Features

3 College Monotony Sleep, eat, go to class, do homework, repeat... By Mike Walsh

4 Snow Day Activities Some fun suggestions to make those snowy days spectacular By Melissa Sonier

9 Contemporary Artist: Janine Antoni An artist who walks tight-ropes and uses her hair as a paint-brush By Nicole D’Amico

15 Po’Town Swing A look into the back room of Poughkeepsie’s Muddy Cup By Jennifer Sommer

16 Over the River... Across the Hudson a relaxed, artsy town is awaiting your visit By Melissa Amarianos

17 Dating 101: The Ex-Factor Can one ever really get along with an ex? By Sarah Briggs

20 Top 10 Christmas Songs The best holiday songs to get you in a festive mood By Marina Cella

21 Top 10 Christmas Gifts Under $25 If you’re having trouble with gift ideas and have a low budget try out some of these By Mary Treuer
Music
10 Album Reviews Some ska-punk, rock, R&B, and the newest pop music by Britney Spears By Sarah Dubrule

11-12 CMJ and WMAR College radios unite and experience the newest trends in music By Paige Zangoglia

Movies
7 Movie Previews Chick flics, comedies, and one creepy-sounding horror movie By Paige Zangoglia and Justine Mann

8 Twilight Movie Review The movie seems to be following the trend of the best-selling book, so what comes after this? By Justine Mann

Literature
6 Book Review: Downtown Owl The first novel by an essayist from the great state of North Dakota By John Sowulski

13 Buddy Wakefield Poetry is a lot more than cutey rhymes and depressingly deep thoughts on paper By Jennifer Sommer

14 Lit-Hop-A-Palooza Ever think of Shakespeare while listening to the current rap hits on the radio? By Sarah Holmes

Theatre
5-6 Broadway Closings We bid adieu to some amazing musicals By Olivia MacMahon

Opinion
19 Relationships During the Holidays Balancing between significant others and blood relatives can be stressful but possible By Ashleigh Whitfield

21 Good Old Christmas Without Santa and with responsibility it may be hard to enjoy Christmas like we used to By Ashleigh Whitefield

22 ‘Tis the Season to Consume The lights are up, the carols are playing, and we’re waiting in line for the best deals By Sarah Holmes

24 Coolest Room on Campus A new feature that shows off a lucky student’s humble abode By Justine Mann

Fashion
17 Fashionology The story behind the scarves, hats, and jewelry on sale in Donnelly By Christine Urgola

18 Sex and the City’s Effect on Fashion How the surprise hit show has influenced the fashion market By Christine Urgola

Photo Credits:
Cover c/o Dandy_fsg @creativecommons.org
Page 1, 2 c/o athenamat, manfrys, and chrisdecurtis @creativecommons.org
Pages 2, 14 c/o Mikal Lee
Page 3 c/o Mme Poubelle from the N.G. @creativecommons.org
Page 4 c/o Hamed Saber and bensonkua @creativecommons.org
Page 5 c/o hilisapie, cinderellasg, david schexnaydre @creativecommons.org and www.observer.com
Page 6 c/o mstephens7 and weevil @creativecommons.org
Page 7 c/o janneM @creativecommons.org
Page 8 c/o ezy brenizzle @creativecommons.org
Pages 9 c/o pbs.org
Page 10 c/o pemachine @creativecommons.org
Pages 11-12 c/o WMAR students
Page 13 c/o foxtongue @creativecommons.org
Page 15 c/o doublebug@creativecommons.org
Page 16 c/o pb @creativecommons.org
Pages 18 c/o www.shadestation.co.uk
Pages 19 and 20 c/o mrhayata @creativecommons.org
Page 22 c/o William hartz @creativecommons.org
Back cover c/o Justine Mann
My eyes squint open breaking the crustiness of the deep sleep. The dim light of my radio reads 12:30 p.m. I lay still, a prisoner of my sheets and blankets. It’s not the weekend, I wasn’t out partying all night, and I’m not under the weather. Yet, here I lie in the middle of the day almost scared to leave the sanctuary of my corner of room in Gartland Commons.

This is not the first time I have been in this situation, as the long semester wears on I find myself doing this more and more. I’ve grown tired and weary of the monotony that has come to stay in my life like an unwanted relative taking advantage of my hospitality. Try as I might, I can’t seem to push the metaphorical covers off of my weak body.

This seems to be a common occurrence for college students. As much as we love the life we lead, it takes a certain toll on our bodies. Living away from home for months at a time and doing countless hours of work for class is emotionally and mentally strenuous. Then the weekend comes and we plan to finally relax, yet 3 a.m. comes around and we are still out partying.

The worst part of it all is the constant monotony. Everyday is the same, sleep in, go to classes, eat. Every weekend we party at one place or another, go dancing, or watch a movie. Sure, on any given night you may have an intramural game or some rehearsal, but your schedule can be boiled down enough to depress even the happiest people you know.

Every now and then we do something to try and shake things up. I like to go to the gym and shoot balls around for a solid hour or so.

But why do we do it? Why do we still claim that these are the best four years of our lives? When we go home over break and see our aunts and uncles and grandparents, they ask us how college is going. We don’t reply with the boring work we do or the hours we sleep. I tell them of the unique joys that fill my life here.

Despite all the monotony we suffer in college, I love it. When I walk into my house and see the five guys that have become my family sitting and arguing over who’s doing dishes, I know I’m home. When I’m sitting in my third class in a row, she walks in smiling, and all the troubles of my day fade away, I know I’m home. And when it’s 3:30 a.m. Saturday morning and I no longer remember where I am and my best friend raises a hand toward me for a high five, I know I’m home.

By Mike Walsh
Although we haven’t had our first official snowfall of the season (official as in the snow actually sticks to the ground), when we do, it’ll start the frenzied anticipation of a snow day.

One or more of your classes might get canceled and you’ll think to yourself, “What could I possibly do on this splendidly snowy day?” You could do schoolwork or study, but who wants to do that when you’ve been given the gift of a few or extra hours? Here are some fun and creative suggestions.

Go sledding down the hill in front of the library! I’ve heard that this is a fun and popular tradition at Marist and I’m looking forward to trying it out this year. Make sure to bring your snow-tubes, saucers, sleds or even a cardboard box to glide down the hill with some friends. The more people, the better, and the possibilities are endless: you could have a race or have a competition for who can successfully sled down the hill backwards, or if you’re really daring, fit as many people as you can on one sled and see what happens when you take off.

If you’re in the mood for some competition, how about starting a snowball fight? Make teams, build forts, assign a few people to make the snowballs and put the rest of the team on firing duty. For variation, you could try playing dodge ball style where you don’t build any forts and play according to the conventional rules of dodge ball. But be safe; no one wants to be hit in the face with a snowball, nor does anybody want to be bombarded with balls of ice.

If you’re looking for a calmer activity relating to snow, build a snowman with your friends. Dress him (or her) up with a Marist hat and a flag to wave. If you’re feeling really ambitious, make a snowy creation of Shooter. Feeling super ambitious? Attempt to build an igloo. Even if you don’t succeed, you might end up with an interesting looking fort or just a crazy snow creation to be envied by all of campus.

But maybe it’s just too cold outside and you’d rather look at the snow than play in it. Gather some people and whip up a batch of hot chocolate. Throw in marshmallows, whipped cream, chocolate syrup, or even some mint leaves for a hot mint-chocolate treat. You can also find some fun cocoa mixes in the store such as Butterfinger Hot Cocoa Mix or yummy Swiss Miss varieties such as Caramel Cream, French Vanilla, and Dark Chocolate. To make things more interesting, have a hot chocolate party where everyone brings one creative hot chocolate recipe. We all know that anything home made or made from scratch tastes better than anything canned, processed or boxed!

Whatever you do, just enjoy the fact that the weather has blessed you with a snow day and that you have a little extra time to get something done or do something fun!
“Wha-what do you mean Rent is closing?!”
This was my horrified reaction to the dreadful news broken to me by a fellow fan. Impossible! Rent? Closing? It was the catastrophic end of the world soothsayers had predicted.

As a Rent-head myself, I’m sure I wasn’t the only devastated Broadway fan. The show closed in June of 2008 with a running time of twelve great years. Luckily, I saw the show one last time before the closing date. For everyone else, well, there’s always off-Broadway.

Rent is only one of many shows that seem to be following this unfortunate trend. Beauty and the Beast, The Color Purple, Xanadu, Legally Blonde, Hairspray, Spring Awakening, and Spamalot are extremely popular and successful shows that have either already pulled the curtain or are planning to take that final bow on Broadway relatively soon.

After thirteen years of incredible classic Disney magic, Beauty and the Beast bid Broadway adieu on July 29th of 2007. Disney fanatics weren’t displeased with the next tenant of the Lunt-Fontanne Theatre: one Disney princess made room for another, and The Little Mermaid opened.

The Color Purple closed on February 24th of this year, much to the extreme sadness of the cast who had grown very close during the production of the musical that broke theatre’s box office records for the most money made in two years.

What’s the hardest part of hearing that such a successful cast must be disbanded? According to Jamal Story, the musical’s dance captain, that would be theorizing about the reasons why it’s being shut down.

Xanadu had its closing date moved up from October 12th of this year to September 28th, after only a year and odd months on Broadway. It’s not such a final goodbye with this particular musical, which was nominated for many Tony Awards; Xanadu will be making appearances in California and Chicago before embarking on a national tour. Legally Blonde finished its rather brief run of only 595 showings on October 19th. But fans of this “girl power” musical don’t fret: it is survived by a national tour that will continue well into 2009.

January seems like it will be a cold month on Broadway with Hairspray calling it quits bright and early in the New Year on January 4th. This show grossed over $265 million, showed more than 2,600 performances, and won a Tony for best musical: an amazing feat for a show running for just six years.

Broadway seems determined to make fans interminably sad this month, for the 18th marks the end of not one, but two shows: Monty Python’s Spamalot and Spring Awakening.

Spamalot opened in March of 2005 and has had over two million people see its performances. It is also a Tony-winning best musical, but is now closing its drawbridge to Broadway. The closing of Spring Awakening, a fairly new musical that debuted in December 2006, is going to cause quite an uproar among newer fans who overestimated the amount of time they had to see it. This rock musical won eight Tony Awards and a
Chuck Klosterman, one of today’s more popular commentators and essayists on pop-culture hails from the culturally-rich state of North Dakota? Seems like a strange origin for a best-selling author who has written four books that display an encyclopedia-esque knowledge of almost everything: music, movies, sports, even cereal. Klosterman uses this knowledge, along with his clever wit and rich metaphors to frequently make the reader think, Oh my God, that’s so true!

Klosterman shifts gears, however, with his newest book, and first novel, Downtown Owl. Taking place in the fall and winter of ’83 and ’84, the book recounts the lives of three different individuals in the small town of Owl, North Dakota.

Mitch is a high school kid who loves sleep more than anything, but hates his football coach/English teacher with even more passion. Julia just moved into Owl as a young teacher, inexperienced lover, and alcoholic-in-the-making. Horace is an elderly man who enjoys a cup of coffee while gossiping about the town with buddies, but is always thinking about his deceased wife. Although completely different, they are one in the same; they all share the experience of living in a tragic rural town where everyone knows everyone, but no one really knows anyone; where nothing ever really happens, and where life is based on a misinterpreted past and a bleak future.

Klosterman masterfully scripts how it feels to live in such a setting by basing a chapter solely on the life of one of the aforementioned characters, restarting the cycle every three chapters. By telling the stories of these people, he’s revealing the story of this Middle America town in the Reagan years. While illustrating what it was like to live during this time and under these circumstances, Klosterman still infuses many of his common hypothetical theories, pop-culture rants, and random digressions through the minds of his characters. Although seemingly unrelated to plot, these appropriately convey the thoughts of the townspeople and their ways of life.

An easy criticism of the book can say it lacks a plot, that the novel is just a chronological account of three random lives. But this adds meaning to the book and the richness of the characters; there is no plot in the story because there’s not a defined plot going on in the town. The town is just there, the people are just there, and things happen to the people in the town.

It’s an unconventional novel but is it due to Klosterman’s inexperience in fiction or was it his intent all along? In Mitch’s English class, the teacher discusses Orwell’s 1984, a book with a government that can make you believe that 2+2=5. Is Downtown Owl a miscalculated equation, or is it exactly what Chuck Klosterman wants the reader to believe? I recommend you read the book and decide for yourself.

Also recommended:

**Sex, Drugs, and Cocoa Puffs** and **Killing Yourself to Live** by Chuck Klosterman

**Plainsong** by Kent Haruf

**A Heartbreaking Work of Staggering Genius** by Dave Eggers
By Paige Zangoglia and Justine Mann

**Bride Wars - 1/9**

Starring Kate Hudson and Anne Hathaway, *Bride Wars* tells the story of two best friends trying to out-do and essentially sabotage each other after their dream wedding plans conflict with each other. With lots of humorous and catty activity, this movie should serve as a great girls-night must-see.

**The Unborn - 1/9**

Another horror flick featuring a creepy undead child antagonist, *The Unborn* is the story of a teenage girl who is haunted by her unborn twin brother. The trailer shows an exorcism, contorted bodies and other visually freakish elements that suggest this movie will make your skin crawl at the very least.

**Fanboys - 2/6**

In a galaxy far far away... or at your local mall in February *Fanboys* will hit theatres! This long anticipated comedy about a group of friends attempting to steal a print of *Star Wars: Episode One* from Skywalker Ranch is ready to be released. The directing/screenwriting duo Newman/Goldberg shot the film in 2006 with a trailer prominently on the *Clerks II* dvd but studio disputes and re-shoots kept it out of theatres until now. While the plot suggests a bit of tear-jerking drama, one of the main characters is dying, guest appearances, rumored on IMDB.com, by Kevin Smith and Jason Mewes suggests there will be more cackling than crying. Not to mention the cameos by dozens of funny and big name stars. If you’ve ever loved a series enough to go to jail for it, check out this flick!

**He’s Just Not That into You - 2/6**

A not-so-romantic comedy about mixed signals and dating based on a 2005 self-help book by the same title [written by Greg Behrendt, Liz Tuccillo, and Lauren Monchik]. The film boasts an all-star cast and a promising trailer. It should make anyone who has ever been shot down, picked-up or left waiting by the phone laugh a little at their own expense. It’s a risk, if none of these couples get a happily-ever-after, the film won’t be the chick flick of the year.
“I cannot wait for the movie!” Jessie Karosos said of Twilight in early November. “I’ve been waiting for months.”

Many fans purchased advance tickets for the premiere. Cristina Petinito said that she and her friends have been planning the day for months.

“I love Twilight,” Petinito said. “The movie looks so good, I’m excited for it.”

Her housemate, Ana Sendon, who hasn’t read the book, is also looking forward to the film but is trying to restrain herself from seeing it just yet.

“I was going to read the books but I never got the chance,” Sendon said. “I’m definitely going to read them before watching the movie.”

After raking in $70 million opening weekend, according to People Magazine, the Twilight films have begun to prove their worth akin to their literary counterparts.

The release of Twilight rocked the Regal theatres at the Galleria in Poughkeepsie. Droves of fans arrived hours early to see the 12:01, 12:02, 12:03 and 12:04 a.m. showings of the vampire love story. Local police officers were on hand to keep the crowds under control and make sure that those who entered the theatres had tickets.

The film itself stuck closely to the book, skipping the prolonged parts of the tale. This left the film slightly confusing for those who did not read the book and left those who did a little curious.

When will Alice learn of her own past? Stephanie Meyer told the tale in the first book but Hardwicke/Rosenberg left it out of the film. Other details are given more spotlight and demystified in the film. Jasper’s stand-offish behavior is cleared up as the audience comes to understand his difficulty with not feeding off the humans who live around him. That mysterious image on the book’s cover? That was seamlessly set-up as an iconic scene in the film.

Fans are paying close attention to the details of the film.

“I think they did well with some of the casting, but the supporting characters like Alice and Jasper don’t look like I imagined they would,” said Karosos.

Some of the characters made audiences laugh out loud at inappropriate moments with their acting skills. Edward even seemed a bit human as he gagged at the smell of Bella in an unattractive movement. Bella’s dad was given a little bit more of a personality on film, but the relationship between father and daughter seemed unnecessarily uncomfortable, not just estranged.

“It was funnier than I thought it’d be,” said Petinito. “Some of the acting didn’t seem quite right, but it was good.”

Overall, fans seemed pleased as they left the theatres with big smiles on their faces if for no other reason than seeing Robert Pattinson’s larger than life image before their eyes for two hours. Female voices squealed throughout the entire showing every time he came on scene.

These fans can begin anticipating the release of New Moon, the next book in the Twilight saga, slated for a 2010 release.

According to actressarchives.com, all three subsequent titles in the series are already in talks to be turned into feature films. Unfortunately, contract battles have begun to push back the release date for New Moon as director Catherine Hardwicke (Thirteen) urges the studio to raise the budget. The budget for Twilight is less than half of what the film made in the first weekend. Robert Pattinson (Edward) and Kristin Stewart (Bella) have already signed on for a healthy $10 million per film, Taylor Lautner (Jacob) has yet to sign on.

The books have all been optioned by Summit Entertainment (SE) whose New Moon contract comes with Melissa Rosenberg (Dexter) continuing to act as screenwriter.

The Twilight DVD can already be pre-ordered on Amazon.com and will have special features including a scene from the elusive Midnight Sun, Hardwicke told buzznet.com. The book Midnight Sun, Twilight from Edward Cullen’s perspective, has been shelved for now but Hardwicke shot some of the scenes during the filming of Twilight.

All of the films are based on the popular book series about vampires in a modern romance. Bella Swan is the accident prone heroine who falls in love with Edward Cullen, a vampire, and yearns to be a part of his vampire clan. The bloodsuckers are friendly fiends as they consider themselves “vegetarians” by only drinking animal blood. Soon, other vampires put Bella on the menu as her relationship with Edward always puts her in the wrong place at the wrong time.

This book series, written by Stephenie Meyer, became a cult classic following on the magical heels of Harry Potter and Lord of the Rings. People Magazine reports that the series has now been translated into 20 languages. From this success, fans eagerly anticipated the film.
How many contemporary artists can you name? If not many, then maybe you can read for a minute about an artist that I have taken a particular interest in. Her name is Janine Antoni.

Janine Antoni is a contemporary female artist who exhibits installations, sculptures and performances. Many of her pieces reside in the idea and story behind a work. Antoni expresses issues concerning gender, bodily functions, societal ‘ideals’ and people that play an important role in her life.

Antoni has the capability to take an idea and then use the idea, whatever it may be, to create a sculpture or performance piece. Often, she utilizes her own body for performance pieces. For example, Antoni has many thoughts on the aspect of balance; therefore, she decided to begin tightrope walking. She then made a video of herself walking on a tightrope in her home country, the Bahamas. In her tight rope walking piece, she connected the idea to her own life story, by filming a video near her birthplace.

Stories, in addition to ideas, hold a great deal of influence to an artist. Antoni wanted to create a narrative piece that represented a life line, analogous to an umbilical cord, which showed the connections between the family and friends in her life. She envisioned a piece that would show an object of history and how it made its way into the world. The piece is called “Moor,” and is a hand-made massive rope, woven of everyday objects collected from Antoni’s friends and family, including Antoni’s grandmother’s Christmas dress. There is an individual experience, story, and emotion tied to each material donated to Antoni. The rope shows how people may be connected in unexpected, mysterious, and beautiful way.

Conventional women’s roles are of similar value to Antoni as familial and friend matters. Several areas that Antoni concentrates on are female-targeted marketing and feminist politics. Her strongest example is her performance piece called “Loving Care.” In this work, Antoni put old-fashioned hair dye on her hair and then used her hair as a mop to paint and clean the floor. The dye is representative of paint and her position as she paints the floor represents a subservient, lower, servile position in society. Overall, the piece comments on how women view their bodies. Women are bombarded by images from the media, society, and trends of how to be “beautiful.” Advertisements tell females if they do a certain action, then men will love them more. Antoni shows that women dye their hair to make themselves “beautiful” and the lengths women will go to in order to comply with traditional ‘norms.’

Contemporary artists have the ability to work with any material and idea and influence a viewer. Antoni exemplifies an artist who creates a different world with the different layers and complexities to her work. For further information on Antoni you can go to PBS.org.
Genre: R&B  
Album: I am ... Sasha Fierce  
Artist: Beyonce  
Release Date: November 18th, 2008

Beyonce’s two-disc release promises a diverse sampling of her talents, ranging from her own engaging style to the bite of her alter-ego, Sasha Fierce. Either way, Beyonce is known for being a modern soul of R&B and will not disappoint.

Genre: Rock  
Album: Day & Age  
Artist: The Killers  
Release Date: November 25th, 2008

The Killers appeal to listeners of all persuasions, and Day & Age hints at another major success. Smart hooks and a quick pace in tracks like “Spaceman” appear throughout the album, but do not bore, and encourage dancing.

Genre: Ska-punk  
Album: Fame, Fortune and Fornication  
Artist: Reel Big Fish  
Release Date: January 2nd, 2009

The spin that Reel Big Fish puts on popular Poison, Van Morrison and Tom Petty classics draws in a large audience and invites them to stay for dinner. This album demands to be an addition to any noteworthy collection.

Genre: Pop  
Album: Circus  
Artist: Britney Spears  
Release Date: December 2nd, 2008

Britney’s most recent emergence on the music scene with “Circus” leads listeners to wonder how aptly the pop-album’s title reflects the songs therein, or rather the artist’s own life, with tracks like “Womanizer”.

By Sarah Dubrule
Every year hundreds of thousands of people gather at numerous venues throughout Manhattan and Brooklyn to attend the prestigious CMJ music marathon where a slew of the best new musical acts grace the stages for the five to seven day festival. Representatives from Marist’s radio station, WMAR, attended the marathon this year that was held from October 21-25. They brought home lists of new favorite bands, crazy memories and most importantly, new ideas for how to improve WMAR.

CMJ, short for the College Media Journal, is responsible for compiling new music and artists in charts and sending them to both college radio stations and record labels in a weekly publication. CMJ has become an essential part of college radio station, including WMAR.

Nicholas Palumbo, a junior and the Vice President of the station explained the use of CMJ at Marist. “CMJ’s charts and articles help us find artists that we should consider adding to the heavy and medium rotation slots [on the radio station’s computer].” He explained that by doing this, the station hopes to encourage people to learn about and embrace new music.

“As a college radio station, it is essential that we play a combination of popular artists, up-and-coming artists, and unsigned artists,” Palumbo said. By utilizing the CMJ charts in the station, “it allows us to realize that music is much more than The Goo Goo Dolls, Katy Perry and Nickelback. CMJ lets us know what is under the radar in the music industry.”

The CMJ Marathon exposed Palumbo, as well as Theresa Martin, Andrew Cleary, and Dylan Wise, all members of the WMAR E-Board, to new bands and artists featured in CMJ charts as well as the atmospheric tendencies of the music industry. The four students jumped from venue to venue, viewing acts such as They Might be Giants, Broken Social Scene and
Cleary, the President of WMAR, said that the four students were able to use the CMJ Marathon as a learning experience, “The conference helps us to see more and more by allowing for us to go to panels that address some of the problems we might be having as a station as well as let us see where the industry is going to allow us to plan for the future.”

Martin, a senior and FM director to the station, added to this idea by explaining that through attending these panels, the four of them were able to brainstorm new ideas for improving the WMAR station, “We’re looking into automation systems for the station that we heard about at CMJ… We’re also adding independent artists to our playlists that we saw play at the marathon.”

The four students thoroughly enjoyed their experience at the CMJ conference. As individuals who are directly involved with the progress and success of WMAR they collectively said that they felt the conference was an important experience on both a personal and professional level.

Martin summed up her definition of the marathon as a place “for young people to come together and to exchange information about the music industry, and to learn about technology, new music, trends, and more related to the music industry, radio industry, and popular culture.”

Cleary added that it was definitely a fun and educational marathon for people who “are looking towards not only the future of radio but the future of all media, and who want to see some awesome up and coming bands along the way.”

---

John Flansburgh of “They Might be Giants at le Poisson Rouge (above) and BrooklynVegan presents... “Takka Takka” (lead singer Gabe Levine) at Knitting Factory’s Old Office (below)
Last Friday night when most students could be found gyrating at The Loft or some equally unsanitary location, a select few could be found in Marist’s Performing Arts Room drinking coffee and listening to the two-time Individual World Poetry Slam Champion, Buddy Wakefield.

Slam poetry is a performance art that causes poets to not only consider what they’re writing, but how they read their poetry to an audience. It often has an expressive style that is created by intonations and body movements. The works of slam poets are not merely supposed to be read, rather, they are created to be heard.

Wakefield’s poetry is no exception. He is an extremely talented poet and performer based out of Seattle, Washington, who has performed on BBC, NPR, and HBO’s Deaf Poetry Jam. He entertains through poetic language that hits at the heart of human existence and many times pokes fun at the state of our nation. He manages to accomplish all of this with a laid back attitude and a quirky sense of humor that makes the audience wonder if they have stepped into a coffee house or a comedy club. The combination is both inviting and refreshing.

Wakefield was born in Shreveport, Louisiana and raised by his single mom in Baytown, Texas. Originally an executive assistant in a biomedical firm, in 2001 he decided to quit and pursue a career as a professional slam poet. Wakefield is currently signed with Strange Famous Records. He has released two CDs, Run on Anything and A Stretch of Presence, and three collections of poetry, The Last American Valentine, Live for a Living, and Some They Can’t Condition. He has also been hailed as “the modern poetry slam role model” by Cristin O’Keefe Aiptowicz.

Even if you are someone who groans at the prospect of listening to poetry for an evening you will easily be captured by Wakefield’s charisma and the modern flair that is slam poetry. The topics of his poems cover everything from his childhood and his mother to musings about death, life, and the United States Government. The range can make your head spin and yet sitting there the minutes flew by and I found myself completely immersed in the rhythm and style of his words.

I was not the only one. Everyone laughed at Wakefield’s punch lines, but as soon as he began a poem the room went silent. His ability to capture an audience and connect with them on a deeper level is what makes him such an amazing performer.

“Some of us are on fire for the answers,” says Wakefield in one of his poems and in the moment I think that everyone could feel that fire in their souls.
Lit-Hop-A-Palooza

By Sarah Holmes

Don’t think literature fiends and rap lovers can enjoy the same thing? Think again.

The Henry Hudson room was packed mainly with studentstaking an English course, their professors, and members of Literary Arts Society. Everyone stayed and enjoyed the rap styling of Machacek and Marist Alumnus Mikal Lee, aka Hired Gun, at the first ever Lit-Hop-A-Palooza.

Although both Machacek and Lee were hopeful for more diversity the audience still enjoyed the different rap styles.

“Students in this generation do have a kind of sensitivity to rhythmic language uses,” he realized and he started to think, what if Shakespeare rapped?

Since this realization Machacek has created five performance pieces based on Shakespeare, three as Shakespeare himself, and two written from one character’s view of the plot, and his students have responded positively to the raps.

He doesn’t go about writing them any differently than when he writes poems that aren’t rap-oriented. It’s the same process, some inspiration, working out the basic idea, and then figuring out what it will take to implement that. “Poems are like puzzles,” he said. “Sometimes difficult to figure out, but fun to do; like figuring out what Macbeth would rap like.”

Those present at Lit-Hop-A-Palooza found just that out and also go to hear how Hamlet might have rapped. The performances were very entertaining, especially for those who knew the plays and could appreciate the amount of detail related to the actual literature.

Before the event an open mic and workshop were held. No one came for the open mic which Machacek attributed to the difficulty in finding and getting in touch with the rap scene on campus. The workshop went very well though with the help of Lee, a ‘99 graduate, student of Machacek and emcee. Students got to enjoy playing Hip-Hop Pyramid, a rapping version of the gameshow Pyramid, in which the emcee has to get the participant to guess the word.

Lee began emceeing when he was 11 and wrote his first song in sixth grade. “Hip Hop music was the first time I felt a sense of connection with my heritage and any type of culture,” he said.

At Marist he took four classes with Machacek. During this time Machacek didn’t know Lee was into rapping and Machacek hadn’t begun his own rapping career.

When Lee graduated, he began working in publishing while “devoting as much energy to making music and building with the hip hop community... in New York City.” He didn’t last long in publishing and ended up doing a lot of customer service for a few years.

In 2005, he began working as an artist educator and youth mentor where he uses his emceeing skills to help children. He also dabbles in freelance writing, performing poetry, and throws hip hop events.

Since leaving college, Lee has been in contact with Machacek and sought him out for guidance when he was working towards getting his master’s. At this time they found out their common interest, beyond all the English stuff, which went something like, “You’re a rapper? I’m a rapper too!” said Machacek.

Lee’s fame as a rapper is a bit more far-reaching than Machacek’s with his establishment of Fresh Roots Music, a collaboration of artists and community lead by Lee under the name Hired Gun. Recently he went to the Czech Republic and performed with the Czech Beatbox Allstars, Beat Apetit, sat in on a community workshop, and did some live promo.

“Peace to Jaro Cossiga, Kuzhel, Dowis, Nasty, Ivanhoe, and the rest of the crew!” he shouted out to the beatboxers.

The best part of performing for Lee is the interaction with the crowds, “the exchange of energy. It is some of the best times to connect with people,” he said. His love of performing could be felt although it did take some time for the audience to warm up to the energy and the intensity of Lee and relax despite his very strong political and social standpoints.

“I want people to question. Question their leaders, question their peers, question themselves,” he said. “To look at things critically, to educate themselves and act accordingly.”

His music also is influenced by his people’s story, those in the African Diaspora. His goal is to give a voice to all strata of people of color.

For the next event like this, Lee and Machacek would like to see more diversity and groups that Lee feels are underrepresented on campus. Either way, they think a bigger room than the Henry Hudson would be necessary.

Although students got the treat of two different rappers the headline, Baba Brinkman, was unable to attend due to flight delays. Brinkman is well-known for “The Rap of Canterbury Tales,” a show he has toured with across the world, which Machacek hopes to bring to campus in the spring.

For more information about Mikal “Hired Gun” Lee visit www.freshrootsmusic.com
The dance floor is covered with bodies doing flips and turns. A few couples are still learning the basic steps. I am currently caught up in my own awkward shuffle. The song ends, so I quickly thank my partner and take a seat with my friends. But before I can even think about sitting down, a man walks over to me and asks me to dance.

I feel as though I have been transported into an old movie, where men and women mingle around the dance floor, and the boys politely ask girls to dance. In fact I even stop for a second to search for my dance card but it’s not there. My pocket is empty because I’m not in some flashback fantasy. Instead, I am located in the back room of the Muddy Cup in Poughkeepsie. Every Wednesday night from 8:00 to 10:30 p.m. an odd mixture of individuals can be seen swing dancing at this local hotspot. There are a few college students, some employees from IBM, one or two men that look like my grandfather, and a bunch of people who want to have fun and reclaim a past time that many of us have forgotten, or never had a chance to experience.

Swing dance was created in the 1920s and 30s alongside Jazz, which was becoming popular at that time. It was a response to the swing style of the music that was characterized by strong anchoring rhythms, medium to fast tempos, and a variety of musical instruments such as saxophones, trumpets, and piano. This music was created during the Harlem Renaissance in an attempt to break away from the traditional values of the past and create something new. The music of the time encouraged improvisation off of a steady rhythmic beat.

As I counted out the steps over and over again in a desperate attempt to keep the base I was being asked to work off of just as my teacher taught me, right 1-2 left 3-4 back 5-6, I began to wonder why this wasn’t popular anymore.

When did we decide to trade in these classic dance moves that require some finesse and skill for ones that consist of two people rubbing up against one another or swaying from side to side? Is the Charleston really that difficult to master?

I don’t claim to be an expert dancer. I will be the first to admit that I mess up often while practicing the art of swing, but at the same time there is a point every night when I become completely comfortable, when my partner and I are in sync, and for a moment I’m able to move like a pro. And that one moment is worth all the shy smiles and broken apologies about how it’s only my second time here.

It is even worth the various admonishments from partners telling me to loosen up. To which I can only sheepishly reply that all I’ve ever done is ballet, and all they teach you is structure.

So even though it may only last for a split second and I’ll soon forget to walk into a turn like I’m suppose to, that second is pure ecstasy.

Anyone can play an overly sexualized rap song and have you sway from side to side, but you won’t get the same rush you’ll find when you’re flying across the dance floor with a flurry of skirts and well dressed men around you. So put on your dancing shoes and come join the fun.

Beginners’ lessons go from 8:00 to 8:30 p.m. and are taught by Glenn Katzen, an accomplished swing dancer, and the swing music plays until 10:30. The Muddy Cup is located at 305 Main Street in Poughkeepsie, NY. Swing dancing is every Wednesday night and admittance is free.
If you have read any of my previous articles you will notice a common thread, I am constantly looking for new things to explore in and around the Hudson Valley. One of my favorite places to visit is the town of New Paltz. If you listen to the stereotypes then you probably believe that New Paltz is a hippie town filled with tweed and lots of vinyl, and you wouldn’t be too far off.

One of the best times to visit is during the fall. There are apple orchards and pumpkin patches, complete with corn mazes and various other autumn activities. If apples don’t quite excite you, then you could always check out one of the vineyards that are located around the area. The town has a relaxed atmosphere and is surrounded by mountains, it is easy to get carried away.

My first trip to New Paltz was in the spring of my junior year. The town is closer to Marist than I originally thought, and my first stop upon arriving was to a coffee shop called the Muddy Cup. This coffee shop is unique in the fact that its prices are low and its tone is eclectic. It is filled with antique furnishings that are reminiscent of items you would find in your grandmother’s basement. The space is large, and the art on the wall is intense.

There are various bookstores located along the main strip of the town, and they range from stores that sell new books to others that offer a vast selection of used books. I personally find the smell of used books to be intoxicating, and if you want to satisfy your literary lust then don’t hesitate to check out the stores on Main Street.

If you happen to be more auditory, then check out the used record stores. The owners are friendly and in most cases will engage you in conversation about their favorite musical selections. If you are a vinyl fan then definitely check out the one-dollar record bins (I found a copy of Electric Light Orchestra once).

Other than book and music stores there are a myriad of other places to shop, most of them privately owned. There is no limit to the number of stores that sell eccentric items, mood candles, spiritual stones, art supplies and other items that will spark your curiosity. Some of the stores are more along the lines of boutiques and in this case, especially with clothing stores, the prices can get rather high. If you’re looking for original, artsy items that are not easily found, then you will enjoy the shopping experience that New Paltz has to offer.

After exploring the sites, you will probably work up an appetite. One of favorite places to eat in the town is McGillicuddy’s pub. This restaurant has a relaxed atmosphere that fits in nicely with the rest of the town. The service is good and the food is delicious (my favorite thing to order is the nachos complete with chili). At night, this spot often hosts events and is a good place to spend time with friends. There is a wide variety of food options in town including Greek, vegetarian, and Japanese.

I hope I have managed to give you a snapshot of what the town of New Paltz is like to visit. Gather up your friends and make a day trip out of it. I still have a lot of my own exploring to do, maybe I will see you there.
It’s an age old question. Whenever there’s a breakup, it always crosses a person’s mind. Whether it was your first breakup in middle school or the end of a 10-month relationship as an adult, we ask: can you ever be friends with an ex?

Some say it can never work, no matter what the situation. Others say that just because you didn’t work as a couple doesn’t mean that you couldn’t work as friends. I say that it all depends on the context of the breakup.

On one hand, there are those breakups that have a slim-to-none chance of ever resulting in the couple as being just friends. In this case, it usually is a long-term relationship breakup where there have been too many emotions involved and at least one if not both parties have been hurt.

Unfortunately, I know this situation all too well, both from observation and from personal experience. Long story short: mistakes were made, people were hurt, and consequentially, we haven’t been able to be in the same room together, let alone exchange any form of communication with each other.

The best example of this situation, though, would be the breakup between one of my closest high school friends, who I’ll refer to as Cathy, and her long-term boyfriend, Jimbo. As a couple, the two had been through a lot together, with her dealing with getting to know her biological father and Jimbo having a brush or two with the law. For about two years, they supported each other through thick and thin. However, when it was around time for her to head off to finish college, things for their relationship got even bumpier. Today, they don’t even speak to each other, save for the occasional awkward running into each other when she comes home for break.

On the other hand, there are times where breakups can permit the couple to be friends or continue to be friends as they were beforehand. Here, the breakup is typically mutual and one that is short-term. This has been the case for me and my last boyfriend, Señor. We agreed that trying to maintain a new relationship the beginning of our senior year was not the best choice, with both of us having busy schedules preventing us to have the time for much of a social life, let alone a relationship. As we have reached the end of the fall 2008 semester, Señor and I are still good friends who hang out from time to time.

Sometimes, a close friendship can even blossom from the end of a relationship, though this is a rarity. In this context, usually the couple was friends prior to dating and decided to give dating a shot, but came to the conclusion that friendship is more suitable. So far, I’ve seen this happen twice in my lifetime—once in high school and once here at Marist—and it is something that has continued to amaze me. This type of breakup is something that happens as often as a person winning the lottery jackpot, and I think everyone knows how slim those odds are.

At the end of the day, it really comes down to whether both parties want to continue to have the other in their lives or not, and how much they are willing to put the effort into doing so. Some breakups require a lot more effort than others to even try being just friends, especially when the emotional stakes are high. It simply is a game of risk.

Fashionology is the “Science of knowing what to wear.” It is also the portable boutique outside Marist’s own Fashion department.

Completely student run by Professor and Internship Coordinator Lydia Biskup’s class, Fashionology is a combination of trendy accessories purchased on New York City wholesale shopping trips as well as the consignment of handmade student merchandise. It provides an opportunity for students (design as well as non-design majors) to participate in the design, production and selling of goods firsthand, and gain an inside look at the industry and its practices.

Every student in the class is assigned a job relevant to the retailing of a product. Some students are responsible for maintaining computer systems; regulating inventory and pricing through programs like QuickBooks. Other groups include Human Relations, Public Relations, Visual Merchandising and Finance. Grades are determined by how well tasks are executed as well as how well the merchandise, purchased at a wholesale price, sells at retail.

Junior Tiffany Mulligan is responsible for managing computer systems. She says; “Students are able to receive self-satisfaction by seeing the merchandise they bought in the market for the boutique being sold and worn around campus. I definitely recommend this class to fashion students as well as non fashion majors.”

This semester the vendor is very on trend with accessories that complement popular fall fashion looks. There is an abundance of scarves in a variety of colors and prints. Hats and mittens are also popular with cold weather approaching. Handmade student jewelry and headbands made from recycled materials seem to be causing a wave of excitement among students as well.

The program is open through December 12th on Monday’s from 11:00 am to 4:00pm, Tuesdays from 6:00pm to 9:00pm, Thursdays 10:30am to 4pm and Fridays from 11:00am to 1:00pm. Be sure to visit for all holiday shopping needs!
Ten years ago, no one could foresee the vast effects that a television show portraying four single women would have on fashion. When a mousy-haired “Carrie Bradshaw” first sat behind her exceptionally dated computer (an obnoxious big white box) wittily writing and analyzing the stresses of relationships in Manhattan, she had a definite fashion deficiency.

It was 1998 and the pilot episode of Sex and the City was hugely lacking in funding, made obvious by the simple outfits as well as hair and makeup on the gals. Thankfully, though, HBO and its “Sex” viewers had faith. Who would’ve guessed that a decade following, the girls would reconvene and flood the fashion industry with some of the most exciting trends of our time?

Patricia Field, one of fashion’s greatest visionaries and the expert costume designer for Sex and the City truly has a flair for dressing a character. For six seasons and one mega-hit movie, she successfully clothed four completely different women with varying body types and personalities.

Charlotte (Kristin Davis), the classic beauty, was always complemented with designers like Chanel, while Samantha (Kim Cattrall) was dressed in sexy ensembles that flaunted her risqué personality, donning plenty of Galliano. Independent and intelligent Miranda, (Cynthia Nixon) was more difficult to dress with her boyish figure and angular body but Field worked with her and Miranda sported sexy mismatched pieces that worked beautifully.

However, not one “Sex” character, or television personality on any other series, for that matter, is quite as influential a fashion icon as Carrie Bradshaw (Sarah Jessica Parker). Her fun flirtation with style progressed throughout the show and SJP only grew more comfortable with venturing into quirky and innovative looks combining designers like Vivienne Westwood and Dior with basic fashion staples. Not to mention that in the film, Carrie not only has ‘the look’; she has an enormous closet in her “heaven on fifth” penthouse apartment in which to stash everything.

The movie, fans knew, would take women’s fashion to the next level. New York Magazine had said in anticipation of the movie, “We’re excited about the Sex and the City movie, but guessing which character dies doesn’t get our gander going quite like wondering what that person will be wearing when he or she dies. Sick, but true!”

John Melfi, producer of the film had said that fashion houses flung open their doors to feature their pieces on the famous four fashionistas. Accessories followed suit; Fred Leighton and H. Stern provided plenty of diamonds for all of the girls. Manolo Blahnik even designed a shoe especially for Sarah Jessica Parker and the New York Manolo store has been swamped with tourists asking to pose in SJP’s famous shoes and have their pictures taken. So where does it get really exclusive? “Sex” is the only feature film to shoot at Vogue offices, an honor deemed possible with editor Anna Wintour’s consent.

Sex and the City fashions have also been seen at less expensive prices on Patricia Field’s website under her exclusive line from the movie. Styles include the blue “Angel dress” worn by Parker in the baby shower scene, nameplate necklaces, the Eiffel Tower bag by Timmy Woods and t-shirts scrawled with slogans like, “Looking For My Mr. Big.” Other fast-fashion store brands have created replicas of the famous Manolos in a rainbow of colors. The great thing about the fashion from this movie is that it is accessible, allowing fans of all incomes to enjoy the trends.

So what’s next for Carrie Bradshaw, Samantha Jones, Charlotte York and Miranda Hobbes? Recent interviews suggest that director Michael Patrick King has been hinting at a sequel—“helloo, lover!”
When in a relationship, we all believe that the holidays will exceed expectations: the memories made this year will be better than all others. But then we remember that relationships usually involve compromises, and who wants to compromise Christmas?

I have personally been hesitant to the idea of sharing Christmas for years. My entire family gathers at my aunt’s house on Christmas Eve. We eat more food for dinner and dessert than we would normally consume in a week while children run around the tree screaming, “PRESENTS! AHHHH! PRESENTS!” It’s how Christmas is supposed to be.

So when my brothers and cousins began to steer clear of this environment, preferring the calmer homes of their current significant others, I took it personally. They weren’t there, and therefore, they ruined my Christmas.

Last year, I gave in and shared Christmas with my boyfriend’s family. His younger cousins sat in a circle while silently opening each gift one by one. It was weird, and frankly, it was unacceptable.

So what happens when relationships interfere with traditions?

Alison Novak, a junior and in a relationship, states, “I find that the holidays are kind of a time for more permanent family.” Rather than debating who goes to which family first and what time they switch, Novak does not see her boyfriend on Christmas at all. Believing family to come first, and not finding a possibility to merge her family with his, it is easier to live separate lives on this particular day. No traditions are abandoned, no changes are made.

Some people are not as understanding when it comes to spending holidays away from significant others. Elyse Brendlen, also a junior at Marist, has found a way to incorporate her boyfriend into her holiday plans. While her boyfriend’s family resides in California, he will spend Thanksgiving with her family and Christmas with his own.

“My family knows him really well,” she states. Rather than being forced to make conversation with the older adults in her family, adding her boyfriend into the mix has changed the atmosphere.

“It’s definitely less boring,” she states. It is possible that including new relationships in your family traditions can help revive what was already there: they can improve what could have eventually become a monotonous routine.

One thing I’ve begun to think about is how my family traditions came to exist in the first place. Between my aunts and uncles and half-brothers and step-cousins and generations of grandparents, someone at some point must have given up their childhood traditions so that I could have mine. Is it only a matter of time before I am forced to choose between the old and the new?

“The holidays are just a time that reminds you how lucky you are,” states Novak. If spending the holidays with people you care about is a priority, then you might have to change the things that were once important to you.

But maybe those changes can be for the better. The gifts are bound to improve with relationships (because what girl doesn’t get a secret thrill out of being handed a Tiffany’s box?), but maybe there is a more significant change to come. Instead of compromising holiday traditions, maybe the changes you make could just be the start of your own traditions for the future.
Winter is a great time of year in Poughkeepsie. It’s the time of year we bring out holiday decorations, drink massive amounts of hot cocoa, and try and stuff full size Christmas trees into our dorm without looking completely ridiculous. You know it’s officially the holiday season when you’re out shopping and you can’t make it through one trip without hearing the same song five different times. So whether you’re getting ready to string lights around the Christmas tree, or just feel in the holiday spirit, here is a list of songs that will help you get in the Christmas spirit.

1. “The Christmas Song” by Nat King Cole – Although this is one of the oldest Christmas songs on this list, originally recorded in 1946, it’s probably one of the best. This song has been covered by artists from Christina Aguilera to Michael Buble. After all, who doesn’t love roasting chestnuts over an open fire, or dressing up like an Eskimo? That’s what the holiday season is all about.

2. “All I Want For Christmas is You” by Mariah Carey - I don’t think I’ve ever gone through a Christmas season without hearing this song. Recorded for her fifth studio album titled “Merry Christmas,” this song has been one of the top hits of the season since it was released in December of 1994. It has sold over 4 million copies worldwide, making it Carey’s biggest selling single to date.

3. “Believe” by Josh Groban - Recorded for The Polar Express that hit theaters in 2004, this song has something majestic about it that makes the Christmas season feel magical. Even though this is not the traditional Christmas song everyone knows, it’s definitely worth a listen.

4. “Carol of the Bells” - Originally written by a Ukrainian composer, this song was first performed in the United States in 1921 at Carnegie Hall and was later recreated and given English lyrics that captured the essence of ringing bells when sung.

5. “My Only Wish This Year” by Britney Spears - This song was recorded in 2000 when Britney Spears was near the height of her career. Back then her wish for the year was to find her true love under the Christmas tree but now her wishes may be something along the lines of “I wish I hadn’t shaved my head last year” or “I wish I hadn’t made a complete fool of myself in public for the last two and a half years”. Regardless, this song is great, I’ll give her that.

6. “Last Christmas” by Wham! - For anyone who has been heartbroken around the holidays this song might be somewhat depressing, but it’s still a good song. First released in 1984 by British pop duo Wham!, this song has been covered by artists from Taylor Swift to Jimmy Eat World.

7. “Feliz Navidad” by Jose Feliciano - The first time I heard this song was in the early 1990s when my Christmases consisted of watching the video Christmas Eve on Sesame Street. There was something about watching life size puppets bring the Christmas spirit through my television set that really made me love this song. Too bad pretty much 80% of America doesn’t own a video VHS player anymore.

8. “Winter Wonderland” - If it doesn’t snow before the holiday season gets into full swing, you can pretend it has. Just buy some fake snow and play this song. In November 2007 the American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers (ASCAP) listed this as number one on their list and confirmed that this song was the most widely played during the holiday seasons for the past 5 years.

9. “Merry Christmas, Happy Holidays” by N'SYNC - This song was released in 1999 on the album Home for Christmas. If you were a 12-year-old girl around the year 2000, chances are you loved N'SYNC at one point because you thought they were sensational. For the sole reason of how much we all wish it were still the end of the 90’s, this has to be on the list.

10. “Christmas Eve/Sarajevo (12/24)” by The Trans-Siberian Orchestra - Who said Christmas songs had to have lyrics? If you like electric guitar, orchestra music, or both of these together you will probably like this piece. Released in 1996 on the Trans-Siberian Orchestra album Christmas Eve and Other Stories. This piece was composed around the theme of a cello player who left his home in Sarajevo when he was young to play in symphonies throughout Europe. Upon his return he found his city devastated and torn by war and began playing carols on his cello amidst the ruins. This piece represents the hope that the Christmas season brings even in the most unlikely of places.
It’s Christmas – time to stress over buying gifts, attempt to fit every family member into your schedule for one day, and envy the carefree children who just want presents. But it wasn’t always like this.

Remember when Christmas used to be fun? Personally, I took the opportunity to wake up at five o’clock in the morning, stare at the presents under the tree for the next three hours, and finally give in and wake up my father and brothers. Kids want to dive into the presents – tear open every scrap of paper immediately, then figure out what the actual gifts are after.

Kids do not hesitate to express their unhappiness. When I was young, I barely looked at the new doll my aunt gave me before screaming, “Ew! She’s ugly!” Another year, I spent Christmas morning sobbing because no one would immediately play a new board game with me. We don’t act like this anymore because we obviously know better. We don’t act like this anymore because we are aware of what will hurt other people’s feelings. We don’t act like this anymore because we have entered into the boring world of adulthood.

Kristin Walsh, a junior at Marist College, says, “It’s a lot less excitement.” Rather than the childish anticipation of waking up early to open presents, Walsh explains how her Christmas values have transformed.

“I’m more excited about seeing my family, especially since I’m at school now.” Holidays are now a time to spend with the people we care about, rather than a time to be selfish children.

Elyse Brendlen, who is also a junior at Marist, admits that her favorite part of Christmas as a kid was getting presents. However, today she realizes that what goes into these gifts takes a lot more than she previously understood. “Now I know how much money goes into it,” she states, explaining how Christmas as an adult becomes more like a financial situation than a holiday.

Unlike Walsh, Brendlen does not believe visiting family to be as exciting. As adults, we are now expected to make conversation, rather than play with other kids our age. Christmas Eve, which is when my family gets together to exchange gifts, consists of several young children running around the house screaming about presents and asking to open them every five minutes.

I was once one of these kids. But now, I recite the proper responses with the rest of the adults, saying we will open them soon and telling them to calm down. I help them open their gifts while I half-heartedly accept envelopes filled with money or gift cards. Buying for adults is harder than buying for children, but I follow the procedure of thanking every family member individually while my younger cousins scream “Thank you” at no one and move on.

“I guess it’s just less fun,” Brendlen states. When Santa Claus is retired and decorating a tree is an obstacle, where does the “holiday” part of holidays go?

The answer shows itself when those screaming children start opening their gifts. You don’t envir their presents (although you know you would still play with some of them), you don’t miss the imbalanced emotions coming from not getting what you really, really, really wanted. What you miss is their excitement; their carefree attitude stemming from having no responsibilities to anyone. But these feelings don’t have to go away.

Decorate a mini-tree, put lights in your dorm windows, help out with the Giving Tree on the Marist campus, and listen to Christmas music. Yes, you will have to spend money on a lot of people and yes, you will have to watch as younger kids rub your adulthood in your face, but don’t worry. Just because you are older, that doesn’t mean you have to wait for Christmas to come and go. Anticipate it. Enjoy it. You might even have as much fun as the screaming kids.

---

**Christmas Gifts Under $25**

By Mary Treuer

1. *Tales of the Beadle Bard* by J.K. Rowling:- This addition to Rowling’s collection is a necessity for any Harry Potter fan. The book includes five stories by the author that we Potter enthusiast a deeper insight into the Wizarding world. The book comes out on December 4th and can be pre-ordered at amazon.com for as little as $7.59.

2. Make your own gift- Create a picture frame, ornament, or scrapbook. These gifts can cost the least, but they can have the most value because they are sentimental.

3. Bring home the movies- Many DVDs are coming out just in time for the holiday season. Summer blockbusters such as the *Dark Knight*, *Wall-E*, *Kung Fu Panda*, and *Tropic Thunder* will be available in November or December. Best Buy normally sells DVDs at the best prices.

4. Accesorize- Hats, scarves, and sunglasses can be appropriate for both genders and can be more affordable than a whole outfit. For some ideas on affordable accessories, try Marist’s Fashionology Boutique in Donnelly.

5. Gift card- When you run out of ideas of what to buy, a gift card is the way to go. Gift cards come in all values for almost every store so they fit easily into any price range and can be more thoughtful gifts than cash.

6. Add to an iPod- A new product called iKaraoke sends music from an iPod to a stereo minus the vocals, bringing this wacky singing pastime home. The product can be purchased for under $20 on Amazon. Also, Apple sells many skins for the iPod for protection and decoration. These can also be found on Amazon for as little as $15.

7. Play games- Target sells a variety of board games for $25 or less. Apples to Apples, Scattergories, CatchPhrase, and Cranium are just a few. Games aren’t just for kids anymore.

8. Bake- Homemade cookies, breads, and cakes are always something to look forward to during the holidays, not to mention they are affordable and fun to make. Prepare your favorite recipe and share the joy with someone through food.

9. Subscribe to a magazine- As a new year is about to begin, let someone begin his or her 2009 with a yearlong subscription to a favorite magazine. There are magazines for every interest group and most subscriptions cost between $10 and $25 for a year’s worth of entertainment.

10. Be musical- Some of the new albums coming out this season are the long-anticipated *Chinese Democracy* by Guns ’N Roses, Ludacris’s *Breakout*, and a new live collection from The Police. Best Buy sells some new releases for only $10.
It seems each year it gets worse and worse. The bombardment of commercials and ads that run throughout the year suddenly amplify once the trick-or-treaters are tucked away, and now, possibly earlier than ever before, some radio stations are playing carols before Thanksgiving and stores are stocked by the last week of October with Santa candies and ornaments. Why is it that more and more of the calendar year is being swallowed up by Jolly Old St. Nicolas and the “Holiday” Sales that precede him?

Even as I write this I have a bag of Holiday Short Bread cookies on my desk, it’s the second week of November. I bought them because they’re tasty and I’m sure there is a non-holiday equivalent, it’s just not as apparent without the green and red sprinkles and bright packaging. Seems Christmas is great for selling anything.

Why is it that Christmas overrides all holidays so potently now? We barely have time to give thanks before we start demanding and ordering and wrapping and stressing. By the time Christmas Eve comes around we forget what we might have been thankful for on the last Thursday of November. Is it the cheer? The brotherhood? The faith and hope that Christmas was founded on that makes it overtake our culture and economy for months rather than, say, 12 days?

Doubtful.

I hate to be cynical and pessimistic but the disgraceful consumerism that shows more blatantly around the holidays breaks my heart and makes me cringe.

Even if you do love the supposed “holiday spirit,” would you like it as much if you didn’t have that chance of receiving that new iPod or designer purse? What if all that was given were cookies, cocoa, and sincere greetings? What if you just got to enjoy your family or friends and didn’t have to worry about your gift being returned or you having to say a thank you for a maroon hand-knit turtleneck sweater?

Producers and stores sell more under the guise of giving during this time. They wrap everything up nicely, maybe take a few cents off, just to press the items their store cells yearly upon us, with maybe a few holiday decorations in there for spirit.

Why do we set our hearts on the newest and best clothing, electronics, movies, and music? The television blares out sales and special holiday hours. People rush to the stores to grab the most wanted gift, not the most sentimental present. People fight, charge their credit cards, and some just look forward to getting pissed drunk on New Year’s Eve. The parody of “The 12 Days of Christmas,” “The Twelve Pains of Christmas,” explains it all. We’re miserable during the holidays.

And without good reason. Who are we to complain during these Happy Holidays? Who of you reading this don’t have plenty of food? Who of you don’t have somewhere to go for the holidays? Who of you won’t be getting one or two of those things you really want this year?

Your life may not be perfect but economically, when you think about how we consume more than twenty percent of the world’s resources and have barely six percent of the population, you’re a lot better off than most people. In our own safe little worlds it seems we just listen to what’s on the television, but we change the channel when Feed the Children or similar commercial comes on.

Even when there isn’t snow on the ground or plastic snowman out on green lawns the deeply entrenched want for things is still within us. The spirit of the holiday no longer encourages true altruistic giving, it encourages giving so you yourself can get.

Do you need another sweater? Do you need five more DVDs to add to my collection? Are you really going to base my happiness on Christmas Day on whatever is hidden within a rectangular Macy’s box?

It seems we’ve based our happiness on what comes down to items and things we want and forgot to just be happy with what we have.

Even as the U.S. is in economic downturn and Christmas is leaner than usual be grateful for what you have. Even consider that when you get something new if you can give away something you already have. Wait, isn’t that part of the Christmas spirit? Giving?

So I propose that this holiday season for every gift you get you give one, or two if you’re feeling especially giving, and see how that makes you feel. Maybe less stressed, less angry, maybe you’ll actually enjoy the holiday and it would probably help with the closet space too. Maybe then we can undermine the want within us all that the ads pull forward and do more than consume, we can give.

By Sarah Holmes
This new feature got me wondering, what makes a room ‘cool’? So for the first run we went with a room that seemed normal but was really a clear example of who the dweller is. Monique Sims was kind enough to let us into her place and snap a few shots.

While no theme or definitive design aesthetic is obvious, Sims says her room is built upon things that make her happy.

“You’re room should express you, all of you,” Sims said.

The room is fused together through her use of blues and purples. The comforter she got freshman year still remains the inspiration for her color scheme. A purple tie-dye sarong serves as a slip cover to hide the mundane school chair that comes with every campus dorm.

Usefulness and tidiness are also of the utmost importance to Sims. She uses a lamp organizer and a lazy susan to keep all of her desk materials handy. The most important things in her room are her art supplies.

“I like drawing, I like colors in general,” Sims said showing off her dozens of markers and construction paper.

Her love for art is obvious as you see the swirl poster she made with her housemate and optically pleasing geometric pieces above her bed.

Sims doesn’t just make her own posters; she buys them with a fury. The banner of lush green trees reminded her of Twilight and she said she had to snatch it up. The Princess Bride film poster is a constant source of laughter as she bursts forth with quotes.

“Inconceivable!” she quotes, adding “Sister Act 2 is my favorite movie but I love Princess Bride also.”

Movies aren’t her life but she doesn’t want to read classics and epic tales while already burdened down with school work. Mid-semester, Sims opts for supposed teen literature, which Sims feels shouldn’t be read by anyone very young. The Pretty Little Liar and Luxe series line her shelves. She admits she hasn’t read them yet.

“My roommate gave them to me but they’re a quick read and lots of fun!” Sims said.

Finally, Sims displays her favorite thing in the room. It is a small red cell phone that rotates and morphs into a camera.

“It’s mad cool,” Sims said. “It flips and its red, my favorite color.”

She loves the phone which was recently featured on Gossip Girl. We smell a trend coming!

Sims checked her color coded and extremely packed schedule and ran out the door. You can’t spend all your time in your room no matter how much you love it!

Want your room featured? E-mail me at Justine.Mann1@Marist.edu!