

Recently passed One VCU Master Plan to reshape MCV campus

The Master Plan produces a unified vision for all VCU properties, including ones on both the MCV and the Monroe Park campuses. Photo by Gessler Santos-Lopez

HANNAH EASON
Contributing Writer

After a process that took more than a year and a half, the Board of Visitors approved the One VCU Master Plan on March 22. The plan outlines the university’s development for years to come and unifies the MCV and Monroe Park Campuses.

The plan guides the development of VCU Health through increased patient privacy, consolidated hospital services, a “campus main street” and suggested green spaces.

“As the first master plan in VCU’s history to create a shared vision for both VCU and VCU Health System, the One VCU Master Plan identifies common goals and provides an evidence-based vision for VCU’s physical development,” said Meredith Weiss, vice president for administration.

In a press release, Weiss said the plan will continue “to make VCU prominent nationally” and “connect” the university to the rest of the city.

Private patient beds and overcrowded facilities at MCV are the “greatest space challenges” for the VCU Health System, according to the Master Plan. The plan states currently 35% of patient beds are semi-private, and 65% are private.

“Given the fact that private patient rooms reduce length of stay, health care-acquired infections, patient movement and operating costs providing 100% of private beds was a critical goal for the Plan,” the plan states.

The expansion of the children’s hospital and new inpatient hospital is expected to make all beds private and accommodate for increased patient volume.

The plan includes the redevelopment of the Patient and Visitor Parking Deck currently located on the 500 block of North 12th Street. This will allow space for a new inpatient hospital and the expansion of clinical, public and support services. All rooms in the hospital will be private. The plan calls for the demolition of the Strauss Research Laboratory, the Tompkins-McCaw Library and the Patient and Visitor Parking Deck.

All inpatient beds will be relocated to the new Inpatient Hospital, eliminating all inpatient stays in the North Hospital. The VCU Health System will evaluate the backfill program, which addresses hospital overflow, based on future needs.

See **MASTER PLAN** on page 2



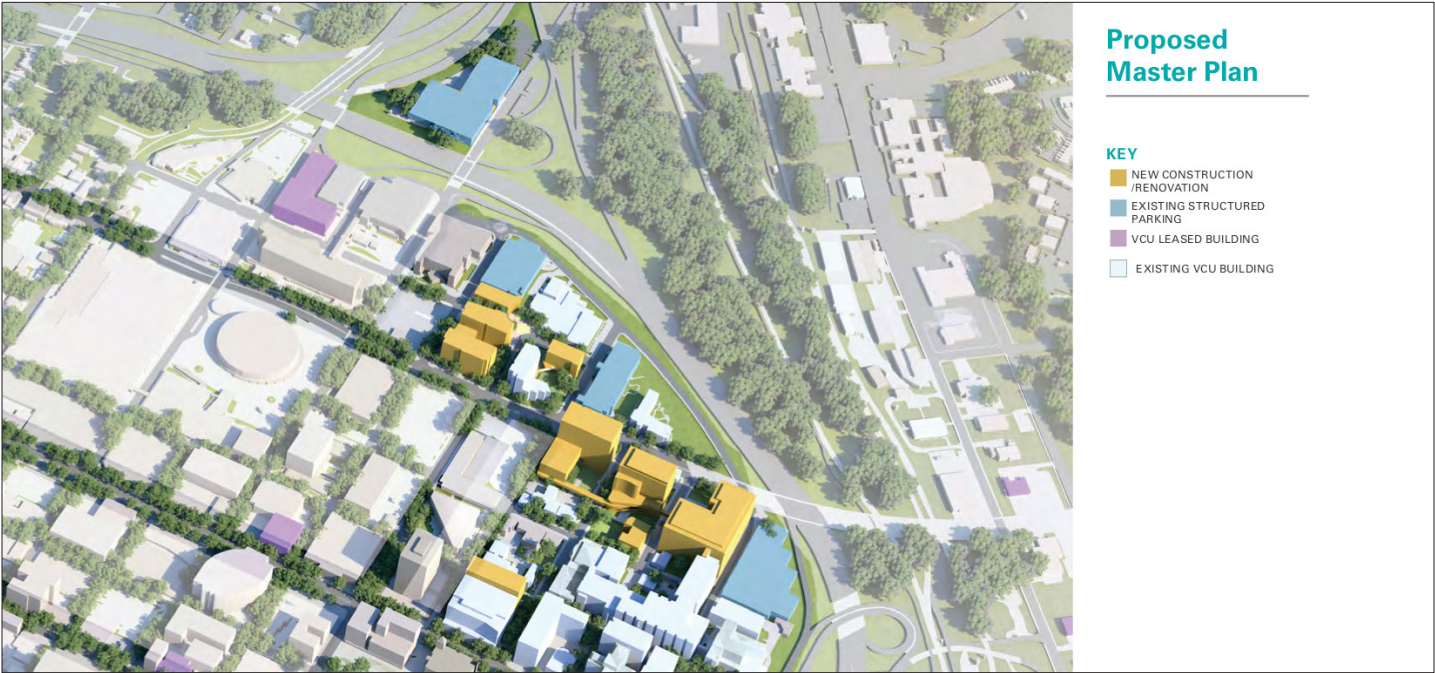
More than 1,500 people participated in the process to produce the Master Plan. Photo by Gessler Santos-Lopez

Stories of the week

NATIONAL: Homeland Security Secretary Kristjen Nielsen abruptly resigned April 7 after a dispute with the president over border crossings, according to CBS News.

INTERNATIONAL: Benjamin Netanyahu and his challenger Benny Gantz have both claimed victory in the closely contested Israeli general election.

One VCU Master Plan to transform to MCV with private hospital rooms, new facilities and ‘Campus Main Street’



The One VCU Master Plan, which was passed by the Board of Visitors on March 22, will guide university development. Photo courtesy of VCU

Continued from front page

The expansion of the Children’s Hospital of Richmond is a key project in the Master Plan. The current pediatric unit will be replaced with 86 patient beds, new operating rooms, emergency services and family amenities. The building plan proposes 16 levels above ground level and four levels below, with additional parking to support the complex.

“The VCU Health System is committed to improving human life and providing the highest-quality, most comprehensive care,” the plan states. “The physical environment plays an important role in achieving these goals and ensuring a high-quality patient experience.”

The plan also proposes a 15-story adult outpatient facility at the corner of 11th

and Leigh streets. The plan expects to use the former Virginia Treatment Center for Children site — which moved to Sherwood Avenue in 2017 — for the facility. The new building is expected to house consolidated adult outpatient clinics to support clinical care models and include a parking structure with more than 1,000 spaces.

The green space will be located near McGuire Hall, the proposed new Interdisciplinary Health Sciences Building and Lyons Dental Building.

Both campuses will have a redesigned “Campus Main Street,” under the new plan — Monroe Park’s will be on Grace Street, and MCV’s will extend down Clay Street with pedestrian-friendly retail, restaurants and housing areas. The plan states that this will increase foot traffic in these areas,

while improving first-impressions of VCU.

The Clay “Campus Main Street” will connect to the new central green and extend to the Navy Hill redevelopment area. The \$1.4 billion downtown Richmond redevelopment proposed by Richmond Mayor Levar Stoney includes a new sporting and concert arena, hotel and affordable housing.

“The proposed Navy Hill redevelopment calls for a new mixed-use development that will revitalize downtown Richmond with retail, housing and other program elements,” the plan states. “VCU and VCU Health System support the project and are exploring potential partnerships that are consistent with the six guiding principles in the One VCU Master Plan.”

VCU President Michael Rao discussed the Navy Hill Redevelopment in a

Richmond Times-Dispatch column. He said the proposed redevelopment does not solve all of the challenges facing the city, but “addresses many of them.”

“VCU is enthusiastic about the project because of what it allows our city to do: turn land that has sat dormant for too long into an economic engine,” Rao wrote. “We have the responsibility to use every means to produce income that we can direct toward schools, public services, and housing that people of many incomes can afford.”

The plan recommends expanding the green space at East Clay Street and North 11th Street to create a new “campus center” at MCV. This is similar to the proposed green space on the Monroe Park campus.

“The central green provides much-needed open space and creates a new heart to campus that will serve as a gathering place for patients, visitors, students, faculty and staff and will facilitate east-west movement through campus,” the plan states.

The West Hospital is expected to be renovated under the proposed plan. It is used for office spaces, but the plan states it is “in need of revitalization.” It will make way for additional housing and office space. The plan also includes the conversion of McGuire Hall into an office space.

“This is a unique opportunity for stronger connectivity between McGuire Hall and the new central green to the west and the proposed Interdisciplinary Health Sciences Building, Library and Innovation Center to the north,” the plan states.

Sanger Hall, currently the largest research building on the MCV campus, is expected to have continued renovation. The plan states the building faces complex challenges, but that significant investment was made to renovate labs and infrastructure.

Student group aims to change university wellness check procedures



Campus police sends officers trained in crisis intervention to conduct wellness checks. CT file photo

ANYA SCZERZENIE
Contributing Writer

A student movement called No Policing in Mental Health wants VCU to replace police officers with mental health clinicians when doing wellness checks on students.

The police department has officers trained in crisis intervention and routinely conducts wellness checks on students, according to a police spokesperson. The checks happen when a family member, staff member or friend contacts the police with concerns about their whereabouts or behavior.

But members of the group say police officers can make students with mental illnesses, especially students of color, feel unsafe and may cause more harm than good.

No Policing in Mental Health held its first meeting March 21 in the Academic Learning Commons. Most students who attended participated in the discussion, saying they came to help students of color as well as get involved in campus life.

Sophomore Sabah Munshi led the meeting. She said the current procedure for wellness checks involves police officers arriving to check on students, which can make them feel “very intimidated.”

“When I was a freshman last year, I saw a lot of things [at VCU] that I wanted to change,” Munshi said. “The idea [for this movement] started over the summer of 2018 and really kicked off this semester.”

Munshi has worked with Virginia Student Power Network to organize the movement.

The group, which was present at the March 22 Board of Visitors meeting, had its second meeting March 27 to go over advocacy strategies.

“I feel like cops don’t have the training they need to do a whole evaluation on a person,” Munshi said. “I think that clinicians should be doing this.”

Angelica Cradle, a sophomore who attended the meeting, said she has seen some students react negatively to the movement when the group was tabling on campus.

“I think people are appalled that we are trying to change policing, because the cops are seen as a beacon of public safety,” Cradle said. “It’s always difficult trying to convince a person with privilege about [a person of color’s] experience with the police.”

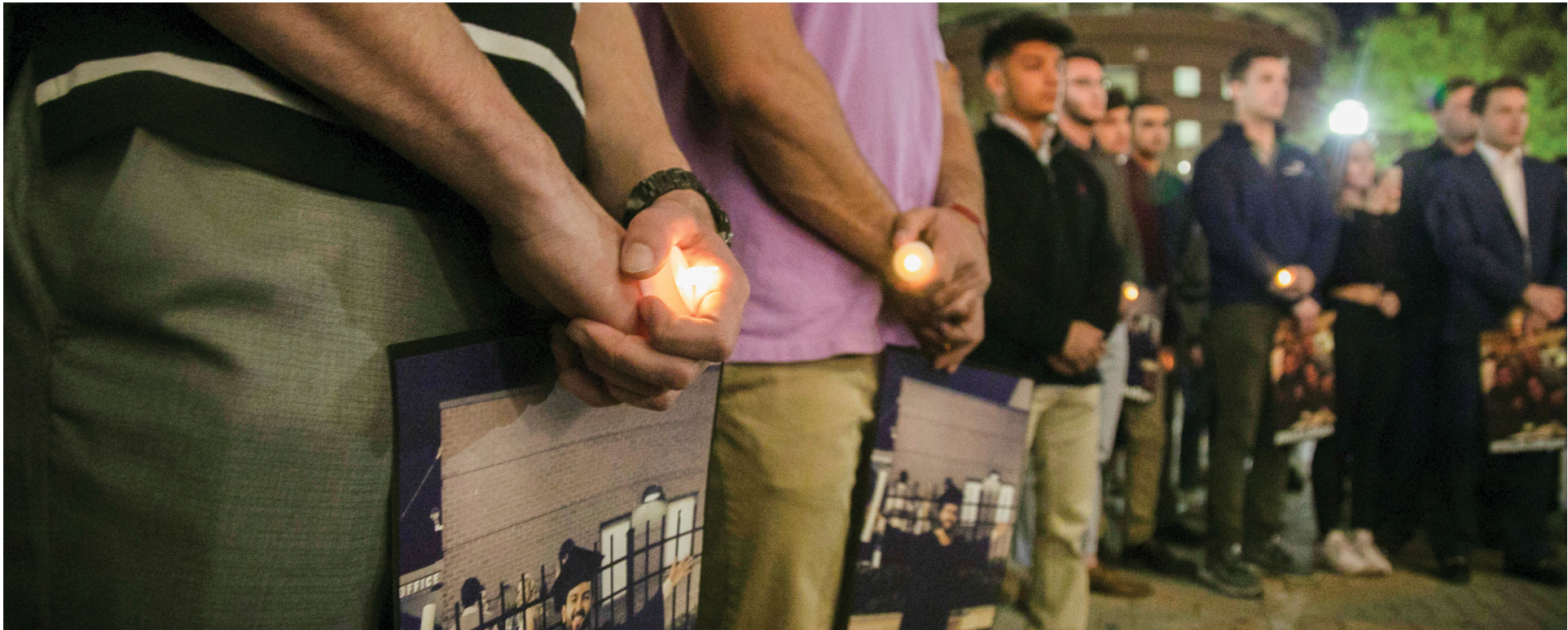
The group recently met with Student Affairs and University Counseling staff. A police spokesperson said the department is considering some of the group’s suggestions.

Munshi said during the meeting that members of the administration cited safety concerns as a reason for having health professionals conduct wellness checks instead of police officers.

“The wellness checks right now are putting many students in danger, Munshi said. “Many cops are not being held accountable for their actions, especially with respect to their treatment of people of color.”

Munshi said the parties will continue their discussion on April 25.

News Editor Fadel Allasan contributed to this report.



Bijan Ghaisar, who graduated from VCU in 2015, was killed by U.S. Park Police following a car chase in 2017. Photo by Gessler Santos-Lopez

Vigil and march held in honor of VCU alum killed by park police in 2017

HANNAH EASON
Contributing Writer

What began as a run-of-the-mill car accident for Bijan Ghaisar on Nov. 17, 2017 ended in the VCU graduate’s shooting death at the hands of U.S. Park Police.

Bijan Ghaisar’s car was rear-ended while driving on the George Washington Memorial Parkway the night of the incident, according to CNN. For unknown reasons, he left the scene of the accident, was pursued by Park Police and pulled over twice. He drove away from police both times. The third time they pulled him over, officers fired shots into Bijan Ghaisar’s car, striking him in the head four times. Bijan Ghaisar, who was unarmed, died 10 days later.

Students, alumni and family members gathered Wednesday in the Compass last wednesday to remember the 2015 graduate. Solemn faces held candles and posters reading #WeAreBijan. Tears rolled down the cheeks of James and Kelly Ghaisar as they spoke of their son’s bright smile, compassionate heart and love for VCU.

The vigil highlighted Bijan Ghaisar’s life and raised awareness of what his parents consider the police aggression he fell victim to. Two days before the vigil — 502 days after Bijan’s death — his parents learned the names of the police officers who took their son’s life.

Alejandro Amaya and Lucas Vinyard have been identified as the two U.S. Park Police officers who shot 25-year-old Bijan Ghaisar. The Justice Department has not decided whether the shooting was legally justified or if the officers will be charged with a crime.

“It took over 16 months of non-stop work, effort, over 300 hours of legal work just to get their names,” James Ghaisar said. “This is unimaginable.”

James Ghaisar said it was the first time they had been on VCU campus since Bijan graduated in 2015. He said he felt support from the event organizers and attendees — most of the people he had never met before.

The husband and wife haven’t given up on finding out what exactly happened to their son. He also suggested body cameras for all police officers to “protect the public.”

Kelly Ghaisar said they were “very touched” by the event, although returning to campus without her son was difficult. She said it sparked memories of him in the library — his favorite place on campus — and the many VCU sports games he attended.

“Bijan was a caring, loving, funny young man,” Kelly Ghaisar said. “He loved this town so much.”

Aundia MehrRostami organized the vigil along with the Center for Health and Human Rights at VCU, where she serves as president. The Northern-Virginia-based nonprofit serves underprivileged communities through donations, medical care and volunteer work in the Richmond community.

MehrRostami, who also serves as philanthropy chair of Alpha Gamma Delta, said many Greek Life members assisted in spreading the word and the #WeAreBijan hashtag. Bijan Ghaisar was a member of the Pi Kappa Alpha fraternity when he attended VCU.

“A lot of the people were really pas-

sionate about it and wanted to be [at the vigil],” Mehrrostami said. “Even people that didn’t know Bijan, but people in their families were lost due to police brutality, showed a lot of support.”

Attendees met outside of James Branch Cabell Library before marching down Franklin Street, turning right on Jefferson Street and returning to the VCU Student Commons via Cary Street. VCU police officers

were in attendance to accompany marchers.

In unison, marchers shouted, “We are your heart. We are your eyes. We are Bijan.”

Junior business major Amanda Valenzuela attended the march because she “believes in justice.”

“Any kind of support and love I have, I’m going to give,” Valenzuela said. “Hate exists everywhere and people just don’t want to recognize it.”



Students remembered Bijan Ghaisar’s life at the rally. Photo by Gessler Santos-Lopez

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Campus cardholders receive benefits from Wells Fargo in response to oversized fees

ANDREW RINGLE
Spectrum Editor

Wells Fargo eliminated some campus debit card fees after a report revealed the company placed oversized fees on college students' checking accounts.

The banking company said it now expects average costs to be reduced by approximately half after implementing four new benefits for students with campus cards.

"We want to make sure we're helping young adults build healthy financial habits that will serve them well over their lifetimes," said Ed Kadletz, head of Wells Fargo's Deposit Products Group, in a statement.

Wells Fargo will refund one overdraft fee a month, and there will be no fees on transfers from saving accounts to cover transactions that will overdraft a checking account. The benefits also include four monthly uncharged withdrawals from non-Wells Fargo ATMs in the U.S. and one courtesy refund for an incoming wire each month.

The new benefits are in response to a report released on Thursday from the U.S. Public Interest Group Education Fund.

"We believe VCU students who choose to have bank accounts at Wells Fargo will welcome the changes implemented by Wells Fargo in March to eliminate four types of banking fees," said Tim Graf, VCU treasurer and director of treasury services, in a statement.



More than 1.1 million students use campus debit cards. Photo by Gessler Santos-Lopez

Colleges are offered financial incentives from banks if they recommend debit accounts to financial aid recipients on campus. There are at least 1.1 million students using campus debit cards.

Kaitlyn Vitez, higher education campaign director for U.S. PIRG Education Fund and report co-author, said in a statement that the Department of Education should end "aggressive paid marketing" to students on campus and investigate banks involved with the practice.

The group found that students paid an average of approximately \$15 a year at schools that weren't paid by banks to market their products. At schools with paid marketing agreements, however, fees were twice as high.

"These cards may look like normal student IDs, but the fees on the checking accounts attached to them are far from the norm," Vitez said in a statement.

The Department of Education enacted rules in 2015 to eliminate overdraft and per-swipe charges, yet students paid \$24.6 million in fees last year.

"Many students already carry a crushing burden of student loan debt to pay for college. High bank fees make that load even heavier," said David Rossini, chair of U.S. PIRG Education Fund's consumer protection program, in a statement.

VCU to offer new minor in LGBTQ+ and queer studies

FADEL ALLASSAN
News Editor

VCU is adding a minor in LGBTQ+ and queer studies in the fall, the university announced last Thursday.

Students can already start enrolling in classes for the minor, which will require 18 credits. Nine of those credits must be in upper-level courses. It will require all students to take an introductory course in LGBTQ+ and queer studies, and an additional five in the field.

VCU is the first public four-year university in Virginia to offer an LGBTQ+ studies minor.

"Students will learn how to examine LGBTQ+ and queer topics across disciplines, cultures and historical periods," said Liz Canfield, associate chair of the Department of Gender, Sexuality and Women's Studies.

"The curriculum will examine intersectional approaches to LGBTQ+ and queer studies — incorporating, but not limited to — race and ethnicity, class, disability and religion."

Students from any major in the university will be able to select the new minor. They will not have to identify as LGBTQ.

"Regardless of disciplinary major, our students will eventually interact with people who are LGBTQ+ and queer — in the workplace, in their neighborhoods, in their social spaces — and they need to approach their interactions with cultural humility and responsiveness," said Elizabeth Cramer, a professor from the school of social work, in a news release. "I'm hoping that students who don't identify as LGBTQ will be attracted to this minor, in part, because of this."

Students will also have to choose from a range of electives to get the interdisciplinary minor. One course has to focus on race or ethnicity in relation to the LGBTQ+ experience and another has to focus on the LGBTQ+ experience outside the U.S.

The elective courses offered to minor-seeking students will be:



The new minor, which is multidisciplinary, will require students to take courses from various departments. CT File Photo

- The Black Queer Politics course offered by the political science department
 - Queen Literature, offered by the english department
 - Sociology of Masculinities, offered by the Department of Sociology
 - Global LGBTQ History, offered by the Department of History
- Some courses in the Department of Gender, Sexuality and Women's Studies will also qualify as electives. Among them are Trans Theory and Activism, Queer Cinema, Activism Practicum in Feminist and Queer Organizing, LGBTQ Health and Wellness, Narratives of Asian American Sexualities and Gender, and Sexuality and HIV in African Literature.
- The minor is designed to highlight a range of studies, so students will not be able to take electives from the same discipline.
- "Our idea is that it is important for the minor to reach across the departments in order to highlight the field's interdisciplinary nature and to be accessible to more students," Canfield said.
- The College of Humanities and Sciences recently hired three LGBTQ studies scholars as part of a hiring initiative seeking to improve

interdisciplinary collaboration and research.

In September, more than 300 students attended a university event highlighting the research of 14 scholars in the field of LGBTQ studies, including the three new faculty members.

"We are seeing greater institutional buy-in to what we've known to be true for decades," Canfield said. "LGBTQ studies is a rigorous interdisciplinary field that has the potential to challenge and change the study of gender and sexuality — and thus humanity — as a whole."

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VCU

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Stat of the week

Senior infielder Zac Ching hit for the cycle April 7 against LaSalle in only five innings, as the Rams knocked off the Explorers 28-4.



From Saturday school to The Diamond, competition drives Arenado

Third baseman Jonah Arenado is in his second season with the Flying Squirrels. He hit .200 last season with five home runs and 39 RBI. Photo by Erin Edgerton

NOAH FLEISCHMAN
Sports Editor

Saturday school: a high schooler's worst nightmare. Four hours without his phone, staring aimlessly at the walls.

But for Richmond Flying Squirrels third baseman Jonah Arenado, one day at Saturday school brought news that changed his life. First, he had to persuade his teacher to let him answer his phone.

"I got a call and it said San Francisco. So I had to tell the teacher that this was an emergency, I really got to go," Jonah Arenado said. "She was like, 'Nope, sorry no phones here.'"

But he pleaded his case to his teacher.

"I said, 'This is an emergency, I've got to

take this,' and she said, 'OK, hurry up,'" he said. "So I got to take the phone call and they said, 'Hey, we drafted you.'"

The Lake Forest, California, native was picked in the 16th round of the 2013 MLB draft by the San Francisco Giants, becoming the second Arenado to be drafted out of El Toro High School.

His brother Nolan Arenado was taken in the second round of the 2009 MLB draft out of high school.

"When I got drafted, I didn't have to make a decision right away," Jonah Arenado said. "I had a few weeks to think about it. So I called him. We talked for a little bit, and I talked to my parents about it too."

After watching his brother go through the ranks of Minor League Baseball, Jonah

Arenado got an idea of what to expect playing baseball each day. But he got a firsthand look at the grind of the long Minor League season when Nolan Arenado played for the Modesto Nuts, the High-A affiliate of the Colorado Rockies.

"When he was in High-A, I got to travel with the team," Jonah Arenado said. "Their manager Jerry Weinstein let me travel with the team, practice with the team and work-out with them. So I kind of got the feel of Minor League Baseball and that really drove me more than anything."

Not only was the experience of being a Minor League Baseball player for a few days inspiring for the younger Arenado, but attending his brother's first MLB Futures game in Arizona sparked him to play professional baseball as well.

Growing up in the Arenado household was full of a competitive spirit in almost anything that they played.

"All of us are super competitive — playing wiffle ball, ping pong, you name it," Jonah Arenado said. "We never just did it for fun, we were trying to beat the other person and talk some trash ... so when it came down to being competitive in baseball, it was never a problem because we've been doing it for so long."

The competitive spirit produced a trio of professional baseball players: Nolan Arenado, Jonah Arenado and their cousin Josh Fuentes.

Fuentes made his MLB debut April 6 for the Rockies against the Los Angeles Dodgers and recorded his first MLB hit.

"Man, I wish I was there. I get the chills just thinking about it," Jonah Arenado said. "He went from being a free agent signed to being a big leaguer, and not a lot of people expected that, which makes it even more special."

Fuentes played in the same game as Nolan Arenado in his MLB debut, a moment that Jonah Arenado had last year.

Jonah Arenado played against his brother in a spring training game in 2018, when the Giants played the Rockies in Arizona.

"One of my favorite players growing up was Evan Longoria, and so I subbed in for Longoria to go up against my brother, which is pretty cool," Jonah Arenado said. "That was really special because I've never played on the same field as him competitively."

“

I don't think I ever told them I was in Saturday school."

Jonah Arenado, Flying Squirrels third baseman



Third baseman Jonah Arenado, left, started 92 games last season for the Flying Squirrels. Photo by Erin Edgerton

Rams combine for 48 runs, complete 3-game sweep at LaSalle

RYAN GRUBE
Contributing Writer

Baseball took all three games against LaSalle, bringing its record to 25-7 (8-1 in A-10) on the season. The Rams dominated all weekend in Philadelphia. They outscored the Explorers 48-12, including a 28-4 thrashing Sunday, to push their winning streak to six.

SUNDAY

The Rams unleashed an offensive explosion in Sunday's contest, marking the team's highest total run and largest margin of victory on the year.

Similar to Saturday, the Rams delivered the opening blow, scoring 20 of their 28 runs in the first four innings. After bringing around two runs in the first, VCU hung seven more in the top of the second, aided by home runs from sophomore outfielder Jack Schroeder and junior outfielder Brandon Henson.

LaSalle answered with a run in the third, before the Black and Gold erupted for a nine-run outburst in the fourth inning to open up a 20-1 lead. The Rams continued their consistent outpouring of runs, scoring in every inning except for the ninth.

On the offensive side, the Rams were led by Schroeder, Henson and senior infielder Zac Ching. Schroeder finished with three hits in six plate appearances and a team-leading five RBI. Henson drove in four on a pair of home runs.

Ching, the team's senior captain,

completed the cycle in just five innings to accomplish the rare feat.

Sophomore left-hander Devin Dunn picked up his first win of the season, pitching in relief of redshirt-sophomore Justin Sorokowski. Dunn gave up two hits and no earned runs in his two innings of work.

The 28 runs are the most by a VCU team since 2010, when the Black and Gold put up 21 against Virginia Tech.

SATURDAY

VCU continued its hot stretch April 6, as the Rams survived a late rally attempt from LaSalle to outlast the Explorers 9-6. The win marked five consecutive victories for the Rams, who have won 10 of their last 11 games.

VCU sprinted out to an early commanding lead with five runs in the first three innings to take a four-run advantage. The Rams loaded the bases following three walks by LaSalle's starting pitcher Colin Scanlon. Sophomore infielder Liam Hibbits then singled in a pair to get VCU on the board.

After a second-inning throwing error from LaSalle gifted the Rams another run, the Black and Gold scored two more runs in the third to push the lead to four. VCU kept its foot on the gas from there.

The Rams loaded the bases for a second time to open the fourth. Following a sacrifice fly from junior infielder Paul Witt, VCU executed a double steal that allowed junior infielder Brett Norwood to reach second and Ching to take home. Hibbits then



Baseball scored a season-high 28 runs April 7 against LaSalle, its most since 2004. Photo by Gessler Santos-Lopez

FRIDAY

Friday marked VCU's fourth consecutive win, as the Rams used a five-run seventh inning to prevail over LaSalle 11-2.

VCU fell behind early when the Explorers cracked the scoreboard in the first with a solo home run off the bat of second baseman Peyton Sorrels.

But the Rams responded with a run of their own in the top half of the sixth. After the Black and Gold held LaSalle scoreless in the bottom of the sixth, VCU broke the game wide open with five runs in the top of the seventh.

The Rams loaded the bases quickly with a pair of one out singles by Ching and sophomore utility player Hogan Brown, followed by a walk from Norwood. Witt then doubled down the left field line to bring in two runs before junior outfielder Brandon Henson added to the onslaught with a three-run home run to extend VCU's lead to 6-1.

VCU added five combined runs in the eighth and ninth innings to close out the contest. Senior right-handed pitcher Jack Alkire earned the win for the Rams after entering the game in relief of junior right-handed pitcher Connor Gillispie. Alkire fanned seven batters over four scoreless innings.

Baseball will be back at The Diamond April 12-14 against Fordham. First pitch on April 12 is at 6:30 p.m.

Track and Field earns 3 first-place finishes in Florida



Nichelle Scott and the 4x400 meter relay team finished in second place with a time of 3:45.22. CT File Photo

BEN MALAKOFF
Contributing Writer

Track and Field dominated at the North Florida Invitational April 6 with three first-place wins and five second-place finishes.

WOMEN'S

Senior thrower Camora Sanders started off the meet for the Rams with a win in the discus throw, casting a toss of 76.41 meters. Sanders also earned second place in the shot put with a 14.61-meter throw.

The next first-place finish came quickly for VCU, as sophomore jumper Aliyah Newman won the triple jump, vaulting 12.33 meters.

The Rams' 4-x-400 team — made up of senior mid-distance runner Nichelle Scott, senior sprinter Taylor Watkins, freshman sprinter Channelle Hodges and junior sprinter Kayla Smith — finished in second place with a time of 3:45.22.

MEN'S

Redshirt-freshman thrower Kayla Merkel earned a second-place finish in the javelin throw, tossing 14.61 meters.

Sprinter Kayla Smith added another second-place finish for the Rams, this time in the 400-meter dash, ending with a time of 53.27.

The men earned their first victory when freshman sprinter Emmanuel Waller won the 400-meter hurdles with a time of 53.26.

Junior thrower Drew Hess finished in second place in the javelin throw with a throw of 57.49 meters.

Freshman thrower Jaekob Vollbrecht finished third with a toss of 48.36 meters in the discus throw. He also placed third in shot put with a 16.47-meter throw.

Track and Field will compete in the George Mason Spring Invitational April 13 in Fairfax.

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PRESS BOX

LeBron gave up on the Lakers

JARON NUTTER
Contributing Writer

LeBron James and the Los Angeles Lakers were a major disappointment this season. As injuries and losses piled up, the Lakers were eliminated from the playoffs. The trade speculation surrounding Anthony Davis and the Lakers ruined the team’s camaraderie. Los Angeles’ front office made every player except James expendable, basically saying they are all replaceable and unimportant. This created animosity between James and the roster — he acted as an assistant to the general manager and helped make moves behind the scenes.

The tension in the Lakers locker room resulted in 15 losses in 21 games after the trade deadline. This is the sixth consecutive season the Lakers have missed the playoffs and the first time James has missed the playoffs in 14 years. But the most disappointing part of the Lakers’ season is James quitting on his team to prepare for a film he is starring in this summer.

On Christmas Day, the Lakers were the No. 4 seed in the Western Conference after defeating the defending champion, the Golden State Warriors, in Oakland, California. The young core of Lonzo Ball, Kyle Kuzma and Brandon Ingram mixed with crafty veterans Lance Stephenson and Rajon Rondo seemed to be a nice supporting cast for James. The Lakers were destined to challenge the Warriors for the Western Conference title — until James’ groin injury. It was the first crack in LA’s fragile armor. With the team’s superstar sidelined after straining his groin on Christmas Day, Los Angeles lost 11 of its next 18 games.

“Being out 18 games, the longest of my career, was devastating,” James told Bleacher Report. “Not only to me personally, but to our team.”

The Lakers fell from 20-14 to 27-25,

dropping to the No. 9 seed in the Western Conference. James’ injury was the beginning of the end to the Lakers’ once promising season.

Los Angeles took another serious hit while James was recovering from his injury. Starting point guard Lonzo Ball suffered an ankle sprain on Jan. 19 against the Rockets. Ball made a huge impact on defense in his second season, and his injury reflected that.

According to USA Today, the Lakers had the seventh-best defense in the league before Ball’s injury. The team dropped to 28th after he was sidelined. Ball’s injury proved yet another damaging blow to the Lakers season. Ball was never cleared to play after the ankle sprain and was shut down for the rest of the season on March



Illustration by Steck Von

9. Lakers small forward Brandon Ingram’s season came to an end the same day after undergoing surgery on his arm. Los Angeles was never able to recover after losing its two young stars. The absence of Ball and Ingram was the most debilitating loss suffered in the Lakers’ season.

As the NBA approached the trade deadline, the biggest news around the league were the trade speculations surrounding the Lakers and Anthony Davis. Team president Magic Johnson essentially put the entire team — except James — on the market for Davis. Los Angeles offered Ball, Kuzma, Ingram, Josh Hart, Ivica Zubac, Kentavious Caldwell-Pope and two first-round draft picks for Davis. The offer created tension between James and the other players: Los Angeles’ front

office created a rift in the roster and ruined team chemistry. The Lakers fell into the Pelicans’ plot to destroy the Lakers internally, through their greed and impatience to land another superstar. Ultimately, the Pelicans rejected the offer, and the Lakers played themselves.

Los Angeles was eliminated from playoff contention after losing to the Nets on Mar. 22. The defeat capped off a depressing season for a team expected to reach the Western Conference Finals. The loss continued the Lakers’ postseason drought. The last time Los Angeles made the playoffs, Dwight Howard and Steve Nash were starting players. As one streak continued, another came to an end. LeBron James 13-year postseason appearance and eight-year NBA Finals appearance streak abruptly ended. The 2018-19 Lakers are the most disappointing NBA team in recent memory.

On Mar. 30, James was reportedly “shut down” for the rest of the season. Unlike his teammates, Ball and Ingram, James wasn’t dealing with a season-ending injury at the time of the report. Even though the rest of the Lakers games were meaningless, James basically quit on his team. With only six games remaining on the schedule, James should have finished the season for his team.

Los Angeles reported that James needed rest for his groin injury, but he is really just resting up for the summer. James is scheduled to star in “Space Jam 2,” a modern remake of the classic cartoon and basketball movie featuring Michael Jordan that was released in 1996. Many compare James to Jordan, but one thing Jordan never did was quit on his team and shut himself down for the rest of the season — especially to shoot a movie. James’ loyalty is without a doubt in question. No wonder he’s having trouble recruiting players to star in the movie with him.

Bumpy stretch continues, Lacrosse drops fifth straight

NOAH FLEISCHMAN
Sports Editor

Lacrosse was defeated twice over the weekend in Atlantic 10 play, falling to Richmond and George Washington.

GEORGE WASHINGTON

The Colonials knocked off the Black and Gold 18-8 in Foggy Bottom April 7, after falling six goals behind in the first half.

George Washington scored six goals in the first 11 minutes, including three in the first five minutes.

Junior attacker Jessica Del Rossi ended the scoreless streak for the Rams about 12 minutes into the contest. Junior midfielder Keriann McTavish logged the second goal of the afternoon for VCU, pulling the Rams within six goals of the Colonials.

McTavish scored again, this time on a one-player advantage after George Washington received a yellow card.

The Rams came out of the halftime break with their foot on the gas — senior attacker Molly Barcikowski scored just over a minute into the period.

Barcikowski scored again midway through the half, pulling the Rams with-

in five of the Colonials at 13-8. But, that was the closest the Rams were able to the lead. George Washington scored five unanswered goals in the final eight minutes of the contest.

Barcikowski led the Rams with two goals, along with McTavish who also scored two.

Senior goalie Ria Peralta recorded 12 saves in the loss to George Washington.

RICHMOND

The Rams fell to the Spiders at Cary Street Field April 5 14-8, despite Peralta’s career-high 22 saves.

Richmond jumped out in front early, scoring three goals in the first six minutes to take the three-goal advantage.

VCU cut the deficit to one goal after senior midfielder Clare Murphy and McTavish logged a goal apiece. This was the closest the Rams pulled within the Spiders the entire afternoon.

The Rams received a yellow card early in the second half, giving the Spiders a one-player advantage for two minutes. Richmond took full advantage of the penalty, scoring two goals to extend the lead to five.

McTavish found the back of the net



Junior midfielder Keriann McTavish scored six goals in the two games over the weekend. Photo by Shayla Bailey

again for the Rams with about nine minutes left, pulling within three goals of the Spiders. The Rams’ shooting went cold the rest of the way, as they failed to score in the final nine minutes.

Richmond outshot the Rams 41-20, including 36-13 in shots on goal.

McTavish led the Rams with four goals

on eight shot attempts. Barcikowski and Murphy each logged one goal and one assist in the defeat.

The Rams will be back in action at Cary Street Field April 12 against St. Bonaventure at 5 p.m.

RAM IN ACTION

Del Rossi continues success and leadership this season

ADAM CHEEK
Staff Writer

NOAH FLEISCHMAN
Sports Editor

Growing up in New York, junior attacker Jessica Del Rossi didn't play lacrosse until she was in third grade, when one of her friends showed her the sport.

"She had an older sister in college who played, and she said I should join," Del Rossi said, "so I started doing it and I'm loving it."

The North Massapequa, New York, native played lacrosse and volleyball at Plainedge High School, playing with five Division I players. Del Rossi gained leadership experience as captain of the volleyball team.

RAM STAT

Junior attacker Jessica Del Rossi has recorded 22 goals and two assists this season.

Del Rossi was drawn to the Black and Gold because of VCU's campus.

"The city is really open. You can walk anywhere," she said. "What drew me to the lacrosse team was the coaches and how friendly they were, and that they had a goal to win the A-10 tournament."

During her freshman year, Del Rossi was a key playmaker for the Rams. She logged six goals in a game against Duquesne and also tied for second in scoring during that campaign, logging 36 goals.

"It was what I've been working for my

“

The friendships that you get, memories that you have, you'll never forget them."

Jessica Del Rossi, junior attacker

whole life. It was like I made it," Del Rossi said. "It was great, my team is really inclusive, and everyone wants the same thing. So it's just a good feeling to be a part of that."

Del Rossi has also improved her own skills during her time in the commonwealth, specifically her ability to lead.

"I definitely like communicating more and being open to like having more of a leadership role," she said, "and it's okay to communicate to people and help people out, because we're all there."

The team was a great place for the then-freshman to settle after she arrived at VCU.

"We all just got along really well, just like working for each other, like we're a

hardworking group," Del Rossi said. "We have one goal we all want to work towards ... I think we're higher ranked than we normally have been so we want it more."

Del Rossi also considers lacrosse an occasional escape from typical college life.

"Once I step on the field," she said, "I forget about everything else."

The attacker said the team has gradually evolved over her career and that losing to important opponents motivate the entire roster.

"We're a heavy upper-classman group. So it's been mainly the same people that have been coming back every year," Del Rossi said. "Playing the same teams every year, when we lose to the same teams, we want to come back and win. So we work together."

She has also helped mentor rookies by having lunch with them and giving tours around campus. A number of those recruits ended up choosing the Black and Gold, she said.

Del Rossi said she takes a lot away from lacrosse and her career in it.

"The friendships that you get, memories



Junior attacker Jessica Del Rossi has scored 75 goals in her VCU career. Photo by Shayla Bailey

that you have, you'll never forget them," she said. "The big wins, big moments that help you in overtime or those that tie up games to send them to overtime."

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On this day

In 1970, Paul McCartney officially announced the split of The Beatles.



Illustration by Steck Von

Bury it, then leave it there

‘Pet Sematary’ is a vapid and lifeless waste of great potential

BRANDON SHILLINGFORD
Contributing Writer

“Sometimes, dead is better.”

Jesus, you don’t have to tell me twice.

After the smash success of 2017’s “It,” excitement for the adaptation of Stephen King’s seminal 1983 novel “Pet Sematary” was bound to be huge. But since its premiere at South by Southwest weeks ago and increased attention from critics, the buzz has gone down considerably and the reception is mixed.

I’m a fan of the book and many adaptations of King’s work, so even after its lackluster trailers and some bad word-of-mouth, I was really looking forward to seeing “Pet Sematary” and reaching my own conclusion.

And that conclusion is, I wish I had gone to see “Shazam!” again because wow, this movie is bad.

“Pet Sematary” is directed by Kevin Kölsch and Dennis Widmyer, the duo behind 2014’s wildly underseen “Starry Eyes.” The plot follows the Creed family as they move from Boston to a small town in rural Maine. What seems like an ideal fresh start for the family turns into a horrifying nightmare, when their new neighbor Jud Crandall introduces the Creeds to a pet cemetery built on their land. A series of tragedies begin to besiege the family.

While “Pet Sematary” has a mix of supernatural thriller elements, it’s a horror story at heart — which is confusing, since it doesn’t try to scare or

unnerve the audience. Instead, it just unleashes a barrage of cheap jump scares. The rest of the film is slow, boring and monotonous.

This movie is 100 minutes long, and believe me, I felt every single one. It’s one thing for a film’s pacing to be slow and deliberate, allowing the audience to wallow in the terror and tension in anticipation of what’s to come. But making the viewer sit through a varying slog of expository dialogue should be considered criminal.

And it would be different if “Pet Sematary” was at least visually interesting, but the only real way to describe the cinematography would be bland and uninspired. There are some clever shots where the use of shadows and fog obscures characters, which gives some scenes a slight sense of atmosphere, but that’s about as creative as this movie gets in terms of lighting and cinematography. Also, the gray color palette doesn’t help.

The shot composition is competent, but there’s a certain way to block scenes in horror movies to make them scary or suspenseful. “Pet Sematary” isn’t able to do either. It feels like Kölsch and Widmyer think the only way to build tension is to show characters walking slowly through dimly lit hallways being startled with loud noises.

This makes up most of the second act — characters we feel nothing for and know nothing about are put into confusing situations that don’t elicit empathy from the audience.

The Creeds are a family with almost nothing special or memorable about them. We only learn about the past of the matriarch — played exceptionally by Amy Seimetz, who tries her hardest to act like this script isn’t terrible — through an enormous expository dump toward the end of the first act.

“

And it would be different if ‘Pet Sematary’ was at least visually interesting, but the only real way to describe the cinematography would be bland and uninspired.”

Brandon Shillingford,
contributing writer

Before focusing on fun set pieces and how to scare an audience, the filmmakers need to build an interesting and engaging story. And in a time when audiences want original and innovative horror movies that challenge stereotypical genre conventions, “Pet Sematary” feels like an enormous step backward.

Compared to other King adaptations, this film fares even worse against the likes

of “It” and “Gerald’s Game.” “It” takes the best parts of the brilliant-but-long novel and condenses it into a fun and scary blockbuster, while “Gerald’s Game” is a disturbing and chilling piece of contained domestic horror.

The biggest difference between “Pet Sematary” and these films is that — whether crafting chilling imagery or introducing new elements to established characters — they actually made the effort to elevate the source material for the visual medium.

This film had the opportunity to take any of these approaches but ignored them instead. And any changes it does make have no lasting effect on the plot or characters.

I don’t blame the film for trying to deviate from the source material. In fact, I wish it made more changes. Where I take issue is its handling of the new plot elements — like the exchange of certain characters’ fates or altered story beats toward the end of the film — that could have made for great additions.

The novel explored grief and guilt through a family’s experience. Those themes have been examined time and time again in film. In order to distinguish itself from other movies, “Pet Sematary” had to do something special and truly unique to justify its existence.

There’s one great performance and a few creepy visuals. But aside from that, “Pet Sematary” is one animal that shouldn’t have been dug up.

Rating: 1/5

Feminist publication promotes an enchanted narrative

IMAN MEKONEN
Contributing Writer

“Art + Ideas = Magic.”

That’s the “go-to magical spell” for Quail Bell Magazine, the feminist publication that has created a community to provide a platform for woman artists and help them showcase their talents.

Taken from the name of a fairytale written by founding editor Christine Sloan Stoddard, Quail Bell features several genres of writing, including fiction and non-fiction.

“Quail Bell is different from other publications because it is woman-run and uplifts the voices of new, emerging and marginalized writers,” Stoddard said. “It is also different because it is highly visual and plays with new media. It is not purely literary or journalistic.”

Stoddard, a 2012 VCUarts alumna, founded the publication during her time as an undergraduate student. She said Quail Bell serves in part to explore the boundaries between “what is real and what is unreal.”

The magazine explores narratives that focus on history and culture. Quail Bell’s website is updated several times a week, if not daily. They also publish special print projects, including zines and books.

“I wanted to create a feminist publication as a platform for female writers, artists and editors to express themselves, collaborate with each other and assume leadership positions,” Stoddard said. “Not every piece we publish is explicitly feminist, but the community we foster is definitely a welcoming intersectional space.”

The Brooklyn-based artist develops ongoing ideas for events for the magazine, like art shows and partnerships, as well as collaborations with other writers and organizations. The magazine has editors and contributors in Richmond, New York, Washington and other locations around the world. She said

developing a community is just as important as the magazine’s mission to serve as an alternative new media publication.

She works closely with executive editor Gretchen Gales, who helps Stoddard with creative discussions involving social media campaigns and creating print projects, such as anthologies.

Gales, who is also a VCU alumna, became involved with Quail Bell after discovering the publication at a First Friday art walk when she was a student.

“About a year later, I had my first poem accepted,” Gales said, “and was also invited to become part of the crew.”

She was later promoted to assistant editor, then managing editor before assuming her position as executive editor in 2018.

One of Quail Bell’s special projects, “Her Plumage,” is set to release this summer. The anthology will include essays, fiction and poetry from the staff’s favorite woman writers, with content starting from 2015. The writing highlights women’s issues and what it means to be feminine, Gales said.

All proceeds from the magazine will benefit She Is Rising, a nonprofit that supports survivors of gender violence and human trafficking.

Quail Bell created a fundraiser on Facebook to raise money for Her Plumage. If they don’t meet the goal, they can’t run the project.

“We figured since the anthology was focused on women’s writing that we should focus on a women-focused nonprofit,” Gales said.

Gales said the magazine values marginalized voices to inspire creative people from all over the world. Unlike some other publications, Gales said Quail Bell puts publishing important stories before profit.

“[Quail Bell] prioritizes the stories that need to be told,” Gales said. “We might not make loads of money, but our mission is something worth fighting for.”



VCU alumni Gretchen Gales and Christine Sloan Stoddard run Quail Bell, a feminist magazine that publishes writing from several genres. Photo courtesy of Christine Sloan Stoddard

‘The Dirt’ displays the extravagance of rock star fame ... and that’s about it

AARON ROYCE
Contributing Writer

Within the first two minutes of Netflix’s “The Dirt,” those uninterested in rock music or its stereotypes would be understandably deterred.

The introduction features a riotous apartment party that involves the band’s frontman setting his arm on fire, and other members participating in sexual exploits that culminate in a public orgasm. Self-introduced as a “gang of f-cking idiots,” Mötley Crüe continues to overdo everything from sex and drugs to over-the-top musical performances until the film’s end.

Directed by Jeff Tremaine of “Jackass” — which sets the tone of this film and should serve as a warning for those unfamiliar with his work — “The Dirt” is based on Mötley Crüe’s 2001 memoir of the same name. The spiral of dramatic events ranges from the genre’s expected themes of parental abuse, affairs and spousal violence to the unexpected scene of Ozzy Osbourne snorting ants. These are heightened by the boldly monochromatic lighting and color tones in each scene, which are the film’s most prominent redeemable qualities.

Performances by Douglas Booth as Nikki Sixx and Machine Gun Kelly as Tommy Lee are also exceptional. It might only be because they’re given the most screen time and hedonistic behaviors — such as when Sixx snorts cocaine off of



groupies and Lee’s performance of oral sex in the movie’s opening.

They’re well done, but none of the characters are remotely likeable and consistently dig themselves into deeper pitfalls. Unlike films that show improved integrity after their protagonists pursue fame, the men in this band never seem to learn when to stop. They don’t change their behavior after their frontman nearly dies or a band member is killed in a drunken car crash.

The movie’s chronology is applaudable. It’s one of the most structural parts of the film. The band’s original quartet — Sixx, Lee, Mick Mars and Vince Neil — is shown from its beginnings in childhood households to the formation of Mötley Crüe, embarking on a first tour and exploring the dangers of limitless fame. There are also timeline-worthy events that appear to pay homage to Mötley Crüe’s original tales.

Viewers can expect overdose resuscitation, excessive day drinking and rushed celebrity marriages in this band’s pursuit of infamy.

In a sense, this film is the antithesis to last year’s rock biopic “Bohemian Rhapsody” — it’s an honest tale of stardom, with more rock glamour than “Rhapsody’s” emotional grit. The film’s accuracy to the original memoir and its stream of unrestrained humor is without flaw. The book’s simplicity definitely makes for an easy film adaptation of the 1980s rock stereotype that Mötley Crüe furthered: loud, music-blasting, leather-jacket-wearing rebels. But their high-rolling lifestyle leaves more to be desired — there’s no lessons learned or behaviors changed after they skyrocket to fame.

That excess of rock star tropes — trashy hotel rooms, rampant sexual affairs and uncontrolled partying, to name a few — is so extravagant it leaves little room for humane moments or sympathy for

the film’s protagonists. The band’s drive to fight traditional musical conventions in an era of new wave sound is admirable. But ultimately their glamorous rise to fame takes a toll, and that seems to be the film’s driving factor.

Fame and celebrity status are parts of American culture today, and Mötley Crüe’s unruly, raunchy and trashy lifestyle makes for an interesting response. Their subsequent days of no-holds-barred constant partying is shocking, concerning and exactly what one would expect from the biggest rock band in the world during the ‘80s.

“The Dirt” isn’t for the faint of heart and likely isn’t for rock music fans who only value Mötley Crüe for their musical contributions. The target audience is longtime fans or even rebellious young adults who can look past the graphic displays of fame-induced debauchery and still be entertained. Though true to its adaptation, this movie’s goal of spotlighting a group’s glam-rock lifestyle and rise to prominence has all of the craft and depth of a dumpster fire.

A TV interview featured in the movie promises to give viewers “a glimpse inside all the sex, drugs, and rock ‘n’ roll.” That statement sums up “The Dirt” in a nutshell — if sex, drugs and rock ‘n’ roll are your forte, you’ll see them all in constant gratuity.

Rating: 2.5/5



Illustration by Emely Pascual

Making the case for video game music

QUENTIN RICE
Staff Writer

The idea that video games are only for the elusive “basement-dwelling nerd” has subsided over the years. With the advent of streaming, and as the first generations of kids with home consoles get older, gaming has become more ubiquitous than ever. That growth has allowed more gamers to talk openly about everything they enjoy about gaming. Perhaps what they have most in common is their love for and identification with the music that accompanies their favorite games.

Video games are a strong cultural force, even a massive money maker — last year *GTA V* was certified to have made more money than any other piece of media. Perhaps it is no surprise that more effort is being put into every aspect of game-making. Video games are unique in that they are essentially a combination of many art forms: graphic design, sound design, storytelling and programming are all essential parts of a good game.

“In a game that focuses on storytelling, the music can become so intimately tied to certain moments that the emotional impact is almost unbearable.”

Quentin Rice, staff writer

It’s a shame these aspects are still scoffed at by some, because video games still carry a “nerdy” tag. Nowhere is this dismissal more egregious than in the music department.

For many games, music’s chief responsibility is world-building. The *Legend of Zelda: Breath of the Wild* makes scant use of music outside of combat, but the light piano flourishes upon sighting a new mountain really draws the player in. *Minecraft*’s legendary soundtrack serves its game masterfully, aiding the serene and almost therapeutic slow-paced atmosphere. It’s a favorite study ambiance for many college students.

These soundtracks, while they do so well, serve the same purpose as most game soundtracks since the dawn of gaming. But the fast pace of technology is helping game developers find new uses for their soundtracks.

Video game music shares a lot of traits with show tunes. In a game that focuses on storytelling, the music can become so intimately tied to certain moments that the emotional impact is almost unbearable.

A perfect example is “Aerith’s Theme” from *Final Fantasy VII*. Aerith’s death is one of the most iconic and upsetting twists in gaming history, despite how poorly the 1997 graphics have aged. The way “Aerith’s Theme” plays through the boss battle following her death created a supremely devastating moment that was drilled into the memory of many gamers who grew up with the title.

FFVII’s soundfont also plays a big part in all of the surprising and charming moments it sports. Hardware limitations made it difficult to use real, organic recordings in games, so many composers used the same set of MIDI sounds to compose an entire soundtrack. This is a soundfont — think of it like a typeface, but for electronic instruments. This can lend itself to the massive emotional impact in certain games.

Earthbound is another title that uses a very characteristic and almost cute soundfont. The game’s soundtrack full of muted MIDI trumpets, electronic blips and muffled bass grooves do wonders for its memorability. The tight association between these games and their soundfonts can make modernized remixes a bit hard to listen to. I often cringe at the organic versions of *Earthbound*’s music in the *Super Smash Bros.* series.

Fans of musicals will know that a leitmotif is a musical riff used to evoke a certain theme or character. *Star Wars* is rife with leitmotifs. The audience knows when the main riff from “The Imperial March” plays, Darth Vader is near. Recently, game developers have found fantastically creative ways to use leitmotifs in their games.

Cuphead, released September 2017, is a technical masterpiece and a love letter to run ‘n’ gun games from the ‘80s and animation from the ‘30s. Animated just like an early Disney cartoon — every frame was painstakingly hand-drawn — *Cuphead* flaunts an absolutely bombastic three-hour

soundtrack of big band jazz numbers by Kristofer Maddigan. Aside from the massive talent displayed on the record, what impresses me most is that many tracks use the same lick of four notes in such drastically different ways that it can be difficult to pick up on at first. A swanky club number, a lighthearted, bouncy tune and a Bond-esque spy theme all use this same lick, but share absolutely nothing else in common.

Cuphead’s soundtrack serves its game perfectly, but it is also a fantastic jazz record all on its own that can be enjoyed by someone who knows absolutely nothing about video games. There aren’t many games that achieve this to the extent that *Cuphead* does, but when it’s done right it really is something I wish more people could partake in.

The *Persona* series from Japanese developer Atlus has mastered this. The series has long been known for its eclectic soundtracks that fuse soul, rhythm and blues, alternative rock and even hip-hop. Composer Shoji Meguro has created absolute treasures for all five games, but he nailed the J-pop-informed acid jazz with the most recent installment, *Persona 5*.

The first time Lyn Inazumi’s voice soars over battle in “Last Surprise” is simply impossible to forget. Meguro’s odd fusion fits *Persona 5*’s odd world so perfectly, but even after 100-plus hours logged in the game, I still want to listen to it when I’m not playing. If this album were released as its own work under a band name rather than being attached to a video game, I think it would be the topic of a lot more conversation in the music world.

Licensed music has also seen some creative use in video games. The ‘40s swing tunes in the *Fallout* series, the ‘80s hair metal in *Grand Theft Auto: Vice City* and José Gonzáles’ “Far Away” in *Red Dead Redemption* all serve the age-old duty of world building by literally bringing the game into the real world.

The traditional album structure and the culture that builds around an artist are difficult to replicate with video game OSTs on a broad scale. But, while records can certainly tell stories, they cannot produce the same slap-in-the-face moments that video game music does in tandem with its story. I want more people to experience these slaps. And I want more people to be exposed to the fire that video games can create.

UPCOMING EVENTS

See something

FRI. 4/12

Guest artist performance

Piano duet Blanc et Noir will perform in the Sonia Vlahcevic Concert Hall. For more information, visit arts.vcu.edu/music. 6 p.m., W.E. Singleton Center for the Performing Arts (922 Park Ave.) Free.

SAT. 4/13

Vinylthon 2019

WVCW will play vinyl-only music and give away items to listeners, all day and all night. To listen, visit wvcw.org or use the WVCW app. 24 hours, Student Media Center (817 W. Broad St.) Free.

SAT. 4/13

Intercultural Festival

Vendors and performers will fill the streets around the Student Commons for a festival, offering food and activities from a variety of cultures. Visitors with VCU IDs will get \$10 of food at any participating food truck. 11 a.m.-3 p.m., University Student Commons (907 Floyd Ave.) Free.

Do something

WED. 4/10

Easter Baskets With Heroes

Heroes at VCU — an organization dedicated to helping sick children — will make Easter baskets for the Children’s Hospital. The event will take place at Rodney’s. For more information, email heroesatvcu@gmail.com. 7-8 p.m., Shafer Court Dining Center (810 Cathedral Place) Free.

SAT. 4/13

2019 Ukrop’s Monument Avenue 10K

Twenty-five thousand participants will gather at Broad and Harrison streets for the 20th annual race. There will also be costumed runners, a race for kids, live music and a post-race party. 8:30 a.m.-1 p.m., Welcome Center (1111 W. Broad St.) Free.

Learn something

THURS. 4/11

National Alcohol Screening Day

The Wellness Resource Center will teach visitors about alcohol safety. Participants who speak with The Well representatives about alcohol use will get free T-shirts and pizza. For more information, visit thewell.vcu.edu. 11 a.m.-3 p.m., University Student Commons (907 Floyd Ave.) Free.

THURS. 4/11

Real Life Film Series: Unseen Enemy

There will be a screening of “Unseen Enemy,” which addresses the threat of epidemics in the 21st century. It will be followed by a discussion led by people with expertise in the film’s topics. Register at vcu.libcal.com. 12:10-1 p.m., Room 2-010, Tompkins-McCaw Library (509 N. 12th St.) Free.

MON. 4/15

Qualitative Brown Bag

VCU Libraries will host the final qualitative research discussion of the academic year. Books and videos will be available on qualitative collection and analysis. For more information, visit library.vcu.edu/about/events. 11:30 a.m.-1 p.m., Room 250, James Branch Cabell Library (901 Park Ave.) Free.

Quote of the week
“There is no gate, no lock, no bolt that you can set upon the freedom of my mind.”
— VIRGINIA WOOLF

Celebrities are worth more than their talent

TAGWA SHAMMET
Contributing Writer

When someone asks who your favorite celebrity is, it probably doesn't take much thought for you to answer. But if someone asks who your favorite politician or activist is, you'd be stumped.

Celebrities are easily recognizable. People can identify Justin Bieber or one of the Kardashians, yet struggle to point out Angela Davis or Cory Booker. People care more about what a celebrity is wearing than the constant injustices happening around us.

American culture has normalized obsessing over celebrities. A fan of a celebrity is much more willing to do something if said celebrity endorses it. If a politician, however, were to make the same request, that person may not feel as motivated to do it.

Take Kylie Jenner for example: if she told fans to purchase her new lip kit, fans would rush to their nearest makeup provider to buy it. However, when Bernie Sanders begged the younger generation to vote in the 2016 presidential election, only 31% of the eligible population, ages 18-29, actually went out to vote. That being said, celebrities of high status should have a sense of obligation to use their fame to promote and voice the injustices of this society — the same society that praises them.

Actor Chris Evans — primarily known for his role as Marvel's Captain America — did not renew his contract with Marvel after filming the fourth movie in the "Avengers" franchise and has no current

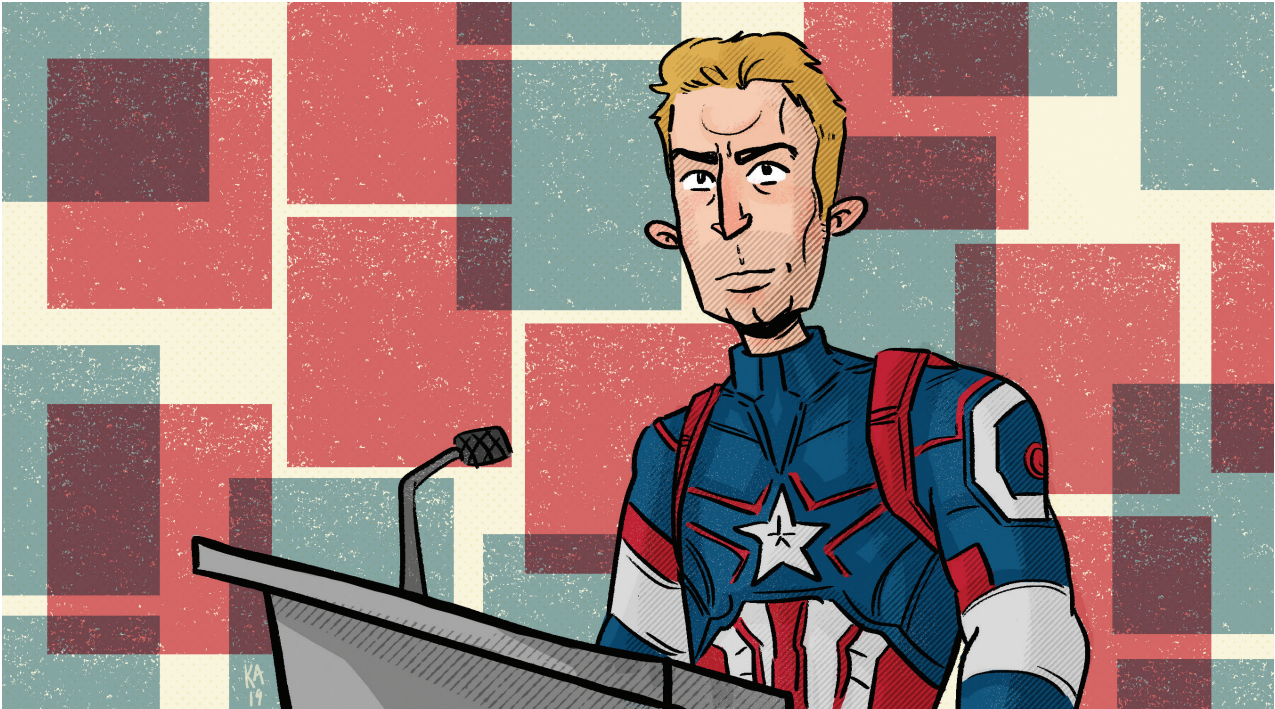


Illustration by Karly Andersen

plans to return. Evans is one of many actors focusing on political tensions — such as the Trump presidency and the water crisis in Flint, Michigan. Evans is known for using Twitter as a platform for his political and social beliefs. A recent tweet highlighted his involvement with Children's Miracle Network Hospitals.

Evans also has no issue displaying his distaste for the current administration. In tweets from 2016, he praised Hillary Clinton and compared Trump to a fifth grader. Celebrities should take notes from Chris Evans.

I could sit here and type my heart out about how it's quite disturbing and disheartening to know many people care more about TV personalities and social media gurus. Instead, I'll let this be a call to celebrities to use their privilege and stardom as a rostrum to speak for people being crushed by societal norms, bring awareness to the

impending destruction of climate change and the endless violence and hate plaguing the planet.

I cannot begin to tell you how many times I've scrolled through Twitter and it is flooded with celebrity scandal instead of real-world issues. Amid some Kardashian drama, someone quoted one of Khloé Kardashian's tweets, saying, "In more important news, Muslims in China are being held in concentration camps, Kashmiris are being killed by the Indian army and there is a famine in Yemen."

If Khloé Kardashian tweeted about these conflicts rather than her problems with Jordyn Woods, those Muslims, Kashmiris and Yemins would have gotten some much-needed attention. Young Americans get their news from reality TV stars — and that's not a bad thing, if these celebrities take advantage of the platform they have.

I'm not saying celebrities need to eat, sleep and breathe activism. Unlike Alex Proud, a Telegraph writer who argues celebrity opinions on "subjects that really matter" shouldn't be regarded, I encourage celebrities to talk about these issues.

"It wasn't always this way. Back in Hollywood's golden age, we had love at a distance," Proud said about how celebrities never used to share their opinions.

This "love at a distance" meant actors and actresses understood their job was simply to act, not provide input on real-world issues. But it isn't the 1950s anymore — society has evolved, so we should allow and encourage celebrities to use their platforms to further their social and political viewpoints.

"Celebrities who people feel positively toward are able to influence what people think about specific political issues," said author David J. Jackson of Bowling Green State University in an interview with PsyPost.

If our elected officials — who, according to Proud, are the people qualified to speak on political topics — don't get as much attention as celebrities, they cannot educate the public as well as they should. Celebrities should use their fame and stardom to account for this discrepancy and inform their fans.

The score of issues brought by the current political climate cannot be solved without the advocacy of all key players and everyone's education. The power of fame is undeniable and should be utilized by everyone privileged enough to have it.

An Ode to Self Care



Recommended listening while reading:
"BIG OLE FREAK"
Megan Thee Stallion

SHAUN JACKSON
Staff Columnist

Let me lay it out for you. Him: 29, business owner, larger-than-life personality, well-traveled and read. Me: 23, recently

re-enrolled in school after a bout of depression. I'm nice, I read and try to exercise, but I also have a tendency to overanalyze everything. Just tell me why this isn't going to work before my stupid ass falls for him. I want to think that I can contend for the affection of someone like him but that just seems unrealistic.

Honey, if you need me to point out every red flag and tell you why a particular relationship is doomed, I can do that. But that is not at all what you are asking me. You want me to hurt you so he can't, so you don't risk being emotionally vulnerable with him. Sorry, sis. You know that's not how we do things here. Pain is inevitable. Relationships end, and you are going to get hurt. Maybe not by this guy, but definitely by someone you care about at some point. There is nothing you can do but work through it and accept it. If you live your life trying to avoid the possibility of future pain, you will end up terribly

boring with no stories worth telling. Also, quit thinking of yourself as a "contender." No matter how this goes, you are worthy of him. Don't forget that.

I do research — when a fellow researcher says, "Hey, I'd love to discuss your research over coffee," and when you agree to said coffee, then said coffee somehow reconfigures into a dinner that he's paying for ... have I just been roped into a date?

Not necessarily. If you think his intentions are anything but professional, feel free to cancel on him, girl! However, two colleagues discussing research over dinner is just that (also, free dinner!) Just business. If he gets too personal or tries to make some sort of romantic move, then you've been duped ... and if that happens, put him in his place.

I like to think of myself as someone who is all in when it comes to love, which

begs me to ask, is love without the forever part worth it?

This might sound a little harsh, but there is no forever part, darling. Everything is temporary and constantly in motion. I think what you're really asking is whether love without the commitment part is worth it. I have often found that it is, but it doesn't feel that way during the heartbreak phase.

If someone vocalizes that they are not a good person and also finds a way to sprinkle in the fact that they "don't know what it means to love," would it be stupid to date them?

I look at this one of two ways: They are either telling you the truth and you shouldn't date them, or they are playing games with you and you still shouldn't date them.

Sex work isn't an aesthetic

ALEXIA HOLLOWAY
Contributing Writer

Branden Miller’s internet persona “Joanne the Scammer” is iconic for her ruthless, conniving and hilarious jokes about scamming others. She influences people to scam and scheme others, especially men, for monetary gain.

This helped further develop “hoe culture” — a culture that normalizes the scamming that Joanne makes videos about. Many women have made “hoe culture” a societal staple, without truly knowing what supporting it entails.

The hashtag #survivingcardib became a trending topic on Twitter after a video resurfaced of Cardi B admitting to having drugged and robbed men to survive. Many people expressed outrage, comparing her to Bill Cosby, who drugged his victims and raped them.

While I do think what Cardi B admitted to was wrong, drugging and robbing someone is not comparable to drugging and raping someone. The tone Cardi B used in the video made it sound like she drugged these men to avoid any sexual contact the two might have agreed upon — not to violate them sexually.

Giving somebody a foreign substance without their knowledge with the intention to take advantage of them is universally wrong. If Cardi B violated these men sexually after drugging them, the Cosby comparisons would be valid. However, I do not agree with trying to equate theft and rape. They are two totally different acts.

The large amount of outrage toward Cardi B, especially from women, shocked



Illustration by Lindsay Hart

me. I was not sure if they were upset that a man who tried to pay for sex did not get his “service,” or if they were upset that Cardi B admitted her truth about something that happens frequently in sex work. Scheming and scamming men has been normalized — to the point where comedic personalities like Joanne the Scammer are able to prosper. Cardi B openly admitted to deceiving men into thinking they were having sex, drugging them and then robbing them. The internet acted as if she committed the ultimate sin.

Much of my confusion over the outrage is that some women on social media claim to “stan scammers.” When someone like Cardi B openly admits she had to scam to make a living, however, these same people say she belongs in jail. While I think it is valid to want Cardi B to face legal consequences, I don’t see the same energy toward men who have committed similar, or more severe, acts.

Kodak Black was recently charged with first-degree sexual assault of a high school student. These accusations have been floating around for about six months, but outrage over the situation did not surface until he made insensitive comments concerning Lauren London after the death of Nipsey Hussle.

Rappers have circulated drugs and guns through their communities since the 1990s. Men excused these behaviors, because these rappers had to resort to illegal activities to survive and eventually make it out of those neighborhoods. In some cases, they brag about street culture — which includes murder, theft and selling drugs — through catchy lyrics and trap beats. But when a woman says she scammed someone to get extra money, not boasting or flaunting at all, she is villainized for it.

This is similar to white kids from middle and upper class families enjoying gangster

rap but supporting legislation for mandatory minimums for marijuana charges. They support the perceptions of the culture, no matter how dark and scary it may be, until it becomes real.

Some people think men shower sex workers with money and have no expectations at all. And if people think there are expectations of these sex workers, it is consensual and sweet. But, sex workers have described a different reality.

Sex work is riddled with violence and rape. According to the Urban Institute, 58% of sex workers have experienced some type of violence. Strippers have reported being forcibly raped while in the club. Oftentimes, sex workers cannot come forward to the police, because many people think it is impossible to rape sex workers.

This glamorization of stripping and escorting is damaging, because it causes some people to think that terrible things do not happen in these professions. While the outrage over the video may come from a general dislike of Cardi B, because of her transphobic and anti-black comments, it stems from the glamorization of “hoe culture” and sex work culture in general. I do not agree with what she did, but some women do heinous things to avoid being victims.

Many people have a Wattpad-level understanding of strip clubs and sex work overall. Strip clubs are not full of men showering women with money out of love and admiration. Sugar daddies are not young millionaires who are just interested in a woman’s company. Sex work is not an aesthetic to appropriate. It is dangerous, risky and can drive some to do contemptible things with the goal of survival.

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THE CT STAFF

EXECUTIVE EDITOR

Georgia Geen
geengr@commonwealthtimes.org

MANAGING EDITOR

Saffeya Ahmed
ahmeds@commonwealthtimes.org

NEWS EDITOR

Fadel Allasan
news@commonwealthtimes.org

SPORTS EDITOR

Noah Fleischman
sports@commonwealthtimes.org

SPECTRUM EDITOR

Andrew Ringle
spectrum@commonwealthtimes.org

OPINIONS EDITOR

Brianna Scott
opinions@commonwealthtimes.org

MULTIMEDIA DIRECTOR

Erin Edgerton
photography@commonwealthtimes.org

AUDIENCE EDITOR

Alexandra Zernik
zernikal@commonwealthtimes.org

ILLUSTRATIONS EDITOR

Steck Von
illustrations@commonwealthtimes.org

STAFF WRITERS

Adam Cheek, Sports
Quentin Rice, Spectrum

STAFF COLUMNISTS

Shaun Jackson, Opinions
jacksonsk@commonwealthtimes.org

STAFF ILLUSTRATORS

Sammy Newman
Erin Joo
Summer McClure

VCU STUDENT MEDIA CENTER

DESIGN EDITOR

Ryan Rich
ryan@ryanrichdesign.com

GRAPHIC DESIGNERS

Mai-Phuong Bui
Jeffrey Pohanka
Andy Caress
designers@vcustudentmedia.com

ADVERTISING REPRESENTATIVES

Gabbi Bernardo
Dana Cantor
Miles S. Hicks
advertising@vcustudentmedia.com
(804) 828-6629

WEBMASTER

Chrislin Hearn
webmaster@vcustudentmedia.com

DISTRIBUTION MANAGER

Evan McGrady
distribution@vcustudentmedia.com

DIRECTOR

Allison Bennett Dyche
abdyche@vcu.edu
(804) 827-1975

CREATIVE MEDIA MANAGER

Mark Jeffries
mjjeffries@vcu.edu

BUSINESS MANAGER

Jacob McFadden
mcfaddenjc@vcu.edu

ASSISTANT BUSINESS MANAGER

Emily Furlich
smc_assistant@vcustudentmedia.com

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CT

Puzzles

For answers to this week’s puzzles, check commonwealthtimes.org/puzzles every Friday at noon.

Los Angeles Times

Crossword Puzzle

Edited by Rich Norris and Joyce Nichols Lewis

- ACROSS
- 1 “Beat it!”

5 Rubberneck

9 Preserve, in a way

13 Grammar topic

18 “East of Eden” director Kazan

19 Only part of Egypt in Asia

20 Brio

21 Bedouin, e.g.

22 Sure sign that Spot got into today’s dessert?

25 Doubtful story

26 Cause of a stir?

27 Nutritious beans

28 Metaphorical fate of a hatchet?

29 HuffPost owner

30 Prefix with phobia

31 Damage

32 APO mail recipients

35 Krispy Kreme rep’s agenda?

43 Medicinal plants

45 Beams

46 Give birth to

47 Boris Godunov, for one

48 Broadcast sign

49 NFL six-pointers

50 Kopf, across the border

51 Agitate

52 Ice cream order toppings?

58 Prof’s aides

59 Appear that way

60 Record holder

61 Rose garden pests

63 Run out, as a subscription

65 NYSE debut

66 Request before a shot

68 Remain at home

71 Coil of yarn

73 Passes

76 Campaign trail pro

77 Final roadside stop for an eggy treat?

82 Ness, for example

84 Soviet news acronym

85 Double curve

86 One washing off the driveway

87 Langston Hughes poem

88 Light-seeking flier

89 Slew

91 ___ Beach: South Carolina resort

92 “You’ve made the Heath bar perfectly!”?

96 One of two in seven: Abbr.

97 Exist

98 Blows it

99 Bygone Ford

101 Tropical lizard

105 “The ___ Witch Project”

107 Italian almond biscuits

112 Boy with a bow

113 “Nice apple tart, Christopher”?

115 Chip away at

116 It’s sometimes enough

117 They’re not idlers

118 “Buddenbrooks” author

119 One tweaking pitches

120 Style

121 “As I Lay Dying” father

122 Q.E.D. part

DOWN

1 Half of quatorze

2 Whodunit game

3 “O patria mia” singer

4 Young boys

5 Paid male escort

6 Like some quotes: Abbr.

7 Pale

8 Like plastic pink flamingos

9 “Later”

10 “The West Wing” actor

11 Golden Triangle country

12 Sci-fi spin-off before “DS9”

13 Roll out

14 Enjoy a view from on high

15 Both: Pref.

16 Big party

17 Henry James biographer Leon

19 Hair holders

23 Draft pick

24 They’re heard in jams

28 Barn bundle

30 Dumbfounded

31 Expert

32 Classification between family and species

33 Absurd

34 Dudley’s toon foe

36 Hindustani language

37 English assignment

38 Does a reception job

39 Env. enclosure

40 Query in Matthew

41 Food at a bar

42 Head lock

43 “Help!”

44 Biblical language

49 Chinese menu possessive

50 Mortise inserts

53 “College Football Live” channel

54 Grasping tool

55 Fat, e.g.

56 Corrupt

57 Ostentatious

62 Bullies

64 Focus of an heir war?

67 Clutter

68 Small Champagne bottle

69 Zipper part

70 Big name in kitchen foil

72 Buckwheat porridge

74 “Yum!”

75 Fishhook fastener

78 Supply

79 Flips (through)

80 Typist’s left hand home keys

81 “___ Day”: 1993 rap hit

83 All the rage

88 Kate of “The Martian”

89 Bacon portion

90 Contest with picadors

91 Iron and zinc

93 Carpenter’s need

94 Dull gray, as winter skies

95 “Get Shorty” novelist ___ Leonard

100 R&B group ___ Hill

101 “Rhyme Pays” rapper

102 Expert

103 Informed about

104 Right hand

105 Cram, with “up”

106 Centers of activity

107 First-rate

108 Plus-size supermodel

109 Alpine transport

110 Toon Charlie, memorably

111 “This ___ working”

113 Statehouse VIP

114 Long, long time

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Just Desserts by Paul Coulter

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Sudoku

By The Mephram Group

DIFFICULTY LEVEL

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4

Complete the grid so each row, column, and 3-by-3 box (in bold borders) contains every digit, 1 to 9. For strategies on how to solve Sudoku, visit sudoku.org.uk

1			5		8		2	
	8				6		5	
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6						5		4
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