COVID-19: Three Years Later

Aidan Ivers
Staff Writer

Three years since the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic began and reached its height, the Montclair State community shares the most important aspects of all that has drastically changed and what has stayed the same as a result of the pandemic.

Like most institutions worldwide, Montclair State announced on March 17, 2020, that spring semester courses would continue online. Spring break was also extended until March 22.

At the time, President Susan Cole sent out alerts emphasizing how "the University has successfully overcome many challenges throughout its long history" and "we will get through this situation by working together and supporting each other."

Montclair State has fully recovered back to what it was prior to the pandemic, with many adjustments along the way.

Kira Fucci, a sophomore linguistics major, shared one of her most important innovations reaching farther back when the pandemic began.

"I learned how to use Zoom and an asynchronous class because [COVID-19] started when I was in high school where teachers were not very good with technology," Fucci said. "I have experience with asynchronous work before, so by navigating that I can take an asynchronous class in university and know what I'm doing."

One upside of the pandemic is that it opened doors for others to nurture new and important practices into their everyday lives. Nicole Passero, a freshman journalism and digital media major, highlighted the practices she took on to improve her own.

"As a result of living through the pandemic in my teenage years, one change within myself is that I started to prioritize self-care," Passero said. "When it first started, I was a sophomore in high school and was always so busy doing work or hanging out with friends that I never had time for myself. I started journaling and meditating in order to improve my mental health, and the pandemic showed me how important it is to prioritize."

Max Geary, a sophomore linguistics major, said he noticed a shift in the way he interacts socially.

"I would say something that has changed is I don't have much of an inclination toward people; I distance myself from people now," Geary said. "I always wasn't too touchy with people, but I noticed that [COVID-19] made me not want to be around people as much. I'm still extroverted, and I'll talk with people, but I don't get as close to people, physically."

Mireya Vilar-Compte, an associate professor in the department of public health, gave some insight into how society as a whole changed from the pandemic, and what is still significantly the same today.

"The pandemic reminded us of the importance of social support, social networks and mental health," Vilar-Compte said. "This implies rethinking how we work, relate to others and live. However, the mental health crisis has only gotten worse and our health systems are stuck in addressing this issue."

From a national perspective, the impact of the pandemic on immigrants in the United States is a negative aspect according Vilar-Compte.

"We need to be much better prepared for emergencies and crises. This includes investing much more in public health, as across the globe we saw fragility in some of the essential services of it," Vilar-Compte said. "Two major areas of improvement would be having a workforce prepared for emergencies and improving communication and information systems such as eHealth. We need to know more about how to make them work efficiently, equitably and people-centered."

by immigrants who suffered enormously. No one has recognized this openly, and we should socially do so."

Vilar-Compte also believes public health institutions should be better designed to keep the general community as informed as possible.

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The Montclarion Recognized by New Jersey Press Foundation

Jenna Sundel
Managing Editor

The Montclarion won nine New Jersey Press Foundation (NJPF) awards in the 2022-2023 New Jersey College Newspaper Contest, including two first place awards, four second place awards and three third place awards.

The contest awards college newspapers and digital news organizations throughout the state for their articles, photography, videos and layouts.

Emma Caughlan, editor-in-chief of The Montclarion, said she is grateful that the team was recognized for their work. “I’m so proud of the team,” Caughlan said. “Everyone has put so much into the work we do and it’s so wonderful to see it get recognized.”

The Montclarion received two first place awards in the editorial writing category for “Don’t Go Breaking Our Arts” by Mad-dye Belov-Boxer, former opinion editor, and the online video category for “Montclair State Alumna is Leaving Her Mark on NJ” by Katie Lawrence, video editor.

Lawrence reacted to her first place win. “When I heard I won an award for online video, I knew it was for the Ink Gallery feature,” Lawrence said. “It was such a great experience to go into the project with Hannah Effinger and bring an off-campus story to the students. Tiffany Perez and everyone at Ink Gallery Tattoo Studio were beyond welcoming and made this one of my favorite videos to put together.”

NJPF gave The Montclarion four second place awards. Dar-ian Moo, Spanish translator, won second place in the arts and entertainment/critical writing category for “‘Noise’ Reflects Violence and Frequent Disappearance of People in Latin American Countries.”

“I still can’t believe I won an NJPF award, I’m still in that transition of wanting to believe it and not being able to,” Moo said. “I wrote that article with a lot of feeling because the movie was very powerful for me and my whole family to see.”

Moo is thankful for the opportunities The Montclarion has given her. “I am so grateful to The Montclarion and how much the staff has helped me progress as a writer since I started in 2021,” Moo said. “Thank you, and cheers to Latin American talent!”

Hannah Effinger, producer/editor, won second place in column/opinion writing for “I Survived the Great Williams Hall Flood.” Effinger and Ian Long, former production editor, won second place in layout and design for “Life In A Pandemic: Montclair State Reflects of Two Years of COVID-19 #Since2020.”

“I’m so honored to be recognized by NJPF,” Effinger said. “We put in so much hard work as a team year-round, and it’s great to see it pay off for everyone.”

Sal DiMaggio, feature editor, won second place in the feature writing category for “EOF Barbershop: Making Men Leaders The Old School Way.”

“I’m very grateful to have such a supportive team behind me to help me write stories like this,” DiMaggio said. “It’s my goal to tell stories that impact people, and the people at The Montclarion make me able to do that.”

The Montclarion received three third place awards. One of the third place awards was in the general excellence category, which recognized the entire staff.

Avery Nixon, opinion editor, won third place in the editorial writing category for “We Want Wi-Fi and We Want it Now.”

“I felt very honored to be recognized at NJPF,” Nixon said. “Opinion pieces and editorials are such an important piece of journalism and deserve to be recognized.”

John La Rosa, former photo editor, and Julian Rigg, former assistant photo editor, won in the photography category for “Photo Essay: Welcome to College Prom.”

The award winners are invited to participate in an awards banquet on April 22.
Recognizing Reid

Science Hall to honor the legacy of former President

Science Hall is being renamed after former Montclair State University President Irvin D. Reid, who served from 1989 to 1997. Reid is attributed with elevating the school from college to university status in 1994 as well as implementing doctoral research programs. His other accomplishments include establishing computerization on campus, expanding the Honors Program and implementing the Academic Success Center. The Montclair State Board of Trustees passed a resolution to honor Reid on Jan. 27. He is the only longstanding president to not have a building named in their honor. The unveiling of Irvin D. Reid Hall is set for the fall 2023 semester and Reid will be in attendance.

“[Reid’s] visionary thinking and leadership laid the groundwork for Montclair State’s emergence as a higher education leader in the state of New Jersey, a public research institution and the second largest university in the state,” the proclamation by the Board of Trustees reads.

Alexia Anthony, a freshman psychology major, thinks that Science Hall will benefit from this name change. “I’m glad [Reid is] being recognized and honored for their work,” Anthony said. “I think renaming the building is a great idea. Plus, ‘Science Hall’ is a boring name anyway.”

Psychology professor Saundra Collins, who taught when Reid was president, was the first to advocate for the renaming of the hall. She submitted a letter of recommendation to President Jonathan Koppell who supported the notion. “I honestly jumped for joy,” Collins said. “It is an honor to have initiated this move and to be a part of [Montclair State], making history yet again.”

At the Board of Trustees meeting, Koppell recognized Reid’s hard work. “[Reid] played a defining role in the evolution of [Montclair State] into something that would have been inconceivable when it opened 114 years ago as a Normal School,” Koppell said in the Board proclamation. “We are pleased to honor his legacy in this way.”

Collins was inspired by the theme for Black History Month 2023, which was “Champions on the Bridges that Carried Us Over.” Although it has been 26 years since Reid left Montclair State, his legacy lives on among current and future students through new classrooms, science laboratories and the university status of the school.

Karim Watson, a freshman animation and visual effects major, is excited to see black representation like this on campus. “As a Black student, it’s nice to see this kind of representation, especially as a reminder of Black History Month,” Watson said.

Reid raised funds through revenues and state support, totaling nearly $80 million toward campus renovations, including the building and naming of Dickson Hall, Yogi Berra Stadium and the ice arena. “The effects of these groundbreaking initiatives still impact the university today,” Collins said. “For example, every faculty member has a computer on [their] desk today.”

Connor Larusso, a sophomore computer science major, is grateful to see how Reid changed Montclair State before he got here. “I didn’t know that Reid was responsible for introducing new tech such as computers,” Larusso said. “Many students, including myself, are computer science majors, so it is great to see how far we [have come].”

The architectural plans for Science Hall were commissioned while Reid was president, although built two years after he left. Since departing in 1997, Reid became the first Black president of Wayne State University in Michigan. He was the seventh president of Montclair State.
An investigation is underway after criminal mischief happened two nights in a row in Morehead Hall.

On Thursday, March 16, some students and faculty arrived at Morehead Hall to find it vandalized. In New Jersey, the crime commonly known as vandalism is referred to as criminal mischief.

The first-floor lounge in Morehead Hall is decorated with students’ photographs covering the walls. To the students’ and professors’ surprise, when arriving for classes around 12 p.m., they found the pictures flipped upside down, trash all over the floor and the pantry soaked in laundry detergent.

Chief of University Police, Keran Barrett, received the report from faculty that this was the second day in a row this occurred.

“University Police received a report from an employee that wanted to report criminal mischief within the first-floor lounge area occurring over two days in the past,” Barrett said. “Someone appeared to have rearranged items in the room and left trash on the floor.”

As the investigation is ongoing this is the extent of information that UPD can give out at this time. Officers will continue to patrol this and other areas for after-hours use, Barrett said. “This case is under investigation so that is the extent of what I can release at this stage and while not significant damage, we want to be sure it ends,” Barrett said. “If anyone has information regarding this case please contact us and speak with a detective.”

Two senior journalism and digital media students, Kyle Polillo and Ryan Breyta were arriving for their class early when they walked into the mess.

“I came down [to the first floor lounge] early for class to get some work done and all of the paintings and pictures were flipped upside down,” Breyta said. “I thought it was a joke at first or one of the professors did it to show an art piece or something.”

Polillo described the scene as disappointing.

“I saw all these paintings flipped upside down and crooked and it was kind of disappointing to see that,” Polillo said. “I thought it was a joke, but when Professor Franklin came in and said ‘Oh no, not again’ he seemed very upset about it which was unfortunate to see.”

Breyta was confused by the criminal mischief but wonders if there is a bigger issue.

“Professor [Thomas] Franklin came in and told us this has been happening for the past two days and I thought ‘oh my god, this is a more serious issue than what I thought,’ Breyta said.

Once UPD arrived, Polillo and Breyta put all of the artwork back to its original positioning.

“We put [the pictures] back where they should be up and down the hallways,” Polillo said. “There was actually a note on the wall when we were cleaning up but the police took it and I did not get to read it.”

Kyle Polillo was disappointed in what he saw.

Ryan Breyta was confused by the criminal mischief but wonders if there is a bigger issue.
The sun is shining, the birds are chirping and the grass is growing: that’s right, spring has arrived. Gone are the bitter days of winter; finally, we can enjoy our beautiful campus the way it was meant to be. Montclair State University has plenty of spaces outside where students can spend time, whether they are studying or hanging out with friends.

**Freeman-Russ Quad**
The Freeman-Russ Quad is a popular place for students to mill about, especially students from the John J. Cali School of Music. Expect to be serenaded with sweet tunes from Chapin Hall or any students playing an instrument in the quad. Play an outdoor game with your friends. Or, if you’re lucky, meet Simon the Dog, who belongs to an advisor in the School of Music.

**Student Center Quad**
Much like the Freeman-Russ Quad, the Student Center Quad is another gathering spot for students. Eat your sushi from the Student Center while sitting under a tree, listening to the newest Taylor Swift songs. Set up a game of Ultimate Frisbee with your friends and run across the grass field. Set up a blanket and go on a date with your partner. Bask in the sun while reading a book. The possibilities are endless.

**The Skyline**
A fan favorite, the skyline is a great place to go during the day. Put in your earbuds and turn on your music as you spend time with them. Or you could set up shop at one of the tables behind Stone Hall or the Center for Environmental and Life Sciences and play a game of chess.

**The Venture Cafe**
The outside seating for the Venture Cafe typically isn’t too crowded. Enjoy a turkey avocado sandwich and a strawberry banana smoothie (my favorite combo) and get some work done. Chat on FaceTime with your bestie while you kick your feet up on one of the tables. You might even be able to catch a soccer practice on Pittser Field if you are lucky.

**The Amphitheater**
The Amphitheater next to Alexander Kasser Theater is usually calm as well. You can climb up to the top and get a great view of the south side of campus. This is a great place to clear your head. Sit on the stone steps and turn on an audiobook. Meditate for a bit. Take in everything that is going on around you. Let yourself calm down—destress from class, work and everything else going on in your life.

As the weather gets warmer and warmer, be sure to take advantage of these spots around campus. Breathe in the fresh air and bask in the sunlight. After a cold and harsh winter, I know I will.
"Please Ignore Vera Dietz" and the Power of Voice in Young Adult Lit

Rebecca Bienskie Jackson
Staff Writer

Are you often more enticed to read a book once you find out it’s banned? A.S. King, otherwise published as Amy Sax King, has written a plethora of books that have skimmed a banned book list. Published under two different names for young adult and middle-grade books, King has gained a reputation for breaking the status quo. Oftentimes addressing “taboo topics” in her YA books. One of which is “Please Ignore Vera Dietz.”

I was introduced to this book in Laura Nicosa’s Young Adult Literature class, (ENGL 305). Going into this novel I had no idea I would be completely captivated by this story long after finishing it.

This book follows 18-year-old high schooler Vera Dietz in the months following the death of her fresh ex-best friend, Charlie. Throughout the story you see Vera cope with the loss of Charlie as he simultaneously haunts her until she tells the truth about his death.

Set in Pennsylvania in the early 2010s, the book features three other perspectives other than Vera’s. The first-person POVs switch to Vera’s dad Ken Dietz, Charlie himself in the afterlife and the pagoda, an Eastern Asian tiered tower, in the center of town. The different perspectives all connect to the story at large as well as leading Vera to find herself and confidence along the way.

As mentioned earlier, King does not shy away from “taboo topics” in her stories. This allows many teens across the world to relate to and recognize a voice that may be reminiscent of their own life. “Please Ignore Vera Dietz” has a list of topics that may be hard for some readers to consume such as abuse, sexual violence and pedophilia. Vera is not safe in her small town as she is exposed to many awful situations while growing up.

This goes to show that everyone lives different lives and that it is important to talk about these topics to spread awareness. If every book written was a utopia, people may think there is something wrong with them for growing up differently. This book also features different family situations following the Dietzs as well as Charlie’s family, the Kahns.

One of the defining characteristics of “Please Ignore Vera Dietz” is the use of different character perspectives. The primary voice is Vera Dietz herself. She is the one who tells the story with the other perspectives sprinkled throughout. She is blunt, straightforward and at times a little too hard on herself. She is an accurate depiction of a teen girl finding herself and going through self-discovery. King’s use of first-person POV for Vera directly shows her character development during the story.

What makes “Please Ignore Vera Dietz” a stand-out story from a lot of other YA novels is the inclusion of Vera’s father, Ken Dietz’s, perspective. This broadens the story and it allows for possible parents who might be reading the book to form a connection as well. Vera is not safe in her small town as she is exposed to many awful situations while growing up.

This book humbling the kids and really puts the reader in Ken’s mind. Charlie himself even gets a voice in this book. While his sections are short, he has the full perspective of the story and he knows of course how he died. He clues the audience in, in ways that Vera can’t. He begins his chapters with “a brief word from the dead kid” which is a little unnerving but also exciting because who doesn’t like ghosts?

Lastly, the pagoda watches over the characters in this book like Dr. T.J. Eckleburg from “The Great Gatsby.”

Or more spiritually, like a god. The pagoda has a few impactful lines in the book humbling the kids and really putting everything into perspective. Having an inanimate object as a POV is an interesting artistic take and adds to the magical realism of the novel.

These different perspectives bring up the question, “Who has a voice?” Additionally, the perspectives show the impact of including different sides to complete a whole narrative.

The writing style in this novel, especially the different perspectives, was so fascinating. King did a great job portraying the teen experience and getting the youth to come together as they read. The way she writes about topics while spreading awareness is honestly inspiring. This story was emotional, relatable and genuinely such a good read.

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This book’s audience is primarily teens, but reading this book as a college student or even an adult has so many perks. Even though I am slightly older than Vera, I still found this story so engaging and I truly think so many people can learn and take away valuable insights from this book.
Pesto Zucchini Chicken Pasta

Alex Pavljuk
Fiction Editor

In need of an easy dinner? Maybe you are looking for an excuse to go to Trader Joe’s. Look no further than this simple dinner that brings in a slew of different flavors and techniques that will be easy for beginners and simple for the more advanced college cook.

Ingredients & Measurements | Serves 1 to 4 People
- Trader Joe’s Pesto Chicken Breasts (One Pack)
- Zucchini (One Zucchini)
- Broccoli (One Head)
- Butter (Half a Stick)
- Cherry tomatoes (Handful)
- Pasta (fusilli or rigatoni works well)
- Salt, Pepper, Dry Oregano, Dry Parsley, Red Pepper Flakes
- Chicken Broth (Half Cup)
- Pecorino Romano Cheese
- Olive oil
- White Wine (Or Brandy/Whiskey)
- Shredded Mozzarella (optional)

Cooking Instructions

Step One:
Start by cutting and setting aside one onion, one zucchini, broccoli and a handful of cherry tomatoes. Cut the cherry tomatoes in half, and the zucchini into bite-sized pieces.

Step Two:
In a medium or large sauté pan set to medium heat, start by heating up a few glugs of olive oil for frying. Once heated up and ready to fry, place as many pieces of chicken as desired in the pan. Cook thoroughly on both sides as you would a chicken cutlet. Once cooked, remove from oil and place on a paper towel-lined plate until later. Do not throw out the oil, leave the pan alone for now.

Step Three:
In the pan you just cooked the chicken in, add a notch of butter and your onions to the pan. Sprinkle the onions with salt and pepper and cook on medium-low until soft and translucent (roughly five or 10 minutes). Using a lid to cook the vegetables will help them soften faster. Once the onions have cooked down a bit, add in your zucchini and cook them using the same process as the onions (roughly five or 10 minutes).

The onions and zucchini should have released some liquid that will mix with the oil. That is the base for the sauce, it should be simmering. If stagnant, kick up the heat for a few minutes and then lower once simmering.

Step Four:
Add a splash of white wine (or whatever alcohol you have listed above) and then throw in the sliced cherry tomatoes and cook down (another five or 10 minutes). Once soft, take a wooden spoon (likely what you’ve been cooking with) and press the tomatoes until they burst. Now season with a few shakes of oregano, parsley and red pepper flakes and stir to incorporate.

Step Five:
During this time take the now-cooled chicken and slice it into bite-sized pieces. If not entirely cooked through, feel free to fry the now-sliced chicken in a different pan coated in olive oil until no pink remains on medium heat.

Step Six:
Once mixed, add about a half cup of chicken broth to the pan. As you cook, the liquid may be absorbed and thicken; that’s what we want. But if it becomes too dry, feel free to add more. From here, add your sprigs of broccoli (as many as you want in the dish). Let those cook down for a few minutes and then add the chicken. Let the dish sit on low/medium to simmer and stir periodically.

Step Seven:
While the vegetable and chicken sauce simmers, bring a heavily salted pot of water to a boil and add in your pasta. Cook until al dente and then with a strainer move the pasta in batches to the sauce. This will allow excess pasta water to mix with the sauce, causing it to thicken.

Step Eight:
Once all pasta is strained, mix to incorporate and add a generous amount of pecorino romano cheese (you can also add the shredded mozzarella) and serve!
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ROOM 2035, SCHOOL OF COMMUNICATION AND MEDIA IN UPPER MONTCLAIR, NJ, 07043
What is something you would tell your younger self?

By Lynise Olivacce and Karsten Englander  
Photo Editor and Assistant Photo Editor

“Always strive to keep bettering yourself and to grow. I had really bad anxiety. [I was] very very scared about whatever the future holds, but just as long as I’m just progressing every day that’s all I can say.”

Liz Franks  
Junior  
English Education

“Follow your dreams because you will make it. My younger self wasn’t that big on school. Like he was always lazy. As I got older things changed. Now I want to reach the stars.”

Jose Cambronero Briceno  
Sophomore  
Sports Communication and Political Science

“Don’t listen to others, definitely. I was kind of a people-pleaser. And I used to think a lot about what other people think. I think I thought too much about what others thought about my decisions. I was more aware of other people’s thoughts on a daily basis than my own. I wish I didn’t care about what other people thought growing up. If I didn’t care about what other people thought, I feel like I’m on a happy route now, but I would’ve been happier sooner.”

Amya Saud  
Freshman  
Policy Studies
"To achieve more than you think you can because when you expand your mind, you can achieve more than what you know."

Victor Urgilez
Freshman
Biology

“To try harder my senior year. I built up my GPA for so many years and then got what some call 'senioritis,' which led to me not trying my hardest and eventually meant that I couldn’t graduate with my class. Try harder and do not give up.”

Jennifer Cazho
Freshman
Biology

"Honestly, as much as I love college, I almost wish that I didn’t rush into college because of how expensive it is. I wish that I went into college later in life than when I did, allowing me to save up more and be less in debt.”

Reagan Loescher
Senior
Sports Communications

"Even during your toughest times in school or in life, there is always someone to talk to and you will always get through it.”

Ella Duffy
Freshman
Filmmaking
Capricorn
Dec. 22 – Jan. 19
Hey Capricorn, are you suffering from a lack of sleep this week from watching live streams of the Eras Tour every night? Yes? Maybe you should get a grip, your significant other hasn’t heard from you in hours and they miss you. Just a thought!

Aquarius
Jan. 20 – Feb. 18
Hey guys. I just wanted to come on here and clarify that Kevin is a fictional person. He did not leave me and I did not do anything to wrong him. I’m 98% sure a Kevin does exist, but not in this context. To clarify, a Kevin did not break my heart. I have a boyfriend who is not named Kevin and named something else and he did not leave me, yet.

Pisces
Feb. 19 – Mar. 20
Hey, we all fart. Just let it rip. I support you.

Virgo
Aug. 23 – Sep. 22
Hey Virgo, you might be quite angry and looking for a debate this week. But be wary. The person you’re debating with might have done a debate and business law in high school and was almost a civil rights attorney who has never lost an argument. Also abstractions are suck.

Aries
Mar. 21 – Apr. 19
This cold brew from Dunkin’ Donuts is running through my body like a child covered in coconut oil on a water slide who’s too big but they let him go down anyways.

Libra
Sep. 23 – Oct. 22
Did you find a celebrity to put on your Christmas card yet? Don’t give up, keep searching! My family is using our picture with Steve Komacki so anything is possible if you put your mind to it. Just don’t steal Komacki, that’s my idea, okay?

Taurus
Apr. 20 – May 20
Hey Taurus, go look at some art this week. Whether it be at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Museum of Modern Art, Whitney, or Montclair Art Museum – look at something abstract and try to find meaning in it. Or not. You might just be too dense to understand, and that’s okay! Just admit it!

Scorpio
Oct. 23 – Nov. 21
It’s been a rough couple weeks back from break, Scorpio. Treat yourself. Visit your inner child. Go to Michaels. Look at the kids’ crafts. Find the slime. Argue with your friends about what tub of slime you are going to buy. Buy said slime, and regret getting it 30 seconds after walking out of the store.

Gemini
May 21 – Jun. 20
Cher

Sagittarius
Nov. 22 – Dec. 21
I’m glad you’re liking the horoscopes! They’re so funny, right? Unlike WMSC who just made up random stuff like they’re experts in astrology or something. Super irresponsible of them if I do say so myself. Clearly, ours are satire because we know our place as College of The Arts students.
The Montclarion Crossword Puzzle and More!
YA Novels Edition
By Jenna Sundel

Across
2. He is the author of “The Perks of Being a Wallflower.”
3. This award-winning book by Markus Zusak is set in Nazi Germany during World War II.
4. He is the author of popular books like “The Fault in Our Stars” and “Paper Towns.”
6. She is the author of “Eleanor & Park” and “Fangirl.”
7. She is the author of “To All the Boys I’ve Loved Before” and “The Summer I Turned Pretty.”
8. This book by Nicola Yoon is about a girl with severe immunodeficiency.

Down
1. This dystopian trilogy was written by Suzanne Collins.
5. This science fiction trilogy was written by Veronica Roth.

Sudoku

Word Search

Reading
Plot
Trilogy
Bookmark

Novels
Characters
Bestseller
Prequel

Author
Library
Conflict
Fiction
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Ombres Portées

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A HYBRID OF CIRCUS, DANCE, AND THEATRE

A visually cinematic exploration of one’s construction of identity against the backdrop of family secrets that evoke questions of culpability and collateral damage. Raphaëlle Boitel’s latest choreographic and acrobatic work plunges into the heart of the unsaid. At the crossroads of circus, dance, and theatre, Ombres Portées takes inspiration from the bodies of work of Fritz Lang, David Lynch, and Alfred Hitchcock.

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ALEXANDER KASSER THEATER

All Montclair State University students receive a prepaid ticket with a valid ID at the Alexander Kasser Theater Box Office.

This season was made possible, in part, by the Alexander Kasser Theater Endowment Fund, PEAK Partners, and the New Jersey State Council on the Arts.

Photo: ©Christophe Raynaud de Lage
After a gloomy, rainy and extremely windy winter, we can rejoice that the semester is about to come to a close.

With midterms taking place and a little less than two months left of school, we decided to do a mental health check-in. Now is the time for Montclair State students who need it. Free counseling to all its students is available through our very own campus. Montclair State’s Counseling and Psychological Services states that they “are a department within the Dean of Students Office designed to provide free personal counseling and psychological services for Montclair State students, as well as referrals and consultations for faculty and staff. We are fully accredited by the International Accreditation of Counseling Centers (IACSB).”

It’s always scary to get help, but it’s worth it in the long run. Look into Tutoring. Every college student has had at least one class where they just could not quite grasp the material. Don’t feel embarrassed, it happens to all of us. If you’re struggling with your grades, you should definitely look into the Center for Academic Success & Tutoring (CAST). “The Center for Academic Success & Tutoring (CAST) is located in Susan A. Cole Hall suite 149. CAST offers free Tutoring, Academic Coaching, Supplemental Instruction and Academic Workshops to all students on campus.”

It can be difficult to get someone for help with your homework, but it will save you money instead of having to retake a class again. Organize Your Workload. Whether it’s setting up a day to have a homework date with friends, giving yourself certain hours to study and complete work or setting aside a weekend to just do everything at once, making a plan when it comes to getting your work done will help you in the long run.

Scheduling your day to do work will help eliminate procrastination and saying “I’ll do it later.” It sucks to have to sit down and get through a heavy workload, but trust us, it’s better than rushing to do everything at the last minute. Find Free Time To Do Some Self Care. Going to the gym, having a spa day or simply taking advantage of some much-needed me time will most definitely help you get through the rest of the semester.

It’s easy to want to lay in your bed and watch TikToks all day, but they will do nothing to benefit your mental health. Try doing something that relaxes you and benefits you mentally. Maybe pick up a new hobby like crocheting or play Sims 4 and make your sims go to university while you’re currently enrolled in university. Whatever gets you relaxed and feeling refreshed is up to you.

In all seriousness, take care of yourselves this semester. Mental health is just as important as physical health. Surely we are not all alone in feeling a little bit overwhelmed. We’re all in this together.
Animation Is a Medium, Not a Genre

Colin Luderitz
Assistant Entertainment Editor

It be very first Academy Award in 2023 was awarded to “Guillermo del Toro’s Pinocchio,” taking home Best Animated Feature. Presenting the award was Emily Blunt and Dwayne “The Rock” Johnson, the latter of whom spoke about the undeniable link between animation and the very foundation of cinema. And while I certainly agree with the “Black Adam” star’s sentiments, it’s too little too late from the Academy.

See, when the Academy Award for Best Animated Feature was presented in 2022, the post would only garner more attention from online comedians using it as reaction images and making meme templates. Because of the Internet’s discovery of this random bird has every-where wondering what’s so viral sensation around 2014 on Reddit. The moment when the viewer is purifying water wetlands they also protect nothing about Shoebills. It wasn’t until in America was begging their parents to put on “Flee,” an animated documentary about a gay refugee escaping his home country of Afghanistan. The documentary was animated, because if the subject revealed his identity, odds are he and his family could have been arrested, tortured or killed.

The backlash to this presentation was such Thankfulst not directed toward the audience, who were simply reading what was written for them, but the message the Academy was sending was loud and clear: animation is kiddy fare, not ‘real’ cinema. But there’s nothing inherent in animation that makes it for kids.

The major misconception is the notion that animation is a genre, which could not be further from the truth.

Genre is the narrative conventions a piece of art takes, and being animated has no inherent narrative conventions. Animation is a medium, the form in which a piece of art takes.

Animation expands our suspension of disbelief by requisitioning us to believe the impossible. If “The Simpsons” was live action, the family’s antics would probably be much more difficult to believe, and their bright-yellow skin more of a health concern than a design quirk. But since there is a clearer line between the real and unreal, the kinds of stories being told can venture outside of what we would otherwise consider logical.

That suspension of disbelief has led to stories that are simply impossible to tell in live-action.

Charlie Kaufman’s “Anomalisa,” nominated in 2016 for Best Animated Feature, is a very grounded, and adult, story about depression, but it visualizes its themes in a way that a live-action film never could.

Or, on the complete opposite end of the spectrum, “Minions” could never be made in live-action because of its intense physical comedy and oddball character design. Not only does the notion of a real-life minion send a chill up my spine, but seeing those disgusting little Tic-Tacs as the victims of real physical violence would probably scar their target audience for life.

But this mindset of animation as a genre has poisoned the potential for more mainstream adult animation outside of the juvenile fare such as “Rick and Morty.” Stories like “Anomalisa” and “Flee” are the exception, far from the rule. You could argue that recent Pixar fare like “Soul” is more adult-oriented, or even a film like “Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse” aims more towards a teenage crowd, but both of those films are still made to carry a PG rating to maximize a potential audience.

In short, animation deserves more respect from those who fund it and audiences who consume it.

The truth of the matter is, most ani-
mation is aimed at the lowest common denominator, either stupid kids or even stupider adults, because the studios that pump hundreds of millions of dol-


dar in these sorts of projects think those are the only audiences.

So if you love animation, be sure to support projects like ‘Anomalisa,’ or ‘Wrinkles & Will,’ or anything else that pushes the boundaries and genres that can be portrayed by such a brilliant medium.

Colin Luderitz, a sophomore television and film major, is in his first year as assistant opinion editor for The Montclarion.

Extinction, Climate Change, And Shoebills Oh My!

Nicky Vidal
Assistant Production Editor

The Shoebill stork is a majestic bird that some would describe as a horrific monster. Although being a popular meme in today’s culture most people know nothing about Shoebills. It wasn’t until I became an enthusiast that I realized the truth of it all.

The bird was almost unknown to most people until meme culture would make it soar in different circles online. Internet comedy threw this bird into a viral sensation around 2014 on Reddit. A simple GIF of a Shoebill turning their head in a very peculiar direction blew up gaining over 2,500 points and 300 comments. This post would only begin the Internet’s discovery of this underrated bird.

As the years went on the bird would only garner more attention from online comedians using it as reaction images and making meme templates. These all lead us to the meme that is so popular that it’s still making its way around TikTok pages to this day.

The template features a Shoebill staring blankly at the camera while being absolutely still as rain washes over them. Hearing and seeing this viral break for the Shoebill might make every-one everywhere wondering what’s special about a Shoebill.

Shoebills are not pleasing to the eye by conventional bird standards Shoebills live primarily in freshwater marshes and swamps in East Africa giving them the nickname “King of the marshes.” These birds are grey with yellow patterns shoe-like beaks and measure up to 152 centimeters in height.

Shoebills are sometimes referred to as the most metal birds out there because of the sounds they make. Shoebills will often clap their beak while squealing, making for a sound that could strike fear into anyone.

As mentioned before, Shoebills have a tendency to zone out and stand statue-like for hours even in the rain. This bird is clearly not a people-pleaser especially when you take into account that only 10 zoos are hosting Shoebills.

None of this information really makes sense as to why the Internet would gravitate toward this bird. You could argue that it’s an attraction toward a bird that’s more beautiful or more widely known.

Shoebill becoming a Shoebill enthusiast myself, I have come to the conclusion that people gravitate toward Shoebill memes for one reason, relatability. Short-form video content like TikTok as many of us know leads to doom scrolling. The most popular Shoebill template which is the one of it staring almost frozen and staring almost blankly at the camera while being completely oblivious to everything happening.

This moment when the viewer is doom scrolling and comes across a Shoebill doing the same thing can make it so this random bird may feel what you are feeling. Through memes the Shoebill has been able to connect to so many people making them feel a moment of realization during the blur of short-form content.

The Shoebill has helped us all. But the truth is, we need to help the Shoebill.

To no one’s surprise, the biggest danger to shoebills is climate change. Rising temperatures and pollution has caused their habitats in East Africa to experience drought and fragmentation. This leads to less breeding between Shoebills causing this population decline.

Additionally, these things are destroying wetlands for not only Shoebills but also the plants and animals inhabiting them. Wetlands are some of the most important things on our earth that often go overlooked. Marshes, swamps, bogs, mangroves and more all act as systems to improve surface water quality. Along with the ability to purify water wetlands they also protect against floods.

Shoebills have also had their numbers affected by the illegal bird trade that is endangering so many birds. This multi-billion dollar industry has been built to kill birds and endanger everyone. This trade not only endangers birds but can also endanger people with diseases that jump from birds to humans.

When taking all this into account, the memes people make sort of experience a tone change. People make these videos about animals while being completely oblivious to everything happening.

There is good news though. Shoebills are still labeled as vulnerable to stories that are simply impossible to tell in live-action.

Charlie Kaufman’s “Anomalisa,” nominated in 2016 for Best Animated Feature, is a very grounded, and adult, story about depression, but it visualizes its themes in a way that a live-action film never could.

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Colin Luderitz, a sophomore television and film major, is in his first year as assistant opinion editor for The Montclarion.

Nicky Vidal, a sophomore visual communication design major, is in his first year as assistant production editor for The Montclarion.
“Anxiety Spell”  
by Danielle Linggar | Staff Writer

Gasping ocean of firework palpitations  
attacks like cold-blooded flash flood  
Sweat pellets burrow out of flesh armor like  
an army of miniscule, transparent ants  
Cotton candy swirl vision synchronizes  
with deafening surrealistic noises ablast  
Autonomous gut churn ablaze  
implodes in unprecedented turmoil  
Hot-air balloon thoughts flail at warp speed  
as spiraling polychromatic cosmic hornets  
Milquetoast words stagger to tongue tip like  
an exhausted mute choir in a forsaken church

“Pizza Shop”  
by Kayla Mulligan | Staff Writer

Memories, tears, sunlight.  
Old photos. Feel so new.  
Missing you. Missing us.  
Missing what once was.  
And what should be.  
Missing the love in my heart.  
So absent.  
I could try to think.  
So dangerous.  
I could try to wonder. Look for answers.  
Look for you.  
No answers, no conclusion.  
Only hope.  
Hope that you’re still sitting at that empty table.  
Through the window of the pizza shop.  
Waiting for me to join you.

“Kelpie”  
by Kiara Oelkers | Staff Writer

Alone in a rocking chair, Roger lays,  
Resting his long chin on the wooden arm,  
His chimney hallowed nose exhausting hot wind,  
Listening to Grandfather’s chant of rotation.  

Upon hearing five, Roger dismounts,  
Pounding each wall with excitement and relief.  
As he hobbles to the front door, his neck hair prickled  
Telling him not to. He pauses for clarity,  

Only to be met by an equine shadow,  
Taunting him forward, announcing its presence with crashing ocean waves.  
Roger unveils his teeth, his hair electrified.  
The dark creature scoffs at his denial, transforming the front door into dust.  

Roger now pleads, his pride between his legs,  
Searching for a puppy in a translucent reflection upon a window.  
It nickers shortly, nodding its head towards Grandfather.  
At the count of five, there’s no more time.  

The equine Grim Reaper lures like a Kelpie,  
And Roger accepts with woe, dragging his overgrown nails.  
The dark creature scoffs at his denial, transforming the front door into dust.  

Roger finds his velocity, a neighbor’s red hot Beamer.  
The shadowed reaper clicks, signaling his horrible demise.  
Roger counted to five before leaping, guaranteeing  
His chosen ending is far from ignorance, but undying love.

“Forest Freak” | Part 1 of 5  
by Alex Pavljuk | Fiction Editor

The dull golden hue of midmorning light cut through the branches of the dead, but rising, early spring forest. The chirp of now long awake songbirds and ever so forgotten deer deep in the heart of this glorified hill that the local townsfolk so claimed was a mountain radiated across for what could fool a hiker as miles.

Among the ruffling leaves and wind-swept woodland debris was a legend that teased the community below with intrigue and wonder. Tales of a man, not much less than a beast, who roamed this hallowed hill for weeks, if not years or centuries beyond that.

Some claimed to have seen such a sight amongst the trees. Swinging from branch to branch, only lit by moonlight. Others, the more fearsome of the bunch, have weaved stories of barrowed escapes from the clutches of its bearlike paws without ever seeing but yellowed eyes amongst the dark cover of the night. Then, there are those who make the outlandish claims that, from beyond the roadside which ensnares the dark and tumultuous forest, on the tracks which the trains run and the parks that children roam, the half-beast mountain man has come and gone for all but a moment before trekking either deeper into the world, or back into its grove.

It’s this tall tale, this local haunt, an urban legend that permeates in the fantasy of those who dare to dream of what lies beyond the pine trees.

Illustrations  
by Alex Pavljuk

This work is an evolving story, see next week’s paper for more!
“In America, the President reigns for four years, but Journalism governs forever.” – Oscar Wilde

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“Dad, show me your chipped tooth” - Rebekkah Dayon

Check out a video with the artist on TikTok! @montclarion
Josh Carmona, a sophomore filmmaking major, wrote and directed "Grease Monkey," which screened at the Silver Slate Film Festival.

Avery Nixon | The Montclarion

Avery Nixon
Opinion Editor

Audiences at this semester’s Silver Slate Film Festival were treated to a viewing of “Grease Monkey.”

"Grease Monkey" follows Herbie Hoffman, played by junior communication and media studies major Nick Najarian, and his paid companion Candy, played by sophomore theatre studies major Lucy Sturm. Herbie and Candy spend time together while Herbie attempts to become a successful writer, but he is extremely lonely and out of touch with reality.

This film stood out at the festival, and it wouldn’t be possible without the mind behind it, sophomore filmmaking major Josh Carmona.

Carmona, from East Windsor, New Jersey, is a writer, director and musician, to name a few things. He is also a very active member of Montclair State University’s film community, Carmona has certainly left his mark on his peers and Montclair State.

"Grease Monkey" was Carmona’s first big filmmaking project and inspired a new career path for himself - directing.

"I sort of fell in love with directing because of 'Grease Monkey,'" Carmona said. "I didn’t realize that I wanted to say as much as I did. 'Grease Monkey' was the first film I made out of like, pure, pure energy of, 'I want to make this.' Not out of some kind of feeling of, 'Okay professor, here’s my movie about bullying.'"

Carmona explained his thought process that resulted in "Grease Monkey."

"I kind of felt annoyed with the kinds of people that you meet in creative spaces who pretend like they’re great artists when they’re children or idiots or something like that," Carmona said. "And I wanted to also make a movie about how someone like that would interact with women because I see people in these spaces who are really creepy or weird or make women feel uncomfortable."

This is despite the fact that Carmona almost pursued a career in music before realizing he couldn’t read it. Luckily, he made the right choice in attending Montclair State for filmmaking. Carmona commented on how much the film program and film community has helped him with his art.

"I toured [a couple of schools], and this was the only place I liked because it seemed like the film program was actually good," Carmona said. "There are so many other schools where it’s like, 'We have a dusty shed with, you know, a camera that you wind up and every time it rolls, dust spews out of it and you start coughing.' That’s just not really a film program."

With the help of the strong film community here, Carmona met some great friends that share his passion for filmmaking and creating art. One of those friends includes his creative partner, sophomore filmmaking major Sean Thrunk.

"I was incredibly humbled and proud when [Carmona] came to me over the summer and asked me to be a part of his film," Najarian said. "I had always considered [Carmona] a good friend of mine, and to this day I’m still constantly impressed by his passion for film and filmmaking. I am beyond grateful that [he] trusted me and my ability enough to take on such a complex character like Herbie Hoffman, and I truly believe he is a visionary artist in every sense of the phrase."

"We are truly excited to see what comes next from Carmona. Spoiler: it may or may not include magicians."
Gorillaz Evolve Musically and Lyrically with ‘Cracker Island’

Victoria Ribarich
Staff Writer

It’s been six years since the virtual band Gorillaz came back to the music world with a vengeance. “Cracker Island,” their newest album, and the fourth one since they ended their hiatus in 2017, shows how much they have evolved musically and lyrically throughout the years.

Music mastermind and creator of Gorillaz, Damon Albarn, hinted at the band’s return in 2015, saying the album’s theme would revolve around cults, came true too. Each Gorillaz album has a very reminiscent of the year 2010 due to its tech-poppy sounds and drums revolve around cults, came true too. Each Gorillaz album has a very reminiscent of the year 2010 due to its tech-poppy sounds and drums.

Becoming the first Gorillaz album to reach number one on UK’s Album Charts since “Demon Days” back in 2005, “Cracker Island” is a side of the band Gorillaz came back to the music world with a vengeance. “Cracker Island,” their newest album, and the fourth one since they ended their hiatus in 2017, shows how much they have evolved musically and lyrically throughout the years.

Music mastermind and creator of Gorillaz, Damon Albarn, hinted at the band’s return in 2015, saying the album’s theme would revolve around cults, came true too. Each Gorillaz album has a very reminiscent of the year 2010 due to its tech-poppy sounds and drums.

The album features artists like Thundercat. Other than “Plastic Beach” being the obvious inspiration for this quirky and funky tune, “Captain Chicken” is the most interesting song on the deluxe version of the album because of how weird and random it is compared to the rest of the songs on the tracklist. But if you listen to the lyrics carefully it is still on theme to what the album is about. “Captivate Chicken, thanks a lot / You're my deity, you're my god / Captain Chicken, oh my God / You look jolly, you look hot,” 2-D sings.

It’s a fun, clever song you can enjoy playing over and over. It’s as if you are being sucked into the cult by keeping this song on repeat while singing along with the lyrics. “Skinny Ape,” the ninth song on the album, went from an acoustic soft opening to a bass-boosted, uplifting, fast-paced, chant-filled chorus, and I’m honestly here for it. Despite the beginning being a little too slow, Albarn’s angelic voice saves it along with the use of a bass drop in the middle of the song that helps speed it up a bit. “And my intent is to breathe (Ape) / In a new world, don’t be sad for me / I’m a skinny little, skinny little, skinny little, skinny little, Skinny little Ape, ape, ape, ape, ape, ape, ape,” 2-D sings.

“Baby Queen,” the sixth song on the album is a synth-pop, dreamy song based on a real event in Albarn’s career. Back in 1997 when Albarn was a part of the rock band Blur, a Thai princess stage-dived at one of his concerts. He recently had a dream about her. “I met the princess from Thailand again / She had grown up into a queen / Down in the abyss where the night / Never turns to daylight,” 2-D sings.

When listening to this song for the first time, I got chills all over my body. It sounds like an out-of-body experience: trippy, psychedelic and peaceful. I’ve probably listened to “Baby Queen” more than any other song on the album aside from “Skinny Ape.” It’s a very emotional song that makes the Gorillaz seem more human (since they are fictional characters).

Overall, I really enjoyed “Cracker Island.” With the album being a breath of fresh air for the Gorillaz’s discography with hints of nostalgic sounds from previous albums, it’s exciting to see one of my favorite bands evolve.

‘Cracker Island’ is a breath of fresh air for the Gorillaz’s discography with hints of nostalgic sounds from previous albums.

The album features artists like Thundercat.
Michael B. Jordan Makes His Directorial Debut in ‘Creed III’

Tears fall more than blood does in “Creed III” as viewers see it is evidently a film about more than just a physical fight, but rather an emotional battle.

Starring two Black male leads, Adonis Creed (Michael B. Jordan) and Damian Anderson (Jonathan Majors), “Creed III” encapsulates mental health, fatherhood, representation of marginalized communities and the complexities of Black masculinity. Viewers digest a film where sometimes one has to get knocked down to rise from adversity. It’s a theme that weighs heavily throughout this franchise.

Accomplishing many goals early on with and without Rocky (Sylvester Stallone), Adonis retires, trains the next generation of boxers and settles down with his wife Bianca (Tessa Thompson) and daughter Amara (Mila Davis-Kent). However, as Adonis backs away from boxing, his past creeps up on him when his childhood friend, a boxing prodigy who was like a brother to him, Damian, gives him a visit. Damian is a free man that is trapped with unhealed scars from his past, leaving him wanting revenge.

The two resurface their history, and Adonis realizes he can’t run from it. His mindset at the beginning of this situation foreshadows how one is going to have to deal with their inner demons and the clear dissonance he has.

The film emphasizes different topics in the mental health community such as guilt-tripping, gaslighting and manipulation and how these can cause one to develop unnecessary guilt. As Adonis experiences this inner conflict and refuses to communicate, he frustrates his wife Bianca, who desperately wants to know what’s going on and truly understand him.

This shows how Black men can experience inner conflict by suppressing their feelings - in other words: wanting to help others but not themselves.

But not only is Adonis a fighter, so is his wife. She sees why he’s acting this way and fights for their marriage. The women in his life arguably develop him into the man he becomes at the end of the film. This scene highlights an ongoing battle of Black masculinity in this “man’s world.” It’s something that women, particularly Black women, tolerate and are expected to fulfill through the stereotype of the “strong Black woman.”

This film demonstrates the importance of inclusivity when it comes to creating films because it enforces necessary topics to be highlighted by people who know what it’s like to experience these situations due to their background and the marginalized communities they grew up in.

Jordan profoundly does this through his strong storytelling skills in front of and behind the camera.

With this being the ninth movie in the franchise, taking big and creative swings was necessary to keep it alive, and shooting each boxing scene with IMAX cameras was just the beginning. To craft things visually in a different way, Jordan took his immense love for Japanese anime and intertwined it into the final fight between Adonis and Damian, notably utilizing two iconic punches from “Naruto: Shippuden.”

But the biggest anime swing Jordan took was the “void.”

This fight was more than just a fight. It was pride, guilt and emotional impediments piling into the rings. Viewers are able to see this from a visual representation in a “void” of the lights of the sirens that night at the liquor store reflecting inside the ring, to bars of a jail cell symbolizing when Damian was imprisoned. He punches Jordan into the “cell,” instigating that it should’ve been him. At the sound of the bell, there’s nothing but a spotlight on the two brothers.

Coming from a family who appreciates digital storytelling, Jordan is no stranger to this craft and is influenced by directors Ryan Coogler and Denzel Washington.

While Jordan leads on-screen in previous sequels, “Creed III” transitions into him leading off of it too. Despite its predictability, it was refreshing to see Jordan have a passion for working behind the scenes. He was intentional with detail, from ensuring that Damian’s body was covered to a tee until entering the ring to the cinematic angles and sounds that make the viewer feel like they are there.

His dedication to his craft exudes throughout the film, and the way he tackles the beauty and struggle of relationships is indisputable. Adonis has moments of isolation while trying to navigate his emotions and struggles to be vulnerable but still finds himself with other people, shown through affectionate scenes with his daughter and wife, but also Damian, a person from his painful past that’s impacting his present self.

One thing we can also always count on Jordan for is to bring that representation and diversity. From the previous film, we learn that Adonis’ wife, Bianca, has progressive hearing loss and his newborn daughter, Amara, is deaf.

Now, seven years later, we get to see how Adonis has developed from a fighter into embracing every bit of fatherhood.

To read the full article, go to themontclarion.org

Photo courtesy of MGM Studios
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Softball Is Moving Full Speed Ahead

Matt Orth
Sports Editor

After a couple of cancelations to end their road trip in Myrtle Beach and a doubleheader sweep against the Cyclones of Centenary University, the Montclair State University softball team looked to achieve another two-game sweep against the Hunter College Hawks, and coming into the matchups with a 7-1 record, the momentum was definitely on their side.

The first game was somewhat close, with no scoring occurring from either side until the third inning, where sophomore outfielder Madison Leech and freshman infielder Kaylee DelosSantos singled, and then senior infielder Jenna Meluso scored both of them in with a double.

Going into the sixth inning, senior pitcher Ali Cavallaro did not allow any hits or walks. But a short single by Hunter led to a couple of runs of their own being scored. Cavallaro would be able to get out of the jam and win the game 5-2 going into the second game.

And for any fans of offense, the second game of the doubleheader was perfect to watch, and the runs started for the Red Hawks in their first frame at bat. Six of their nine runs were scored thanks to a wild home run from junior outfielder Kayla Cosentino, and another home run from graduate student infielder Amber Reed, which was crushed down the left-field line.

Hunter College had no response the entire second game, and it led to six different Red Hawks gaining two hits in the game, and the end of the doubleheader ended in a 9-0 shutout. The Red Hawks’ next doubleheader is at Drew University on Wednesday at 3 p.m.
Alyssa Borozan Is Beginning to Create a Historic Season

The graduate student utility player is on another level so far in the 2023 campaign

Vincent Picone
Guest Writer

Montclair State University’s softball team has been nothing short of amazing. They started their season nine and one with a team batting average of .417, which leads the New Jersey Athletic Conference (NJAC). The are soaring ahead of the competition, well ahead of second-place The College of New Jersey (TCNJ) with a .352 average.

The team is stacked with talent. Junior pitcher Stephanie Seretis has a sky-high batting average of .556, which could easily be a team-leading stat. However, on this year’s team of Red Hawks, Seretis has the third highest batting average.

This is in part due to graduate shortstop Alyssa Borozan. She has been the NJAC’s most electric player to start off this 2023 season. She’s been off to a fantastic start at the plate by going 28 for 38, leaving her with a slash line of .737 batting average, .725 on-base percentage, and 1.079 slugging percentage through her first 10 games.

This includes 10 extra-base hits, and her 100th hit, and a hit in the first 10 games. She leads all of these categories by a large margin in the NJAC. When asked what she attributes to her hot start, she didn’t just mention the physical part of the game.

“I would say a lot of hard work goes into practicing mechanics, but it’s just as important to focus on the mental game and positive self-talk, believing you can do it, and seeing it through,” Borozan said.

Her best day by far was March 9 in Myrtle Beach. She played two games against Rosemont College and Widener University, with nine at-bats and nine hits. That ninth hit was number 100 in her five-year career as a graduate student infielder.

“It felt pretty amazing considering that was my ninth hit of the day over two games, my last hit was the 100th hit, and I had no idea,” Borozan said. “I don’t like to look at my stats; I think it gives bad vibes, and I don’t want to get in my head. When I got back to the dugout, my teammates were like, ‘That’s your 100th hit,’ and I just began to cry, but I had to remember that we have a game to finish.

In the last two years, Borozan has hit .308 then, last season, she bumped it up to .408. If she continues this pattern, she will shoot over the .500 mark, a feat only two players have done in Montclair State history, with Jamie Lascik hitting .562 in 1999 and Jennifer Flinn just creeping into .500 in 1994.

Her teammate Jenna Meluso came close last year with a .494 average. She is third on the all-time list. When Borozan was asked about her season goals, one of the goals she has is pretentious for any softball or baseball player.

“I always try to get at hit a game,” Borozan said. “Sometimes it doesn’t happen, but just having an amenable goal contributes to working hard and pushing yourself [toward] that goal.”

When talking about Borozan, you can never forget her speed. Last season she had 24 stolen bases. This ties her with Jennifer Citarella in 1999 and once again Flinn in 1995 for third-best in a season.

So far this season, she has seven. As the leadoff hitter, you can imagine she will come close if not beat her personal best.

With the impressive start Borozan has had, it will be fascinating to see how she keeps it going.

This team has been very impressive to start as well, and Borozan echoes the same sentiment head coach Anita Kubicka had going into the 2023 season.

“The team goal is definitely to make it to NJAC playoffs,” Borozan said. “We were ranked 7th, but that doesn’t accurately describe our skills. We can get into the NJAC playoffs and make a run. I want to play till May.”

So far this season, the graduate student infielder has over a .700 batting average, over a 1.800 on base plus slugging percentage, and has 28 hits with three of them being triples. Stats like these are rarely seen from the legends of the sport. They lead the NJAC in almost every offensive category and Borozan hasn’t dropped that red hot bat. It will definitely be interesting to see how far this team can go when they get closer to May.
Joe Norton: From Star Player to Star Coach

Matteo Macolino
Staff Writer

Over the years, Montclair State University has had a habit of hiring alumni for its athletic programs. Both men’s and women’s soccer head coaches, Todd Tumulty and Patrick Naughter, graduated from Montclair State and are products of the men’s soccer program; the newly appointed head coach for football, Mike Palazzolo, is the same.

Now, a new name enters this exclusive alumni-turned-coach club as Joe Norton was named assistant coach for the Montclair State baseball team.

Norton made a name for himself as a student-athlete after playing six seasons for the Red Hawks from 2017 to 2022. Norton is top five in Red Hawk baseball for most hits and runs and is the school’s all-time leader in stolen bases with 74.

He’s accomplished many other things as a student-athlete, being named New Jersey Athletic Conference (NJAC) Player of the Week several times, third team ABCA All-Region and two All-NJAC honorable mentions. Norton now takes on a new challenge as an assistant coach for the Red Hawks.

Norton’s love for the sport is what influenced his decision to take the coaching position. He’s always wanted to remain involved with something around baseball after playing and currently has that opportunity.

“I never really wanted to get out of the game,” Norton said. “When I was playing, I kind of knew that always in the back of my head, I couldn’t see myself not doing something in baseball.

After the season ended, I talked to [head coach Dave] Lorber and weighed my options, and decided this is what I wanted to do.”

This wasn’t the first time Lorber had a former player come and coach for him. When Lorber was an assistant coach for George Washington University, one of the student-athletes playing for him was Pat Knight, who spent three years as an assistant coach under Lorber at Montclair State before leaving this year. Lorber gets the opportunity again with another former player of his in Norton, which he says is always rewarding.

“It’s awesome to have those guys want to stay around the game and obviously it’s nice to have that camaraderie, that trust is built in already when you hire someone new to your staff because it’s someone who played for you,” Lorber said.

Norton graduated from Montclair State in the spring of 2022 with a master’s degree in exercise science and a minor in sports coaching. Many of Norton’s former teammates are still on the team this year. Norton was able to build many relationships with his, now former, teammates but those close relationships are changing since becoming an assistant coach.

A former teammate of Norton’s and current graduate student infelder for the Red Hawks, Peter Cosentino, commented on the adjustment from playing with him to now being coached by him.

“The four years that I was a teammate with him, working with him every day on and off the field and then having that authority switch when you go from a player to a coach, at first it was a little bit interesting because I’ve known this guy for a lot longer and yet he’s my coach,” Cosentino said. “Adjusting to that was a little tricky, but with that being said [Norton] has done a great job.”

Norton put his degree to use and became the team’s unofficial strength and conditioning coach, a unique opportunity for him as he was given this task due to his degree and certification in strength and conditioning.

“I had internships in gyms and things like that, so going in it was something that I think I offered that I could do,” Norton said. “We never really had a formal program in the past so having the ability to do that gives the guys more structure and a better idea of what we’re doing and why we’re doing it.”

The structure that Norton has brought to the team’s lifts has certainly improved the way things are done and are looked on favorably by the team.

Norton has provided schedules and spreadsheets for certain lifts and created a more organized way of doing things in terms of strength and conditioning.

“The past three years have been kind of what I call an unorganized lift. We had a scheduled time, but there wasn’t a set lift,” Cosentino said. “Norton has whole Excel spreadsheets for every player. He splits it up between pitchers and position players and those lifts are different. Norton tailors his lifts to the particular athlete. That’s something we’ve never really had.”

Despite focusing most of his time on weight lifting and strength and conditioning, Norton has quickly accustomed himself to helping the team with hitting and catching.

“On the baseball side of it, he’s helped me out with the hitters and helped out with the catchers,” Lorber said. “It’s a role that I think was unnatural at first, but I think he’s done a good job diving into the catching side and learning and connecting with some people to get some insight and some information.”

Right now, Norton is enjoying his time as an assistant coach and wouldn’t be opposed to continuing coaching down the line.

“I would enjoy doing it in [the] long term. I’m feeling it out for sure,” Norton said. “I don’t know exactly where I’m going to go but right now, I’m enjoying it. I’m going to continue to learn as much as I can to get better at it.”