

# FOCUS

**FCS STUDENT MAGAZINE**  
**JANUARY 2017**



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FRIENDS'  
CENTRAL  
SCHOOL



# FOCUS

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# Trying to Make Sense of the Nonsense

EDITORIAL

## POST 2016 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

BY: TALIA ROSENBERG '17

America is still in shock. Only a little after 1 am on Wednesday, November 9th, Pennsylvania went red. It was at that point that, although networks could not call it yet, we all knew who would be the 45th President of the United States. At about 3 am, Donald J Trump took the stage at his campaign headquarters in New York to declare that Clinton had conceded the election after an obvious majority win of electoral college votes by Trump - sorry - *President-Elect* Trump... What could have been the election to put the first female President in office running on one of the most progressive platforms thus far in American history became the election that handed the most powerful position on earth to the host of *The Apprentice*.

Everyone is entitled to their own opinion when it comes to policy and Conservatism vs. Liberalism; however, no one can deny that this election was the most vulgar in US history. This could be proved simply by the fact that racist rhetoric, sexist actions, and all around xenophobia, were the memorable points in Trump's campaign platform, and they did not deter half of America from voting for him. Some people felt as though their voices were not being heard until Trump came along and put a microphone to their anger. It did not matter if his policies were not concrete, or if he tanked the debates against Clinton. To these Americans, what mattered most was that policies like Hillary's have been ineffective for the past eight years and Trump's new ideas were fresh and full of possibility in their eyes. It is okay to believe in Hillary's policies and exclaim that even this justification for voting for Trump is wrong; however, it is naive to think that all of America believes in what you or Hillary believes in.

Not even all of the Democratic Party believes in Hillary and her policies. While many Republicans who disagreed with Trump begrudgingly voted against him, many did not, as it is hard to change your entire take on the economy and domestic and foreign affairs in one election cycle. Policies did not align, and some people could not risk giving up all of their beliefs simply because they disliked the person leading their party to the White House. However, the

more worrisome reality is that some people voted for Trump *because* of his racist/xenophobic rhetoric and sexist personality. Since the election, there have been multiple instances around the country of hateful actions against minorities, including swastikas being drawn in public spaces in the name of our future commander-in-chief. This does not come from a place of policy disagreement but from a place of white supremacy and utter racism. This election has unearthed what we at Friends' Central strive to fight against every day. With these thoughts fueling the actions of our President, how can we have hope that equal opportunity will be rewarded to all American citizens regardless of religion, gender, sexual orientation and nationality? How can we have hope that the number of shootings of young African Americans will decrease? How can we have hope that our Muslim friends will feel safe in their own country? How can we have hope that a woman will ever make it to the White House or ever receive equal pay for equal work? As the answers to these questions are so unclear, we need to continue to try and make these things happen, speak up for what we believe in, and fight for equality to make sure everyone has the same opportunity to pursue happiness. There is hope in aligning ourselves with our friends of different backgrounds and cultures in the face of discrimination and degradation. We have hope by unifying the people across party lines and trying to see the humanity in others despite all of the walls put up by our differences. We have hope by coming to school every day and continuing to educate ourselves so that we can take hold of our own futures and do our best as United States citizens to "peacefully transform the world."

Things may look bleak now, but they will not be bleak forever. President-elect Donald Trump represent ideals of the past. We as accepting, caring students of a Friends' School, where our Quaker values guide us through dark and confusing times, represent the future. This is not the time to point fingers at other Americans and think of more ways we can all hate each other. **Love Trumps Hate** and we must try to understand others as well as try to help others understand us. With understanding comes peace.

# Strangely Captivating

MOVIE REVIEW

## A REVIEW OF *DOCTOR STRANGE*

BY: DYLAN MITCHELL '19

Hello potential movie watchers. I'm Dylan Mitchell, and I'm here to fill you in on the movie *Doctor Strange*. Let's begin.

*Doctor Strange*, first of all, is not for those with light stomachs. If you found yourself queasy at movies like *The Walk* or *Inception*, you may want to watch this movie with a phone and a backup bag. If you didn't, on the other hand, then you're in for a treat. The aforementioned special effects deserve a strong mention, as they are what really drives this movie to its source material. There were cities folding, electrically magic weapons, and even a whole separate dimension, and the effects held strong. Marvel took a leap similar to *Ant-Man* when making this movie, meaning that they picked a hero that the majority of people didn't know and tossed him into the limelight. It worked fairly well, in my opinion,

as the strong and elegant visuals and well-placed humor made for an enjoyable viewing experience. From the classic comic temples to the breathtaking mountaintop expanses, there was much to be seen and little left to be desired in this movie. There were many excellently presented motifs throughout the picture such as Ego, Light and Sacrifice. The major complaint I have is that, besides the excellent character development of the Dr. himself, there is basically no character development in the strictly static characters. While there is one other character who isn't static, there are enough characters to overshadow it.

That aside, this movie is fairly solid, especially for a superhero movie. Let's just be glad it was made by Marvel and not DC. Overall, I give this movie 4 out of 5 stars. I highly recommend it. Go see it!



# Different Voices, Same Vision

## DIVERSITY CONFERENCE 2016

BY: JACK LI '20

The Friends' Central "Different Voices, Same Vision" Conference returned for the second year in a row, and this time with even more energetic and diverse participants.

Friends' Central's Simone Gibson '17 organized both the 2015 and the 2016 Diversity Conference. She talked to us for this article about the groundbreaking progress student organizers have achieved and what the future looks like.

This year the Conference was an even greater success in terms of student participation. The number of student participants almost doubled from last year, and many more student facilitators were actively involved in the event and its preparation. "It took a lot of work with teachers and students in our community along with our administrators to get there," a senior organizer told us.

"Prior to the conference, we met twice a week to assign tasks and make sure that we stayed on schedule."

The amount of collective effort put into this conference paid off well. The conference featured several workshops related to the election and other social issues. And the second year of the Diversity Conference experience was even more fulfilling: "This is my second time here and it's a lot different from last year. I really liked it," said 11th grader Thoreau Witherspoon from St. Joseph's Preparatory School and a fan of the FC Diversity Conferences. "I think this year was a lot different from last year because of the recent election and [the organizers of the conference] created some new workshops in response to that."

Students new to the conference enjoyed the opportunity to self-reflect, share ideas and break down social barriers. The coolest thing about this conference, according to first-time participant Daniel Braggs, was how everyone opened up and shared some really important ideas about the world we live in and how we look at one another. Every participant and facilitator worked together to break down prejudice and fear and really became as close as a family by sharing honest thoughts with each other.

A typical workshop consisted of discussion leaders (faculty members from FCS and several student facilitators) and theme-based discussions with multiple activities that related to the topic. The workshop I attended on white supremacy and capitalism was led by Ms. Helwa, an upper school teacher from FCS. Students participated actively in the discussions and learned a lot more about the problems facing the world they live in right now.



It's very interesting to be a student from a foreign culture and take part in these Diversity and Inclusivity workshops. People of various races, skin colors, and origins come together to work and to live on this piece of land. Yet does everyone accept each other? Is America a wonderful, ideal melting pot of different cultures (as commonly described in propaganda), or is it an awful dish where the chef just threw many different ingredients and flavors in the pot, which tastes like a conflict and struggle among flavors? There are inspiring times when I feel that I am treated with support by the faculty members, as many of my friends do, and I stay highly positive. There are also other times when I am put into a box of stereotypes by people who hardly know who we are and why we are who we are. People fear differences and change inherently - that's why they tend to stay within a group and shut the door. When they close the door, look out the window and point at the kids who have different identities. Some people make jokes about them, some people hate who they are, and others simply don't care what's outside their own boxes. At the end of the day I stay confident. Why? Because I see the next generation, coming out, taking the brave steps toward their feared neighbors and knocking on their doors. They say "Hi" and have conversations with each other. How do we make America great? We come out and talk.

# Book Reviews

BY: SYDNEY KAPLAN '18 & GIA MATIKA '18

## *Aristotle and Dante Discover the Secrets of the Universe*

By: Benjamin Alire Sáenz

Benjamin Alire Sáenz has written a masterpiece with this brilliant story of two Latino-American boys. Narrator, Aristotle 'Ari' Mendoza, tells in clear and raw words how a boy named Dante Quintana enters his life and the beautiful friendship they discover. I myself usually go for fantasy or science fiction, but I could not leave the story unfinished. I loved every word, even through my laughter and tears. Sáenz's characters are unique and memorable, and the work has received multiple awards. Throughout the story, we cope alongside the two boys during family tragedy, personal conflicts, and the truths they discover about love and life. If you're looking a beautiful story and stunning imagery, you can definitely find it here.

## *The Perks of Being a Wallflower*

By: Stephen Chbosky

*The Perks of Being a Wallflower* is a brilliant and commanding coming-of-age novel that centers around a boy known only to the reader as 'Charlie.' The story is told through letters Charlie writes to someone who is identified only as "friend." Set in 1991, the book focuses on Charlie's experiences in high school as he becomes friends with senior step-siblings Sam and Patrick, and how he grapples with his own issues. Although the description may sound cliché, I can assure you that this book is anything but. Stephen Chbosky has crafted a magnificent story about how it feels to be young and to be lost. The writing is relatable, funny, emotional, and thought-provoking. I loved this book and would highly recommend it to anyone 14 or older. If you want to read a book that makes you think and feel, this may just be the one for you.

## *The Lake House*

By: Kate Morton

*The Lake House* is a vivid and mysterious tale about an abandoned house, a missing child, and two women's pursuits of closure. Sadie Sparrow is a thirty-something year old detective in the UK who has been suspended for overstepping her boundaries on a case. Alice Edevane is a critically acclaimed author of mystery novels whose younger brother went missing seventy years ago. Eleanor Edevane is the mother of Alice Edevane and the boy who disappeared. The narrative switches between the three women, Sadie, Alice, and Eleanor, as each woman struggles to find peace and answers. While the title may sound bland, the book is well written. With plot twists and plenty of surprises, author Kate Morton keeps readers on the edge of their seat. Overall, this book is an excellent read, and I myself enjoyed it very much. If you're looking for an intriguing mystery novel that isn't gory, this is it, folks. This is it.





# The Fallen

## A BOOK PREVIEW

BY: JAMES PETERSON '17

### Introduction by Zoe Ginsberg '17

*When staff member and current senior James Peterson told us he was in the midst of writing a novel, we asked him to send FOCUS a preview that could be published in our magazine. He was kind enough to do that for us, and we are very excited to be able to publish this on behalf of James.*

*We wish him the best of luck as he continues to write, once again, thank you James. This is The Fallen Part I by James Peterson. Enjoy!*

**T**ruth took a deep breath. The hood over his head severely impaired his vision but did not affect his hearing. He had to figure out where he was. But first, how did he get here? He remembers being in the store. The cashier eyed him suspiciously as he feverishly scavenged for his preferred brand of chips. Then the Outcasts came in. There were two of them, both wearing their gang colors, both carrying guns. They killed the shopkeeper without a single care. This wasn't surprising though as the two warring gangs who fought over the area were known for their ruthlessness and brutality. In fact, their bloody feud is probably the reason that this collection of cities is called Ground Zero.

Anyway, they killed the shopkeeper and, hoping to avoid any confrontation with the attackers, Truth asked if they could give him a lift. They were hit some time after that. Was it as they were driving? It had to have been, he had no recollection of getting out of the car. He had no doubt that the two Outcasts were dead. But why was he spared? It didn't matter. Truth knew he had to capitalize on this situation. There's always a way out.

He focused on the surroundings that he was able to concentrate on. There were two people guiding him. He could hear a conversation going on about a dozen feet ahead. At least two more people. There had to be more behind him. He could hear their footsteps. No telling how many there were though.

There was a sharp creaking sound as a metal door was thrown open. He was led inside and put in a chair. Two people immediately went to work binding his hands to the arms of the chair. Were they going to try to interrogate him? That would be a grave mistake. He smiled at the thought. Then, realizing he needed to refocus on the situation, he took another deep breath. The area smelled of smoke and desolation. He had to be in some sort of abandoned building. Hushed voices spoke in lowered tones all around him. He was surrounded. Did they think he was an Outcast?

The hood was yanked away from Truth's head and after a brief moment of letting his eyes adjust, Truth began to observe his surroundings. There were several people in the warehouse. He assumed they were all of some importance to the leader. The room was dimly lit but he could make out another figure in the corner, he had his arms crossed and his back to the wall. He stood by the door, avoiding eye contact with Truth. For some reason he looked familiar, but Truth didn't have time to think it over.

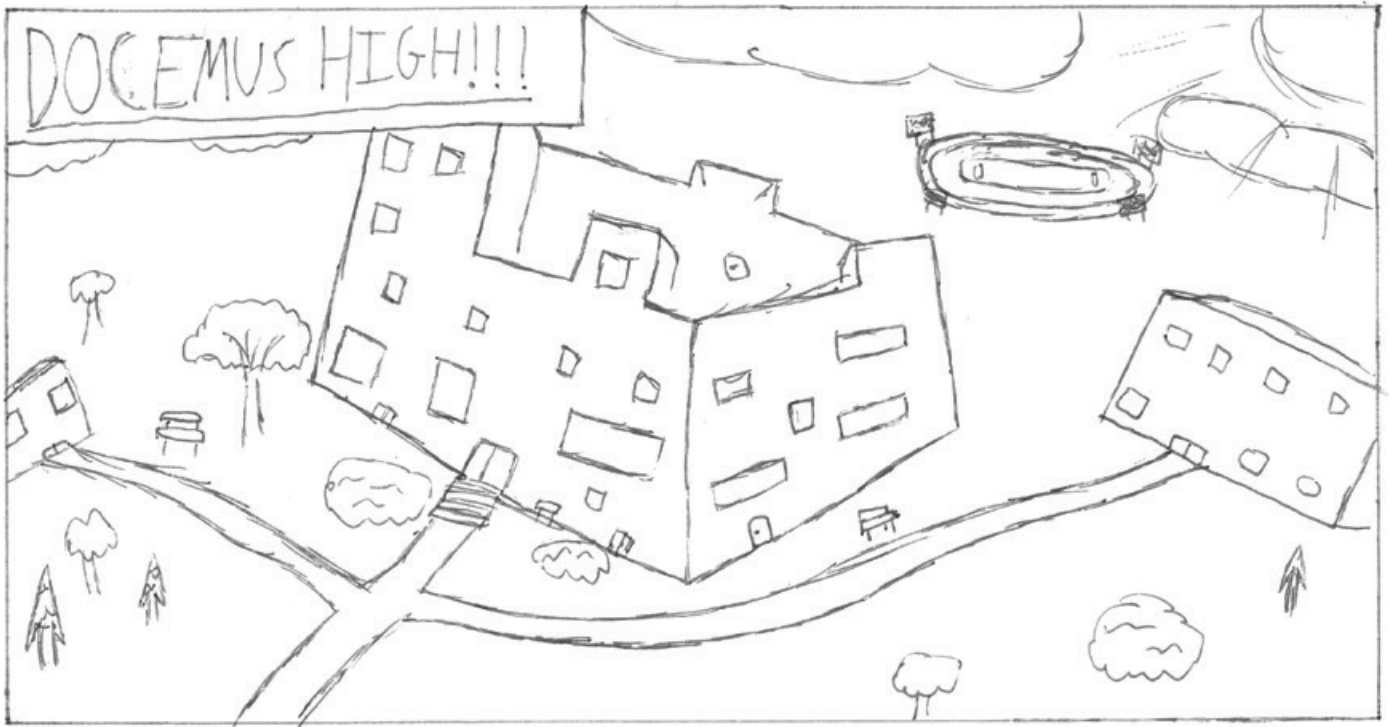
A nearly inconspicuous door on the left side of the room swung open and out stepped a tall, muscular Hispanic man. Judging from his face, anyone could tell he was in his mid to late 20s. An air of calm settled when he entered the room. Truth was more at ease now. In fact, he was more curious than he was afraid. This man wasn't the interrogator. He was the head of the gang. He was the leader of the Fallen.

# Docemus High Comic

BY: NIR NETZ '19 & DYLAN MITCHELL '19







TO BE  
CONTINUED



# The Top 30 Musicians and Bands I Discovered in 2016

BY: NIR NETZ '19

Greetings everyone, and welcome to my list. I've been a music-head for quite some time now, and this year has been the pinnacle of my music craze. I've learned about so many new genres, listened to tons of great (and not so great) songs, and stumbled upon new favorites. This list discloses some of the talented musicians and bands I've discovered this year. Most of what I listen to isn't pop or hip hop, so I'm hoping to turn you guys onto something new. You may not like some of the people on this list; however, you should definitely give each band/musician a shot! Now, on with the list. Here are the top 30 musicians and bands I discovered this year!



## 30. Trash Boat

**Genre: Skate Park Punk**

Starting this list off is an underrated punk band known as Trash Boat. Their musical style is fast-paced, loud, and above all: crazy. The guitars and drums help convey the feeling of adrenaline in their songs, and the lead vocalist, Tobi Duncan, has a great, high pitched voice. The lyrics are also worth mentioning; they're deep, entrancing, and they tell stories of pain and regret. They're perfect songs to listen to while skating.



## 29. The Interrupters

**Genre: Ska**

I find it sad that ska isn't very well known on campus. I mean, who wouldn't love a combination of punk and reggae? Here's the first ska band on this list: The Interrupters. The instrumentals and lyrics are your typical ska instrumentals and lyrics

(partying, friendship, and comedic stuff) however, what separates this band from other ska bands is the lead vocalist: Aimee Allen. Aimee's voice is groovy, energetic, and pleasant to the ears. Her voice is basically the heart and soul of The Interrupters, and that's why the band is so memorable.



## 28. 11 Acorn Lane

**Genre: Electro-Swing**

While making this list, I really wanted to put Unicorn Lunz, an electro-swing band (subgenre of 40's swing and EDM) on your radar. However, I just remembered an electro-swing band that I discovered this year that's even better - 11 Acorn Lane. This band always turns my frown upside down. Their songs are so upbeat that I can't help but smile! This duo has everything going for them: amazing vocals, infectious catchy tunes, and cute lyrics. I love them to death, but since I just discovered them, I don't feel comfortable putting them any higher on this list until I know more about them.



## 27. Benjamin Clementine

**Genre: Piano Opera**

Benjamin Clementine is an incredibly talented artist, poet, and musician. As much as I'd like to talk about his experimental art and his dramatic poetry, this is a list about music, so let's focus on his musical abilities. His songs are mostly piano based, and include deep, thought provoking lyrics sung in Benjamin's beautiful operatic voice. Some of his other songs use instruments like violins and drums. He also incorporates his other artistic abilities into his music videos, which is very cool.



## 26. The Pains of Being Pure at Heart

**Genre: Shoegaze**

Despite the crazy name, shoegaze isn't really an interesting genre. It's basically a more space-y and calmer version of indie music, one of my more disliked genres (at least in its' purest form.) However, The Pains of Being Pure at Heart manages to make this genre interesting and enjoyable to this listener! Their songs usually include relaxing guitars and calm vocals that have an echo effect. They include an almost psychedelic vibe and always suck me into this vast void of tranquility. Their music videos are also worth mentioning, as each one is brilliantly made and contains positive messages.

# 25



## 25. Radiohead

**Genre: Rock**

Finally, a band that a few people might actually know! For those not aware, Radiohead is a popular rock band that surfaced around the mid 80's. Today, they're one of the most well known modern rock bands - and for good reason! Thom Yorke, the lead singer, has a voice reminiscent of a somber melody. The instrumentals are laid back, yet emotional, and the lyrics are pretty symbolic. I would've put them higher if I had listened to them more often, but alas, they're only at 25.





## 24. Big Bad Voodoo Daddy

**Genre: Swing Revival**

Whoever says that swing in it's purest form is dead? Look no further than Big Bad Voodoo Daddy to show you that swing is alive and kicking! As a modern swing band, their melodies sound like Cab Calloway if he were alive today. Their tunes are jazzy and snappy. I could totally tap dance to their music if I knew how. Their lyrics are captivating, romantic, and pretty catchy - especially in songs like "Diga Diga Doo" and "Why Me?"



## 23. Týr

**Genre: Viking Metal**

Believe it or not, Viking metal is a real genre, and it's awesome! If you're completely new to this genre, why not start with Týr? Their songs are slow, and they have this epic downtempo tone. Their lyrics are always about Viking related things like Norse mythology and history. The lead vocalist, Heri Joensen has a beautiful deep singing voice that sounds like nothing I've ever heard before.

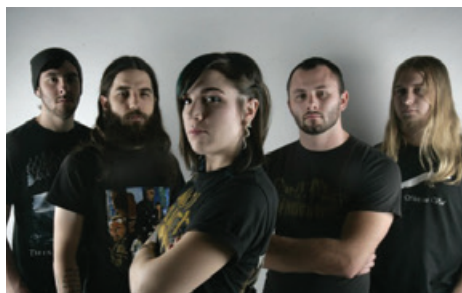


## 22. The Four Freshmen

**Genre: Barbershop Jazz**

I'm a big fan of barbershop music, and there's a lot of great bands from the genre. One of them is The Four Freshmen. Their music dates back to the late 40's, and they're still making music to this day! Once in awhile, the quartet loses and gains

new members, and for the most part, they sound harmonious. The combined voices of the Four Freshmen are simply astounding - they're bold, on key, and very pleasant! My only complaint is that they could use a little work on their lyrics; otherwise they're home free!



## 21. Light This City

**Genre: Death Metal**

I know not many people like this kind of music, but regardless, I really like Light This City. This band's guitar riffs vary in speed and tone, the drums are simply crazy, and the lyrics are brash and violent. Much like other bands previously mentioned, the vocals are what makes this band stand out. Laura Nichol has a deep, menacing, and masculine voice that makes it difficult to make out her words at first, but once you read the lyrics her words become clear as day! Unfortunately, the band broke up in 2008, which is such a shame, because these guys were awesome!

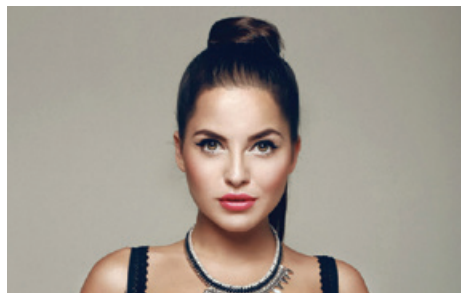
# 20



## 20. Andrew Bird

**Genre: Folk Rock**

Shoutout to Teacher Monty for sparking my interest in this talented musician! A few months ago I discovered Andrew Bird on Spotify, but I didn't think much of him at first. Then, after Monty showed me more of his songs and told me about his ability as a multi-instrumentalist, a fantastic vocalist, and an expert whistler, I was amazed. Each of his songs are different from one another in so many ways. One song has roots in rockabilly, another in folk, and another sounds like it's right out of the 1930's. I hope to listen to his music more often.



## 19. Miss K8

**Genre: Hardcore Gabber**

Raise your hand if you've ever heard of a female DJ. I'm not talking about EDM or trap songs that include female vocals, I mean women that actually make the beats and snares. Anyone? Okay, then let me introduce to you Miss K8! K8 hails from the gabber genre, a subgenre of dance music that's faster, more hardcore, and instead of lovey-dovey pop lyrics, we get sound bites from action movies and metal songs. This genre may not be your cup of tea, and I can understand why, but you should really check it out. Miss K8 stands out amongst the others in this genre by sounding less repetitive, and varying the speeds of each of her songs. Overall, her music is just so hardcore! Out of everyone on this list, I'd have to say Miss K8 is the best female musician I've heard this year.



## 18. The Algorithm

**Genre: Electronic Metal**

Enter The Algorithm, a French electronic musician that fuses electronic genres such as drum and bass, chiptune, and dubstep with metal and mathcore. His music is fast paced, loud, and epic. By epic, I mean epic as a futuristic war between pirate ninjas and cyborg dinosaurs. That kind of epic. Even though his songs can be repetitive, they're completely overshadowed by the intense riffs, guitars, and insane drums. I can tell that this guy works hard on his music, and the work definitely pays off!

Visit [fcsquakefeed.com](http://fcsquakefeed.com)  
to find links to the  
music in this list.





## 17. Steam Powered Giraffe

**Genre: Steampunk Folk**

Time for another oddball band, and this one's steampunk themed! Steam Powered Giraffe is a band made up of lead vocalist Bunny (who happens to be the only trans musician on this list), guitarist/vocalist The Spine, and bassist/vocalist Hatchworth. Let's start with the elephant in the room: their costumes. The costumes this band dons are robotic, mime-like, Victorian, and clownish. Their songs are usually comedic, containing references to steampunk related things and pop culture. Each band member has a unique voice, and they are harmonious when they all sing at the same time.



## 16. Agust D

**Genre: K-Pop Rap**

So far, we've seen musicians from America, France, England, and more. For the 16th musician, it's time for us to journey into South Korea. One of the most popular bands there is the Bangtan Boys (BTS), a hip hop boy band with seven members. While I think their music is all right, they're not on the list. Then why mention them if they aren't even on the list, you might ask? Well, one of the members of the band, Suga, decided that he wanted to make a name for himself outside of being in a boy band - he wanted to be known as a true musician. Two months ago, Suga released his first solo mixtape under the name Agust D, and it was awesome! He raps with quickness, confidence, and a serious attitude, and his lyrics are very well written. His songs are sung in both English and Korean, which I think is pretty cool. However, what keeps him from being higher on my list is what most current rappers suffer from: poor instrumentals. Most of his songs use generic, monotonous, and obnoxious beats, and it sort of takes away his likeability.

# 15



## 15. SebastiAn

**Genre: French House**

SebastiAn's music can only be described as catchy. If I were to compare his style to any other musician, it would be Daft Punk... except harder, better, faster, and stronger (don't kill me). His musical style is like a combination of dance, punk, and funk. It's a melting pot of different genres, and overall makes for a foot-tapping experience.



## 14. Wintergatan

**Genre: Experimental**

Okay, we've seen some experimental artists on this list, but you can't get more experimental than a band that MAKES THEIR OWN INSTRUMENTS! These guys are some of the most creative and avant-garde artists of the 21st century. Their incredibly beautiful and complex instruments usually involve bells, music boxes, and machines that combine various instruments. One being the Marble Machine, a musical machine that's powered by 2,000 marbles. You should definitely give them a listen.



## 13. Death Grips

**Genre: Experimental Hip Hop**

Death Grips is an acquired taste in the rap

community. Either you love them, hate them, or you don't know what to think about them. Judging by their placement on this list, you can guess what my opinion is. When Death Grips first formed and started releasing videos, they broke many expectations and stereotypes for rap groups. They are experimental, intimidating, bizarre, and harsh. Their lyrics are also edgy, jarring, and vary vastly from song to song. The instrumentals are all over the place, and it's hard to explain without going on a complete tangent. The rapper/vocalist of the band, MC Ride, is brooding, loud, and actually kind of corny... in a good way.



## 12. Stromae

**Genre: Pop**

Pop is one of my most despised genres. However, there is one pop musician I'm currently into, and he hails from France! You may have not heard of him, because he's mostly popular in said country — and he doesn't sing in English. Stromae, the creator of such great songs as 'Carmen', 'Papaoutai', and 'Alors On Danse' is a lyrical genius. Here's a few examples of what his lyrics tackle: the relationship between a son and his negligent father; how social media will be the downfall of humanity; facing your problems head on, etc. His voice is very calm and echo-y, but can be strong when needed. Stromae is such a cool guy, and definitely deserves a spot on this list!



## 11. Greg Haines

**Genre: Ambient**

Greg Haine's music can be described as calm and dreamy. This is the kind of music you want to listen to when life is getting really stressful and you just need to relax. Once I started listening to Greg's riveting songs, I was instantly sucked into a world of euphoria, relaxation, and beauty. It was like I was meditating on a magic carpet in the air. Plus, his songs can be pretty long,



ranging from four minutes to a half an hour, so you can simply recline while listening to this amazing ambient artist!

# 10



## 10. Skeleton Staff

**Genre: Baroque Rock**

Do any of you remember Gorillaz, the band made out of fictional characters? Well there's actually more than just one virtual band! However, there was only one virtual group that I discovered this year: Skeleton Staff, the band made up of a strangely stylish redhead man, a furry (anthropomorphic animal,) an alien, and a robot. Their music has a sort of pop rock feel, with some synths and strings here and there. Their lyrics are unique because they tell wonderful stories of love, propaganda, and fortunes. The lead vocalist, Stanton, has a singing voice with an incredible range that always makes me sway back and forth.



## 9. The Bran Flakes

**Genre: Mashup**

The Bran Flakes is a mashup band. What does this mean? It means that they make songs by combining parts of other pre-existing songs, which is really pretty creative! I've heard that the band literally shops at thrift stores to find cool songs to sample. Unfortunately, this leads to some fair use issues and the band was banned from using their songs commercially. This eventually led them to join the Illegal Art record label with other mashup musicians like Girl Talk. Either way, I think they're really interesting and they deserve a spot in the top 10!



## 8. Larry and His Flask

**Genre: Contemporary Punk Bluegrass**

Larry and His Flask is a bluegrass-punk-powerhouse. The instrumentals are fast and smooth, and the lead and backup vocals are intense and harmonious. The lyrics are deep and relate to romance, grief, and travel. They're definitely worth listening to.



## 7. Reel Big Fish

**Genre: Ska**

Reel Big Fish is one of the best ska bands in recent memory. They have a distinct sound booming with energy and positivity, and you just gotta love their funky guitars and horns. Their lyrics are intelligent, hilarious, and uplifting, especially in songs such as 'Sell Out' and 'Take On Me.' If you're looking for a music group that will make you smile, look no further than to Reel Big Fish.



## 6. Shpongle

**Genre: Psychedelic**

Psychedelic music isn't a dead genre, and these guys are here to prove it! Much like the previously mentioned Greg Haines, Shpongle has this really calm vibe to it, and they have long songs. However, what sets these two apart is their music styles. While Greg's music is straight up ambient, Shpongle's music is inspired by the traditional music of India, China, Brazil, and other countries. Their songs can also transition into energetic drum pieces with echo-like

tribal voices. There's one more thing I should mention: their logo is my favorite band logo ever. It's this crazy mask with four eyes, tentacles, and a happy expression. I'd suggest looking it up.

# 5



## 5. Junior Senior

**Genre: Funk**

Alright, time for the top 5, and we're kicking it off with something groovy! Junior Senior may not be as upbeat a band as 11 Acorn Avenue or Reel Big Fish, but I swear, these guys sing the catchiest songs I've heard this year. Sung by musicians Jesper "Junior" Mortensen and Jeppe "Senior" Laursen (nicknamed this way because of their contrasting voices and appearances), their songs have a really positive vibe that always makes me want to dance. Their lyrics may be a little poppy, but they get the job done. The instrumentals are upbeat, slow, and funky, and contain elements from synthpop, indie, and hip hop. Their vocals are simply amazing. Senior has a loud smooth voice, and Junior's singing sounds like Michael Jackson to me. Unfortunately, the duo split up in 2008 and went to do different things. Junior formed the forgettable band MAKE OUT, and Senior started to write lyrics for popular musicians like Lady Gaga (ugh).



## 4. Mr.B the Gentleman Rhymer

**Genre: Chap-Hop**

Much like Steam Powered Giraffe, Mr.B the Gentleman Rhymer is a popular steampunk musician. However, instead of creating songs with roots in folk music, Mr.B makes chap-hop music! Chap-hop is basically old school hip hop, but with a British

twist. Chap-hop's all about royalty, making friends, fine wine, and just being a good ol' chap, all while rapping in a British accent. Believe it or not, this is real, and Mr.B is the creator of this genre. His voice is whimsical, gentlemanly, and pretty funny. As for the instrumentals, it's just Mr.B playing his banjolele to a funky beat. I agree, he's pretty weird, but what's not to love about this guy?



### 3. Alestorm

**Genre: Pirate Metal**

Don't worry, this is the last weird band on this list. Let's talk about Alestorm. Much like Týr, they're a metal band following a specific motif: pirates. I'm a fan of pirates and I love the look of their ships, so you can imagine the look on my face when I learned that pirate metal was actually a thing. Alestorm's music is just astounding; their instrumentals are filled to the brim with awesome guitars and accordions; the lyrics are about traditional pirate topics like traveling the sea, robbing towns of their beer, being stranded on an island, etc. The gruff vocals are simply a perfect fit for this band's scurvy crew!



### 2. Wolfie's Just Fine

**Genre: Folk**

Jon Lajoie is quite possibly the funniest musician I've ever heard. He's quirky, satirical, bizarre, and just all around talented. However, Jon wants to prove that he has true musical abilities, and can make serious songs. Thus, Wolfie's Just Fine was born. This side project sounds totally different than Jon's usual songs. Instead of intentionally low quality hip hop riffs, he gives us calm acoustic guitars, and drums that build up as the songs progress. Jon's vocals also sound different than his norm: they're calm and echo-y, yet booming as well. Then there's his lyrics, which are fantastic. Most of WJF's songs are about childhood fanta-

sies and experiences that shaped Jon into the man he is now. For example, his song "A New Beginning" is about the first time he watched a horror movie, and how he dealt with his fears at the time.



### 1. Famous Last Words

**Genre: Emo**

Famous Last Words is simply inspiring. They're an emo/post-hardcore band with 3 studio albums and 3 EPs. So, what makes this band deserving of the number 1 spot? Well, everything! Each album of theirs tells a story. Their first album, A Two Faced Charade, is about a man who has a crush on his neighbor, but she's already dating someone else. Suddenly, his "other self" rears his ugly head and persuades him to "get her back," though he never had her to begin with, and he slowly deteriorates from there. The band also made a short film based on this album, bearing the same name. It's strange, tragic, and well-made. Their second album, Council of the Dead, tells the story of lost souls that are brought to the Council of the Dead. The chairman of the council tells them that they lost their memories after their tragic deaths. Most songs in the album tell the story of how each of them passed away, and how they're connected to one another. Once they learn about their pasts, they can either transcend to another plane, or start the life cycle all over again. Their most recent album, The Incubus, follows a "stay-at-home-mom" in 1953. She faces terrible nightmares, is pressured by the gender stereotypes of the time, and is incarcerated for a crime she never committed. This band is pretty dark but I love them because they tackle touchy subjects, yet create empathy for the main characters. Now, how about their music? As stated, they're an emo band, but they're not like the others. The instrumentals are booming with heavy guitars and graceful violins and cellos. It's a brilliant combination! The lead singer, JP, has a voice with a very wide range, and can go from really high to a deep intruding voice. JP is also the mastermind behind the stories, and is the director and lead actor of the short film. In my eyes, this band is perfect, and you should definitely listen to them if you like hard rock, metal, or angsty emo songs.

# FCS IN PHOTOS







# FOCUS

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