



PAW PRINTS

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INSIDE “ORR.MEMES”

BY EMILY WILSON

In the early days of the 2018 school year, an ORR legend was born. The locally famous “orr.memes” Instagram account began gaining followers soon after its creation in November. It quickly became one of the most talked-about pop culture phenomena in school history. The page posted original and student-submitted memes commenting on school policies, such as the hall pass rule, or school trends, such as frequent bulldog block announcements. With an impressive peak follower count at nearly 900, students and staff were mesmerized. The most intriguing aspect of the ordeal was the anonymity of the account. Most students had no clue as to who was managing it, although, toward the end of its month-long run, the identity of the creator surfaced and became somewhat public.

Few students know the whole story behind “orr.memes”. Curious about the lightning-fast rise and fall of the beloved account, I set out to discover how one student managed to captivate an entire school without revealing their identity. Along the way, I found out what the meme account was meant to stand for.

“Me and my friend were talking about it and we were like ‘wouldn’t it be so funny if we made a meme page for ORR?’ and it just kind of went from there,” said the originator of “orr.memes”. In the account’s first week, the originator let two close friends know she had started it. Although she acted alone, the two friends were tasked with deflecting suspicion away from the creator, or “damage control”, as she put it. While in junior high school, she had created a similar Instagram account, which had boasted about 400 followers and featured similar content. The originator expected a few followers this time around, but she was not prepared for the publicity the meme account would bring her.

The originator was methodical in increasing the account’s popularity. She claimed: “I followed a bunch of really popular freshmen because I knew they would send it to their friends.” She started by following 10 people. Once they began sharing her account, she unfollowed them to leave no trace of her identity.

Teachers: *dont enforce needing a pass to go places*

Students: *go places without passes*

Teachers:



One of the most popular memes on the “orr.memes” page.

Within the first three days of the account’s existence, it exceeded 100 followers, and from there, it grew exponentially. After a week, students started sending their own memes for her to post. “Most of them were trash, but I got a couple good ones,” she added. In the spirit of school unification, she rejected memes that only certain students could relate to. “I wanted to appeal to a larger audience. I wanted them to be general enough so that everybody could relate to them.” As the account’s following increased, her memes began to promote a unified spirit in our divided school. The memes were not about the soccer team vs. the drama club or the freshmen vs. the seniors, but about the student body as a whole. Says she; “This was one thing that everyone could relate to.”

Students responded very well to the sentiments expressed in the memes. Junior Sarah Melloni, who was an avid follower of the account, believed its popularity could be attributed to the humor and accuracy of the memes.

(Continued on PAGE 4)

SHOWCASE YOUR TALENTS!

Email emilywilson@oldrochester.org to contribute to the paper.



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OR COMMUNITY

“THE CRUCIBLE” PERFORMANCE PRESENTS NEW PERSPECTIVE BY ELISE MELLO

If you’ve ever taken an English class, chances are you’ve been tasked with the annual burden of summer reading. For some, corporal punishment seems like a better alternative than having an ever-looming task that serves as a constant reminder that although summer’s in session, school can never be escaped. The pure hatred that it inspires among some students can overshadow the content of the books, which, contrary to popular belief, can actually be quite good! I know this was the case when I read “The Crucible” the summer before my sophomore year. Instead of actually reading the story and fully absorbing the content, I just focused on skimming the book for quotes to fill up my dialect journal, and getting a general synopsis that would give a passing grade on the exam that followed. However, this October current sophomores were given the opportunity to watch “The Crucible” by Arthur Miller in its intended medium: on stage. Most of the Sophomore class went to New Bedford’s famous Zeiterion Theater to see their summer reading book played out, and I was lucky enough to attend for the purpose of writing a review.

“The Crucible” takes place in the Puritan town of Salem, Massachusetts and depicts the harsh realities of the witch trials that occurred during the late 1600s. A whirlwind of events ensues when Abigail Williams, a troubled teenage girl living with her reverend uncle, is spotted dancing and summoning demons in the woods under the cover of darkness. When her cousin falls ill the next day, accusations of witching and dark magic begin to spread across town. Since the book is formatted like a play (with dialogue and some stage directions), there is a lot of room for interpretation when depicting both the characters’ intentions and the setting. In the National Players production of the novel, the cast took some unique creative liberties in regards to their interpretation of the classic tale, and needless to say, they didn’t disappoint.

One unique feature of this performance was the set or lack thereof. As opposed to filling the stage with small, colonial houses to depict Salem, the National Players chose to perform with a very mini-

malistic set consisting of only a few chairs, a gallows, and few platforms for dimension. I quite enjoyed this creative decision. A basic set allowed the audience to focus on the story, instead of distracting me with their elaborate detail and movement on or off the stage. Many props and set pieces had multiple purposes, which overall made for smoother transitions between scenes and let the audience members immerse themselves in the witch hunt.

What the set lacked in glamour the players made up for with their acting skills. The story is one filled with loss, competing concepts of morality, and sheer terror as people spread dangerous gossip in order to preserve their reputations. A play filled with such intensity requires extremely talented actors capable of depicting raw emotion. The National Players delivered in this aspect. The acting was so riveting that even the blaring car alarm sounding from outside the theatre didn’t detract from the show. Sophomore Emma Williamson stated after the show, “It was intense, that’s the best way to describe it”. According to Sophomore Emma Vivino, “I felt they put a lot of emotion into their acting”.

In my opinion, the performances weren’t perfect; there were a few actors who were so dedicated to showcasing their characters’ emotions that they yelled or spoke so quickly that they were incomprehensible. I wish I could’ve heard more of Tituba’s lines because I see her as a very complex character, but alas, the Zeiterion microphones were simply not able to pick up all the fast-paced dialogue.

Overall, I’m glad that I was given the opportunity to see “The Crucible” brought to life onstage. Not only was it entertaining and a way to avoid my history quiz, but the performance truly allowed me to connect more with the story. The message resonated with me deeply, as I saw themes in “The Crucible” echo modern societal issues. I can say confidently that “The Crucible” on stage is a completely different experience than reading the story in a book, and I hope that next year’s Sophomore class gets the opportunity to see the play again.



The National Players as Puritans in “The Crucible”. Image via Pueblo Pulp.



TEACHER TRIVIA!

Our teachers are fascinating people, and everyday, we learn a little more about them. How closely have you been paying attention? Test your knowledge with our new column, teacher trivia!

The answers to the following trivia questions are on **page 10!**

Question 1: Which World Language teacher once worked as an architect?

Question 2: Which teacher once appeared on a the game show, “Kid’s Quiz”, when they were in Junior High School?

Question 3: Which teacher spent two years living in Florence, Italy?

Question 4: Which teacher, who graduated in OR’s class of 2002, earned the senior superlative “Most Sarcastic”?



OR COMMUNITY

NEW COURSES FOR THE 2019-2020 SCHOOL YEAR

Latin Language and Culture 1

Level 3
5 Credits
Full year
Grades 9-11

Students in this course are introduced to the world of the ancient Mediterranean through their study of the basics of Latin grammar and Roman culture. Through this introductory course, students develop a deeper understanding of their own language, working extensively with English grammar and derivatives. In addition, students will learn about the daily life of the Romans, Greek and Roman mythology, as well as the geography of Rome and Italy.

Latin Language and Culture 2

Level 3
5 Credits
Full Year
Grades 9-11

Latin Language and Culture 2 is a continuation of Latin Language and Culture Part 1. Students in this course will expand their knowledge of the world of the ancient Mediterranean through their continued study of the basics of Latin grammar and Roman culture. Through this course, students develop a deeper understanding of their own language, working extensively with English grammar and derivatives. In addition, students will learn about the daily life of the Romans, Greek and Roman mythology, as well as the geography of Rome and Italy. Upon completion of this course students are prepared to continue their studies in Latin 2.

AP Physics 1

Level 5
5 Credits
Full Year
Grades 11-12

AP Physics 1 is an algebra-based, introductory college-level physics course. Students cultivate their understanding of physics through inquiry-based investigations as they explore these topics: kinematics; dynamics; circular motion and gravitation; energy; momentum; simple harmonic motion; torque and rotational motion; electric charge and electric force; DC circuits; and mechanical waves and sound. Students will learn to analyze the world around them by conducting experiments and then modeling those experiments with mathematical models. This course is designed as an introductory physics course, no previous physics course is required, but it is a very challenging introduction based on problem-solving.

Architectural Design 2

Level 3
2.5 Credits
Half Year
Grades 9-12

Architectural Design 2 is a hands-on course that builds upon skills learned in Architectural Design. In the first half of the class, students will use the software Chief Architect to design three-dimensional models of kitchens, bathrooms, and a two-bedroom residential home. In the second half of the class, students will plan, design, and construct a 1:16 scaled framing model of a two-bedroom home in balsa wood.

Architectural Design 3

Level 3
2.5 credits
Half Year
Grades 10-12

In Architectural Design 3 students will experience first-hand the technology that’s been sweeping over the world. Starting with lessons in engineering and technology, students begin by building RubiQ, their modular, open-source training drone! After learning the safety regulations and procedures surrounding unmanned aerial vehicles, they’ll then start with the basics of flight, first first becoming comfortable on a training simulator before moving to line-of-sight piloting. After mastering RubiQ’s controls, it’s time for students to don their First Person View (FPV) goggles, experiencing first-hand what STEM at 75 MPH is like!

Game Design and Development 2

Level 3
2.5 Credits
Half Year
Grades 9-12

Game design and development II is a continuation of the game design experience and programming skills gained in Introduction to Game Design. In this section, students will continue to brainstorm, prototype, test, and build original games using Unreal Engine 4. While this course requires programming skills, those who successfully completed Introduction to Game Design have all of the skills required for this class. Games in this section will include more advanced features such as role-playing game elements and abstract games.

Art History

Level 3
2.5 Credits
Half Year
Grades 9-12

Introducing art within social, economic, geographical, political, and religious context for understanding art and architecture through the ages, this one semester course offers high school students an overview of art throughout history. Students will engage in activities that emphasize visual literacy and critical thinking skills as a means to develop an appreciation and knowledge of artworks and art movements in the European tradition and cultures beyond. An emphasis will be placed upon the artist’s role in society and how art mediates a vast range of human experiences.

Media and Popular Culture

Level 3
5 Credits
Full Year
Grades 9-12

Have you ever wished you were part of the creative team behind your favorite television show, movie, album, or video game? Have you ever laboured to perfect a social media post or been ambushed by targeted advertising? Have you ever seen your friends, family, or acquaintances share misinformation without considering the consequences? In this ever-evolving course, you will learn how to analyze and interpret media messages, assess their value, and apply those lessons to media you create on your own. You will review film, television, video games, music, social trends in personalized media bogs, pitch your own entertainment and advertising concepts, and get hands-on experience developing the student newspaper. You will also have the opportunity to assume leadership positions on the newspaper staff and practice the principles of layout and design. Other major parts of the course include an extensive film study unit in which you will learn about cinematography, citing, screenwriting etc; an investigation into the best practices for maintaining your social media presence; and the development of a final, personalized media project that reflects your skills and interests. This elective course is designed for students in all grades.

COURSE NAME CHANGES

Engineering Design 1; Formerly Introduction to Engineering
Engineering Design 2; Formerly Principles of Engineering
Architectural Design 1; Formerly Architectural Design
Robotics Engineering 1; Formerly Lego Robotics
Robotics Engineering 2; Formerly Advanced Robotics
Game Design and Development 1; Formerly Introduction to Game Design





EDITORIAL

INSIDE “ORR.MEMES” (CONTINUED)

She stated; “I think it was so popular because the memes that were posted were not only well-thought-out but also really accurate to how students felt about some ORR inside jokes, like juuling and the wifi crashing. The opinions that inspired the account already resonated with students, so adding memes to the mix made it iconic.”

The creator not only used her platform to promote unity but also to speak out about ORR issues. “In the beginning, I was just posting for fun, but then once I started gaining a following and I heard that teachers were hearing about it, I wanted to post more things about problems with the school because I knew it would catch people's attention,” said the originator. Many of the memes pointed out problems such as the poor execution of the hall pass rule and the school’s tendency to focus on trivial issues. The account inarguably attracted the attention of the staff. In classrooms, teachers would openly discuss the memes with students. The memes were

to me the moment she realized how popular the memes had become; “It was during bulldog block, and there was no one in the hallway. I was walking back from the bathroom in the language hallway and all the doors were open. I could hear people talking about [“orr.mememes”]. I think that was the coolest thing. I was walking and every classroom was talking about it.”

The originator adhered to certain rules when posting memes. Her three outstanding rules were: 1) No slander, 2) No harassment, 3) No bad language or vulgar content. Whether or not the creator consistently followed these rules is debatable. Some staff members have objected to the memes that singled out specific teachers. For example, many of the memes mentioned Principal Devoll’s name and, in some cases, featured his photograph. In regards to her personal rules, the creator said: “I didn’t want to target any teachers because I would think ‘I know I’ll wind up getting in trouble for this’ and I didn’t want it to be considered harassment.” According to her, Principal Devoll pressured her to delete the account because it targeted specific groups and teachers. The account was gone later that day. In regards to this request, she said: “I think it was within their rights because I was taking aim at teachers and certain groups in the school, it could be seen as harmful. Not everyone has the same sense of humor as me. [Principal Devoll] had a right to do this, but I don’t think it was a reasonable request.” She believes that it would’ve been more reasonable if the school had asked her

to delete the problematic memes rather than the entire account.

When the account was finally gone, the student body was flabbergasted. Its deletion was largely unpredicted.



An “orr.mememes” meme that was posted shortly before the deletion of the account.

By that point, the creator’s name was already being whispered throughout the halls and the truth began to surface. “I just decided to give in,” she commented. “Still a lot of people didn’t know. Even when I took it down, not everyone knew it was me.”

The creator has no future plans to revive the account. She explains; “I think I might leave it alone. I realized I need to take a break from it and that there are better ways that I could work to improve the school, so I’ll just focus on that.” Despite our differences, “orr.mememes” gave the student body something to rally around, something that we all got. If only for a second, “orr.mememes” brought us together.

devoll trying to see our memes after we made the account private



At one point, the “orr.mememes” page went private to prevent anyone but students from viewing the memes. This meme was posted on the page’s Instagram story shortly thereafter.

even emailed among the staff.

The creator says she enjoyed the sense of power and importance she felt while running the page. She described



THE SALTY DOG

SATIRE: NEW BILL BANS FEMININE HYGIENE PRODUCTS

BY ALEXA MCLEOD AND CARLY O’CONNELL



A visual representation of how the Luxury Import Prohibition Act is affecting American women.

Background: For decades, feminine hygiene products have been taxed as a luxury item in the United States. Because the IRS does not consider tampons and other sanitary products medical devices, those who buy them must pay an additional price. Many advocates have called for the eradication of the tax, but only nine states have complied. This has left many American women to pay the “pink tax”, or “tampon tax”, among other names. Opposers of the tax have called it unfair and sexist. The issue has been ignored by most political figures since its ratification, sparking outrage among many Americans.

In early January of this year, our fearlessly progressive government has passed a new act which is expected to diminish the national debt by as much as 60%. This long-overdue bill, called the Luxury Import Prohibition Act, bans the sale of all non-essential goods in order to cut down on imports into the United States. Much to the dismay of millions of American women, this includes tampons and other sanitary products. Because feminine hygiene products are considered “non-essential” items, stores in most states will be taking them off the shelves. The housewives of America

should not get so incredibly emotional about the new ban. They should be grateful that the level-headed, menstrual cycle experts who are running the country are making these important decisions.

The alternative to these frivolous products is for women to go back to their organic roots and make use of the sanitary napkins which nature has provided them: leaves. According to a recent government press release, “For women’s bodies: the green leaves freshly picked from a tree will be most absorbent.”

This new rule will keep women from being distracted by personal choice, for all they have to do is get pregnant and none of this would be a concern. Men are not controlling women's bodies, that would be unethical. They are simply giving women the right to choose between two reasonable options: getting pregnant or getting to the forest.

The United States is projected to do just fine with the addition of this new law. Because the banned goods are all “non-essential,” absolutely nothing could go wrong. More importantly, the national economy is expected to skyrocket once our debt is paid, so it is vital to stay logical and think about what’s important: money.

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CLASS OLYMPICS!

Friday, February 15th
Stay tuned for more Student Council updates!

CONGRATULATIONS, DRAMA CLUB, ON YOUR MOST RECENT PRODUCTION: “CINDERELLA” !





ART

Student Artwork



By Kaitlin Kelley



By Kaitlin Kelley

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Wednesdays to cook with friends and
enhance your culinary skills.



CAREER CORNER

A REWARDING CAREER PATH: HEALTHCARE AND MEDICINE

BY KATELYN LUONG AND EMMA VIVINO

From a young age, children are constantly asked what they want to be when they grow up. Despite how frequently this question comes up, children are exposed to a limited number of careers, and unconventional careers are often overlooked. As they grow up, they learn about a wider variety of jobs. As teens and young adults, careers no longer seem like the glamorous interpretations we saw as children, but legitimate life choices which take dedication, hard work, and, sometimes, years of education. Careers in the medical field, like those of medical doctors and nurses, are among the most commonly idealized, while many of the technicalities and logistics of working in that field go unacknowledged. It's important for prospective medical professionals to understand that a doctor is more than just a person in a white coat with a stethoscope and that reaching this position takes years of relentless determination.

The medical industry is a career field with extensive professional opportunities, projected to grow 18% from 2016 to 2026, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Occupations in the healthcare industry have salaries ranging from \$25,000 to \$200,000 and well over, depending on education level, location, and other factors. The median of all salaries in the medical field is approximately \$64,770, which is \$27,080 higher than the median salary for all professions in America as of May 2017. It is important to note that the average salary of a medical professional in Massachusetts is considerably higher than most of the United States, but the cost of living is also higher, according to Boston Magazine.

A career in the healthcare industry may require no more than a high school diploma, or it could require a doctoral degree which is earned after 11+ years of schooling after starting college. Becoming a medical doctor requires the most extensive education in the field. An aspiring doctor will complete four years for their undergraduate degree, (which does not have to be a STEM-related degree). After passing the MCAT exam (Medical College Admissions Test), the scholar will complete four intense years of

medical school. Afterward, a doctor will enter into a three to seven-year residency, comparable to an internship, which focuses on hands-on training in a medical environment. Following this training, depending on the field a student's area of interest, they will enter a one to four-year fellowship in their desired specialized field. There are many specialties to suit any doctors interests, ranging from pediatrics to neurology to oncology. If desired, doctors may continue training to reach an even more specialized

**"It's a long process, but
it's worth it in the end."**

~Dr. Paul Vivino

field. According to Dr. Paul Vivino, a cardiologist at Hawthorn Medical Center, "It's a long process, but it's worth it in the end." Some other careers which require a medical doctorate include surgeons, dentists, physicians, and pharmacists. Thanh Vo of Vibra Hospital of Southeastern Massachusetts is a respected pharmacist in the field. Her duties include ensuring medications are correct for different symptoms, that they are being distributed to the right patients, and that her technicians are mixing the correct medications. Her pharmaceutical technicians mix different medications, which are ordered by doctors for patients, and deliver them to said patients.

There are numerous occupations in the medical field which only require a high school diploma or equivalent. These jobs can include pharmaceutical technicians, veterinary assistants, opticians, and personal care aides. Most of these jobs involve working with people and assisting doctors or nurses. It is important to note that salary is generally reflective of the education level. Salaries of medical careers which only require a high school diploma typically range from \$23,000 to \$36,000, which is substantially lower than that of careers which require years of additional education after high school. There is a multitude of careers requiring an associate's degree (two years



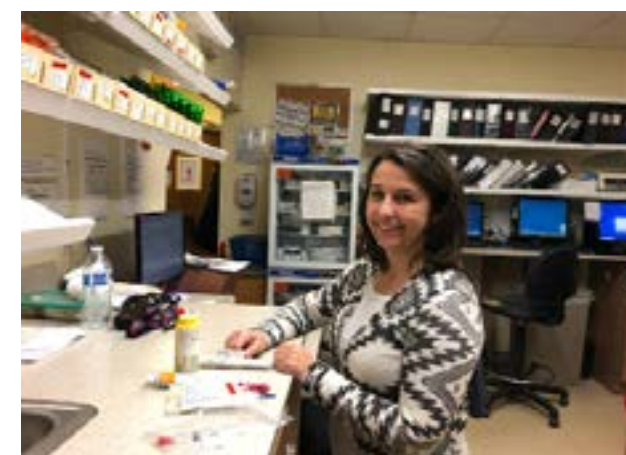
Dr. Paul Vivino, of Hawthorn Medical Center, performing surgery.

at a university) or a bachelor's degree (four years). Athletic trainers, recreational therapists, dental hygienists, and nutritionists are among these careers. One excellent career in this array is a registered nurse (or RN). This occupation has created 3 million jobs in the United States alone, and it is still in great need, projected to grow by 15% between 2016 to 2026, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. The median salary of an RN is \$70,000. A registered nurse typically works in a hospital or doctor's office, assisting doc-



tors and monitoring patients' health. Some RN's have the option to specialize.

In the medical field, any career can be extremely rewarding. "The honor of being trusted to give advice. The gratitude of helping someone through a difficult illness. These things never grow old," says Danielle Ofri, a physician at Bellevue Hospital and clinical professor of medicine at New York University School of Medicine. The ORR Guidance Department, which consists of 3 school counselors, Ms. McPhee, Ms. Perry, & Ms. Shields, would like to invite students interested in pursuing a career in the healthcare field to make an appointment with them to discuss their ambitions in further detail.



A pharmacy technician, Denage Pinard, mixing medications.



ENTERTAINMENT

“BLACK MIRROR: BANDERSNATCH” CHANGES THE FUTURE OF TELEVISION

BY GRAYSON LORD

With nearly 100 new releases in December alone, Netflix has been rapidly gaining popularity. Viewers across the world are flocking to their devices to check out the brand new content. Among the recently-added titles were many newer films, such as Marvel’s Avengers: Infinity War, Bird Box, and the notable Netflix original, Bandersnatch. This special is an exclusive episode of the popular series Black Mirror, which has been producing episodes since 2011. But what distinguishes this episode from others?

Similar to the “butterfly effect” phenomenon, Bandersnatch stresses that every decision you make will ultimately help or harm you. The viewer is able to choose from a variety of pathways throughout the special and is responsible for the fate of the protagonist, a nameless game-designer in the 1980s. Some of the questions seem important, while others seem pointless or arbitrary. Specifically, the first decision the viewer makes is which cereal to eat for breakfast. Later on, however, the viewer is tasked with making life-or-death decisions, which could potentially hurt the character or other characters around them.

Bandersnatch is catching the attention of millions across the world because of this new-age concept which is paving the way for television’s future. One of its most out-

standing victories is its ability to engage the viewer. The show is designed to entrance the player, making them unable to concentrate on anything other than the screen. The viewer is also given the power to rewind or change their answers. Perhaps the actors, who were a mixture of both familiar and new faces, were the reason the experience is so addictive. Each individual cast in the production shared the common ability to captivate the audience while simultaneously acting naturally in front of the camera.



Fionn Whitehead as Stefan in “Bandersnatch”. Image via Vulture.

The main character was played by Fionn Whitehead, an actor best known for his role in the 2017 film, Dunkirk. Also featured in the episode was the Maze Runner actor, Will Poulter. Poulter’s Bandersnatch character bore some striking similarities to his character in Maze Runner. In Bandersnatch, he played the role of Colin, a cocky and complex game designer who worked with the main character.

Even if the viewer has never seen an episode of Black Mirror before, this episode is enchanting enough to make anyone a fan of the show. The episode is more than just a “choose your own adventure” story, but also a fantastic display of well-developed characters and stunning cinematography. Black Mirror: Bandersnatch is one of Netflix’s first interactive experiences, and after its smashing success, the future of television has been changed forever.

TEACHER TRIVIA ANSWERS:

(Questions on page 3)

1. Ms. Carreira
2. Mr. Bushnell
3. Ms. Palombo
4. Ms. Tallman

Do you have a teacher trivia question you’d like to submit? Email us at pawprints@oldrochester.org and you’ll be given full credit if your question is published!

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ENTERTAINMENT

TUCK’S TRACKS: JEFF MAGNUM AND THE NEUTRAL MILK HOTEL

BY TUCKER NUGENT

From a one-man band recording albums on his answering machine to one of the most prolific, underground bands of the 90s Neutral Milk Hotel is undeniably great. They started with “Invent Yourself A Shortcake and Beauty”, recorded on lead singer Jeff Mangum’s voice-mail in 1991 and 1992, which is wonderful in its own right. Then, they released “Hype City” Soundtrack of the same vein, and after its release in 1993, the group put out “Everything Is”, which is notoriously odd. Finally, they released their two most commercially successful works: “On Avery Island” and “In the Aeroplane Over the Sea”.

Everything Is

Everything Is” can be described as a journey of sound including songs and tape recordings of conversations, like in the title track and “Aunt Eggma Blowtorch”. This song’s bizarre name somehow fits the mood of the song perfectly. With no words, the instrumental takes the listener to a place not previously known to man. “Everything Is” as an album was relatively unsuccessful, but as a piece of Avant-Garde art, it is a masterpiece.

On Avery Island

The next album released by the indie rock band was “On Avery Island” was released in 1996. “Avery Island” is not just a made-up place in the mind Jeff Mangum, it’s in Louisiana and was where the band was founded in the late 80s, and this album reflects it. The EP is bathed in new innovative air. The album bangs, with songs like “Gardenhead”, “Leave

Me Alone”, and the first track on the album, “Song Against Sex”. All of the three are obscure songs that one can only imagine were fueled by blind rage and frustration. Mangum starts “Gardenhead” with the lines:

*There are beads that wrap
Around your knees that crackle into the dark
Like a walk in the park like a hole in your head*

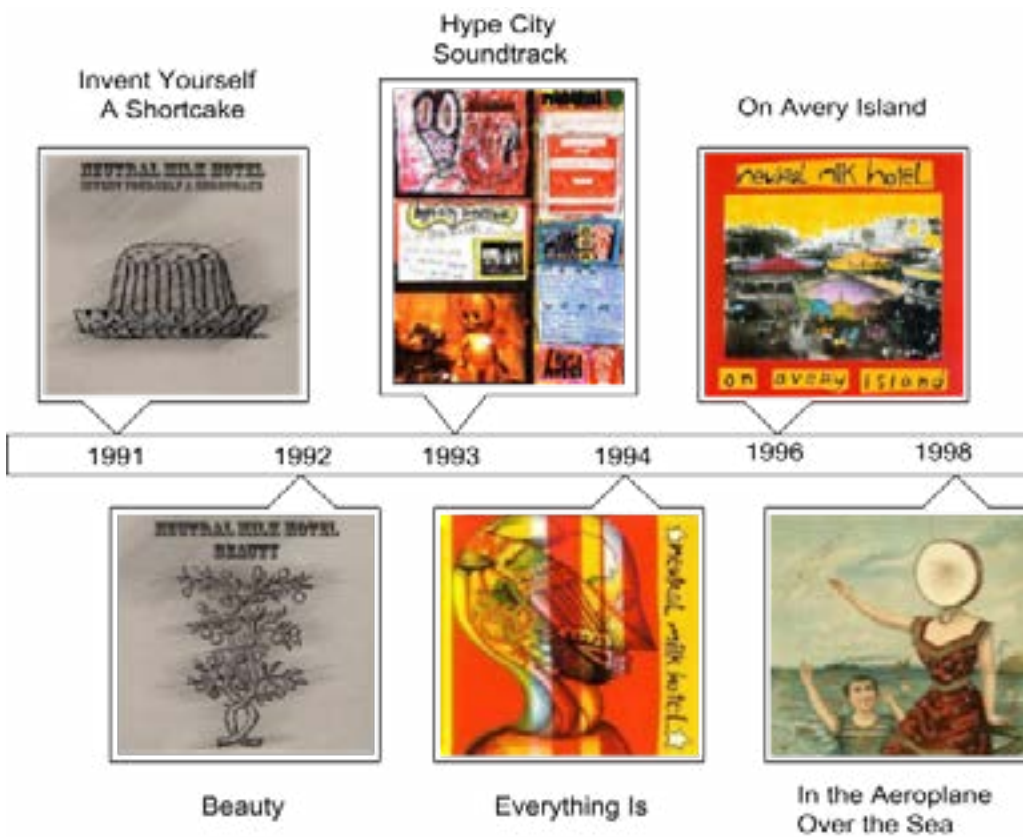


The band “Neutral Milk Hotel”. Image via BrooklynVegan.

*Like the feeling you get when you realize
you’re dead.*

These words are sung with a sharpness, then at the word dead Magnum releases and really goes for it, a melodic yell. This type of melody is quite common in NMH songs, and it is clear that Mangum uses his voice as an instrument, and this is noticeable in almost every song he sings. Some examples: “Oh Comely”, “Engine”, and “Two-Headed Boy”.

NMH Release Timeline:



In the Aeroplane Over the Sea

This album was the most commercially successful. Each song ties in perfectly with the next. The LP gives us gems like the epic “Oh Comely” which is nearly eight minutes long. The best-known song in the album is the track titled “In the Aeroplane Over the Sea” which brings up the idea of existentialism in one of the most famous lines of Indie Rock history:

*And when we meet on a cloud
I’ll be laughing out loud
I’ll be laughing with everyone I see
Can’t believe how strange it is to be anything at all*

Though he is not the first to explore what it means to be alive in this context, it’s important. The album tells a story about the girl Jeff Mangum was in love with, a girl who grew up in the 1930s and died soon after. This

girl is thought to be Anne Frank, as the lyrics suggest she is. He says her name in this line from “In the Aeroplane Over the Sea”:

*Anna’s ghost all around
Hear her voice as it’s rolling and ringing
through me
Soft and sweet
How the notes all bend and reach above the trees*

On another note, NMH often strays from its rock genre and goes punk. In Holland 1945, the song starts quiet and then, after 4 counts, all hell breaks loose. A fuzz box bass and the lead guitarist add a layer of chaos and it’s, in a word, glorious. The title of the track comes from the place and year where Anne died. Mangum sings about her death as well as some more existentialist themes:

*And here is the room where your brothers were born
Intentions in the sheets
Where their bodies once moved but don’t move anymore
And it’s so sad to see the world agree
That they’d rather see their faces fill with flies
All when I’d want to keep white roses in their eyes*

The first line talks about Magnum’s bandmates’ brothers’ deaths, they both died in their beds, one taking his own life and the other from an unknown cause. He then comes back to antisemitism and the hate of the Third Reich with the line about their rotting faces.

Neutral Milk, as a whole, is a masterpiece of art and sound. Mangum’s warped storytelling perfectly fits the eerie mood of his music. His powerful voice can carry a listener through a maze of lyrics. Thank you, Neutral Milk Hotel.

CREATIVITY

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The Dog House ~ By Paul Kippenberger



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