

Editors Column

Journey to the 2024 LA Auto Show



Isleen Lee
Grade 11
Harvard-Westlake School



I do not have my driver's license yet, so this Kia EV6 GT Driving Experience simulator at this year's LA Auto Show was my first attempt at driving! [Source: Author, Isleen Lee]

Located in the heart of Downtown Los Angeles, California, the 2024 Los Angeles Auto Show took place over ten days, from November 22nd to December 1st. After my interest in Formula 1 began a year and a half ago, I quickly started picking up names of exotic cars in the broader realm of autosport. My social media feed was soon



Seeing the bright orange McLaren 750S up close was surreal; it was one of those moments where online dreams meet real life. [Source: Author, Isleen Lee]

full of cars, races, and, most importantly, the thrill of cheering on my favorite teams and drivers.

Although I spent a significant amount of time learning the names of popular car models, it never felt like I could apply what I had memorized in real life when I tried to "spot" a car. "Spotting" re-

fers to the act of easily identifying a car model by memory and is often an attribute that people with advanced car knowledge have. I strived to be a good "car spotter," but being a student, it was difficult to devote my time to developing this new hobby. Until, it was, the annual LA Auto Show!

It is a more eccentric hobby to have, for sure. My parents often thought it was odd that I was so intrigued when I heard the roar of an engine as we drove down the street. No, I'm not a mechanic, but as an avid Formula 1 fan, I learned about the pumping adrenaline that drivers experience behind the steering while racing down a track. It's not just about driving, but about going fast (safely, of course!) and finding a sense of freedom by unlocking speeds the normal person wouldn't dare to go at. Being able to identify these cars makes me look forward to the day I get to experience that same thrill I have only ever heard of!

The LA Auto Show, held at the Los Angeles Convention Center, which many people know as the

"big building next to the Crypto.com Arena," is a historic amalgamation of day-to-day cars, hypercars, trucks, and a variety of vehicles. I felt that this would be a good place to go during my Thanksgiving break to not only relax but also test my car knowledge. There were cars that I was extremely excited to see, such as the newly released Nilu hypercar and the Porsche exhibit, while there were some others that I didn't expect, but was very pleased to have seen, including some McLarens, Ferraris, and Lamborghinis. I felt elated seeing so many of the cars that I had only been able to see online, and it felt like a dream come true when I saw what I believed to be the pinnacle of modern-day engineering: the 2024 Nilu hypercar. I had followed the company since it launched until earlier this year when it unveiled its first hypercar. There were cars that I was able to recognize and some that I couldn't, but just being there made me feel hopeful for my future as a car enthusiast and deepened my interest. I will definitely be returning next year and urge anyone who has even the slightest interest to go!

Student Reporter

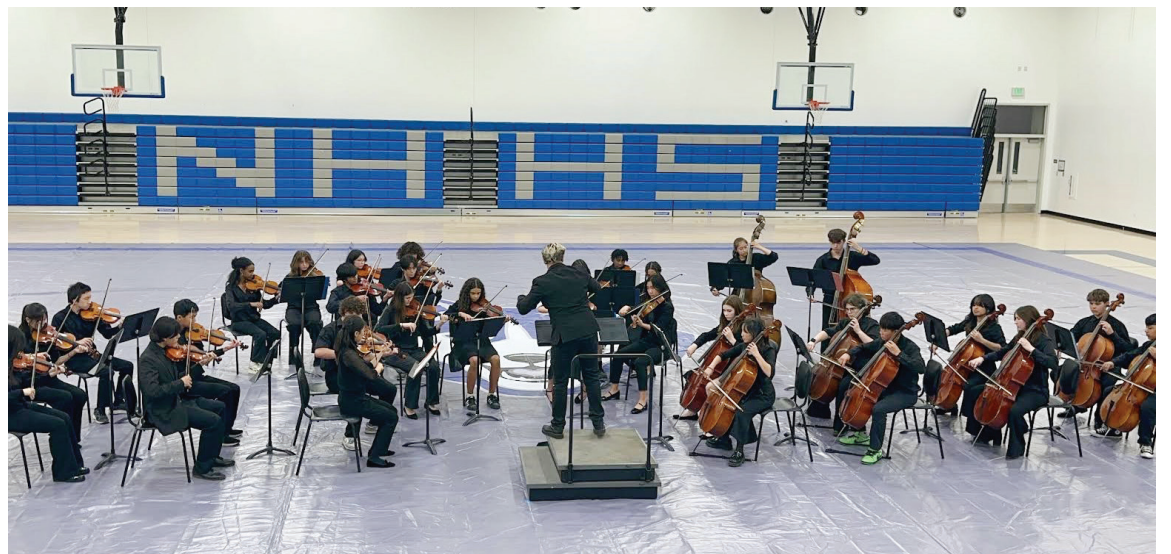
Completing the Music Department Puzzle



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North Hollywood High School

During the last month of the 2023-2024 school year, North Hollywood High School's Music Department made an unexpected announcement: the orchestra was returning to the program! To provide context, the music department had gotten rid of the course in 2022 due to low enrollment and decreasing popularity. Unfortunately, they found that because the students preferred to achieve academic goals through AP classes, the orchestra would no longer be supported. However, it has finally made its comeback and returned at the start of the 2024-2025 school year. Thus, the music department prepared everything necessary and even staffed a new teacher to maximize classes. Along with this re-addition, a vocal ensemble was introduced as well. Thanks to the school, the music department is now complete, and it is off to a great start; many students are taking the class this year!

On November 21st, the NHHS music department had its first concert of the year. It was a very exciting time because it would be the first concert in two years that the orchestra would perform at. It was certainly an enticing experience for me as well because I had not partici-



The North Hollywood High orchestra playing the piece, "Warrior Legacy" by Soon Hee Newbold at our fall concert. [Source: Min Lee]

pated in a school orchestra since eighth grade. Most of my classmates are familiar faces from the middle school I went to, but because they are one year younger than me, their high school journey has had a musical start. This made me realize how much I had missed being in a school orchestra because of all the friends that it had forged. Our shared passion for music is what brings us, including the conductor, and that's what makes music such a beautiful thing.

The program consisted of an indoor drumline, vocal ensemble, and jazz band. Orchestra and marching band performed after intermission. Because our school is currently under construction and we do not have an auditorium, our concert was held in the main gymnasium. Despite these accommodations, however, a surprising number of people came to see the show! The orchestra did an amazing job, and I am positive that we can put on an even greater per-

formance next semester.

Music has been such a large part of my life, and having the opportunity to be a part of a school orchestra again was very nostalgic. I have also been able to meet many new people and become friends with them, as well as become closer to those I already knew. I am so glad to be in such a great community, and I hope people feel the same throughout this program!

Student Reporter

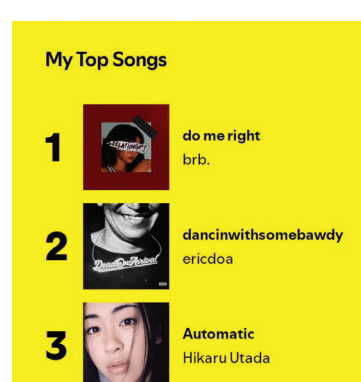
Spotify Wrapped: Was it Worth the Wait?



Angel Song
Grade 10
Harvard-Westlake School

Around November of each year, people start buzzing about a specific topic: Spotify Wrapped. More specifically, many can be seen griping about the music they had been listening to throughout the year, complaining that they probably ruined their Wrapped with their horrible music taste. If this sounds like you, don't be embarrassed. It's universal. But for this year, the question we should be asking is, did we ruin our Wrapped, or did Spotify?

Spotify began releasing end-of-year summaries in 2016, and it is literally a "wrap" of a user's music taste, giving users statistics, including their top artists, songs, and total listening hours. It is revealed every year between November 30th and December 6th, and the 2024 Wrapped was showcased on December 4th. The feature takes a format similar to Instagram stories, where users are able to



My top three songs, which baffled me because there was NO way I listened to "Do Me Right" that much this year. [Source: Author, Angel Song]

swipe through slides and look back on their year.

One of the key reasons why Wrapped is so popular is because of the extra personal data it supplies its users with. Crucial components of this feature include total listening hours, per-

sonalized video messages from top-ranked artists, and how close one is to their top artist, calculated based on the number of hours listened.

Although it has been receiving much attention since November, this year's Wrapped was off to a rough start. For starters, users pointed out that the feature's release was getting delayed more than usual. However, many interpreted this as a signal that this year's Wrapped was going to be better than previous years, heightening the excitement. Unfortunately, after the highly anticipated release, many users reported that it seemed their results were not very accurate. Even though Spotify typically gathers data from the beginning of the year to an unconfirmed point in November, one of the most common pieces of feedback was about how the top artist and top song feature

seemed to be off.

Chloe Lee, a Spotify user, said that she was surprised to see who her top artist was. "I was not expecting to see this artist on my top five rankings, considering that I had mostly listened to them a couple of times earlier this year, and never after that." Other users have reported that the overall quality had gone down. For instance, this year's Wrapped did not have a feature that reported the new genres one listened to and a total breakdown of which genres a user enjoyed most.

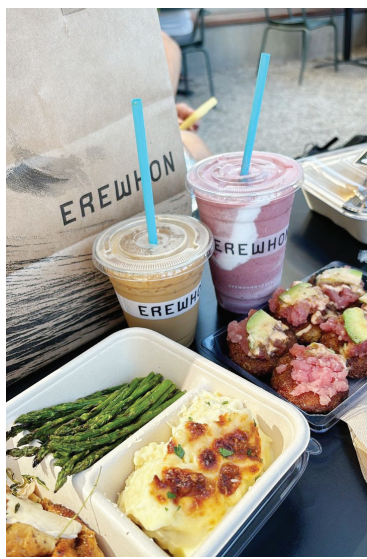
As a Spotify user myself, I have to admit that this year's Wrapped was a bit anticlimactic. The wait was longer than usual, and frankly, I didn't find my top artists and songs to be accurate either, which defeats the point. Spotify can definitely do better in 2025, but it seems like all we can do is wait.

Student Reporter

LA's Trendiest Grocery Store Beyond Groceries



Sora Ju
Grade 10
Geffen Academy



Erewhon's smoothies first became viral due to popular social media star Hailey Bieber. The "Strawberry Glaze Skin Smoothie" (pictured right), the inspiration behind the viral product from her viral skincare brand Rhode, regularly sells 40,000 a month!
[Source: Author, Sora Ju]

Erewhon is not your ordinary grocery store. With its sleek design, narrow aisles, and perfectly curated shelves, this Los Angeles hotspot is where wellness meets luxury. Known for its celebrity clientele, viral smoothies, and exclusive products, Erewhon has become a must-visit destination for tourists, influencers, and locals alike.

The store's name, pulled from the 1872 satirical novel "Erewhon" by Samuel Butler, is an anagram for "nowhere"—a fitting choice for a place that feels like it's in a world of its own. Regular shoppers here don't just come to pick up their daily groceries; they immerse themselves in a luxury experience.

A central part of Erewhon's appeal is its celebrity collaborations, especially the smoothies. Hailey Bieber's \$20 Strawberry

Skin Glaze Smoothie has become a cultural phenomenon. Available for purchase at Erewhon's Tonic Bar, the store's cafe and bakery section, this smoothie is packed with high-quality ingredients, including collagen powder, sea moss, and hyaluronic acid, meant to nourish skin from within. Other celebrity smoothies from stars like Sabrina Carpenter, and even popular product brands, such as Alo and Vacation Sunscreen, have also gone viral. "I wasn't sure if it was worth it," says Ashley Brand, an ordinary shopper who tried the smoothie after seeing it on TikTok. "But honestly, it's pretty good. It feels like a treat, and I get why it's such a big deal, even though the price is steep."

But Erewhon is about more than drinks and the luxury shopping experience. This high-end grocery store has also earned its

reputation as a celebrity magnet. From Hailey Bieber to Miley Cyrus, spotting a famous face in the store is almost as common as seeing a superfood powder. Erewhon merch, often seen on stars like Kendall Jenner and Sophie Turner, has become another trendy status symbol.

While critics point to the store's high prices—where even basics often are priced double what they would elsewhere—fans argue that it's about the availability of high-quality, ethically sourced ingredients and the luxurious experience.

Whether you're stopping by for a \$20 smoothie, the latest TikTok-famous snack, or just to soak in the atmosphere, Erewhon has turned grocery shopping into an event. In Los Angeles, a city where trends set the tone, it's no wonder this store continues to thrive.

Student Reporter

Sabrina Carpenter: A Night to Remember

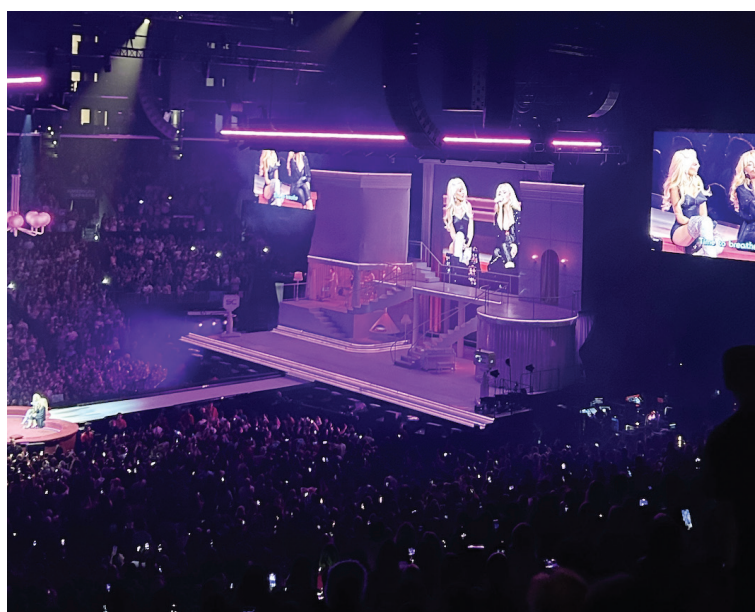


Summer Park
Grade 10
Harvard-Westlake School

Are you in the mood to read about one of the latest pop-star artists? Grab your favorite drink, maybe an espresso to kick-start your day, because you're about to dive into the experience of Sabrina Carpenter's Short n Sweet tour!

I had the absolute pleasure of attending Carpenter's recent concert at the Staples Center in Downtown Los Angeles, and let me tell you—it was nothing short of electric! I was joined by three of my closest friends, and each of us was practically bursting with excitement. We had been looking forward to this night for weeks.

Even though my friends and I arrived early, the seats were filling up fast, and the energy in the room was electric. I ended up sitting next to a group of college students, and we quickly hit it off. Despite the age gap, Sabrina's music brought us together. I'll never forget one of the older girls turning to us and saying, "You guys are so adorable! I hope you enjoy the show, free from the stress of high school!" It was such a sweet moment, reminding us that music has the power to unite, no matter



An exhilarating moment when Sabrina and Christina sang a surprise duet during the concert.
[Source: Author, Summer Park]

where we are in life.

What makes concerts like this so special isn't just the artist—it's the community, the shared experience, and the sense of belonging that transcends the stage. Sabrina Carpenter's Short n' Sweet tour isn't just a series of performances; it's a celebration of music's ability

to unite, offer an escape from worries, and create lasting memories that we'll carry with us long after the lights fade.

Sabrina took the stage with undeniable style, and the moment she appeared, the crowd erupted into a thunderous wave of applause and cheers. Her

voice, both powerful and vulnerable, filled the room, drawing the audience into every note as they swayed in unison. But the real shocker came when, in a stunning twist, Christina Aguilera made an unexpected appearance on stage! The crowd went wild as the two powerhouse vocalists shared the spotlight, creating a magical moment that no one would soon forget.

As the final notes echoed and we made our way out of the Staples Center, I was still processing everything I had witnessed. My friends and I were filled with excitement, and, to our surprise, we ran into Paige Taylor, an influencer with over 6.5 million followers on TikTok! It felt like the perfect night kept getting better.

On the drive home, I couldn't help but feel so grateful. Not only for Sabrina's incredible performance but for the reminder of music's unique power to bring people together. It's moments like these that stay with you, shaping your memories in ways words can't quite capture. I don't doubt that Sabrina Carpenter's music will continue to be the soundtrack to many more memories.

Student Reporter

The Phone Ban: Curse or Blessing?



Erin Ryu
Grade 11
Harvard-Westlake School

Harvard-Westlake announced it will ban phone usage during the school day starting the next school year. Students will be unable to use phones throughout the school day—a policy first enacted by Harvard-Westlake's Middle School—in an attempt to encourage connection and minimize distractions. The school administration first proposed the phone policy and joined the Coalition to Limit Access to Smartphones and Social Media (CLASS) in cooperation with a group of other independent schools across Los Angeles that is dedicated to discouraging phone use among adolescents.

Zoe, a student at the school, said she believes the phone ban will increase usage and further isolate students. "As we know, restricting things will only make them more desirable, and, therefore, more likely to be abused," Zoe said. "We had a similar policy prohibiting the use of phones at the Middle School, which caused kids to become even more isolated from others due to the prospect of being caught on their phones by teachers in popular areas. If socialization is what the school wants to promote, why not allow students more opportunities for socializing instead of taking away a useful tool for it?" Along with Zoe, many other

students have expressed discontent regarding the new policy, with many citing the benefits of having access to connecting with friends, for example, during breaks, and checking in with parents throughout the school day.

However, Sophia, who was subject to the Middle School phone policy last year, said she supports the policy based on her experiences without a phone at school. "The phone policy is a step in the right direction, and I'm glad that the school, and many other schools, are taking action," Sophia said. "Coming from the Middle School, where phones were banned the whole day, I saw a drastic shift in how we interact with each other during our free time and how much more isolating the culture here is. [The phone ban] will definitely shift us away from this culturally embedded habit of being so reliant on our phones and foster greater connection among students, even if this is subconscious or not immediately noticeable at first."

Many members of the faculty cite research about the toxic effects of the overuse of cell phones and the distractions they create on school campuses. So, as a way of compromise, instead of asking students to come to



Cell phone bans are coming to Harvard-Westlake School. Some students are excited, but others think it's a bad idea.
[Source: Adobe Stock]

school without their phones, the school is considering providing students with pouches to store their phones during the school day. These pouches would limit phone usage during the day but still allow students to carry them on their person in case they need to be accessed during an emergency, such as contacting a parent or therapist. Although the exact logistics of the policy are still being finalized, some measures have been proposed to balance

student freedom with reasonable restrictions.

"We give you guys a lot of independence," the administration told students. "We don't think teachers want to start getting into the habit of monitoring the lunch area and constantly taking phones from people. We'd love to actually get to a place where you could have them and use them responsibly."