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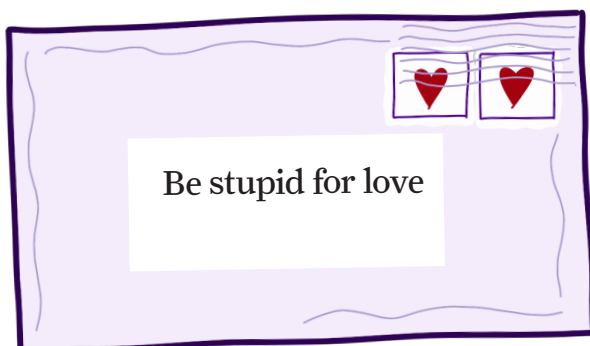
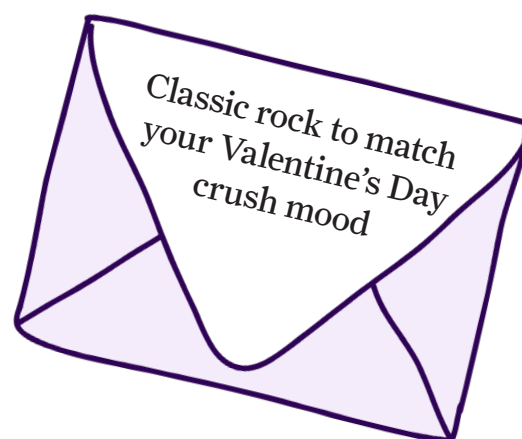
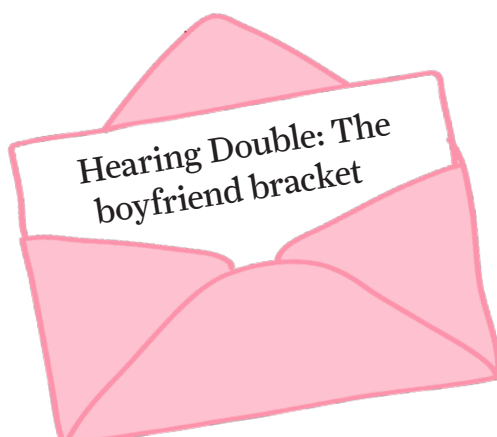
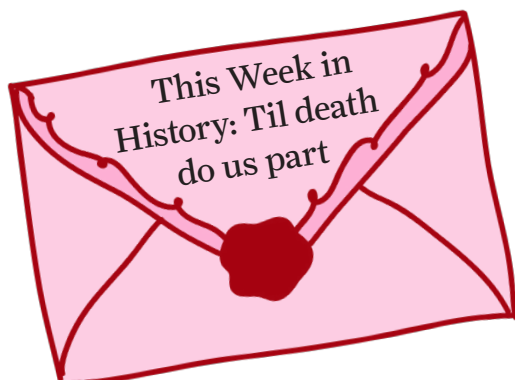
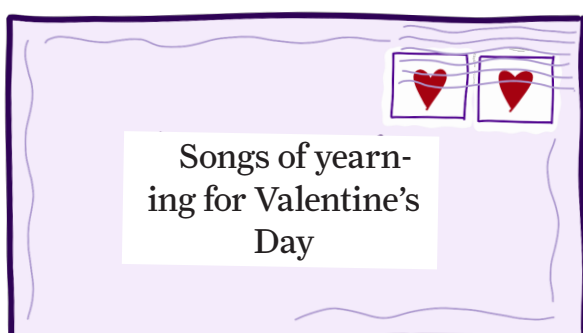
## Valentine's Day Edition



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ILLUSTRATIONS BY COLBI LORANGER, ASSOCIATE MANAGING EDITOR/THE DAILY CAMPUS  
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Happy Valentine's Day, Huskies! It's been a long and cold winter, and while it seems the frightful weather outside may not be getting warmer anytime soon, there's some comfort in knowing that there's a day set aside to celebrate what makes us all feel warm and fuzzy inside.

Love is complicated and messy, but it can also be beautiful and endlessly rewarding — and we're not just talking about romantic relationships. Whether you're spending the day with a partner, a friend or a family member (or maybe even at Gampel, watching the men's basketball team destroy Georgetown), just know that all love is precious.

For the 10th year in a row, the Life section is here to bring you the highs and lows of love, dating and everything in between. We've got a packed issue this year, featuring pieces on self-love, long-distance relationships and songs about boyfriends — both the good and the bad. And if you're in the mood for something a little more exciting, we also have the results of our annual sex survey, featuring the love stories of the average Husky. Thank you to everyone who participated! We hope you experience Valentine's Day to the fullest, and we'll see you next time!

XOXO,

Samantha Brody, Life Editor

Maleena Muzio, Associate Life Editor

## Love

# Sexperts set for Valentine's Day celebration

by Thaddeus Sawyer | STAFF WRITER | HE/HIM/HIS | thaddeus.sawyer@uconn.edu

Outside room 106 of Wilson Hall at the University of Connecticut, a table covered in Valentine's Day cardmaking supplies, free candy and woven baskets filled with condoms sits beside an open doorway.

Just one step inside the brightly colored room reveals walls covered in statistics about sexual health, shelves packed with storage containers of condoms and crocheted penises.

"I like to crochet," said Cassy Setzler, the program manager for sexual health and peer education initiatives at UConn.

Setzler oversees the UConn Sexperts, a group of student health educators. A part of UConn Student Health and Wellness, they hold one-on-one meetings, drop-in hours, sex education events and help with other services such as sexually transmitted infection testing and condom delivery.

Setzler, who graduated

helping students feel empowered are amongst the most important aspects of her role.

"Through this job, I've kind of been able to destigmatize this area of health and understand that a person's sexual health can really affect their well-being, especially if they don't necessarily know how to engage with sexual health in a safe or comfortable manner," Mahendarkar said.

Through both outreach programs and events, the group attempts to make sexual education more accessible to UConn students.

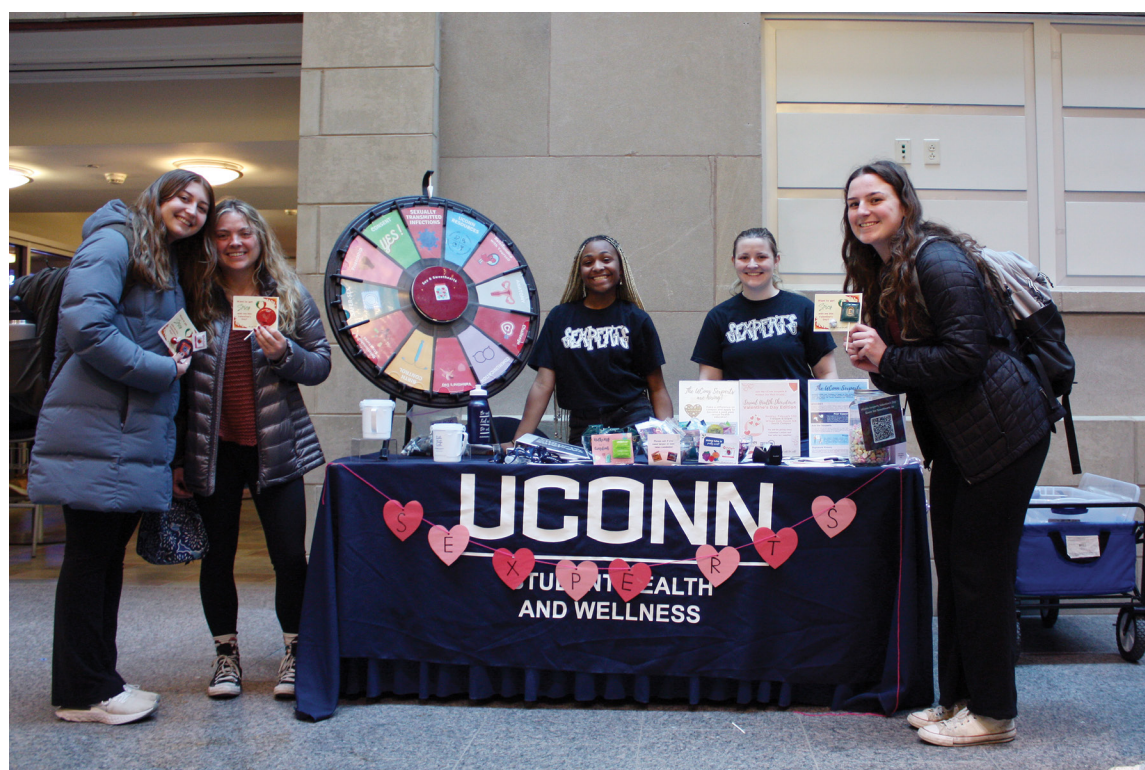
The group has multiple signature events throughout the year. These include UConnom-a-thon, an event held around World AIDS Day on Dec. 1 that teaches safe sex skills at Late Night at the Student Union while giving out free ice cream, and the annual Sexual Health and Wellness Fair.

They also have a Kahoot! titled the "Sexual Health Show-

cial events this week instead of our more run-of-mill one-on-one programs."

**Setzler pointed out that, in addition to Valentine's Day, Saturday also marks National Condom Day. She added that there are chocolate strawberry flavored condoms for the holiday.**

Some of those events, such as the "Good Vibrations Pleasure Pop Up Workshop" where Sexperts explain how to use sex toys and safety tips, are more



Sex & Sweethearts with the University of Connecticut Sexperts at the Student Union on Feb. 9, 2024. The UConn Sexperts educated students on safe sex.

PHOTO BY BLAKE SYKES, GRAB PHOTOGRAPHER/THE DAILY CAMPUS

from both UConn and UConn Health and was a Sexpert during her time as a student, said that mission of the Sexperts is to provide UConn students with education, resources and opportunities to have open and honest conversations about sex and sexuality so they feel comfortable and empowered to make informed decisions regarding sex.

**"Everyone's coming in with different levels of understanding," Setzler said. "We just assume that when students are 18, they should know everything about sex when the reality is this is the time to learn."**

"Everyone's coming in with different levels of understanding," Setzler said. "We just assume that when students are 18, they should know everything about sex when the reality is this is the time to learn."

Sugita Mahendarkar is one of those peer educators. A fifth-semester physiology and neurobiology student, Mahendarkar is in her fourth semester as a Sexpert.

"I thought that this would be a good opportunity to become more informed and explore this area and see what I thought of it and if I liked it," Mahendarkar said. "So I applied, and I really like being a Sexpert. I really like telling people about their health and how they can be healthy on campus."

Mahendarkar said that destigmatizing sexual health and

down," which Setzler said is presented at least 20 times per semester to organizations such as fraternities and sororities.

They have partnered with other organizations as well, such as with the UConn Student Union Board of Governors for Sex Education Bingo. Students could win sex toys, among other prizes donated by the board.

"Some people could be really shy, so we understand that [...] even if they want to go to an event, they might not feel entirely comfortable going and we get that," Setzler said. "We try to make it accessible for people and relax[ed] so that people aren't intimidated."

With Valentine's Day approaching, they have also seen an uptick in one of their other services: "gloveBOX." Setzler says that students are provided with 20 different types of condoms for free in a surprise box delivered to their residence hall or picked up at the Sexperts' office. There are different types of boxes to fit differing needs.

Setzler pointed out that, in addition to Valentine's Day, Saturday also marks National Condom Day. She added that there are chocolate strawberry flavored condoms for the holiday.

**Through both outreach programs and events, the group attempts to make sexual education more accessible to UConn students.**

"It is a big week for people because we get a lot of condom orders this week and stuff because people want Valentine's Day to be special," Setzler said. "We do some of our more spe-

cial events this week instead of our more run-of-mill one-on-one programs."

**"We embrace awkwardness, I think, because, yeah, sex can be awkward," Setzler said. "And that's part of the beauty of it."**

"We also remind people that you don't have to have sex on Valentine's Day," Setzler said. "Valentine's Day is the day to love yourself, love your friends, love your family. It's not just about romantic love."

Both Setzler and Mahendarkar understand that students can be hesitant to engage with their office and events for differing reasons, and both emphasized the effort put into ensuring events are safe, comfortable and accessible spaces.

"We know that when people laugh, it's because they're uncomfortable and they don't know what to do, right?" Setzler said. "They might be curious, but they don't know how to express that. Or they're with their friends and they're like, 'oh, if I stop at this table, what will my friends think?' And, if people laugh and walk by, that's okay. We'll get them next time."

Mahendarkar added that some of the people who laugh will sometimes double back and return with questions such as how to use a certain type of condom after overcoming the initial awkwardness they may be feeling.

"We embrace awkwardness, I think, because, yeah, sex can be awkward," Setzler said. "And that's part of the beauty of it. So we just try not to shame anyone. If they do feel uncomfortable, we'll meet people where they're at."

PHOTO COURTESY OF PEXELS.COM



## Birdbrained Science: Inhuman ways to love

by Gabrielle Wincherhern  
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Happy (early) Valentine's Day! Are you tired of seeing chocolate-covered strawberries, bouquets of roses and watching everyone post their partners? Me too, so in this special edition of Birdbrained Science, we're going to look at a few displays of love in non-human species.

**Putting the 'wing' in wingman**

If I were to talk about every avian courtship ritual that involves dancing, we'd probably be here until next year's Valentine's Day (sidebar: did you know dinosaurs probably had dancing courtship rituals similar to birds?). So, I will only focus on a particular kind of dancing, and that is group dancing.

Certain manakin species will perform synchronized courtship displays in groups to attract females. These groups typically consist of a dominant, or alpha male and at least one beta male (yes, that is actually what they're called). Although all the males are involved in the dance routine, usually the alpha is the one who gets the girl (betas later have a higher chance of becoming an alpha — maybe partly due to all that dance practice — so "beta-ing" for alphas could be an effective long-term strategy for some males).

My takeaway from this? Get your friends involved in your shenanigans and do a jester dance together. Also, teamwork makes the dream work — but mostly if you're an alpha male.

**I got (you) a rock**

If you're on the same side of Instagram as I am, you might have seen something on social media about this already. But if you haven't, allow me to enlighten you: In some species, male penguins present single females with rocks in hopes of forming a potentially lifelong bond. If the female deems the rock good enough, she will also find a rock, and the two will go back-and-forth finding rocks, which they will eventually use to build an impressive nest. From there, they'll start a family together.

Of course, there's practical, scientific reasoning to all of this. A male penguin who selects a good nest-building rock signals to a female that he will probably be able to find other good nest-building rocks, meaning he can help build a good nest that will protect their offspring. This, in turn, will maximize the chances of the offspring's survival, thus maximizing the chances that the parents' genes will get passed down.

But even so, I think there's still something cute and poetic about it. Male penguins offering rocks to prospective partners aren't just offering rocks; they're showing the cornerstone of the foundation of their future together.

And honestly, I can get behind that. If someone got me a really cool rock, I would probably also start a family with them. That's why we have engagement rings, right?

**BFFs: The 'B' stands for 'bottlenose'**

Shifting away from romantic

examples of love, let's look at dolphins. Some of you might know about my hatred for dolphins and be confused by my decision to include them, but I do have to grudgingly admire them every once in a while. This is one of those cases.

Male bottlenose dolphins will form pair bonds, where they pretty much just constantly hang out with each other for a long time, sometimes even for life. Males in these pair bonds have an easier go at most things in life than unpaired males, like hunting and reproduction. I think that's pretty neat. After all, everyone wants to find someone who will do things with you and make life a little bit easier. And isn't that what friendship is all about?

**I'd give you the skin off my back**

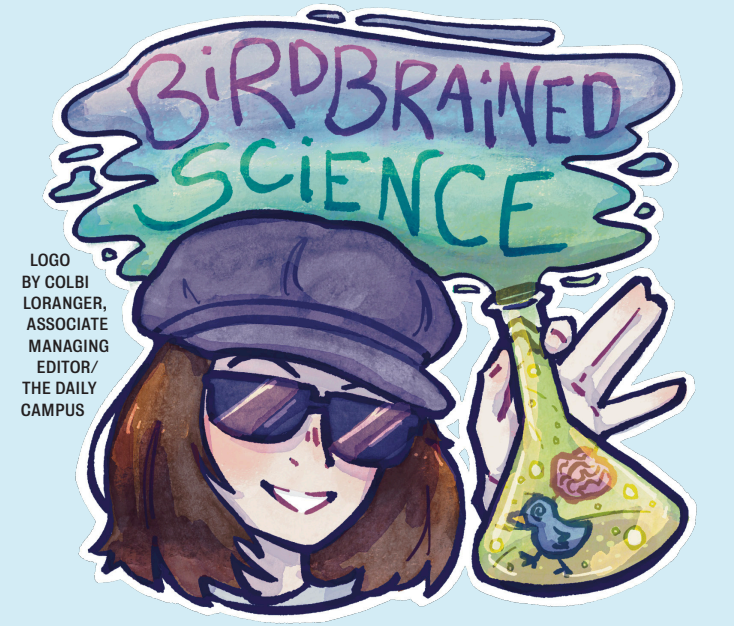
Some of my friends have probably heard me talk about caecilian (pronounced the same as "Sicilian") mothers before. For those of you unaware, caecilians are a kind of amphibian. They sort of resemble big worms, only they have spines and sometimes (depending on the species) also eyes.

This specific display of love is considerably less wholesome than the other examples I've discussed so far. Maternal dermatophagy, also known as skin-feeding, is found in some caecilian species. If the name didn't give it away, it's when offspring peel off their mother's skin and eat it. During this period, mothers will grow skin rich in lipids, microbes and other good stuff. By eating the skin, caecilian offspring will obtain all these benefits.

In other words, mothers literally give the skin off their bodies to feed their children. And aside from the simultaneous repulsion and fascination this incites in me, I've never quite been able to put into words why that's always stuck with me. To me, the whole thing feels representative of parental love in general, no matter the species. I've always thought of love as involving some sacrifice, but I guess the extent of that sacrifice will always get to me.

Some people might say I humanized animals way too much in this article. Maybe I shouldn't be looking to animals to figure out more about love and human relationships. I should respect that there is evolutionary, "survival-maxxing" logic behind every example I discussed here. But I don't really see why I can't do both. I can acknowledge that there are scientific reasons behind every one of these cases, and that animals aren't the same as humans. And I can also look at animal relations and use what I've learned from them to reflect on my own relationships and what they mean to me. I hope this article made you do the same.

So if you're single and spending this Valentine's Day alone, just remember there are all kinds of love out there. And so by extension, there is some kind of love out there for you. It might not be traditional, or in any form you're expecting, but it's there. Even if it's not romantic, I hope you have people in your life who you love and who love you. And I hope you celebrate that with them.



LOGO BY COLBI LORANGER, ASSOCIATE MANAGING EDITOR/THE DAILY CAMPUS



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Love

# Hearing Double: The Boyfriend Bracket

by Jenna Outcalt  
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Hello, and welcome to a special Valentine's Day edition of Hearing Double, where I compare and contrast two unrelated songs of the same title and decide which title does the most justice!

For Valentine's Day, we are holding an official battle of "Boyfriend" by Dove Cameron, Ariana Grande, Justin Bieber and Big Time Rush. There can only be one winner.

**Round #1**

Our first matchup is Dove Cameron versus Justin Bieber. These two songs are both trying to convince us that they should be a woman's boyfriend. They even use similar phrases, with Bieber saying he "can be a gentleman, anything you want" and Cameron saying she "could be such a gentleman."

One notable difference between the songs is that while Bieber is auditioning himself to be a boyfriend, Cameron is explicitly attempting to replace the boyfriend her love interest already has, saying she is going to "steal you from him." She includes personal attacks on the current boyfriend, pointing out the ways he abandoned his girlfriend.

An even more notable difference is Cameron's sapphic twist on the song, allowing her to subvert the classic im-

age of a boyfriend and joke about how "all [her] clothes would fit" if the girlfriend wanted to borrow them.

Bieber's song paints a very upbeat, aspirational picture of him as a boyfriend, saying he'd "never let you go" and hyping up the hypothetical relationship. Although it's undeniably a fun song with a great beat and catchy tune, its weakness lies in how general it is. As is typical of this era and genre of pop, the song is designed for mass appeal, while Cameron's song manages to feel more intimate and seductive, as if she's making a personal plea.

Dove Cameron will move on to the finals.

**Round #2**

Our next matchup pits Big Time Rush against Ariana Grande (along with Social House, who feature on Grande's track).

Big Time Rush's "Boyfriend" is their top song on Spotify and has captured many a nostalgic heart at parties and girls' nights. There's no argument that the song is catchy and downright fun, especially when you can sing it in a group and dance along. Unsurprisingly, this song also attempts to pitch the narrator as a potential boyfriend, with particular emphasis on his commitment to pursuing his love interest.

Big Time Rush does suffer from the same disadvantage as Bieber: it's hard to make

a song with a lot of feeling when it's designed to make millions of girls imagine it could be about them. Luckily for this "Boyfriend," the song comes off as more wholesome than intimate, focusing on the cheerful music rather than the basic lyrics or surface-level emotion. Though it may not be a masterpiece for the ages, this "Boyfriend" does exactly what it's trying to do: simply make the listener feel good.

Ariana Grande's "boyfriend" is a melancholy dialogue between two self-declared "train wrecks" who are not dating but are jealous for each other and don't want the other "to see nobody else" or "touch nobody else."

The interplay between two people who are obviously going through the same struggle in this song is entertaining and open to interpretation. Although the couple is undoubtedly in love, they are working through their own issues while they pine for their other half. While it could be seen as an unhealthy obsession with someone you're not dating, it can also be seen as a private commitment to someone you love while you're still getting to a place where you can be in a relationship.

These are two very different songs with very different tones. Big Time Rush's "Boyfriend" is a nostalgic classic, but the interplay between the

two characters in Grande's "boyfriend" is ultimately more compelling.

**Round #3: The ultimate "Boyfriend"**

Now it's time for the finals: Dove Cameron vs. Ariana Grande. The songs have similar vibes, but the lyrics tell diverging stories.

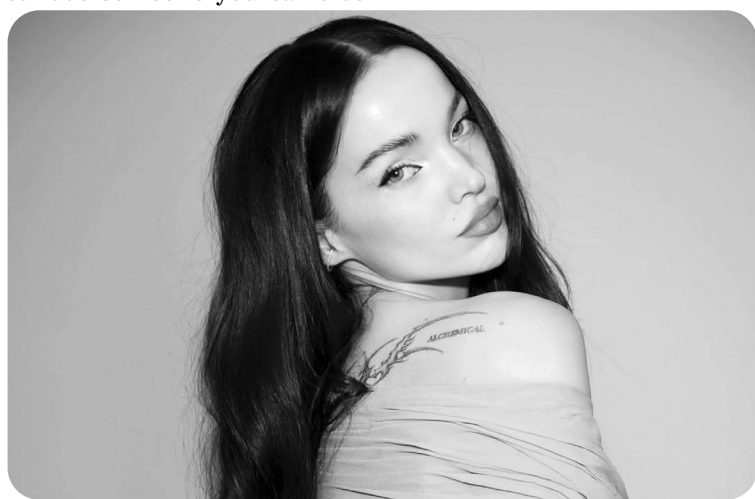
The pulsing music in Cameron's "Boyfriend" reflects the intense personality Cameron is projecting through the sultry lyrics and intimate tone. The entire song comes together beautifully to play with the audience's image of a boyfriend. Cameron's mastery of tone almost makes you feel like she's in the club flirting with you personally and doing a good job of it too.

Grande and Social House paint a relatable and realistic picture of what it means to love someone you can't be

in a relationship with. The harmonies elevate the music to another level, a constant strength of Grande. The debate between whether the narrators are toxic or yearning adds a fun layer to the listening experience, which can be intensive or relaxed depending on the listener's mood going into the song. However, Grande's "boyfriend" doesn't quite have the same power and intentionality behind it as Cameron's.

It's a close battle (between all four songs, not just our finalists), but Dove Cameron's "Boyfriend" manages to earn the title.

**Winner: Dove Cameron**

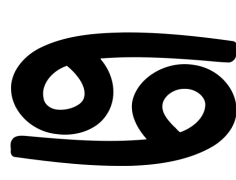
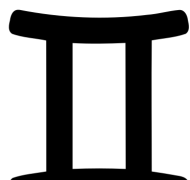
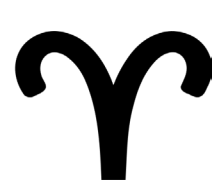


Dove Cameron posing for photos the day of the Grammys. PHOTO COURTESY OF @DOVECAMERON ON INSTAGRAM

## Horoscope: Is love written in your stars this Valentine's Day?

by Maleena Muzio | ASSOCIATE LIFE EDITOR | SHE/HER/HERS | maleena.muzio@uconn.edu

Hello everybody, and welcome to the brand-new horoscope section of the paper! Today's predictions will reveal what the astrological signs can expect in their romantic lives this Valentine's Day. This horoscope is based on predictions made by AstroDienst, www.astro.com.



**Aries**  
March 21 - April 19  
Recently, you may have been too focused on yourself, leading you to overlook someone who matters. Some form of trust has been broken, and it is up to you to determine and communicate who (if not both parties) broke that bond and how to repair it before moving forward.

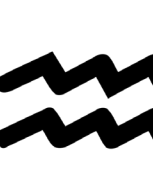
**Taurus**  
April 20 - May 20  
A possible reconciliation is coming your way. Peace and honesty are key to leaving nothing unanswered. While self-work and anti-competitiveness may be two things you are working on right now, deciphering the intent behind this reconciliation is equally important.

**Gemini**  
May 21 - June 20  
A choice has been made, either by you or your partner. A relationship or bond has broken by surprise and will likely stay that way. Acceptance is necessary during this time. Continue to speak up for what you believe in.

**Cancer**  
June 21 - July 22  
Pieces of a larger puzzle are coming together for you as you learn new things every day that will impact your romantic life soon. Trust your gut. When you have an inkling that something is wrong, believe it.

**Leo**  
July 23 - Aug. 22  
A reevaluation of your expectations in certain situations may need to be done. There may be a certain person who has dominated your mind, and they may feel the same toward you. Keep a balance of freedom in your mind as you move forward.

**Virgo**  
Aug. 23 - Sept. 22  
Seek out people that match your compassion as you enter a long-term period in your romantic life. An important decision needs to be made or navigated during this time that may throw you off slightly.



**Libra**  
Sept. 23 - Oct. 23  
Tap into your dreams and your artistry to remain grounded. You are aware of your romantic situation and an end is near, as well as a new beginning.

**Scorpio**  
Oct. 24 - Nov. 21  
Although a common cliché, listen to your heart. Your emotions will guide you to a powerful compromise with someone, requiring you or them to cede a portion of dominance to the other.

**Sagittarius**  
Nov. 22 - Dec. 21  
Change is coming your way. A relationship that began recently will bloom, but will have its challenges. Be ready to face opposition that can be solved.

**Capricorn**  
Dec. 22 - Jan. 19  
Accept forgiveness from someone who has offered. You are beginning a new journey of self-love and inner peace, healing from a past relationship.

**Aquarius**  
Jan. 20 - Feb. 18  
Be bold and take that risk! Action will reward you in your romantic life this week. No more sitting around and waiting for things to fall into place.

**Pisces**  
Feb. 19 - March 20  
You are going to feel like a magnet, attracting all the things you desire. Take advantage of this responsibly and act on your pull with intent.

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## Love

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by **Ky'Lynn Monts**  
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Valentine's Day is a day full of love, laughter and celebration with a significant other (a little late-night celebration if you're lucky). It's a day when you tell your lover how much they mean to you.

But there's a question that lingers: why do we need Valentine's Day for that? And before you think I'm bitter about Valentine's Day, hear me out.

Why is it that we wait until every Feb. 14 to show those who mean the world to us just how much they matter? Why do flowers become a necessity? Paragraphs are now poetic and dinner reservations are cherished because the calendar is telling us to care. There is nothing inherently wrong with Valentine's Day. Rituals can be fun, and they give people a reason to slow down and express meaningful appreciation for the relationships (platonic or not) in their lives.

Still, love does not operate best on a calendar. Valentine's Day is beautiful, but it is also performative. A giant teddy bear with heart-shaped chocolates re-

ally doesn't compensate for the eight months of emotional laziness. And posting a photo captioned "my forever" doesn't mean anything if you were struggling to stay present on a random Tuesday in November.

And here is where I really want you to hear me out: be stupid for love.

Not the kind of stupid where you are tolerating disrespect, infidelity and the loss of yourself. But the kind of stupid that means you are soft. The kind of stupid where you are shamelessly expressive about the one you love. Stupid as in sending a long sappy text, holding hands in public and planning that surprise for no reason.

Being stupid enough to care and show your love out loud.

We are in a time where detachment is cool. Nonchalance is the protection for too much emotional availability and pretending that you don't care makes you cooler and powerful. But there is nothing cool about withholding feelings, especially when it comes to withholding feelings for the people you love the most.

If you love someone, tell them on Feb. 14, of course, but also make sure to tell them on March 3, Nov. 8 and Dec. 10. Tell them

on that random Monday after a bad chemistry lab, at times where you're tired and when they are doubting themselves.

Love is not about a grand gesture once every year. It's about the daily decision to choose someone over, over and over again.

Valentine's Day is not the problem. The problem is thinking the day should be the only time you love out loud.

It might feel silly, it might feel stupid and maybe even scary. But anytime the universe gives you the opportunity to show the people around you how much you love them, you do it. And even if you do it every day, Valentine's Day is just another day to do it.

Life is already rough and tough. And we must seize any and every moment to love on the people around us as much as we can. It might be stupid to you, but that memory lives forever even when one of you does not.

Time moves faster than we could ever expect it to. We do not always get a warning or a notification before things change. This is why love cannot be postponed.

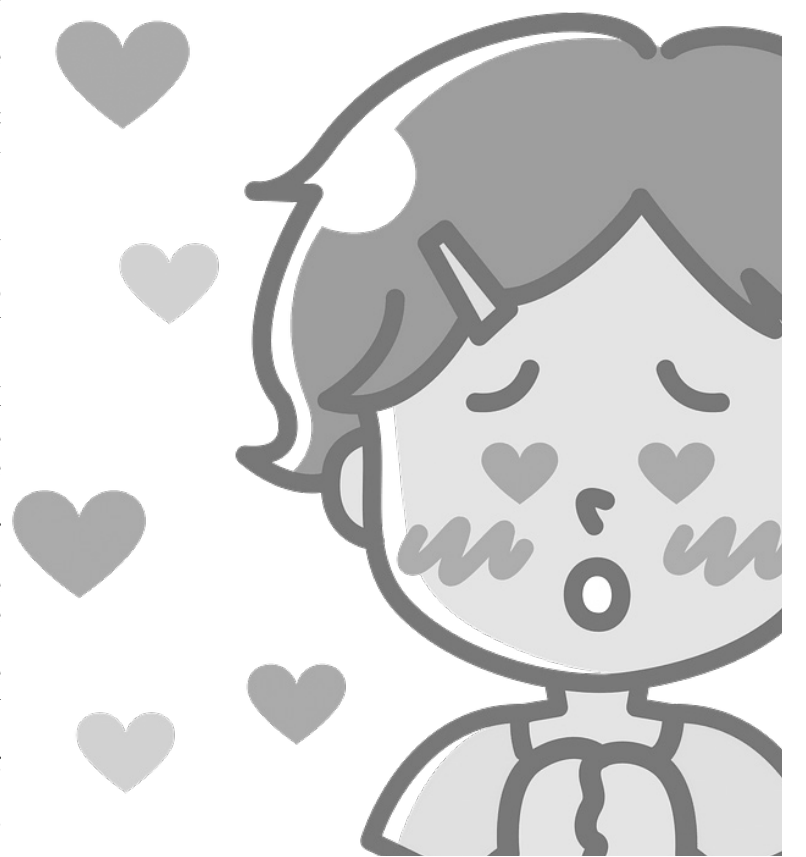
Being stupid for love is refusing to live with any emotional regret. Because one day, the flowers

and Instagram captions won't matter. But what will matter are the ordinary days when we showed up without being asked. The laughter in between moments of stress. The memory of feeling chosen consistently.

We spend so much time pro-

tecting ourselves from looking foolish, we forget how much damage silence can do. How many relationships fall off not because the love faded, but because the expression of love did?

So be stupid for love, not just on Valentine's Day but for every day you are lucky to have it.



# Anti-love songs for the perfect anti-Valentine's Day

by **Elijah Polance**  
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While many people fully embrace or are indifferent to Valentine's Day, those who have gone through a recent breakup or who are cynical about love might hate it entirely. Forget songs about romantic love or hopeless yearning — here are some anti-Valentine's Day songs that will validate anyone's aversion to the holiday.

**Olivia Rodrigo - "Love is embarrassing"**

Has a past relationship left you feeling done with romantic love in its entirety? Well, on "love is embarrassing," Olivia Rodrigo sure seems to think that way. With an upbeat pop-rock approach and satirical charm, Rodrigo tackles how tiring romance can be, referring to pointless sacrifices made for "some weird second string loser who's not worth mentioning."

Like many of the songs on her sophomore album, "Guts," Rodrigo maintains a sense of self-awareness, balancing the line between being dramatic but also comedic with tongue

in cheek lyrics. With the song's focus on the futility of love, it's a compelling ode to the strengths of staying single and a worthy listen for those unenthused about Valentine's Day this year.

**Adrienne Lenker - "Vampire Empire"**

Through a live performance on "The Late Show with Stephen Colbert" and social media circulation, "Vampire Empire" has become one of Big Thief's most popular songs. It's a densely illustrated track covering a relationship plagued by the narrator's co-dependence and miscommunication with their partner.

While released as a single by the band in 2023 that provided bristling indie rock catharsis, their frontwoman Adrienne Lenker recorded a solo version for her 2024 album "Bright Future." Her vision is a looser, jam-like composition with folk instrumentation. The intimate presentation and slightly altered lyrics arguably hit harder, especially with the repeated line: "In her vampire empire, I'm the fish and she's my gills." Clearly, nothing is working in this relationship, and those who

have been in these situations know this isn't the kind of love you want on Valentine's Day.

**The Beatles - "I'm Looking Through You"**

If you go through The Beatles' discography, the amount of optimistic love songs can feel never-ending, especially in their earlier albums. Their abundance, while tiring, helps make scathing cuts like "I'm Looking Through You," written and sung by Paul McCartney for the 1965 album "Rubber Soul," stand out even more.

The folk rock song is all about miscommunication and not seeing a partner in the same admirable light as before, with the conflict rooted in McCartney's own experiences toward the end of his relationship with Jane Asher. At the end of the verses, McCartney's vocals steer into an angered shout while aggressive guitar licks amplify the negativity, giving the sense that the relationship was never really worth it in the first place.

**Taylor Swift - "All Too Well (10 Minute Version)"**

While 10 minutes is a long runtime for a pop song, Taylor Swift perfectly paces her re-recorded

version of "All Too Well" to keep any part from dragging. Verse after verse of imagery spanning reflection, idolization and bitterness moves the mountain of a song and its compelling narrative of a relationship's beginning, end and aftermath along.

By weaving in and out of memories and contemporary contemplation, "All Too Well" transcends traditional breakup songs and dives into a deeper exploration of how this relationship impacted Swift. While she seems to end with some solace and appreciation for the relationship happening, even with its lows, the plethora of overwhelming emotions and feeling of dejection show that love isn't always all it's made out to be.

**Chappell Roan - "The Subway"**

Chappell Roan may have only released two songs in 2025, but they sure stuck, especially "The Subway." Boasting a waterfall of jangle pop guitars, Roan sings elegantly about a past love that she keeps seeing, both literally and figuratively, throughout a city.

It's a melancholic, post-breakup ballad that highlights how the downsides of love can linger af-

ter a relationship with frustrating effects. The way the bridge switches from the line, "She's got a way," to "She got away" shows Roan won't be getting over this relationship anytime soon. What an annoying feeling.

**Bob Dylan - "Don't Think Twice, It's Alright"**

"Don't Think Twice, It's Alright" is one of Bob Dylan's more popular works, and for good reason. The track unfolds as a narrator addresses a woman soon after their relationship ends. Boasting an infectious fingerpicked guitar melody and soothing harmonica playing, the song remains comforting despite the somber acquiescence of parting ways.

Admittedly, the track is less cynical and negative about love than the others on this list. It's mature and reflective; a tribute to the worth of moving on. Still, Dylan infuses a bit of that anti-love sentiment to close it off, applying both jab and bandage with the words: "You just kinda wasted my precious time / But don't think twice, it's all right."





# 3 horror movies to scare away the rom-coms this Valentine's Day



COMIC BY SAMANTHA HASS, ARTIST EDITOR

CLIPART COURTESY OF CREATIVE COMMONS

by **Thaddeus Sawyer**

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Are you tired of watching rom-coms on repeat? Did the new “Wuthering Heights” adaptation force you into swearing off love stories? Do you swear that both Jack and Rose could’ve fit on the wood?

Whatever the reason may be, there’s no shame in looking for an alternative to the typical Hallmark, meet-cute style movie this Valentine’s Day. However, for those who may still crave a dash of romance, here are three horror movies that may fulfill that desire instead.

Starting off with one of the most famous horror franchises of all time, “Scream” features a plot essentially built on the mistrust of Sidney Prescott toward her boyfriend Billy Loomis. Directed by Wes Craven,

the film parodies but also outwardly defies the rules of slasher films such as “Halloween” and “Friday the 13th,” such as the stipulation that the final girl must be a virgin.

The intrapersonal and relationship conflicts in this film are abundant, from Sidney and Billy’s varying levels of trust throughout the film and their ultimate outcome, to Deputy Sheriff Dewey Riley’s infatuation with reporter Gale Weathers.

The film was so popular that an additional five iterations have been made to date. In fact, “Scream 7” will come out later this month.

The commercialism of the franchise is right in line with the spirit of the holiday!

If you somehow get through all six currently released films and are still craving more high school drama, “Carrie” by director Brian De Palma may be right up your alley.

For the lucky couples out there who are high school sweethearts, why not take a chance to look back and reminisce about a high school prom or dance?

Popular yet empathetic jock Tommy Ross asking the sheltered and quiet Carrie White to prom has all the makings of a tried and true coming of age story. Carrie finds herself fitting in under the guidance of physical education teacher Miss Collins, while Tommy seems to slowly find himself becoming genuinely intrigued by the possibility of a relationship with Carrie.

The pair share a kiss on the dance floor and are even named prom king and queen.

Carrie then proceeds to go on a three-minute telekinetic rampage after being embarrassed while on stage receiving her crown by bully Chris Hargensen. The movie features fan-

tastic religious symbolism, both in the sexual repression of Carrie White and the final scene with Carrie’s religiously fanatic mother.

The wonderful 70s synth-laden soundtrack is worth listening to on its own, and the early-career appearance of a pre-Saturday Night Fever John Travolta is an under the radar highlight of this Stephen King adaptation.

Just make sure there’s no pig blood around.

Rounding out the list is a film reliant on sexual repression is “Cat People.” Produced in the era of the Hays Code, a self-imposed set of censorship rules in Hollywood from 1922-1945, studios had to find ways to scare audiences while avoiding gore and excessive sexual content.

Born from those rules was a film that perfectly encapsulates the show-don’t-tell method. Serbian-born Irena Du-

brovna must weigh her sexual desires against her fear of what may happen if she leans into them.

Irena believes that she is the descendent of cat people and that sexual activity will cause her to transform.

When proposed to by Oliver Reed, Irena accepts but eventually refuses to consummate the marriage, fearful of what may happen.

As Oliver is pulled away from Irena by another woman, peculiar animal-like behavior begins to surround their lives.

When Irena is kissed by another man, the consequences of even the minor sexual awakening become clear.

Establishing some of horror’s most iconic tropes, such as the Lewton Bus (named after director Val Lewton), the black and white film will be underwhelming for some but is one of the most influential films in the history of the genre.

# What ‘Alien Stage’ says about unhealthy relationships in our world

by **Bonnibel Lilith Rampertab**  
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**Content warning: sexual assault, suicide, mental illness. Major spoilers for “Alien Stage.”**

The Korean webseries “Alien Stage” has gripped and crushed the hearts of many — especially Gen Z — with its subtle and not-so-subtle visual, audio and written storytelling. It follows the lives of six fleshed-out characters who were forced to perform in a singing competition where the losers die.

As revealed in the first episode, all of the enslaved population of humans known to exist are held captive on an extraterrestrial planet by the alien race of Segyein. With this dystopian backdrop, “Alien Stage” focuses on the characters’ battles with vices internally as well as romantically. I am of the opinion that “Alien Stage” can reflect the ugly side of something as sacred as love tainted by the abusive systems of exploitation even in our world — primarily, the dangerous pitfalls of how not to love.

Director of “Alien Stage,” VIVINOS, has a track record of portraying toxic relationships in her animations for the sake of horror. Most of her works prior to “Alien Stage” were short films, but this series has the longest runtime — and highest popularity — of all the creations under her belt.

The four main characters of “Alien Stage” meet up and develop relationships together as kids at the music education prison Anakt Garden to train

and become professional singers. The first two characters introduced are the shy, lonely and studious Sua and the seemingly confident and bold Mizi. The next two characters are the sensitive and artistic Till and the over-enthusiastic yet somewhat stoic Ivan (whose adoption day is Valentine’s Day).

Sua and Mizi were inseparable growing up ever since Mizi initiated conversation with her. One could say they had become extremely codependent. In a world where their lives were entirely commodified and thus left without comfort nor education on how to take care of their social-emotional health, they felt no other choice but to cling onto each other.

Anxious attachment styles and codependency permeate into relationships mainly from complexities like past experiences, especially in childhood. The need to be loved and paid attention to can develop into an unhealthy or even toxic relationship. “Alien Stage” highlights this well.

In Sua’s case, she was incredibly obsessive and intense about her love for Mizi. This culminated into sacrificing herself in her match with Mizi: a planned and calculated duty she burdened herself with and rehearsed constantly. Mizi eventually revealed that she knew about Sua’s plan the entire time, and although it hurt her to know this, she didn’t do anything to stop Sua.

In Ivan’s case, he would go at any length to get Till’s attention. He would get himself beaten up by Till and enjoy it because Till was paying attention to him.

Furthermore, Ivan forces his love onto Till in his final moments through his own sacrifice, so he will die without regrets. He forcefully kisses and, in order to get shot and killed by security, strangles Till.

Losing people you know in your life — especially people close to you — is extremely hard to cope with. Mizi develops an intense self-loathing and makes her problems everyone else’s. This is emphasized by how she sabotaged the revolutionaries’ mission in “KARMA” to shoot at rocket in the sky to find help and physically hurt other people.

Till hallucinated Ivan in the webcomics “Scars” and “Remember Everything” in part due to the weight of the forceful kiss and ultimate sacrifice by Ivan. Unlike Mizi, however, Till comes to terms with these facts and decides to forgive Ivan for what he did.

What “Alien Stage” is trying to convey to the audience is that unhealthy coping mechanisms and relationships can ruin lives even if they feel good to do in the moment. Unhealthy relationships are, at best, not talked about enough, but at worst, glorified such as in the media. College students are not exempt from this. Most pieces of media only show the pretty parts, but “Alien Stage” also doesn’t shy away from the macabre.

It can be extremely dangerous to glorify things that are unhealthy within ourselves or our relationships, but I would like to tell a story about how I got into “Alien Stage.” Please bear with me.

At the Rainbow Center



COMIC BY RAYFORD BROMLEY, CONTRIBUTING ARTIST

last semester, I met someone and we celebrated our favorite media together. I asked him about the Ivan plush and he recommended that I should watch “Alien Stage.”

After watching the “Alien Stage” YouTube videos, I realized how much Sua’s character comforts me with my own flaws as a friend, girlfriend and person. If anything, Sua inspires me to be better than she was and not fall into the same traps as she did.

When I told my friend this, he told me he really related to Ivan not only because he’s very talkative but also because of his need for attention. I realized that we’re a lot alike, uniting under these systems and pasts out-

side of our control. But unlike these characters, we process and cope with them together.

The purpose of art is to share and inspire, changing our worldviews and mobilizing us to change things across the board. Having art you can relate to — and share with others — can be of immense comfort, especially when we’re surrounded by it. “Alien Stage” may be an extremely depressing piece of media, but it helps us connect with others who also resonate with the themes and, hopefully, strive to be socially healthier and self-aware inside these oppressive systems we find ourselves in. Hopefully we can change more than only ourselves.

Daily

# Life

## This Week In History:

# TIL DEATH D♡ US PART

by **Isabella Kulawik**  
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It's that time of year again when the icy months of January and February loom and seem to last an eternity. However, a brief reprieve from the gloomy winter is here at last, full of chocolate and hearts and pink! It's Valentine's Day, and for this special edition of *The Daily Campus*, I wanted to dive past the greeting card company decorations to discuss the origins of this hallowed day and some of the traditions with it.

The beginnings of Valentine's Day are believed to potentially date back to the ancient pagan Roman festival of Lupercalia. The festival itself was centered around fertility and dedicated to the Roman god of agriculture, Faunus, and the founders of Rome, Romulus and Remus. On this holiday, Roman priests would gather in a sacred cave. This place was be-

lieved to be the home of Romulus and Remus when they were taken care of by the wolf, Lupa. The priests would then sacrifice a goat and a dog for fertility and purification.

According to "Lupercalia and its relationship to Valentine's Day" by Helen Charlie Nellist from the Vindolanda Museum, the priests would then cut the goat hide to form strips called februa that were used to hit women as they went through the streets. Women often welcomed this activity as it was believed to have brought on fertility for the coming year.

As pagan rituals in Rome faded with the rise of Christianity, the Catholic Church may have sought to Christianize the Lupercalia festival by celebrating St. Valentine instead. Regarding accuracy, St. Valentine was a real person who was martyred in the third century by Emperor Claudius II Gothicus, but there are varying

accounts of his story.

Some popular versions of the legend claim that he was a priest and physician during a time of Christian Persecution. While awaiting execution, it is said that he fell in love with the blind jailer's daughter and healed her of her ailment. In their last correspondence, he would leave her a letter signed, "Your Valentine." Others claim that he was the bishop of Terni, Italy, and had illegally married couples to prevent them from being conscripted into the army. Both versions retain the common theme of love, but it is difficult to verify either with how sparse the records were during that time.

Either way, if you would like to see St. Valentine for yourself and are looking for any fun date ideas, there are several holy relics across the globe, including his skull at a basilica in Rome and his shoulder blade at a basilica in Prague, in case you're looking for any fun date ideas. Nothing says romance



St. Valentine's skull in the Basilica di Santa Maria in Rome. St. Valentine is thought to have left a letter signed "Your Valentine" to his lover. PHOTO COURTESY OF ATLAS OBSCURA ON FACEBOOK

like an ancient reliquary.

The holiday as we know it today began to take shape in the 18th century, gaining popularity through the 19th and 20th centuries. A large portion of why greeting cards have become so associated with the holiday was not only from the legend but also due to legislation in the 1850s. The United States Congress decreased postage rates to avoid the privatization of the postal service, making it more affordable to send postcards and letters in the mail,

according to a Time article by Rachel E. Greenspan. Then came the advent of Hallmark's Valentine's Day cards in 1916, which remain a staple today.

To all the lovebirds out there, have a splendid holiday this weekend. To those of you who are single, maybe it's time to take a page out of the book of St. Valentine and take a chance on new love. If worse comes to worst, at least future scholars will get to study your skull in the nearest basilica. Happy Valentine's Day!



by **Thaddeus Sawyer**  
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Though Valentine's Day often means spending time with that special someone, not everybody finds their person at the same speed. While you can't hurry love, it doesn't hurt to look for it. So, while you wait, here are some classic rock songs that encompass different stages of having a crush: the good and the bad.

**"A Thing About You" - Tom**

**Petty and the Heartbreakers**

Despite sitting at just over three minutes in length, the Heartbreakers pack a blow into this driving relative deep cut.

Petty's yearning vocals toward the top of his register inject the lyrics with a building emotional tension that is released by Mike Campbell's ripping guitar solo.

The lyrics themselves are about a pure crush, one that doesn't "pass with time" but rather grows and becomes incurable as the singer falls deeper

## Classic rock to match your Valentine's Day crush mood

in love with the subject.

**"I've Just Seen a Face" - The Beatles**

"I've Just Seen a Face" may not be as memorable as other love songs on the album "Help!" such as "Yesterday" and "You've Got to Hide Your Love Away," but it's the most positive song on the record by far.

A song about love at first sight, Paul McCartney's lyrics discuss being drawn back to a person immediately after the first time you meet them and sit perfectly on top of a skiffle-inspired instrumental of layered acoustic guitars.

**"Sleeping With the Television On" - Billy Joel**

A hidden gem on an album full of iconic singles, "Sleeping With the Television On" tells the story of a person too shy and too scared of the person they're interested in to make a move.

With bright new wave organ and a punchy performance from

drummer Liberty DeVitto, coupled with a sarcastic television sign-off, the music largely covers Joel's grim outlook on his chances with the subject.

Joel laments that he wished he was less of a thinking man and "more a fool who's not afraid of rejection." Instead, Joel's inability to act and the subject's refusal to let their guard down may leave them both alone that night and "Sleeping With the Television On."

**"I'll Wait" - Van Halen**

This synth-heavy rocker details singer David Lee Roth's infatuation with a model featured in a Calvin Klein ad.

The larger feeling of obsessing over a celebrity crush is far more relatable than "Diamond Dave's" crush, even if Roth could probably get closer than any of us ever will.

Still, Eddie Van Halen provides both a ripping synth and guitar solo. Add Michael An-

thony and Van Halen's soaring backing vocals, and the disappointment of a futile celebrity crush becomes an easier pill to swallow.

**"Please Let Me Wonder" - The Beach Boys**

"Please Let Me Wonder" features one of Brian Wilson's most poignant performances, with the somber emotion in his vocals coming through clear as day.

A set of Mike Love's finest lyrics, they beg a love interest not to reveal their true feelings, as the singer feels relief in being unsure of how the other truly feels. He prefers to sit with the image of their relationship in his head rather than the reality of the situation; a desire for hope that is quickly fading.

Carl Wilson and Glen Campbell's shimmering 12-string guitars and the typically gorgeous Beach Boys vocal harmonies leave the track as one of their most ethereal works.

## HOW TO ♡ AVOID DIGITAL DREAD ♡ ON VALENTINES DAY

by **Maleena Muzio**  
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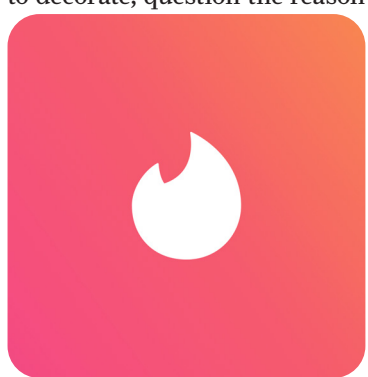
Valentine's Day, like all holidays, has been changed by social media and the digital age. However, this holiday faces some unique challenges that can be difficult to navigate whether you're single or taken.

I'm sure you can already picture it: it's Saturday morning, you wake up, check your phone and are immediately hit with hundreds of Valentine's Day Instagram stories. Before you know it, you may find yourself stalking pages of people you don't even know. The tags can be tempting, but this Valentine's Day, I suggest taking a minute to ask yourself: "why?"

Going analog has become a trend recently as more and more people attempt to detach themselves from their devices. Try to be present in the moment. Not everything is about capturing the perfect picture. Whether you are on a dinner date or hanging out with friends, put

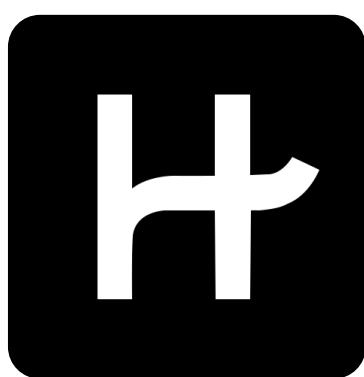
that phone away or maybe try sticking to a digital camera so you don't get distracted by other apps.

Too often do people plan their Valentine's Day plans around social media posts, instead of the posts resulting from the plans. The best pictures are usually the authentic ones and the ones that are spontaneous. It is okay, and probably more fun to have a messy Valentine's party than a neat, color coordinated event planned around showing off the setup. While it can be fun to decorate, question the reason



as to why you are doing so. Do your decorations align with you or some post you saw on Pinterest?

Now, I know that posts have become a gesture in a way — similar to giving someone a card — but it is important to not let these posts consume you. Social media is supposed to be fun, so keep it that way. There is no reason to stress over an intricate Valentine's Day post which may leave you disappointed if your



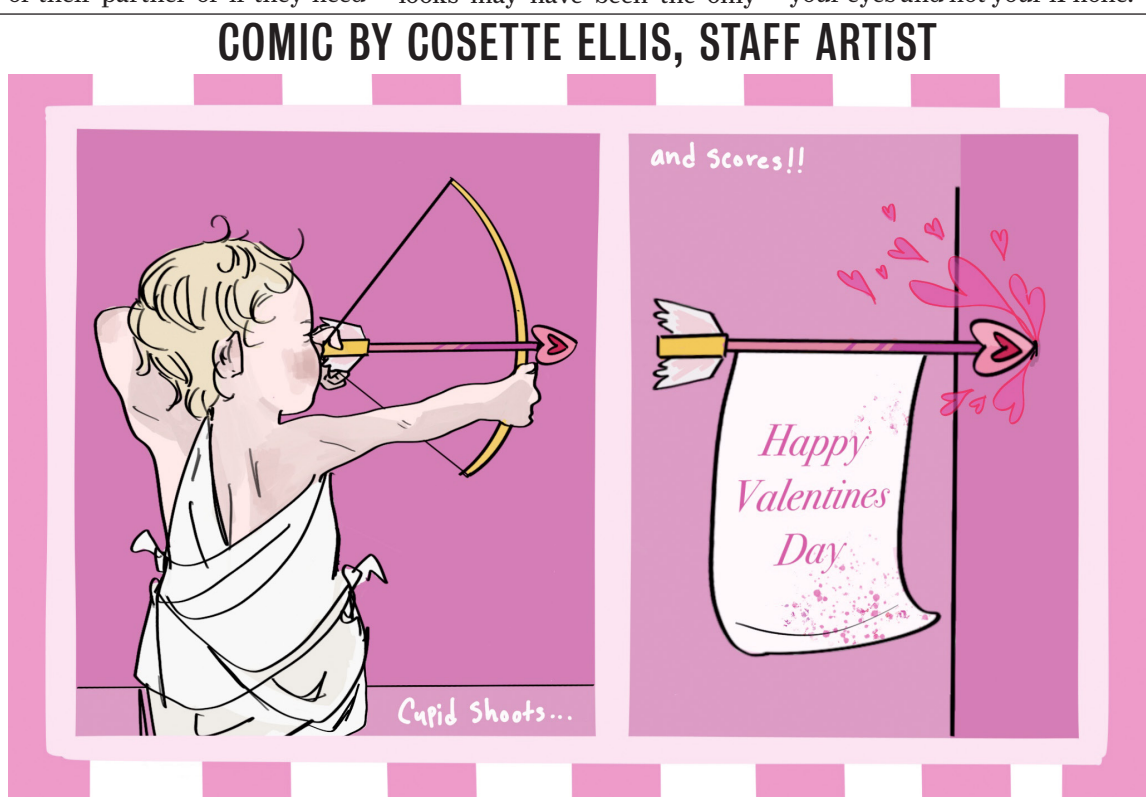
partner does not do the same. People also may be wondering if it is too early to share a picture of their partner or if they need

to "soft launch," but do what you want! Post your photo and move on to the real fun of your day.

The problems associated with Valentine's Day and social media may also be the direct products of online dating itself. Humans are visual, but with the popularization of dating apps like Tinder and Hinge, the early stages of romantic relationships have become increasingly looks-based. Maybe this is the reason why people are so quick to show off the best photos of their partner on Valentine's Day; their looks may have been the only

thing that drew them in initially.

By no means am I telling you not to post on social media tomorrow. I am just suggesting that you do so with genuine purpose and continue to experience your day — whatever your plans may be — authentically. If that means posting your picture, then logging off social media for the day, there's no shame in that. But if that also means taking out your camera to capture a surprise moment, then that is also okay! Just remember to live your day through the lens of your eyes and not your iPhone.



CLIPART COURTESY OF CREATIVE COMMONS

# SONGS OF YEARNING FOR VALENTINE'S DAY

by **Thaddeus Sawyer**

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Are you someone who has tried repeatedly to secure a romantic relationship, but just can't seem to make it work? Or perhaps a hopeless romantic who tries just a bit too hard? If you identify with either of these, or if you just don't have someone to spend Valentine's Day with this year, these songs with strong themes of yearning might be relatable or comforting for you.

## Jeff Buckley - "Lover, You Should've Come Over"

Perhaps the quintessential yearning song, Jeff Buckley's "Lover, You Should've Come Over" captures the full emotional spectrum of wanting a relationship while not being ready for one. With verse after verse of despondent imagery, heightened by the aching refrain: "Too young to hold on / And too old to just break free and run," it's a masterclass on the feeling of wanting something unobtainable. Buckley manages to heighten the intensity in the bridge with a series of earth-shattering lines that keep building on each other.

The version that appears on Buckley's only studio album, "Grace," is fiery and cinematic. But if you want a stripped back performance that exudes desperation for an exceptionally wistful Valentine's Day, I'd recommend the version that appears on the live album, "Live at Sin-é."

## Black Country, New Road - "Concorde"

What does Concorde — a failed European supersonic passenger jet — and unrequited love have in common? Well, if you were to ask Isaac Wood, former frontman for the United Kingdom indie rock band Black Country, New Road, the answer would be a lot. On

"Concorde," Wood uses a series of clever similes and metaphors to create a rich profile of the speaker, who stumbles up hills just to barely get closer to their person of interest, characterized as Concorde itself.

The Concorde fallacy, referring to the immense resources put into the Concorde jet only for more problems to arise, is also at play here. In the verses, you see the speaker investing their all into this person but not getting any closer to a meaningful relationship. With a constantly changing chorus and explosive ending, where guitar and saxophone lash out in cathartic release, this is the perfect Valentine's Day song for those actively pursuing romantic relationships but constantly and frustratingly falling short.

## Joni Mitchell - "All I Want"

"All I Want," the opening track to Joni Mitchell's classic 1971 singer-songwriter album "Blue," is a simple yet perfect depiction of desire. Mitchell's longing is multifaceted — while mostly about a romantic connection, she extends this yearning towards the broader self-fulfillment and sense of purpose she hopes to gain from being happy with someone.

The words "want" and "wanna" together appear 23 times within the three-and-a-half-minute runtime, and Mitchell accentuates the lyrical passion with a voice that freely soars into piercing, airy falsettos. It's an apt listen for anyone mildly rueful about not having a valentine on the 14th but confident about having better odds next year.

## Sufjan Stevens - "Futile Devices"

Sufjan Stevens' "Futile Devices" has appeared in a few places, primarily on his 2010 album "The Age of Adz," though its most known for its use as a remix for the 2017 film

"Call Me by Your Name." It's a quiet, reflective ode to a male figure the narrator seems to be attracted to. But despite the romantic admiration, the narrator never acts, instead thinking: "And I would say I love you, but saying it out loud is hard." While barely over two minutes in length, "Futile Devices" is a powerful listen that shines light on internal and social limitations that can make queer love feel confusing and unattainable.

## Slowdive - "Alison"

Rarely does a genre name describe a song's sound as well as "dream pop" encapsulates "Alison," the opener to U.K. shoegaze act Slowdive's 1993 album, "Souvlaki." The track describes a psychedelic journey while sounding just like one, with lead vocalist Neil Halstead's echoing vocals working with reverb-soaked guitar to craft a transcendental experience. Halstead makes references to "floating," "sinking" and feeling "lost," but the narrator ultimately feels stable thanks to the comforting presence of Alison.

But at the end of the song, Alison seems to disappear, with the final call "I guess she's out there somewhere" producing no answer. The last minute of swelling and then fading instrumentals feels like a fruitless quest to find her, cementing this as yet another solid though abstract depiction of longing.

## Cameron Winter - "Love Takes Miles"

Somehow, singer-songwriter Cameron Winter has found himself in some sort of niche cultural moment as an indie sensation, at least online. At the center of his success as a solo artist and as frontman for the New York indie rock band Geese is the song "Love Takes Miles," released toward the end of



COMIC BY JASON J SAMPSON, CONTRIBUTING ARTIST

2024. On the track, Winter explores wanting to love, yet not being ready because "Love takes miles, love takes years."

The song's upbeat, jaunty cadence is almost enough to overshadow the craving lyrics and Winter's warbly, unconventional vocals. Still, the sense of unavoidable pain ma-

terializes when Winter cries: "I need somebody sent down from the sun that talks to me how you used to." But even with this sense of loss and constant pining, there's the underlying belief that given time, love is possible. This one's for all the optimistic yearners out there willing to bide their time.

# 5 tips for surviving a long-distance Valentine's Day



by **Jessica Pizzimenti**

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Whether you are a two-hour car ride or an entire continent apart, long-distance relationships can be tough, especially around the holidays.

Valentine's Day, for most, is a day of celebration. It's a day of gratitude and showing up for your loved ones extra so they know how much they mean to you. But for those in long-distance relationships, the holiday can be a harsh reminder of all the things you might be missing out on because you are apart. Long-distance doesn't have to mean you can't celebrate, though. Here are five tips to surviving a long-distance Valentine's Day from a seasoned long-distance veteran.

## Do something for yourself

Valentine's Day is supposed to reflect how much you love someone, so why not treat yourself to something special. Buy yourself flowers, order your favorite dinner, watch that new show you've been dying to watch but haven't found the right time for and enjoy your night.

There are a lot of misconceptions about the holiday, like if your partner isn't around or you don't have one, you just shouldn't celebrate, but I think life is too short to waste your time waiting around

for a traditional Valentine's Day. You're the only constant in your life and I think it's important to celebrate that.

## It's okay to be upset, but don't wallow

It's human nature to be upset or even jealous during Valentine's Day, especially when those around you can be with their partners and go to fancy dinners. It's important to remember that it's okay to feel that way, but don't let it consume you.

I honestly think it's beneficial to allow yourself time to grieve what could have been. But bottling up how you feel only makes things worse. Let it out and then get up and do something that makes you feel good. You don't want to be miserable, and I promise your partner doesn't want you to be either.

## Spend time with family and friends

There is so much more to life than waiting. Finding friends who also don't have plans and having a special night with them can be a great distraction. Celebrate "Galentine's Day," watch a sports game, go to a gym class or just spend quality time with them. It gives you something else to focus on and allows you to nurture other relationships rather than your romantic one, which are equally important.

Going out to dinner with your family is another

great way to celebrate. It's a holiday full of love and company; it doesn't matter who you spend it with.

## Send gifts and cards via mail

Just because you can't see your partner doesn't mean you can't celebrate them. Sending a gift or card in the mail is a great way to show your partner that the distance doesn't mean they aren't loved. It doesn't have to be anything big or grand either. A meaningful gesture can go a long way, even something small like sending your partner money to buy flowers and chocolate can mean a lot.

## Utilize Technology

We are so lucky to have technology that allows us to talk to anyone, anytime, anywhere, so utilize it! Set up a cute dinner date over FaceTime, play a card game through the phone or just spend some quality time chatting with your partner. If you do send each other gifts, open them together on the phone and make it a special night anyway. Just because there is a distance between you doesn't mean you can't make it a special holiday.

Distance doesn't have to mean doomed. It's only when you let the distance get in the way that you open a relationship up to failure, so don't let it stop you this Valentine's Day or any day!

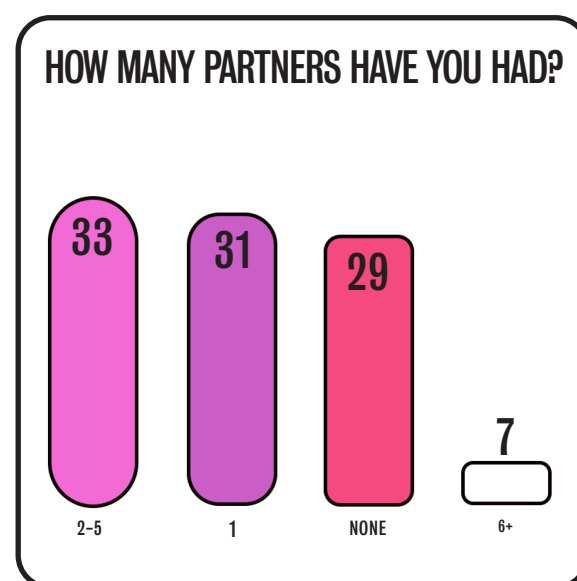
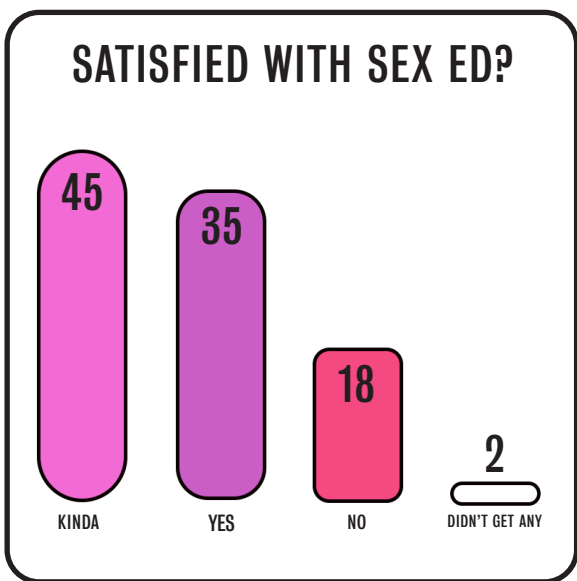
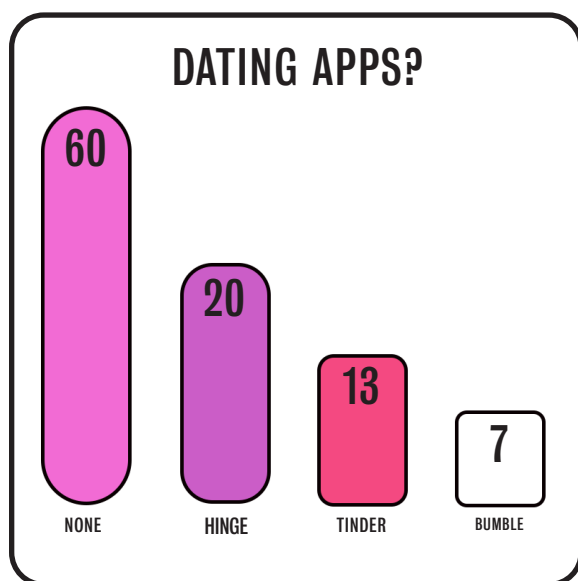
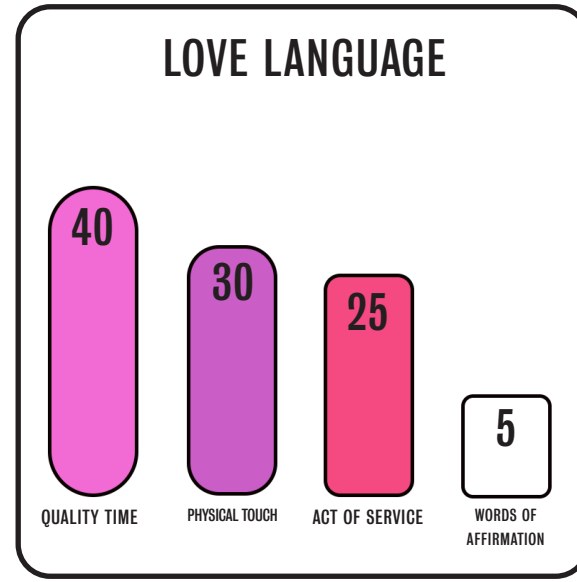
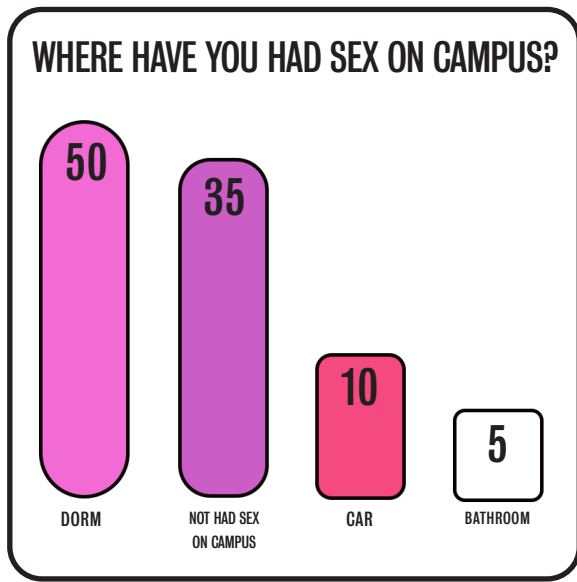
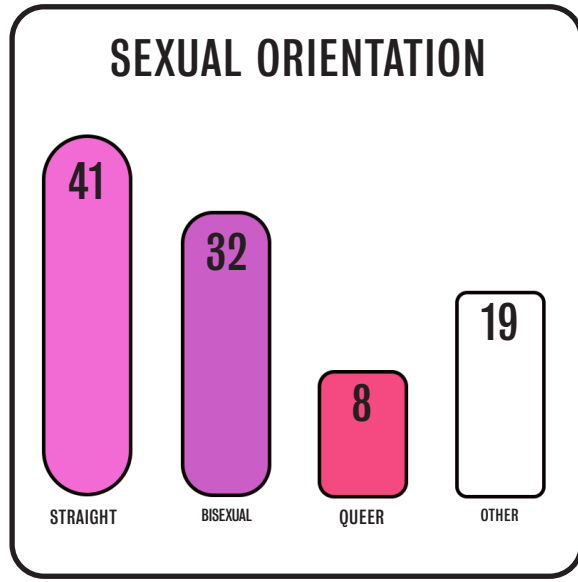
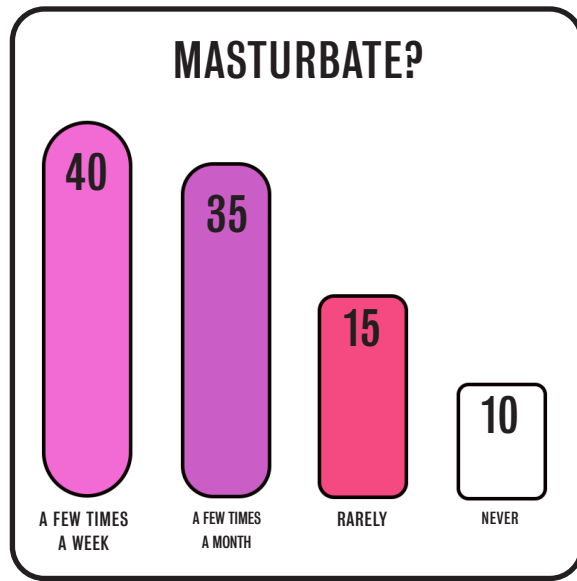
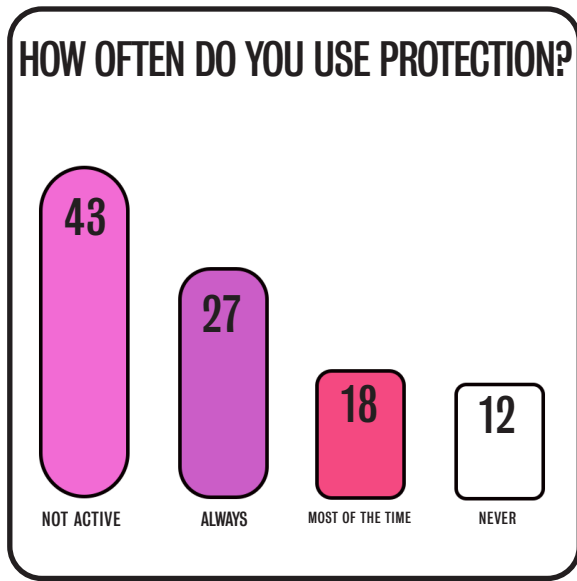
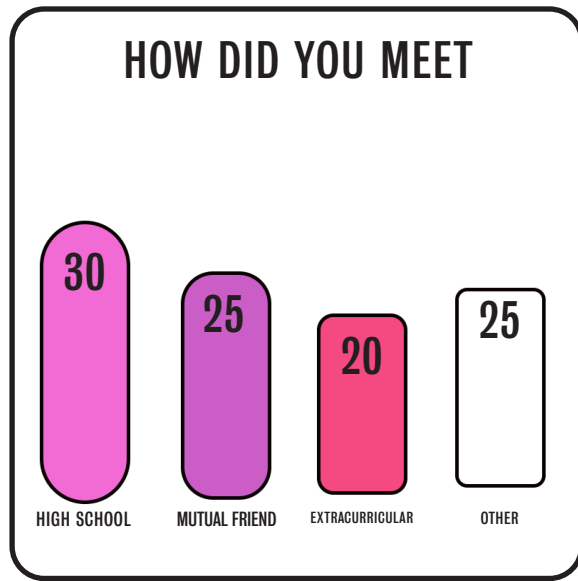
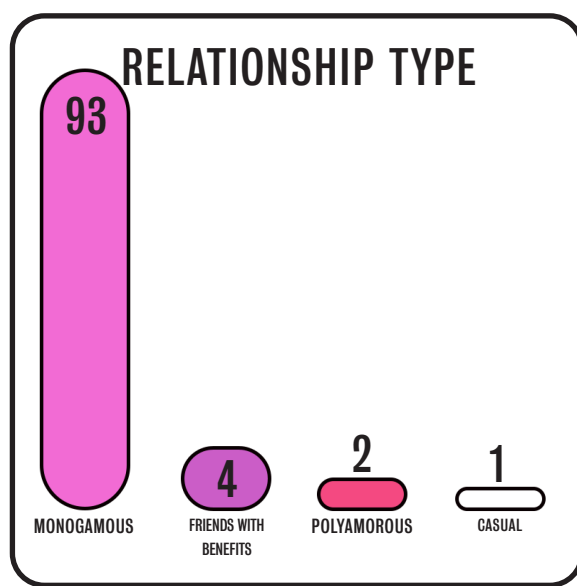
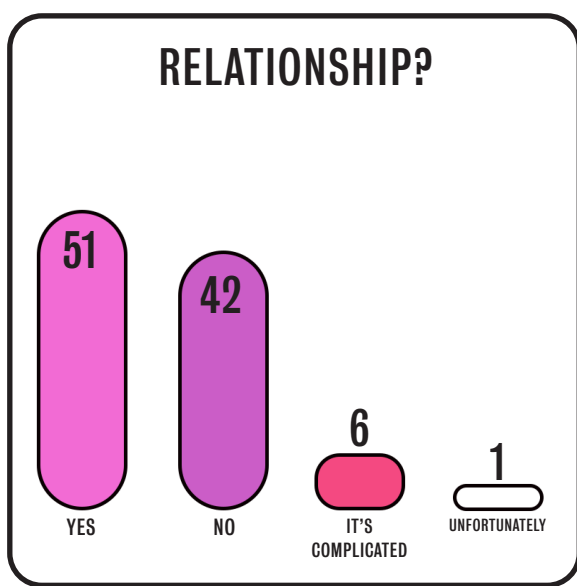
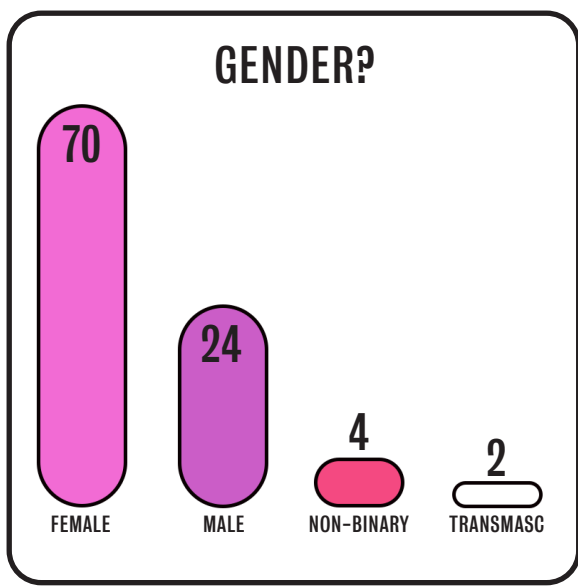


COMIC BY ALEX PAPPAS, STAFF ARTIST



Love

# UConn Sex Survey Results



#### DISCLAIMER

ALL THE VISUALIZATIONS OF THE GRAPHS ARE PRETTY HEAVILY EYEBALLED - THE STATISTICS ARE ALL REAL THOUGH!

THANKS FOR RESPONDING TO THE SURVEY, AND IF YOU DIDN'T THIS YEAR, MAKE SURE YOU RESPOND NEXT YEAR!

News



# HUSKIES, TED'S COMPETE IN NATIONAL BAR BRACKET



A group of people in a crowd pose for a picture outside of Ted's Restaurant and Bar in Storrs, CT. PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF @TEDSBAR/INSTAGRAM

by **Nora Mariano**  
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Huskies and Ted's will both represent the University of Connecticut in the fifth Annual LineLeap Bar Tab Battle. Voting began on Thursday, and a final winner will be crowned at the beginning of March. Each bar will post weekly on Thursdays at 3 p.m. and the amount of user interaction their posts receive will decide which bars move up in the competition. The competition pits 64 bars from across the country against each other to win the ultimate prize of a \$5,000 bar tab and DJ event. "It would be pretty cool to have a bar tab," Kevin Mitchell, Huskies' daytime manager said. "We've had liquor dis-

tributors and liquor companies like Sun Cruiser do sponsored bar tabs in the past and it's always a big show out." Last year, Crooked Floor Tavern from South Carolina's Coastal Carolina University won it all with 222,959 likes and comments. Riley's from California's Chico State University was the runner-up with a final count of 220,869. They received a \$3,000 bar tab as a consolation prize. According to the LineLeap schedule, voting for the Round of 64 began on Thursday. LineLeap will announce the Round of 32 on Feb. 15 and the Round of 16 on Feb. 19. The Elite Eight round will be on Feb. 22 followed by a Final Four on Feb. 26 and ending with the Championship faceoff on Mar. 1. In an Instagram post, LineLeap posted the initial bracket

and the competition rules. For their vote to count, people must be following @lineleap, @drinkhappythursday and the bar they're voting for. To support Huskies and/or Ted's, simply like their posts and mention a friend in the comments. LineLeap clarifies that voters can comment as much as they like, but engagement from fake accounts will not count towards the final tally. Ted's bartender Lucia Ferreira says she can see Ted's advancing far into the bracket because of its loyal following. "We've been around since the 1970s, so we're very well known," Ferreira said. "And I'm very confident that because we're so well-known, and because people love this place - it's been around forever - that we'll get pretty far."



COMIC BY

JASON J

SAMPSON

CONTRIBUTING ARTIST



## COMIC BY ALEXA PAPPAS, STAFF ARTIST



An entrance to Huskies Restaurant and Bar in Downtown Storrs, Storrs, CT. PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF @HUSKIESBARUCONN/INSTAGRAM.

# The Daily Campus

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## Opinion

## A critical analysis of Bad Bunny's Superbowl halftime show

by Tomas Hinckley

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As I sat and watched Bad Bunny's Superbowl performance on Sunday night, after absolutely glazing over the rest of the match which I admittedly could not care for, there were two thoughts that sat in my brain. First, I was amazed by the spectacle of it all: the music, the imagery, the emotion, the story, etc. And second, I was in suspense. A Puerto Rican man was singing Spanish music at the Superbowl, one of the most quintessentially white American events in existence. In this political context, where Latinos are being terrorized and kidnapped by the government, I imagined that there was no way for him not to acknowledge the elephant in the room. Just in the same way that he called for Immigrations and Customs Enforcement out of communities at the Grammys, I expected to see a grand political message that would tie everything together.



Bad Bunny poses proudly with the once illegal version of the Puerto Rican flag during the Superbowl Halftime Performance. PHOTO COURTESY OF @HYPERBEAST/INSTAGRAM

Eventually, it did come, in the form of the quote blasted across the stadium's Jumbotron: "The only thing more powerful than hate is love." It aptly summarized the feeling of the 13-minute show. Instead of leaning into the culture war divisiveness that was hovering around it, he chose a unifying message. He celebrated Latino culture from Chile to Puerto Rico and made the bold suggestion that "God bless America" applies to all of them too and that we could unite under that. The world seemed to take notice, as this performance became a flashpoint for all things counterculture and all those rallying against the current administration. It became a symbol of resistance.

If self-contained, this message of love and unity would be valid. The problem is that it wasn't. The show was wrapped on all sides with advertising from some of the largest corporations in America, about half of which felt like AI slop or sports gambling. It was also platformed by the NFL, which is not exactly a

progressive institution. After all, this is the same body which still has Colin Kaepernick on a blacklist for refusing to stand for the flag in 2016. It's the same body led by league commissioner Roger Goodell, who has long chosen policies of quiet appeasement to the demands of President Donald Trump. It's also the league where owners of the various teams collectively sent over 19 million dollars to conservative election efforts from 2020 to 2024. For a more specific example of this, just look at the owner of the New England Patriots, Robert Kraft, who helped fund Trump's inauguration and has spent over 100 million dollars supporting Zionist political organizations in past years. All of this is not even to mention the institutional partnerships the NFL directly has with DHS and the military.

This context changes the message that was put out during that halftime show. Ultimately, it is important to remember that Benito was chosen to perform at the Superbowl. His message, his performance and his impact were prescribed and scripted in boardrooms and corporate high rises long before they ever made it to our screens. Every detail was implicitly given the stamp of approval by all the actors named above, as their logos were set to be screened before, during and after his time on screen. This is not to say that each of them necessarily agrees with his message, but that they did not find it so odious as to oppose it. It is acceptable to Goodell, to Kraft, to OpenAI, to Apple, to Meta and all the rest, so long as you sit down, shut up and keep your eyes on the screen.

When we further consider that it is these institutional actors that are materially supporting the extreme violence against Latino communities across the country, a contradiction is



created. In this contradiction, Bad Bunny's message is neutered. A message of resistance against ICE and unity among peoples becomes an idealistic dream; it is detached from reality. The popular "dissent" he platforms is coopted, managed and given a release valve before it gets to be too angry. The incredible spectacle of his message satisfies people, and satisfied people do not revolt. Spectacle creates complacency, obedience and compliance.

True impact requires recognition and repair: The naming and shaming of systems that cause these issues, as well as focused direction of energy into efforts that attempt to address them. Spectacle is the opposite of impact. When Bad Bunny focuses on the importance of "love" over "hate," these systems are obscured behind emotional language. Hate does not exist in a vacuum, and the type of hateful white supremacy that pushes forward ICE and the federal government is not simple irrationality. These things have structural causes and are based in the material interests of those in power. To say that "love" is the answer erases the possibility

for both recognition and repair.

All of this is not necessarily to crucify Benito, but rather to point at how structures of media, consumption and dissent operate. I think some of the discourse he generated with the performance has been beneficial, like the use of electrical poles to bring awareness to the long blackouts the island faces. I also believe he has done truly good work in the past: When he decided to skip the U.S. in his most recent tour because it was "unnecessary," that was hilariously disrespectful as well as a genuine example of protest that puts your money where your mouth is. However, in this current situation, any progressive impact intended is inherently limited by the foundation of corporate money that it is built upon.

We must look past these spectacles designed for us, that are inherently disconnected from the material reality they attempt to replicate. We must recognize that the revolution will not be televised in between multi-million dollar commercial spots. No matter how visually stunning, heartfelt and emotionally cathartic, the revolution will not be sponsored by the NFL.

## How 'But I'm A Cheerleader' uses comedy to critique gender and sexuality norms

Content warning: homophobia, misogyny. Major spoilers for "But I'm A Cheerleader."

by Bonnilil Lilith Rampertab

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"But I'm a Cheerleader" is a cult classic film for good reason. With the heavy task of being an early cinematic satire of the indoctrination of queer people through conversion therapy, it surprisingly stuck the landing in some regards. It helped pave the way for future queer storytelling in ways that aren't solely confessional or necessarily dramatic. "But I'm a Cheerleader" celebrates true love and acceptance in a place where you're shunned if you don't fit the societal mold. The movie subverts tropes of only expressing queer expressions of pessimism and austerity and making fun of queer people in bad faith. This results in punching up at misogynistic and homophobic institutions in a comedic way.

"But I'm a Cheerleader" must be discussed when talking about campy movies for its plot alone. For context, the 1999 film directed by Jamie Babbit stars Natasha Lyonne as Megan: a goody two-shoes Christian cheerleader in high school living the "American dream" in the sense that she's popular, has a boyfriend and has a stable home life. However, she gets singled out for acting flirtatious with other women. Her religious parents send her to a conversion therapy camp, suspecting that she's a lesbian. Megan gets close to a rebellious masculine woman named Graham who's confident in her sexual orientation, but the conversion

camp wants to separate them.

"But I'm a Cheerleader" uses stereotypes to its advantage for a controversial effect. For example, the stereotypes of the "femme" lesbian for Megan and the "butch" lesbian for Graham reinforce, on a surface level, traditional gender roles' application to non-heterosexual relationships. Furthermore, the queer men depicted in this film are oftentimes speaking with a lisp. This reliance on tropes and stereotypes could be argued as hindering the film, but for the sake of comedy the stereotypes work to parody the very caricatures that intolerant people create and critique the systems behind these prejudices.

Gender roles are prevalent to a sickening extent in this movie. The queer women wear pink along with skirts and the queer men wear blue with ties. The camp segregates the sexes only by their sexes and disregards gender identity in the process. Gender is perceived as a tool to control people and tell them what they can and cannot do. Of course, the film makes fun of this too.

Near the end of the movie, the conversion campers are forced to wear skinsuits with leaves covering their genitals (in reference to the story of Adam and Eve, the first man and woman in the Bible) and simulate having sex on a bed. Disregarding their ages and the fact that everyone's forced to watch, the staff at the conversion camp are supportive of these heteronormative displays of sexuality

where the woman is always submissive and the man is always dominant. For a variety of reasons, it's so disgustingly uncomfortable it's absurd. Hopefully, it makes you consider the institution of gender roles in our culture as a result.

The underlying theme of anti-LGBTQ+ indoctrination in the youth in this film is shown when the conversion campers are forced to protest how much they supposedly hate homosexuality in front of the house of a gay couple who freed the conversion campers to go to a gay bar. They shout homophobic slurs and other catchphrases, but they don't really mean it. While it may seem easy to resist the bigotry, it penetrates the mind and destabilizes your confidence.

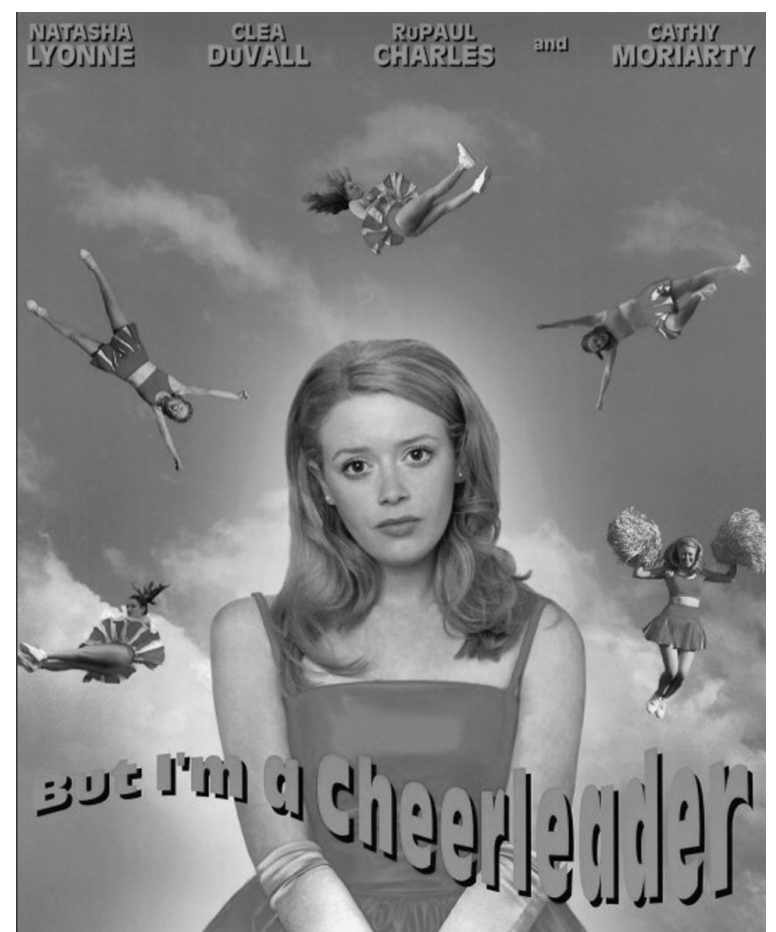
Graham faces this lack of confidence when given an ultimatum to choose her love for Megan or finish the conversion program. Although she loves Megan, she chooses to marry a man to finish the program and to assimilate back into her family as a "heterosexual" woman — until Megan wins her back over by crashing the wedding with a protest cheer.

This ultimate switch from comedy to romance-drama at this point of the movie hits like a freight train because it's a candid symbol of claiming one's full identity. We are genre-less and capable of so many different moods. We cannot be easily labeled. And despite her stereotypical character, Megan eventually refuses to hide any part of herself. She accepts her identity

and the truth about who she is.

"But I'm a Cheerleader," while not perfect, is really a story about accepting yourself no matter how you identify and despite oppression. Letting go of harmful traditions — originally decided on by people we'll never meet — that promote social constructs such as the patriarchy and cisgender, heteronormative ideologies is a

goal facilitated by art as methods of education and critique. "But I'm a Cheerleader" has a beautiful, riveting love story that resists and critiques homophobia, misogyny and ultimately the seizing of autonomy in blatant terms. The movie's story results in further developing a queer canon that deserves to be remembered, appreciated and built upon.



Poster of 1999 "But I'm A Cheerleader" film.

PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF @NOSTALGICNEBULA/INSTAGRAM

## Sports

Photo of the Day | have a lovely valentine's day :D



UConn women's basketball takes on Butler at PeoplesBank Arena on Saturday, Feb 7, 2026, wearing pink uniforms for the Play4Kay Pink Game. The Huskies took a strong victory of 80-48 versus the Bulldogs. PHOTO BY ZACH MOLLER, STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER/THE DAILY CAMPUS

## The Full 90: The Managerial Merry Go Round

by Will DeLetto  
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Hello and welcome back to The Full 90. We are officially in the year 2026, and the excitement of world football continues to ramp up as we approach the end of the season. The January transfer window proved to be quite exciting for teams all over Europe, and in this week's edition, I would like to discuss where things stand.

One of the more shocking points of the window included the departure of six top managers from their respective clubs, only a month and change into 2026. Tottenham Hotspur fired Thomas Frank only a couple of days ago after a bad run of results left the London club in danger of relegation. Frank was hired in the summer by Tottenham off the back of a very successful stint at fellow London club Brentford FC. Similarly, Sean Dyche was sacked by fellow Premier League club Nottingham Forest. Dyche's spell with Forest was short-lived after just 114 days in charge — the ownership group sought change. Although these managerial decisions are dramatic, the two mentioned earlier were easy to see coming.

The real drama in the transfer window began when English giants Manchester United and Chelsea FC decided to part ways with their

clubs. Former Chelsea manager Enzo Maresca decided to step down from the job on Jan. 1, 2026, after a solid 18-month tenure with the club. The Italian manager helped the London club win the UEFA Conference League and the FIFA Club World Cup. Despite this success, an inconsistent run of results as well as a strained relationship with the club's owners and hierarchy inevitably led to a mutual parting of ways. The exit was described publicly as "mutual consent" but many fans speculate that reports of growing tension and dissatisfaction behind the scenes made Maresca's job increasingly difficult. Chelsea quickly pivoted and decided to appoint Liam Rosenior, who formerly managed Chelsea's sister club RC Strasbourg in France's Ligue 1. Since the appointment, Rosenior has led his side to six wins, one loss and one draw, which is a stark improvement from Maresca's one win in seven games before he was let go from the club.

Fellow Premier League powerhouse Manchester United underwent a similar situation when its manager, Ruben Amorim, was sacked on Jan. 5, 2026, after 14 months with the club. Manchester United sat sixth in the table at the time, but over the entirety of Amorim's tenure, it was never able to build a consistent run of

form. Like Maresca, a major determinant in this firing wasn't just the result. Within the Manchester club, there was a power struggle between the club's recruitment and sporting directors. Amorim publicly complained and announced to the media that he wanted "full" managerial control. This means he wanted to be involved and heavily influence the club's overall transfer policy. This caused the ownership group, alongside the sporting directors, to come to the decision to part ways with the Portuguese manager and replace him with Interim coach and Manchester United legend, Michael Carrick. Many Manchester United fans have been

thrilled with this decision, as since the appointment of the interim coach, the team has gone unbeaten in its last five games. Big wins over Manchester City and Arsenal as well as two very well-managed wins against Tottenham and Fulham could spark thoughts within the club of giving Carrick a real go at the job.

Managerial turmoil was a prevalent theme in our most recent transfer window, and we can see that it transcended just the English Premier League. Over in Spain, one of the world's largest clubs, Real Madrid, also decided to make a managerial change. In May 2025, Xabi Alonso was appointed manager of Real

Madrid on a long-term contract after a wildly successful spell in Germany with Bayer Leverkusen. During his time at Leverkusen, he won the Bundesliga and the German Cup while maintaining an invincible season, never losing a game. Alonso's side began the season well in LaLiga. However, inconsistency, as well as having a thorn in its side like FC Barcelona, eventually caused pressure to mount as opportunities for trophies slipped through the club's fingertips. Behind the scenes, tactical discrepancies, dressing room dynamics and training demands all naturally played a role as Alonso was tasked with managing some of the world's best footballers. Big names like Kylian Mbappe, Jude Bellingham and Vini Jr are all pieces Xabi would need to make fit despite tactical preferences because the ownership had spent so much on them. After some anticipation, the club finally announced Alonso's exit just seven months into the project, making it one of the most surprising and dramatic managerial sagas in European football.

It's safe to say the transfer window was quite the show. Next week, we'll dive into the rest of the drama and talk more about the most exciting transfers that happened in the January window and what they may mean for the future.



Chelsea FC celebrating winning the Fifa Club World Cup 2021. Chelsea FC recently parted ways with its club. PHOTO COURTESY OF @CHELSEAFC ON INSTAGRAM

## WOMEN'S BASKETBALL: NO. 1 UCONN BEGINS ROAD STRETCH WITH TRIP TO MILWAUKEE

by Jake McCreven  
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Life is good. Sarah Strong is on the mend. Azzi Fudd has broken out of her slump and is playing some of the best basketball of her career. Allie Ziebell has emerged, in fiery freshman Blanca Quiñonez's absence, as a consistent scorer off the bench in a tightening rotation.

The top-ranked UConn women's basketball team is 26-0 and only five games away from its 11th undefeated regular season in program history. The team has won 42 games in a row dating back to last year and have crushed its 26 opponents this season by an average of 40 points.

But Geno Auriemma isn't (fully) happy.

"My job between now and the end of the season is to try to fix the things that I can and



Sarah Strong against the Tennessee Lady Volunteers at PeoplesBank Arena in Hartford, Conn. The Huskies won with a final score of 96-66. PHOTO BY CONNOR SHARP, PHOTO EDITOR/THE DAILY CAMPUS

hide the things that I can't fix and hope they don't cause us to lose," Auriemma admitted after Wednesday's 50-point win over Creighton. "There are some things I can't fix."

The world is curious as to what those things are.

Perhaps one of them is

health; the Huskies have been smattered with injuries since December. Four players missed Wednesday's game, including Quiñonez, who missed her fifth straight.

But Strong, who sat out last Saturday with general tightness, came back at least, even

if it came with a mid-game trip to the tunnel to throw up in a trash can.

Whatever these "things" are, Saturday's trip to Milwaukee to take on Marquette (16-9, 10-6) is a chance to fix them.

Get to know the Golden Eagles.

Opponent Profile: Marquette Golden Eagles (16-9, 10-6 Big East)

The Golden Eagles' scoring trio of Skylar Forbes, Halle Vice and Lee Volker has evolved into one of the conference's best this season, combining for over 59% of Marquette's 69.8 points per night.

Forbes has developed into an All-Big East caliber player down low, leading the conference in blocks per game (1.9) while serving as the offensive anchor of Marquette's half-court-centric offense.

But Cara Consuegra's squad lacks depth; while nine players average double figure minutes,

six soak up over 21 a piece, and only one player off the bench (Jordan Meulemans) averages over four points per game.

Marquette's 16-9 start (and 10-6 conference record) lands it squarely in fourth place in the Big East standings — which wouldn't be the most optimal placement for a deep run-in next month's Big East Tournament at Mohegan Sun. The Golden Eagles were picked second in the conference pre-season poll but have yet to assert themselves as the clear No. 2, battling with Seton Hall and St. John's for third while Villanova runs away with second place.

Cara Consuegra's second Marquette team is experienced and laden with veteran leadership. They play to their style — slow, methodical sets that usually result in open jumpers and lay-ins — and rank inside the top 70 nationally in offensive rating (102.3).



# Sports

# BOBAN'S BELIEF

by **Boban Marjanović**  
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Game was good. Sarah Strong is back. She played great. Other players play, too.

I think Geno missed her. I would have, too.

Go Huskies. Boban out.



The UConn women's basketball team defeated Florida State University in a 99-67 bout. The Huskies started off the evening by unveiling their 2025 NCAA Championship banner. PHOTO BY CONNOR SHARP, PHOTO EDITOR/THE DAILY CAMPUS

Boban Marjanović walks around with a coffee cup in his hand. Marjanović paid a visit to the University of Connecticut on Wednesday, Feb. 11. PHOTO COURTESY OF @BOBAN ON INSTAGRAM