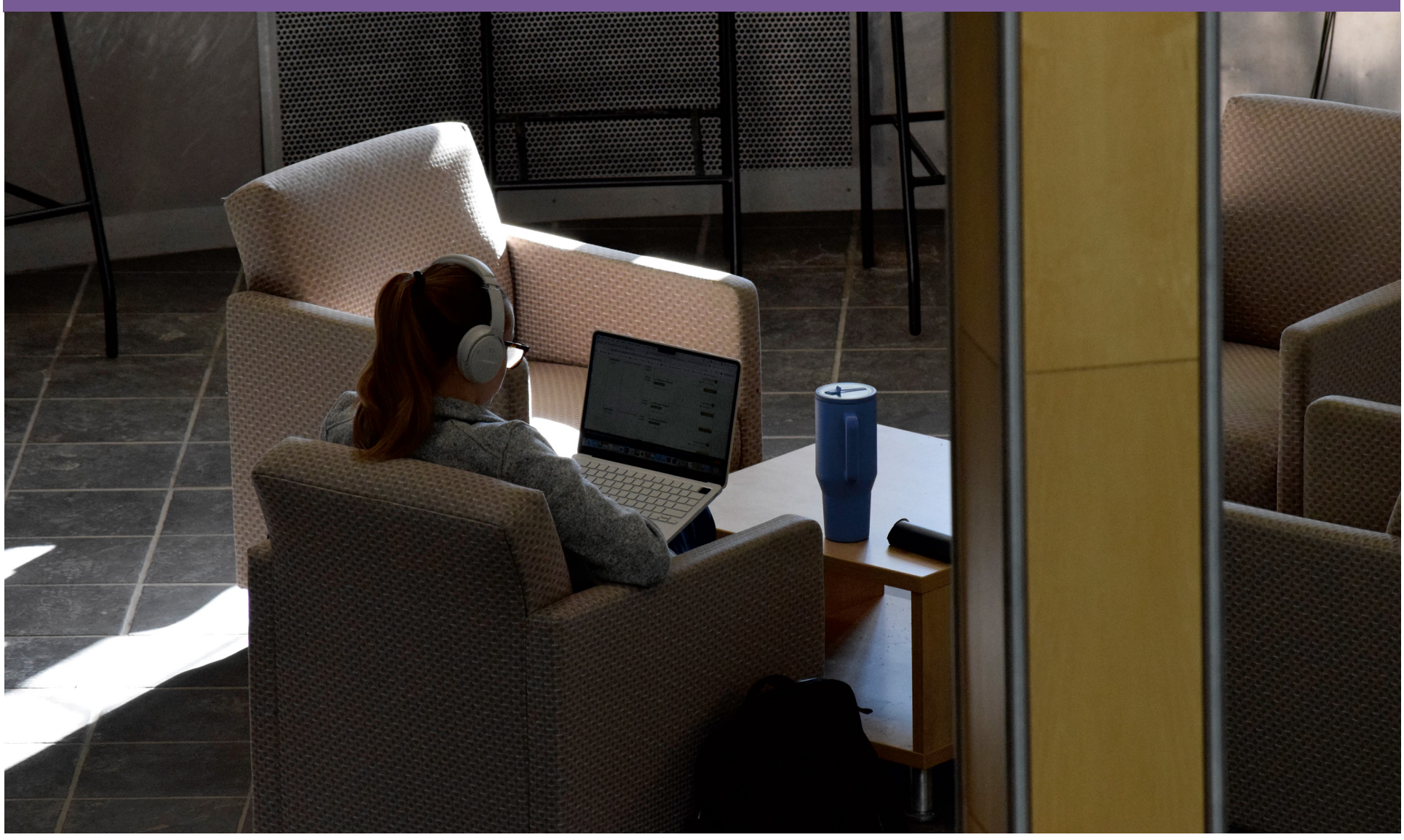
Photo of the Day | Week 3 study time



A student studies on laptop in the Wilbur Cross Building. The building has become a popular study spot for students on campus.
PHOTO BY OLIVIA DICKSON, GRAB PHOTOGRAPHER/THE DAILY CAMPUS

Overconsumption has made us insufferable: Do we hear ourselves?

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Last week, I reread an interview author Emily Henry did, where she announced that she wouldn't release a new novel this year. For non-Emily Henry-heads, she has consistently released a book every single year since "Beach Read" came out in 2020. I remember my reaction to her announcement as follows: "I can't believe there won't be a new Emily Henry book this year, what am I supposed to do?"

Genuinely, how greedy am I, that my favorite author taking a "break" is something to be annoyed, or even complain about? I have six books of hers to reread, something I have no problem doing. Yet, the prospect of no new content not only surprised me, but disappointed me. When reflecting on my initial reaction, all I have to say is: do I hear myself right now? How entitled I have become, and not to point fingers, but it's not just me — it's all of us.

How many times have you seen people spam their favorite musicians' comment sections asking when the next single or album is? Take Chappell Roan for example, who rose to fame in 2024, fresh off her 2023 debut album, "The Rise and Fall of a Midwest Princess." Roan then released three singles in 16 months. In a interview with Vogue centered on the highly anticipated release of "The Subway," the topic of her unreleased sophomore album is brought up. Roan created several headlines with her response: "The second project doesn't exist yet…It took me five years to write the first one, and it's probably going to take at least five to write the next."

Last year, Roan was in her first full year of solidified celebrity status, and the only questions thought to ask her were: what more? What next? And when? I understand where the interviewer is coming from, as Roan was on a single run, which seemingly leads to an album. But why is that the expectation in the first place? Roan was providing her listeners with new music, on a consistent basis, and instead of accepting these singles for what they were, individual singles, she was urged to release a full body of work. Fourteen songs, instead of three.

I'm not saying it's immoral to want new content from your favorite creators, whether that be in books, television shows or music. Believe me, I have been lamenting about the lack of a new Phoebe Bridgers solo project for at least two years now — I don't think I have some sort of moral high ground here. But just think of why we all feel this way, how come none of us can just simply wait for anything. The consistent stream of new releases has made us rush creators and turned us ungrateful. If one artist is pumping out album after album while another takes years between projects, people jump to hound the "slower" artist. But just because one creator is more constant, doesn't make the projects any better.

As a society, we are so accustomed to instant gratification. No matter what I'm doing, or where I am, I can find content to consume. If I don't like the first TikTok I see, good news, there is seemingly an endless amount I can scroll through. Not to sound like someone's dad, but there used to be a waiting period to access things. You had to wait for computers to boot up, there was no "Skip Intro" option on the show you were watching. And that instant accessibility has harmed us in ways; we are entitled to the immediate content we consume. If a phone lags for three seconds, we complain about the service. You used to have to own physical copies of everything, but now I can find a free PDF of an Emily Henry book in one Google search or find any (released or unreleased) Chappell Roan song on multiple platforms, and yet, we still aren't satisfied. Since we can consume any content whenever we wish, it loses its novelty rather quickly; it makes us crave new material faster than we used to. I don't think we're inherently the problem; we've just been made into one. Our attention spans are getting shorter, our patience weaker, as our access grows, so do our expectations, and so does our entitlement.

Not everyone is some evil villain of mass consumption, or a bully; I just think we're unaware of how entitled we not only sound but are, and why that is the case. All I ask is that the next time you find yourself upset about waiting for a new project, you just listen to what you're really complaining about: not getting your way. Sure, the overconsumption and overproduction of new content has made us insufferable, but it hasn't made us unalterable.

Vocalist Res broke social and artistic boundaries by expressing herself

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The music industry forever changed in 2001 after Philadelphia native Res released her debut album, "How I Do." Although she took so many artistic risks, by blending so many different genres into a single listening experience — highlighting societal disillusionment as a Black woman — the genre breaking project faced lukewarm reception and was ultimately forgotten by the majority of public consciousness. Still, by not sacrificing her artistic vision and identity, she ultimately inspired generations of women of color in sound and ethos. "How I Do" proves to them and the broader music industry that women of color can create whatever songs they please. It carried a torch that should be reinvigorated and celebrated as an important part of Black music history.

The impact of "How I Do" is first shown in the process of its creation. It featured the collaboration between Res and co-writer Santigold, who would later become her own lauded singer and songwriter, were hometown friends. This would be Santigold's first credit for writing published music and likely inspired Santigold to further push social and musical boundaries in her own way. This impact alone would be enough to show how important "How I Do" is as a piece of music history, as Santigold's music helped define the sound of the 2000s and itself impacted further artists down the line. This album was the first showcase of Santigold's prowess as a songwriter, and without this credit it would have been more difficult for her to get a platform to change the landscape of music.

The historically unsung hero here, though, is the singer Res and her sonic vision in genre bending. Her art called for a mixture of genres on a single album all coming together to make a texturally engaging listen with a lovely voice to guide us. While primarily defined as neo-soul, hip-hop and alternative R&B, Res also dabbled in genres such as trip-hop, reggae, alternative rock and, arguably, grunge or post-punk.

Just as captivating as the sounds of this record are the lyrics Res sings with such power. Take "Golden Boys", for example: an eclectic blend of modern jazz and neo-soul with trip-hop drums and lyrics about lying to people about yourself due to insecurities and being seen as shallow, playing into the hands of mass media and consumerism. This song is one of the greatest opening tracks of all time largely in part due to how well the lyrics aged, but also the presence of the vocals as they're sung. The next song, the alternative rock "They-Say Vision", explores themes of non-conformity, which keeps the social analysis and criticism theme consistent.

The perfect definition of Res' output, however, is "Tsunami" and the bonus track attached to it, "Say It Anyway." What starts off as a solemn R&B ballad about becoming independent from a previous love interest becomes a high-energy grunge song with the most abrasive instrumentation on the entire album courtesy of drums and an electric guitar about celebrating the break-up and not caring about what the other party thinks or says about them. This is an epic not just about breaking up, but finding freedom.

It's no secret that disparities run rampant in the music industry. It's easier for a white man to obtain mainstream success and establish themselves than a person of color, especially a woman of color. The institutions which facilitate success in the industry create added difficulties for these demographics. This is reflected by the fact that executive positions in the music industry are disproportionately held by white men. The voices of the marginalized are absent or stifled in many of these spaces without much else to do except take direct action.

What does this have to do with "How I Do"? It could be argued that Res, and by proxy Santigold, are fighting back against systemic racial and gender oppression especially in the music industry by expressing herself as she is without compromising her artistic vision as much as to lose its authenticity. The result is an album that, although receiving little airplay and recognition on release, not only stands the test of time sonically and lyrically but will also be culturally relevant for an extremely long time, breaking boundaries in the process.

Furthermore, as an artist, Res has directly or indirectly influenced several Black women artists. The inspirations range from people like English vocalist and songwriter Estelle to, indirectly, blender of the electronic subgenre jungle and neo-soul Nia Archives.

Res is one of the first — but far from the last — artists who empower women artists of color to nurture their authentic creativity as they see fit, to encourage them to act without conformity or concern for what other people want to think, control and manipulate. By refusing to be defined by a single genre, Res shows how arbitrary and even useless labels can become to define experiences especially if applied by people detached from them. Experiencing and platforming the art of the marginalized is a start to giving us the voices we need to advocate for ourselves, breaking the oppressive cages boxing us in and showing how we can challenge the status quo in the process.