

When Secret Snowflake Flakes...

Exploring The Shortcomings of our Holiday Traditions

By: Katia Campos '22

With Thanksgiving long since passed, I think it's safe to say that winter is approaching. With winter comes the joyous holiday of Christmas. We at FCS have a special way to show our school spirit and love for the holiday... a little something called "Secret Snowflake" (though many still call it "Secret Santa"). For those of you that are unaware of what Secret Snowflake is, it's an annual tradition in which the Student Council randomly assigns each upper school student and teacher a fellow classmate or colleague to purchase a small treat for right before Christmas. In the past, the Student Council has suggested that nobody spend more than \$5 on a gift.

According to Student Council Vice President McKenna Blinman '19, the event has been arranged for many years. "We continue this [tradition] because it is a relatively easy way to spread holiday cheer and show others in the community how much you care about them," says McKenna. She continues, "the joy of getting a gift from someone but not knowing who it is, [and] seeing the work they put into sharing a little happiness [is] unbeatable. Witnessing your person's joy as they open their present from you might be even more gratifying than getting a gift." McKenna ends her interview by saying, "the event is really about spreading happiness and holiday cheer around our campus, and

it's immensely successful when everyone participates." Even though the Secret Snowflake program strives to spread cheer throughout the entire campus, there are unfortunately situations

COTD. on Page 2



In This Issue:

Quakerism + Sports? (P2)

Skiing Recommendations (P3)

Featured Artist (P4)

New iPad: Worth It? (P5)

Film Review (P8)

Video Game Review (10)

New Music Review (15)

Sports Review (6)

'Secret' COTD. from Page 1

where people end up not receiving anything from their Secret Santa, causing them to feel let down. *Focus* reporters went out in search of people who hadn't received gifts in years past to see what their experiences were like. Max M. Cohen '19 says that he has experienced this situation before: "I had spent a few days trying to figure out what I would get from my Secret Santa, and I had picked a pretty cool gift, candy of some sort. I was thinking, 'I can't wait to see what I received.' You know, like a letter of some sort, something small. I kept waiting, every day. It never came, and I was really disappointed."

Sadly, Max wasn't the only one not to receive anything from a Secret Santa. Pierce Hayton '20 received the same treatment when he was in ninth grade: "It was the last week before Winter Break and I was waiting the whole week. I was excited, it [was] my first year of high school, my first Secret Santa, and Friday comes and goes and I received nothing." Despite Pierce not receiving anything that Friday, he didn't give up hope. Pierce says, "I [thought] to myself, 'Maybe they just missed it, I'll get something after break.' Then, the first week after break [came and went] and it was a huge disappointment."



Despite the sadness of Pierce's ninth grade experience, the story has a silver lining, because in tenth grade, he did receive a gift. He reflects on how it felt: "It was fantastic. It was just so nice. I finally felt that somebody actually thought of me, and it made a huge difference."

Students not receiving anything for Secret Santa can be quite devastated. The Student Council encourages that everyone participate to avoid this situation. Let's all get into the ring and fight the injustice of not receiving a gift together. This year, let us leave none of our classmates or teachers behind, and actually have fun trying to surprise the person that we've been assigned to. You never know, sometimes all someone needs is a little gift to keep them going, to give them hope for a new day. On that note, happy holidays!

In Quaker Sports, Good Character is the Name of the Game

By: Miles Johnson '19,

The Quaker SPICES, Simplicity, Peace, Integrity, Community, Equality, and Stewardship, are known to guide the behavior of Friends' Centralites in the classroom. The school also expects that its student-athletes will uphold these values outside of the classroom, even while competing in athletic programs. As an institution routed in Quaker values, Friends' Central aims to instill in student-athletes strong moral character on and off the field, even though coaches of course urge their teams to win.

A beautiful example of "character over outcome" occurred at a recent boys' soccer game. The team had a four-seed versus five-seed playoff game against Moorestown Friends School. Seven minutes into the game, one of the players from Moorestown Friends was laid out on the ground injured. Everyone eventually learned that the player broke his leg and after 20-25 minutes, he was carted off the field by an ambulance.

Although this unfortunate incident unfolded in the midst of an intense playoff game, both teams stopped what they were doing and checked on the player. At the end of the game, we lost one-zero and were knocked out of the Friends League Playoffs. Despite this, our players handled the loss with the SPICES in mind. A day after the loss, the head coach of the team, Galen Guindon '06, said to his players, "I received an email from the MFS coach today. He wanted to thank you all for the kind words and classy way you handled their player getting injured. Yesterday wasn't our day, but I am always proud of the way you represent our school and program!"

I interviewed Liam Sullivan '19. Liam is a four-year varsity soccer player and has been one of the captains of the boys' soccer team since his junior year. Liam told me that before he went to Friends' Central, he was a competitive player, but was never really concerned with sportsmanship until he came here.

Although this unfortunate **COTD. on Page 14**

Slope's Up! Where to Ski Here in PA

by Aiden McLean '21, Guest Contributor

With winter here, it's all too easy to remain indoors, curled up in a blanket, and binge-watch Netflix. While the frigid weather certainly prevents us from visiting the beach or taking a dip in the pool, it actually allows us to participate in an array of outdoor activities only possible in the winter. Skiing and snowboarding are some of the most popular winter sports. My family has been going skiing regularly every winter for the past four years. In December of 2015, my dad took us to Colorado, and we skied in Breckenridge, one of the best ski resorts in the country. After that, we developed a taste for the sport and wanted more. We can't afford to go to Breckenridge every winter, so we decided that each year we would rent skis from a local shop and hit the slopes here in our own state. There are many mountains to choose from in Pennsylvania, all with different varieties of slopes, courses, and skiers. In this article, I'll review our favorite slope, Elk Mountain, and explain what makes it unique.

One of the reasons our family fell in love with Elk Mountain is because it

accommodates all of our needs and desires in a way that other local mountains don't. For example, Bear Mountain has very few slopes from which to choose. The price for a season pass at Blue Mountain (\$599) is just ridiculous! We heard from some friends that Camelback wasn't necessarily the best choice. This reduced the list down to one: Elk Mountain.

Elk Mountain reminds me so much of Breckenridge, admittedly on a much smaller scale. This place is the best spot to go for both experienced daredevils and newer people just trying out skiing. There is a large bunny slope and they have great classes to choose from. The only green slope, "Tioga," is an easy trail to perform, yet still fun for more experienced skiers. For intermediate skiers and snowboarders, a variety of blue trails are available. All are fun to go down. Some are winding, some have spots good for jumps, and a few have areas for tree skiing. For the more experienced people like myself, the black trails are awesome. Mogoles, steep drops, extreme speeds, tree skiing, whatever you love about a black diamond,



Elk has it (except for vertical drops and cliffs). For those even more extreme skiers, there are two challenge courses to try. Each trail and slope is different and offers different challenges.

The trails at Elk are groomed daily and kept in exquisite condition. There are medical and ski support staff all over the place, ready to aid any mishap within minutes. The staff is always ready to help. The lodge at the bottom of the mountain has some decent food, candy, and hot chocolate, perfect after a long day of skiing. It even comes with its own separate restaurant with better food. Additionally, there are many restaurants just a twenty-minute drive away from the lodge. For the parents and adults in your group, there is a bar and beer garden with beer and drinks, as a reward for a hard day's work.

There are only three problems with Elk. First, it is a two-hour drive from Philadelphia. Second, there just aren't enough areas to tree ski, and last, the time it takes the lift to get you to the top can feel like an eternity. However, Elk's amazing slopes make up for all of these shortcomings. Whatever level skier or snowboarder you are, Elk can accommodate you.

Despite the long drive, it is still possible to have just a day ski, if your group has a well laid-out plan of leaving home early and leaving Elk a little bit early as well. From 5-10pm, Elk has a few slopes available for night skiing! If you are looking for a mountain that is virtually guaranteed to satisfy you, Elk Mountain is the one.

Artist in Focus:

The Creative Pursuits of Nir Netz

By Julian Duvivier '22

*T*welfth grader, Nir Netz

'19, has a love for art in many forms. He has been drawing since he was very young and is currently enrolled in Ms. Murphy's Visual Arts Course. His pastimes include listening to music and reading comics, notably *Page by Paige* and *Homestuck*. Additionally he enjoys creative writing and has a fondness for nature, marine biology, and entomology.

Nir has worked in many different creative mediums. His most-studied medium is drawing with pencil and paper, but it is far from his only. He has an affinity for charcoal, pastels, and digital art tools such as Photoshop and Procreate, and has dabbled in many other areas of creative expression. The inspiration for his art often stems from his adoration of music. He has eclectic tastes spanning many genres and runs the Music Appreciation Club that meets every Friday from 1:15 - 1:50 in the Main building, room 20. He has tried his hand at composition, and is

interested in composing electronic music (Ambient, Raggacore, Metalstep), though he feels that he lacks the time.

Though Nir finds enjoyment in more traditional studio art forms, he focuses his talent on sketching original characters. He showed me a series of these sketches and I was enamored by how interesting and personality-driven they all were. Alongside these, he let me look at a handful of action sketches he had done, each of which took about two minutes to draw. These are part of his dream to create an animated series, which would allow him to channel



his many talents. He enjoys numerous animated shows such as *Motor City*, as well as many animated movies, including *The Secret of NIMH* and *Coraline*, which have inspired him and fueled his desire to animate.

Nir intends to continue his pursuits through art school and is currently looking at a number of

possible colleges including the art schools MICA and MassArt, and the liberal art schools Bennington and Sarah Lawrence. He plans on continuing to create characters and pursue his goal of writing an animated series. He is seemingly on his way to becoming a success in the visual arts.



Tech Focus

By: Jerry Yu '19

Apple first introduced the

12.9-inch iPad Pro in 2015, followed by the 9.7-inch model in March of 2016. Since then, the design of the iPad Pro line remained unchanged, until Apple's third-generation iPad Pro. Launched in November of 2018, the design overhaul comes in both 12.9-inch and 11-inch sizes, features an all-screen display with minimal bezels, and has no home button. The new iPads also feature Apple's TrueDepth camera system and updated FaceID technology, allowing for secure and rapid unlocks from all angles, which was not possible on the recent iPhone Xs line.

The iPad Pro is marketed as a portable powerhorse, and the latest benchmarks of the A12X inside the 2018 models back that claim up. Apple makes many claims about the new device: it has twice the graphics performance of the A10X; it has 90 percent faster multi-core performance than its predecessor; and it performs equally as GPU power of the Xbox One S game console. The Geekbench scores of the systems prove this claim is no joke; single core scores show a more than 30

percent increase from its predecessor and crushes the new Samsung Galaxy Tab S4 that sports a Qualcomm Snapdragon 845, one of, if not the most, powerful non-apple mobile chip by almost 3 times. When compared to laptops released in the same year, multi-core scores show no compromise against Dell's XPS 15 2-in-1, and are lighter and thinner than the others.

What does this power translate to? Full-sized desktop apps on a mobile platform! Adobe promised Photoshop CC's release on iPad Pros by 2019, and Bethesda is releasing a new Skyrim for iPads. (Yes, we will talk about games this time). For the first time, we can hold a tablet in our hands and work on hundreds of layers in Photoshop, instead of one single photo on the current Photoshop mobile build, allowing for more creative freedom since artists can literally edit on the go.

The new iPad pro also has redesigned i/o, including extra smart connectors, and a USB-C to replace Lightning. Now, users can

snap the Apple Pencil on the sides of their iPads, and carry them with their devices, allowing more convenience and safety as the old Pencils were quite prone to losing. USB-C ports, on the other hand, can provide enough power for the powerful chips and can allow significantly faster data transfer, and connection to extremely high-resolution displays.

All these changes result in smoother user experiences both for school and entertainment. Starting from \$799 for 56GB versions, however, it is not the most economic choice, as despite of

having a more powerful chip, its limited disk space proves to be a significant drawback. 56GB is hardly enough for many movies and games, which are worthy challenges for the upgraded CPU and GPU, and the topic for this edition's special section, Gaming Focus. Read it in this issue!



Editor's Note: I extend special thanks to Julian Duvivier '22, who has gone above and beyond in his contributions to our Layout and Design Team. As always, I also thank Mrs. Luzuriaga for her continued support and guidance.

Go Philly!

By Max Marinelli '22

Max's Flying Eagles Update, Week 10: Eagles vs. Cowboys (Loss: 27 - 21)

The game started off as possibly the worst half of football in years. There were practically no yards of offense for the Eagles through the first half and only three points combined for both teams through the first quarter. In fact, heading into the last minute of the first half, no team had scored a touchdown until a fateful third and 15 for the Cowboys inside their own half. The Eagles had already called two timeouts to stop the clock after completely shutting down the Cowboys' first two plays. On a third and 15, the Eagles folded and allowed a first, starting the Cowboys march down the field for a touchdown made possible courtesy of the Eagles' poor defending.

Going into the second half, the game had been a defensive struggle at 13-3. The second half ended up more of the opposite with offenses trading touchdowns. The Eagles went on to tie it at 20-20 with little time left in the

fourth quarter. They then proceeded to collapse and let the Cowboys score another touchdown, giving themselves 56 seconds and no timeouts to score a touchdown. Wentz threw a 40-yard pass to Ertz, getting the Eagles all the way to the seven yard line. Yet, the time expired, and the Cowboys left the game victorious, giving the Eagles a four-five record through the first nine games.

A playoff picture is fading away from the Eagles as they played an embarrassing game the next week, losing 48-7 to the nine-one Saints. The Eagles' record stands at four-six. To even make the playoffs, they would most likely need to win all of the remaining divisional games or split with the Redskins and win against the Texans. At this rate, a crushing loss to the Rams is almost imminent. However, it is Wentz's redemption game in week

15, so he may be able to pull out a crucial season-swinging win. In the meantime, the Eagles need to focus on fixing problems on both sides of the ball. The secondary is currently paper thin, so those who are still left need to be playing their hearts out. As for offense, I don't understand the problem because the team isn't riddled with injuries. Therefore, they need to get their heads back in the game and recover some of last year's drive.

For the rest of the year, we will be in a very similar position to the one we were in at the end of last year: underdogs, going into nearly every game. As Jason Kelce said, "Hungry dogs run faster, and that's this team." I think all of Philly is hoping for a strong playoff push to end the season as we go into the final stretch of six games.



Go Philly!

Greeting Gritty: The New Mascot of the Philadelphia Flyers

By: Caroline Blackman '20,



Right before the start of their 2018-19 season, the Philadelphia Flyers announced an exciting new addition to their organization: a tough, energy-filled individual with an intimidating height of 7 feet... their new mascot, Gritty!

Within minutes of Gritty's reveal, the big, googly-eyed, fluffy, orange character gained a lot of attention inside and beyond the sports world. Initially, Gritty was not received particularly well; many took to social media to share their harsh views on the new mascot. #Gritty became a trending topic on Twitter, though probably not in the way the Flyers' marketing team had hoped when they created the creature. Nightmare fuel, muppet gone wrong, and an embarrassment to the fans of the Flyers are just a few examples of the nature of the criticisms Gritty received.

Though Gritty faced the unforgiving words of the

public in his early moments of existence, what seemed to be a total flop of a marketing move quickly turned itself around. After his first few days on the job, the Philadelphia community couldn't help but start to fall in love with the funny-looking monster... or creature...whatever you want to call him! He proved to be an entertaining spectacle at the games: flying in from the rafters, dancing crazily on the big screen, kissing fans for the kiss cam, and intimidating anybody cheering for the opposing teams. I recently went to a game and everywhere I looked, fans were wearing Gritty shirts or hats that featured the mascot's signature orange hairdo.

Perhaps what truly earned the adoration of Philly fans was the mascot's response to a mocking tweet from the Pittsburgh Penguins, arguably the Flyers' biggest rivals. The Penguin's twitter, @penguins

retweeted a photo of Gritty adding a condescending caption of "lol ok," to which @GrittyNHL responded "Sleep with one eye open tonight, bird." If there's one thing Flyers' fans can bond with others over, it's their (good-spirited) hatred of the Penguins, so Gritty's tweet certainly boosted his popularity. In a matter of weeks, he had gone from being a laughing stock to being a beloved figure in Philly. So let's give Gritty some credit where credit is due. After all, it's not exactly easy to sway the passionate and somewhat stubborn minds of Philadelphians.

I think it's safe to say that the addition of Gritty was an overall success. He's proved to be an exciting new source of energy for the organization. Still,

there is one major issue that I can't seem to look past, and it's not those ridiculous eyes. It's the fact that although he wears the Flyers jersey and helmet, Gritty doesn't play! What the Flyers *really* need is an exciting new source on energy *on the ice*. Time and time again, the team finds itself lacking consistency and frankly lacking success during the regular season. Of the past six seasons, they have missed the playoffs three times. If the Flyers want to stop finding themselves at their oh-so-familiar place in the middle of the league, they're going to need to think bigger... or smaller... than Gritty.

This Month in Film

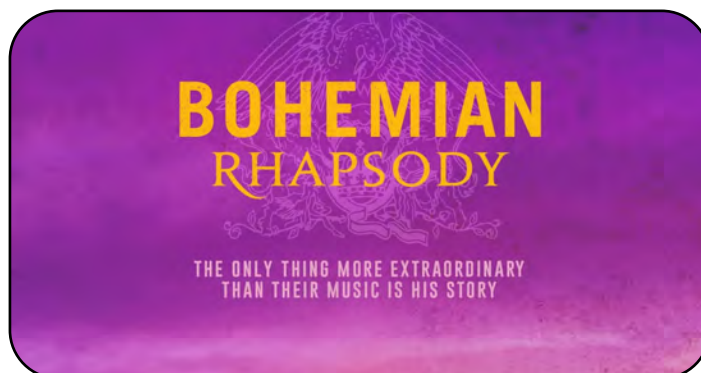
Bohemian Rhapsody: Worthy of the Name

By Riley Roche '22,

What happens when a revered band is given a high-budget biopic? Simply put, amazing things. This past month, we saw the release of the movie, *Bohemian Rhapsody*, directed by Bryan Singer. *Bohemian Rhapsody* focuses on the start of the ever-popular band, Queen, and its band members' experiences and songs that eventually lead to their brilliant performance at the 1985 Live Aid Charity Event.

After seeing the trailer for this movie, I was, to say the least, not looking forward to it. I just couldn't wrap my head around why 21st Century Fox would choose Bryan Singer of all people to direct a biopic. For those who are unaware, Singer's most famous work is with the X-Men franchise, as he directed 2000's *X-Men* and 2014's *X-Men: Days of Future Past*.

On top of this odd choice of director, the actors didn't seem promising either. Aside from Rami Malek, most of the cast members were relative unknowns in the acting industry and seemed to deliver weak performances in the trailer. Finally, after all the waiting and excitement from a friend of



mine who is a huge Queen fan, the RT (Rotten Tomatoes) score was released and the movie was hovering around the mid to high 50s. I couldn't believe it: Fox was going to screw up a Queen movie. After I forgot about the movie for a while, it was released. As the credits rolled, my whole opinion changed... this movie was fantastic! *Bohemian Rhapsody* is the first movie of the fall season I can confidently call "good."

There was obvious care and heart put into the production of this movie. To start, I would like to acknowledge Susie Figgis for her work in casting. Every single member of the band delivered incredibly true-to-life performances that I couldn't see anyone else pulling off.

Specifically, Rami Malek and Gwilym Lee rocked their performances as Freddie Mercury and Brian May, respectively. These two were able to portray

the dynamic the real band members had with brilliance and conveyed the personalities and emotions of these characters perfectly. The visuals were definitely better than expected, but got a little bland sometimes with some basic camera angles. However, the music was incredible and the placement and usage of various Queen songs was very well done by Singer. The one gripe I have with this film is that Singer's tendency in the *X-Men* film franchise to make the beginning of films too quick shined through in *Bohemian Rhapsody*. The start of the band in the beginning of the movie is too fast, and I would cut away some scenes towards the end of act two to reduce the runtime.

If you have any spare time or are looking for something to do with other people or even by yourself, watch this movie.

The life of Freddie Mercury is portrayed honestly and tastefully, and the songs and band dynamic are just a joy to watch. Overall, I would give Bryan Singer's *Bohemian Rhapsody* an 8/10 and, currently, it is my choice for best picture this year.

Creed II: Even Better Than the First One

By Jared Miller '22

The Rocky franchise is arguably one of the best movie franchises ever. The newest installment to the franchise, *Creed II*, which came into theaters on Nov. 21, did not disappoint. *Creed II* is about heavyweight champion boxer Adonis Creed, son of Apollo Creed, who is challenged by Viktor Drago, the son of Ivan Drago, the man who killed Apollo Creed in the ring. It was an excellent movie with a wonderful plot. It was a little bit predictable, as all Rocky movies are, but there were a few moments that definitely caught the viewer off guard.

The best part of this movie was the performance of Michael B. Jordan, who played the main character, Adonis Creed.

COTD. on Page 9

This Month In Film

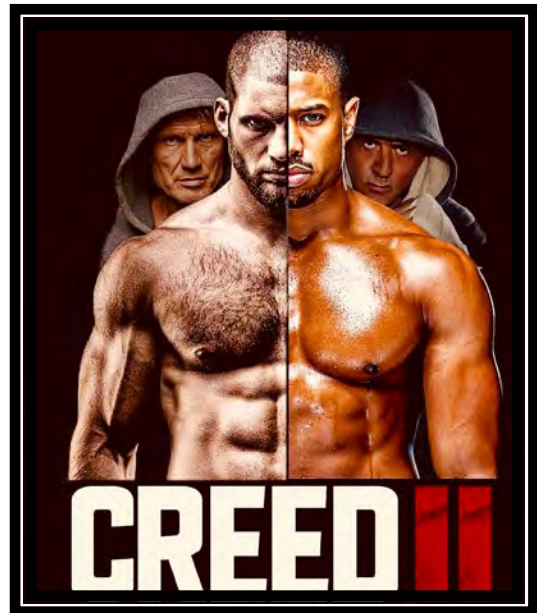
'Creed II Review' *COTD* from Page 8

In both of those past movies, Michael was given a great script, and he executed the roles exceptionally well. Nothing is different in *Creed II*. He is given a lot to work with: a bunch of dramatic scenes, a few aggressive scenes, and a few training scenes. Co-starring alongside Michael B. Jordan is Sylvester Stallone, who has portrayed *Rocky Balboa* in every *Rocky* movie to date. In my opinion, he was not

so great in this movie.

It wasn't his fault though; he wasn't given much of a script with which to work.

This movie was almost perfect, earning an 82% on Rotten Tomatoes, and an 8.1/10 on IMDb. The one flaw in this film is that there are not enough training scenes. There is only one big training montage, which was very entertaining, but I think there should be more. All in all, *Creed II* is a fantastic movie and is a must-see for all that are interested.



Rewatch Recommendation

Since it's the holiday season, let's take time to remember one of the best holiday movies of all time, *Home Alone* (1990). *Home Alone* is a fantastic movie about a boy who has to fight off burglars that are trying to break into his house on Christmas. *Home Alone* is directed by Chris Columbus, who, before *Home Alone*, had not directed a big film. However, since Columbus did such a wonderful job with *Home Alone*, his career launched a whole new chapter. Starring in this film is Joe Pesci, who is usually known for his more serious roles, but does a great job in a comedic role. It is an all-around great movie full of laughs, and you are sure to have a fun time watching it.



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Gaming Focus

Columnist's Opinions:

G-Star 2018 and the future of MMORPGs

By: Jerry Yu '19

Many would claim that MMORPG is almost dead, when, in reality, it is more alive than ever, and what it needs is a shuffle. The Korean creators, for years the powerhouse in MMORPGs, are losing their Western audience. NCSoft's popular PC titles like *Guild Wars 2* is facing decline and even shut-down, while *Blade and Soul's* dueling-focused PvP lacks innovation and its art style more sexualized than aesthetic. Long-anticipated new Korean releases like *Bless*, meanwhile, completely flopped in the West due to mediocrity and greed. I think that the main reason why these games are not gaining much force is that they are designed based on a similar formula. These companies focus too much on player looks, while the stories and worlds are flat and linear, with no exciting explorations awaiting the players.

MMORPGs are very different from AAA games that release every year, in that players pay less attention to the graphics and more to what they can actually accomplish in an "alternate reality" over years of devotion, and the

developers have to roll out new content, new maps, and new classes for the players to explore for existing games, instead of completely new games.

Bethesda's *Elder Scrolls Online* is beginning to see long-term success. In its fantasy world, Tamriel, players are allowed to freely roam and form organizations, or fight for one of the three kingdoms in the lore. Story-telling works differently in these games: as players join one faction, they will fight for the faction for control, and their decisions actually matter to not only their experiences, but also the entire game world, and millions of other players. Meanwhile, this game offers players infinite opportunities by opening up the "class" system with warriors, mages, and healers, replacing it with open skill trees players can customize to create heavy-armored mages, swift combat medics, or tanks with bows and arrows. After the *Morrowind* expansion, the player base is reported to be over ten million, making it a direct competitor to the juggernaut in the genre,



World of Warcraft. Based on the old *Elder Scrolls* series, this game managed to take tradition to a new level. Maybe that's where Bethesda went.

Armed with similar ideas, indie developers are flexing their muscles as well, after game engines and powerful computers are no longer exclusive to the richest companies. *Star Citizen* raised over \$100M and has recently opened a free trial to its first working planet (they crafted each planet, unlike *No Man's Sky*).

Crowfall, an Indie *Game of Thrones* -inspired MMORPG, meanwhile, raised over \$1M and is experimenting on its fantasy world featuring endless power struggles and territorial wars. These games take the concept of player freedom to a new level, as there are no more storylines, and players are free to bond, trade, form

governments, wage war, and write their own history. An issue with the story-driven model is that developers have to constantly update new content, and it requires more and more resources to continue, compared to putting the continent in eternal war, and sitting back to do balance patches and art overhauls. It is becoming more and more obvious what the players want: better combat systems, fairness, skill-based gameplay, and player choice. Developers should pay attention to what the players really want, and try their best to deliver a game that fits the players' desires. The market should no longer follow Vanilla *WoW's* patterns of questing and grinding, but allow the players more freedom in an open world they can truly conquer.

Gaming Focus

E3. Gamescom. G-Star 2018.

We were promised quite a few new games and gaming devices, and by now, most have been delivered. Here are a few noteworthy events in different game genres:

Fallout 76 launched.

Bethesda? Hello? IGN gave you 5/10! On E3, Bethesda announced the new installation to the vastly-popular Fallout franchise. Set in post-apocalyptic West Virginia after a devastating nuclear war, this game is expected to be “the online prequel where every surviving human is a real person...the largest, most-dynamic world ever created in the legendary Fallout universe.” This game turned out to be large and lonely. With some 20 people spread across a massive map comparable to that of *Fallout 4* (an entire city), players hardly see any

useful multiplayer interactions, and all the quest-givers are wandering robots, dead, or AI constructs. No humans. There is no talking, no combat, just walking around and bad stories.

Battlefield V launched.

Better than *Fallout 76*. Thanks, EA marketing team. *Battlefield V* actually turned out to be a great, but incomplete, game. DICE tried to hide not being able to be as productive as *BF1*, so they announced the Tides of War service, where live content is to be pushed to players (imagine “Seasons” in *Fortnite*, *LoL*, or *R6S*). A



member of the EA marketing team, meanwhile, tweeted that players “shouldn’t buy the game if they don’t like it” to angry fans after the overly politically correct trailer featuring disabled British female frontline soldiers in the frontlines of WWII. Sales were down by 63% percent compared to its wildly successful predecessor *BF1*, and EA has to fire a few people and put everything on sale for 50% to save the day. However, unlike *Fallout 76*, it had great reviews. YouTubers like JackFraggs, LevelCapGaming, and Angry Joe all quite positive about the gameplay innovations, while IGN giving it an 7.5/10 score despite the fact it is unfinished.

Columnist’s Review:

Assassin’s Creed Odyssey.

What a AAA should be. Nice job Ubisoft Quebec. Grand, majestic, and most importantly, fun. That is what you’d expect from a new *Assassin’s Creed* installation. It is set in the Peloponnesian war over 2400 years ago, a decades-long struggle between Athens and Sparta. The player has much freedom in experiencing the social, political, and warfare both on land and sea. Experience over 60 hours of storyline placing the hero/heroine in a conflict of money, patriotism, and family conflict. It is beyond an exciting war game--it is a thoughtful recreation of ancient Greece that we can enjoy fully. Overall, an exciting open-world RPG experience, but the sound is the only drawback to the game.



Focus in Photos

By: Lydia Varcoe-Wolfson '19



Focus in Photos



'Quaker Values'***COTD. from Page 2***

Liam reflected, "I think what helped me develop this understanding of the importance of sportsmanship was playing for Coach Galen. He always reminds us that whether we win or lose, we will do it with class, because that is what kind of program we are." When you step foot on the field, court, pool, and track, you are not only representing yourself, but you are representing your school and the values for which it stands. Liam said that having good character is so important because "our actions on the field reflect our school whether we want them to or not. Keeping a good reputation for our school can help attract more kids which will let the athletic program grow and develop."

Next, I interviewed Raanee Smith '19. Raanee is a University of Colorado commit and a four-year varsity basketball player. She has been the captain of the girls' basketball team since her junior year. Raanee explained the balance of staying competitive in order to win, as well as having good sportsmanship on

the court. She said, "If I want to have a chance at winning, let alone actually win, then I have to compete. When incorporating sportsmanship into this idea of competitiveness, it acts as a set of unspoken rules that I abide by. Things as simple as picking up a member on the opposing team after a foul or handshaking at the end of the game are easy sportsmanship-related things to do that do not impede on my competitive, game-driven mindset." Being competitive, while at the same time valuing sportsmanship, is not difficult for Raanee to balance. To Raanee, playing with good sportsmanship is just an acknowledgment that she is playing basketball and having fun while doing it. Furthermore, the importance of good sportsmanship to her reflects the respect she has for the game.

Of course, in any sport, whether Quaker or not, scoring a win is a goal every player strives to achieve. While Quaker tradition doesn't totally disagree with competition, it urges players to demonstrate it in a way which reflects high ethical standards. As an example of a way this sportsmanship can manifest itself, players are able to be competitive and show that

they care without having an attitude if we get subbed off by our coach, or yelling at the ref after a bad call. Upholding integrity and leadership is something that every player can show while competing. This is the culture here at Friends' Central. Our Quaker culture is a social glue and this is what promotes a positive community.

How does a player react to a bad call? How should a player react to being sent to the

bench when they would rather play? What we've learned from our players with good values is that however a player responds, it should be in a way that upholds the testimonies we hold most dear--especially in this year of integrity. Developing solid sportsmanship is a virtue that will prepare us for life well beyond the field, court, track, or pool, and well beyond Friends' Central.



Music Focus: Muse's *Simulation Theory* Can't Simulate Good Music

By: Lucas Chiang '22, and Calvin Mustokoff '22, Guest Contributor

Few things can be as depressing as watching your favorite band start to crumble to pieces. For the English rock band Muse, no one can deny that they had a good run, starting with the album *Showbiz* (1999) and creating tons of famous songs and albums along the way, such as *Absolution* (2003), *Black Holes and Revelations* (2006), and *The Resistance* (2009). However, all good things eventually come to an end, and that's what happened on Nov. 9, when Muse's eighth studio album, *Simulation Theory* (2018), was released. With a very underwhelming track list and a general uninspiring sound, *Simulation Theory* is a musical mess.

Muse was formed in 1994 by singer and guitarist Matt Bellamy, bassist Chris Wolstenholme, and drummer Dom Howard. For a long time, Muse was hailed as a band known for its variety; *The 2nd Law* (2012) featured an artsy synth rock vibe, while *Drones* (2015) was a much heavier album with more emphasis on the guitar, bass, and drums. *Origin of Symmetry* (2001) and *The Resistance* were

based around complex musical parts and vocals, or "theater rock," while *Absolution* featured more bass-heavy punk rock. *Simulation Theory*'s theme mainly comes from electronic dubstep rock with an additional 80's sci-fi retro vibe, but honestly, some of the songs sound more like a 12 year-old's first GarageBand project.

The album starts off with "Algorithm," a rather underwhelming electronic dubstep. This type of music is heard quite frequently throughout the album, but right after that comes one of the better songs in the album, *The Dark Side*, which was also released as a single. *The Dark Side* definitely returns to more traditional Muse music, which means using more bass and adding a guitar solo but still keeping the electronic synths of *Simulation Theory*, and, frankly, that's what most of these songs should have been like. Following this song comes the hit single, "Pressure," a fun 80's retro rock with an appealing guitar riff backed by a brass section. Here, things take a turn for the worse, however,



as the next song, "Propaganda," starts off as a stereotypical bad dubstep song before bursting into some poppy Timberlake-style vocals. Next up is "Break It To Me," which will probably sound better live as it features a lot of unique guitar techniques, such as scratching to create an ambient noise solo. However, the opening guitar riff sounds pretty terrible and flat. After that comes "Something Human" previously released as a single, and this is where I just ask, "Muse, what in your right minds are you guys doing?" Although "Something Human" takes a break from the painful dubstep, it instead uses a mellow guitar that sounds straight out of a bad country album. With over half of the album done, two-thirds of the songs heard so far are well past underwhelming.

Luckily, next up is the single "Thought Contagion," a catchy and jamming song featuring an Imagine Dragons-style chorus. Honestly, it is just so incredibly fun to listen to, and it actually has good synths that aren't too heavily used. The next song is "Get Up And Fight" which received more mixed reviews. Personally, I like it, but I can see how longtime Muse fans won't appreciate the vocaloid-style vocal opening. Personally, my favorite part of the song is definitely the ending keyboard. The following tune, "Blockades" is certainly the highlight of the album. "Blockades," has it all: a catchy chorus, intricate musical riffs, and even an incredible guitar solo at the end. Honestly, I could write a whole paragraph about just

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is. It has musical parts imitative of *Origin of Symmetry*, a guitar part similar to *Drones*, and a verse and chorus alike to *Absolution*. Wolstenholme's bass and Howard's drums finally show up again, specifically the drum beat during the verse, which is just so catchy and fun to listen to. Although *Pressure* and *Thought Contagion* are, despite how good they sound, rather simple and repetitive, *Blockades* could have come straight from peak Muse albums such as *Black Holes and Revelations* or *The Resistance*. If you're scared of listening to this album because of everything I said before, at least take a listen to *Blockades*.

Unfortunately, things certainly get worse from there with single "Dig Down" being rather unremarkable on all fronts. As it's a tradition that the last song of every Muse album is one of the worst, the only thing "The Void" does well is keep that tradition. Throughout the entire song, all I could think was, "just add a guitar already." It sounds less like a Muse song and more like the *Stranger Things* opening. This finishes *Simulation Theory* with 11 songs, maybe four of which are as good as older Muse songs. The rest of

the songs are just sad. Not only are songs like *Propaganda* and *Something Human* just depressing to listen to, Muse just lacks the same feel that they originally had. Chris Wolstenholme's bass part, the same bass that played the bass of Muse's *Hysteria* (2003), which was considered by *The Top Tens* to be the third best bassline of all time, is practically nonexistent and when heard is constantly drowned out by the synths and vocals. To conclude, *Simulation Theory* is just plain disappointing.

This leaves us with the real question: can Muse ever return to its peak form? Back in 2012, when *The 2nd Law* was released, many fans were underwhelmed by the lighter, artsier sounds, only to be satisfied again once *Drones* came out, returning to Muse's heavier roots. But now, any Muse fan would take *The 2nd Law* over *Simulation Theory* any day of the week. *Simulation Theory* is unlike Muse not only stylistically but in terms of music quality. The only thing Muse could really do is to go way back to its roots, with more complex "theater rock" and more guitar, bass, and drums. But if anything, Muse is heading in the opposite direction, into a more pure pop style of music. I still have hope that Muse, at the very least, will

Timberlake. I still have hope that Muse, at the very least, will remain to keep their incredible talent, and even *Simulation Theory* shows that Muse can become more mainstream while keeping their amazing music, as heard in songs like *Pressure* or *Blockades*. Therefore, for now, even if one of the most famous rock bands ever is starting to fall into oblivion, I can at least know that Muse will always be who they always were.

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