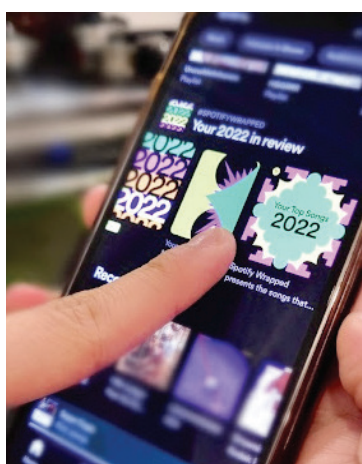


Student Reporter

This Year's Music has Officially been "Wrapped"



Audrey Park
Grade 9
Northwood High School



"Spotify Wrapped" has made its annual comeback to display its users' music streaming experience.

[Source: Author, Audrey Park]

Easily accessible music has found its way inside school grounds in recent years. Especially throughout 2022, it was common to see students with the Spotify app open, eager to blow off steam. However, at the end of November, this app was opened for different reasons: Spotify had officially "wrapped" every-

one's listening experience.

Artists and users have globally contributed to the success of this music streaming platform by studying, exercising, or decompressing with songs in the background. "Spotify Wrapped" was launched in 2016 and has been annually featured to commemorate every user's unique listening experience. Because the ever-changing genres on the home page are accumulated through listening preferences, "Spotify Wrapped" made it easier and aesthetically pleasing to view a year's worth of streaming statistics. The average user could see daily listening habits, artist histories, and top songs in a few minimalistic slides.

Naturally, processing a day's events elicits different moods, which is why the feature of seeing 'day-to-day' shifts in music genres has been notable to some individuals. To il-

lustrate how a user's listening experience fluctuates through their mood, Spotify dissected a day into three sections—nights, afternoons, and mornings—and added tone words to indicate how the user felt at the time. Some frequent tone words I've seen are "Hardcore Hype," "Dramatic," and "Quiet." While these examples range from depicting contentment to gloom, one might find patterns connecting music to their activities. Students who lose sleep over schoolwork might have tranquil tone words included in their "night" section, indicating the quiet study playlists they listen to while finishing assignments. It is just as possible for young adults, who start the day with a short jog or workout, to have energetic tone words in their "morning" section.

Although some people prefer seeing the times they've spent listening to music, others prefer the

statistics behind their favorite artists and songs. Knowing this, Spotify decided to add approximately five slides specific to their users' listening experience. One of the slides, for example, exhibits the artist you supported the most. Spotify includes the artist's song you played the most and how many minutes you spent listening to it. By simply observing the "wrapped" results of people at my school, I recorded that the number of times an individual could play a single song within one year could surpass the hundreds!

Through "Spotify Wrapped," a large audience found an elaborate way to observe the personal implications behind music choice further. While reminiscing about the factors that assembled 2022 are significant this time of year, these features in the art media are components that will definitely drive the direction of next year.

Student Reporter

New Year, New Me (Or Not!)



Alexis Choi
Grade 10
South High School

2023 is rolling up, which means it's now time for the greatest cliché of January: New Year's resolutions. Despite their massive popularity, these goals are rarely ever successful. Compared to the number of people who promise to start going to the gym, start eating healthier, and stop procrastinating during school or work, the amount of people who successfully carry out these goals is minuscule.

This is for numerous reasons. The main cause is that, over decades, resolution-making has become overly ritualistic. It is like eating turkey on Thanksgiving, going trick-or-treating on Halloween, or being too lazy to take down the holiday decorations after December. Due to this tradition, there is now a stifling pressure for people to become a "new" version of themselves every year. Individuals feel obliged to participate in resolution-making, whether or not they truly feel passionate about reforming themselves.

This half-heartedness makes it difficult to genuinely accomplish anything since individuals often



It is important to make achievable resolutions for the New Year!

[Source: Author, Alexis Choi]

create weak, unrealistic resolutions that they put little effort into achieving.

Achieving these goals isn't something one can complete in a day. Even in optimal

circumstances, permanently changing behavior is a difficult task. Human brains are made to stick to old habits, so paving new neural pathways takes constant effort, concentration, and painstaking repetition.

So how can people make resolutions for the new year that will ultimately be successful? The main

step is to make sure that the goals are realistic. Nothing is worse than writing a laundry list of resolutions, breaking them all in the first three days of January, and spending the rest of the month wallowing in failure and self-hatred. To prevent this, it's important to choose a few specific things you want to work on. By understanding what is so difficult that it will be unrealistic in your life and what is just the right amount of challenging, you will have to work for it, but have a chance of succeeding. Choosing one or two realistic goals can make the entire process easier and more fruitful.

The second tip is to plan ahead.

First, write your resolution down on paper. Then, create an action plan. How will you work towards your goal? What do you need to accomplish it? What should you do every month, week, and day to create a lasting change? Identifying these factors and physically recording them can help create more structure and support than simply creating a mental list or mentioning it out loud.

The most difficult part occurs during the actual carrying out of these steps. Motivation wears off quickly, and it can be difficult to find the strength to practice new habits continuously. However, the desire to give up can be mitigated by establishing reward systems, finding sources of inspiration, and recording progress throughout the months.

In the end, however, it all comes down to the person making the resolution. The phrase "new year, new me" is beginning to become a meaningless mantra; unless you are actually determined to work to carry out your goals, it may be better not to make any at all!

Student Reporter

Those Few Weeks With Academic Burnout



Isleen Lee
Grade 9
Harvard-Westlake School

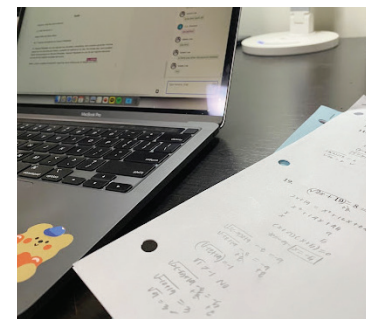
As students approach winter break, students also near finals, end-of-unit tests, and countless assignments. It is the most stressful part of the school year, and it is not easy to stay motivated. The numerous tests and assignments are one of the main contributors to academic burnout. Burnout usually consists of a period consisting of a lack of motivation to get work done, such as completing homework assignments or studying for a test, a decrease in focus, and even a decline in one's performance. Most importantly, it can lead to severe physical and mental health problems.

As a student, my experience with academic burnout hasn't always been easy. Like the symptoms listed above, I was left unmotivated to complete any work, but

anxious because I wasn't doing any of the things I needed to do. "I'll do this at 7" became tomorrow, and tomorrow became the night before the deadline. This vicious cycle takes advantage of people like myself and many other students. I've learned that this pattern won't stop after a certain number of days or weeks. If I didn't step in and regain control of my work habits, I would only continue to become the puppet of a ruthless system. At first, I felt lost stepping back after days of being unable to do any work. I was behind, which only contributed to my unwillingness to get back on track. However, I have learned some tricks and tools that are accessible to everyone that helps reverse the afteref-

fects of academic burnout.

First, identify what assignments or exams you need to study for. It's important to also note the deadline, so you can prioritize certain subjects over another. Knowing what you need to work on is key to getting back to your regular study habits. Regardless of the list length, separate the assignments by class, then priority by looking at how close the deadline is. Continue to utilize this chart to keep track of the things you need to do. The most important part of this, however, is not overworking yourself. Even though it may seem impossible to do so, remember that academic burnout can affect any student, and chances are, you're not the only one going through it. It is also vital to keep in



Consider taking a break when it feels like you're losing control of the things you have to do. [Source: Author, Isleen Lee]

mind that your productivity does not amount to your self-worth. Be kind to yourself through this period because academic burnout is never easy. In the end, academic burnout is not something to be overlooked because of how easily it can drain a student of their physical and mental health.

Student Reporter



Sean Kim
Grade 11
Los Alamitos High School

Speed is in the Air!



Nervous or excited? Runners took special care to warm up for their first race of the season. [Source: Author, Sean Kim]

Track and field has officially started!

Recently, I competed in the first track meet of the season. The meet was hosted by my high school in Los Alamitos, but it was open to runners from all ages and backgrounds. Some participants practiced other sports and came to try their hand at running. Others were seasoned sports veterans, ready to crush their times from

last year. Competing against a variety of people made for a fun, diverse environment!

Since it was the first meet, I decided to interview runners on how they felt about the first race of the season. Devon, a football player from Edison High School, felt more excited than nervous. Devon had played football since elementary school, but he came out from Huntington to have fun.

Since Track was new to him, he felt no pressure to top any previous times. He was just looking forward to beating his other football friends in the 150m and 600m.

Like Devon, Robert, a senior from Servite in Anaheim, seemed unfazed as he prepared for his run. Although Robert was an experienced track runner, he was confident he would beat his previous time. In fact, he was so confident he even bet me five dollars that he would beat his time by a full second. He had trained every day over the summer, and he was more than ready to see the fruits of his labor. When the time came to get set, his legs were ready to explode at the sound of the gun.

As for myself, I was both excited and nervous. I saw this meet

as a diagnostic of my speed. Had I peaked in sophomore year? Would I get a good time despite my relative inactivity during pre-season? I hoped to answer these questions with this first meet of the season.

Track and field season kicked off with a mix of excitement, nerves, and competitive spirit from all kinds of backgrounds and contexts. I had a great time running my first race and witnessing how everyone performed. Devon, despite his inexperience, placed very well and crushed all his friends. Robert's confidence was sky-high for good reason. As expected, he improved his time by over a second! As for me, I performed as I expected. My time was around the same as it was last year. I left the meet with a newfound determination to improve for the match.

Student Reporter



Rubie Choi
Grade 11
Torrance High School

A San Francisco Itinerary.

San Francisco is one of many cities in America that everyone needs to explore. I recently went to San Francisco and visited many famous landmarks that make the city so special. Here is a one-day itinerary for those considering going to the Golden Gate City.

The first stop is the Painted Ladies located at Alamo Square! I recommend going before noon to have an uncrowded experience. My family and I walked around the park in front of the beautifully painted houses while enjoying a cup of coffee from the small coffee car stationed in the middle of the park.

The second stop is Twin Peaks. Twin Peaks has the best view in San Francisco, as you can see just about the whole city, from the Golden Gate Bridge to Alcatraz, because the hills are around 1000 feet high. After marveling at the breathtaking view, my family and I then went to the Golden Gate National Park.

The 81,000 acres park is home



The grand monument of the Palace of Fine Arts in San Francisco is a place everyone should visit. [Source: Author, Rubie Choi]

to the Japanese Tea Garden, Moon Viewing Garden, Tulip Garden, Redwood Grove Garden, and many more! My family and I first visited the Tulip Garden and walked around the Japanese Tea Garden. We then quickly decided to explore the rest of the park by car.

By then, it was lunchtime, so we decided to get the famous Boudin's clam chowder. My family and I

ate lunch at a bench at Land's End Lookout, my favorite part of the trip. Land's End is also a part of the Golden Gate National Recreation Area. It contains rocky small cliffs right by the ocean and enormous cypress trees. Land's End Lookout had multiple large pools of water in the middle of the landscape because it used to be a bath location in the late nineteenth century for the wealthy. Nevertheless, it was

refreshing to walk around while the ocean wind blasted against my face.

The fifth stop of our day was underneath the Golden Gate Bridge. We went just before dark, which I think is the best time to visit because of the beautiful sunset colors mixed with the blue of the ocean and the bridge. People enjoyed barbecues, paragliding, biking, and, overall, taking in the beauty and tranquility of nature.

The last stop of our day was the Palace of Fine Arts. Although we did not go to the museum to look at the art, my family and I still marveled when walking around the monument. People took wedding, quinceañera, and family pictures, so it was very crowded. However, it was still worth it, and I advise the Palace of Fine Arts to be one of the places you visit.

San Francisco has so many other landmarks, but if you find delight in walking (a lot of walking), then I definitely recommend this course for you!

Student Reporter



Thomas Lee
Grade 11
Cleveland High School

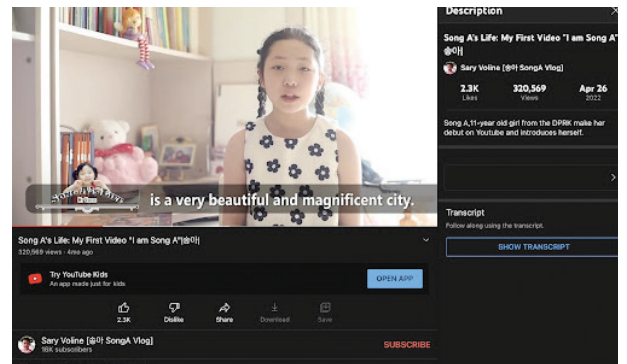
A YouTuber From The Unknown

North Korea is one of the world's most secretive and private countries. It is extremely hard for one to go in and out of the country. The only way for people living outside of North Korea to see insights into the country is through vlogs and newsletters from travelers who have made short-term visits. These YouTube videos gain millions of views and comments filled with words of fascination and eerie from all around the world. Around four months ago, on April 26th of 2022, a channel called "Sary Voline" posted its first video that surprised viewers.

In the first video, an 11-year-old introduces herself as Song A in a fluent British English accent. She presents herself and the country in contrast to what we heard and believe. Reading Harry Potter and going to amusement parks, she tells the viewers all the ordinary things she enjoys in Pyong-

yang. In later videos, she vlogs about a rather 'normal' life, with places such as water parks and school, just like American content creators her age would enjoy. In addition, she posted a short video showing the regulations of Covid-19 and how "everything is under control as it used to be and everyone is just fine." At the same time, she tells the viewers that she is running out of medication for the virus, and the soldiers come into her house to give her medicine. As more videos were uploaded, the viewers sensed the strictly controlled and scripted flow of all her videos.

The harsh reality is that the videos posted are most likely not filmed freely by Song A herself. North Korea's internet is strictly regulated and banned from outside media, so it is nearly impossible for a North Korean individual to post a video of her



People are fascinated to see a North Korean YouTuber. [Source: Author, Thomas Lee]

daily life. Many believe these videos are a new way to spread propaganda and manage their profile into other countries. In addition, the videos show parts of Pyongyang that are already known to have modern facilities compared to the other regions. This is the reason Song A's vlogs are not an accurate representation of North Korea, but that of the 1% of the people who were born with extreme wealth and political power under the coun-

try's regime.

There is a growing number of videos on the internet about the lifestyle of North Korea filmed by the citizens themselves. There is not a lot of information to explain the reasons behind the videos, but we are able to see the insights of North Korea, or Pyongyang even more. Although Song A's vlogs appear ordinary on the surface, they may conceal a dark, disturbing secret that only North Korean officials know.