the eyes of the organization. The Yankees are hoping Boone doesn't make the same mistake.

Boone will resonate better with the players and have a better relationship with them than Girardi did, which should only make the Yankees better. Overall, Boone has the ability to be a successful manager given the current talent available on the team. The Yankees are a great team now and Aaron Boone should keep things this way now and for the next several years to come.



NBA Christmas Day Preview

Aidan Broderick '18

Christmas Day consists of many festive celebrations and traditions, such as opening gifts from under the Christmas tree, meeting up with family members for Christmas dinner, and a new Christmas tradition: watching a series of playoff-caliber basketball games from noon until midnight. Instead of watching reruns of Christmas movies that you've seen each and every year, ESPN, ABC, and TNT will be broadcasting games such as an NBA Finals rematch between the Cleveland Cavaliers and the Golden State Warriors (3:00 PM EST), two young teams facing off in the New York Knicks and the Philadelphia 76ers (noon EST), and James Harden returning to Oklahoma City as his Houston Rockets take on the Thunder (8:00 PM). These three matchups, along with the Celtics-Wizards matchup at 5:30 PM and the Timberwolves-Lakers game at 10:30 PM, should provide entertaining and competitive basketball games throughout the holiday.

The 2017 edition of Christmas basketball will kick off with a matchup of two Eastern Conference rivals: the young and charismatic Philadelphia 76ers and the surprisingly successful New York Knicks. Both teams have started off their 2017-18 season well, with both teams winning nine of their first sixteen games. The matchup to watch will be between the teams' two

young big men: the Knicks' 7'3" Latvian Kristaps Porzingis and the 76ers' dominant center Joel Embiid. Expect the 76ers' young core of Embiid, Ben Simmons, and Robert Covington to lead Philadelphia to a victory over the Knicks to start off Christmas Day.

Immediately following the first game, the main event of the NBA's Christmas Day games will tip off as the Cleveland Cavaliers and Golden State Warriors will clash in a rematch of the last three NBA Finals matchups. The Cavs and Warriors faced off on December 25th in both 2015 and 2016, with both teams winning one game each. Due to this, the 3 o'clock game will be a grudge match to determine the winner of this three-game Christmas Day series. LeBron James's Cavaliers have gotten off to a rough start in 2017, with the new-look Cavaliers missing their new point guard Isaiah Thomas to a hip injury. Because of this, even if Thomas is healthy for this matchup, the Warriors will prove to be too dominant and defeat the Cavaliers in yet another series.

Finally, while the Celtics-Wizards and Timberwolves-Lakers matchups lack a storyline leading into the matchup, the 8:00 PM game between the Rockets and Thunder features Houston's superstar guard James Harden returning to face his former team, which now is made up of three dominant scor-

ers: Russell Westbrook, Paul George, and Carmelo Anthony. Despite the star power that the Thunder have, their team has struggled with sharing the basketball, and James Harden and the Rockets will look to capitalize on this weakness. Based on this, the Rockets will likely win on the road in another tight Christmas Day match up.



Why You Shouldn't Have Hopped on the Giants Super Bowl Hype Train Jack Butterfield 18'

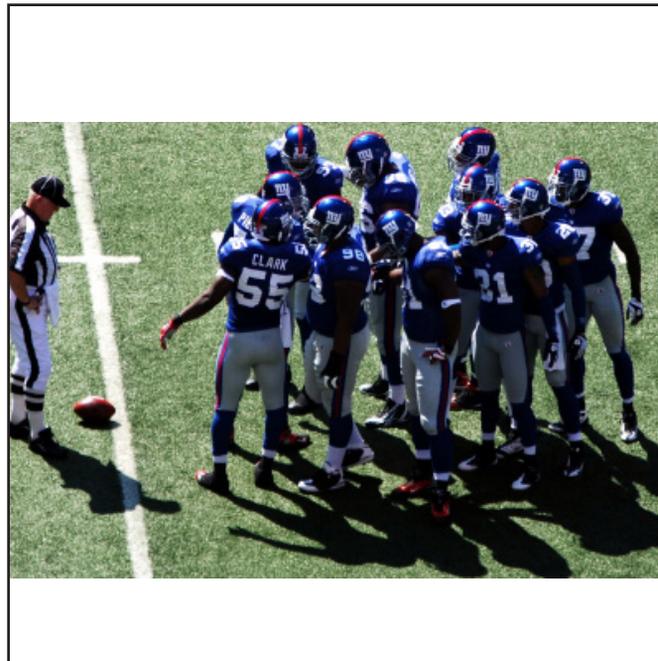
Going into the 2017-18 NFL season, the New York Giants were given 22-1 odds to win the Lombardi Trophy. The big addition of wide receiver Brandon Marshall, the return of key pieces on defense, and Ben McAdoo coming back for a second season left Giants fans pretty excited. Could this be a team that had their eyes set on a Super Bowl run? Yes, it could have happened, but should it have been a Super Bowl team? Unfortunately for any fan of the Big Blue, the correct answer would've been no, and I have three big reasons why.

A key to success on offense starts with protecting your quarterback. To take a step back, the big key to having a successful offense is having a good quarterback. I'm not saying that Eli Manning isn't a good quarterback, but he's playing past his prime. You can't expect to be playing on the first Sunday in February dueling it out against the AFC winner if you don't have a top quarterback. He's been there before and knows how to win, but age isn't on his side, and unfortunately, he can only hurt the Giants from here.

The other key to success is having an offensive-line that can protect your quarterback. And that is the exact opposite of what the Giants have. During free agency and the off-season, John Mara and Steve Tisch had plenty of time to look for a guy who could be a big part (literally and figuratively) of this Giants offensive front. They didn't, and that's why they shouldn't have had high expectations going into the season. If they did add a guy who could block and protect Eli, then this wouldn't be a problem. Ereck Flowers, John Jerry, and Super Bowl just don't fit into the same sentence. It doesn't work.

The last reason why the Giants shouldn't be a part of a Super Bowl conversation is due to the dismal running game. Last year, they ranked 29th in rushing. Their first string running back is Paul Perkins, a second-year player from UCLA. The last notable running back from UCLA I could think of was Maurice Jones-Drew. Paul Perkins is no Maurice Jones-Drew, let's make that clear. He isn't a reliable back that can be used to give Eli some time off from slinging the ball around all game long. They haven't had a good running back duo since Brandon Jacobs and Ahmad Bradshaw, and even they had their ups and downs.

I am a die-hard Big Blue fan, but if I could go back to the beginning of the year, I would not have bought the hype surrounding the New York Giants.



“The Giants shouldn't be part of the Super Bowl conversation...”



The Rise of Boston Basketball

Michael Sullivan 19'



The Boston Celtics have been one of the most talked about teams throughout all of basketball. The past few years though, it has been the Cavs and the Warriors. From the 2012 to the 2016 season the highest they ranked in the Eastern Conference was five, and they had not gotten past the first round of the playoffs. Last year they made a run, but got taken down by LeBron and the Cavs. This year though they have one of the best point guards in Kyrie Irving and Gordon Hayward. Not only do they have these two but they have arguably the best player out of the draft, Jason Tatum. Although the Warriors and the Cavs are still very good teams especially with LeBron on a mission to prove his legacy, the Celtics have a better chance than ever.

They also have one of the least

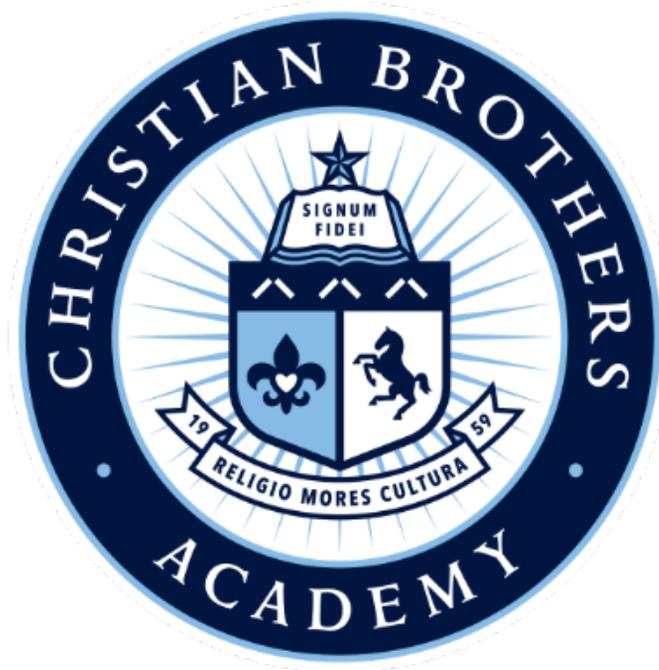
talked about and most under rated centers in the NBA. If Al Horford can stay healthy he will make a dominating presence on the team. This change from center Kelly Olynyk who was a center who is known for his game from the outside, but Al Horford takes a more athletic presence to the game, while he is still. Although Gordon Hayward is expected to miss the remainder of the season it is likely that he will be back for the playoffs if needed. The Celtics although they are hurt by the injury, it looks like they do not need him as they are dominating the East.

Kyrie Irving is also on a mission to show that he does not need LeBron to make it late in the playoffs, as he can take a team to the championship by himself. They also have a very solid bench which not only help the team by

bringing in fresh legs to score and play defense, but also, they help the starters stray away from fatigue and injury. As of now the Celtics are the number one in the East with the second team coming in at 5 games back and the teams they must look out for are the Warriors, Cavaliers, and the Rockets.

The Rockets will most likely be the Celtics biggest threat, because they are also an up and coming team with a man on the same mission as Kyrie. James Harden along with the rest of the rockets are trying to prove that they are a contender for the championship. That being said the Celtics still have the upper hand against the rest of the teams in the league and are the team to look out for this season.

“The Celtics are dominating the East.”



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