

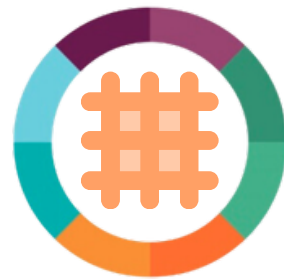
Longbenton High School

The Waffle

12 February 2026

Volume II

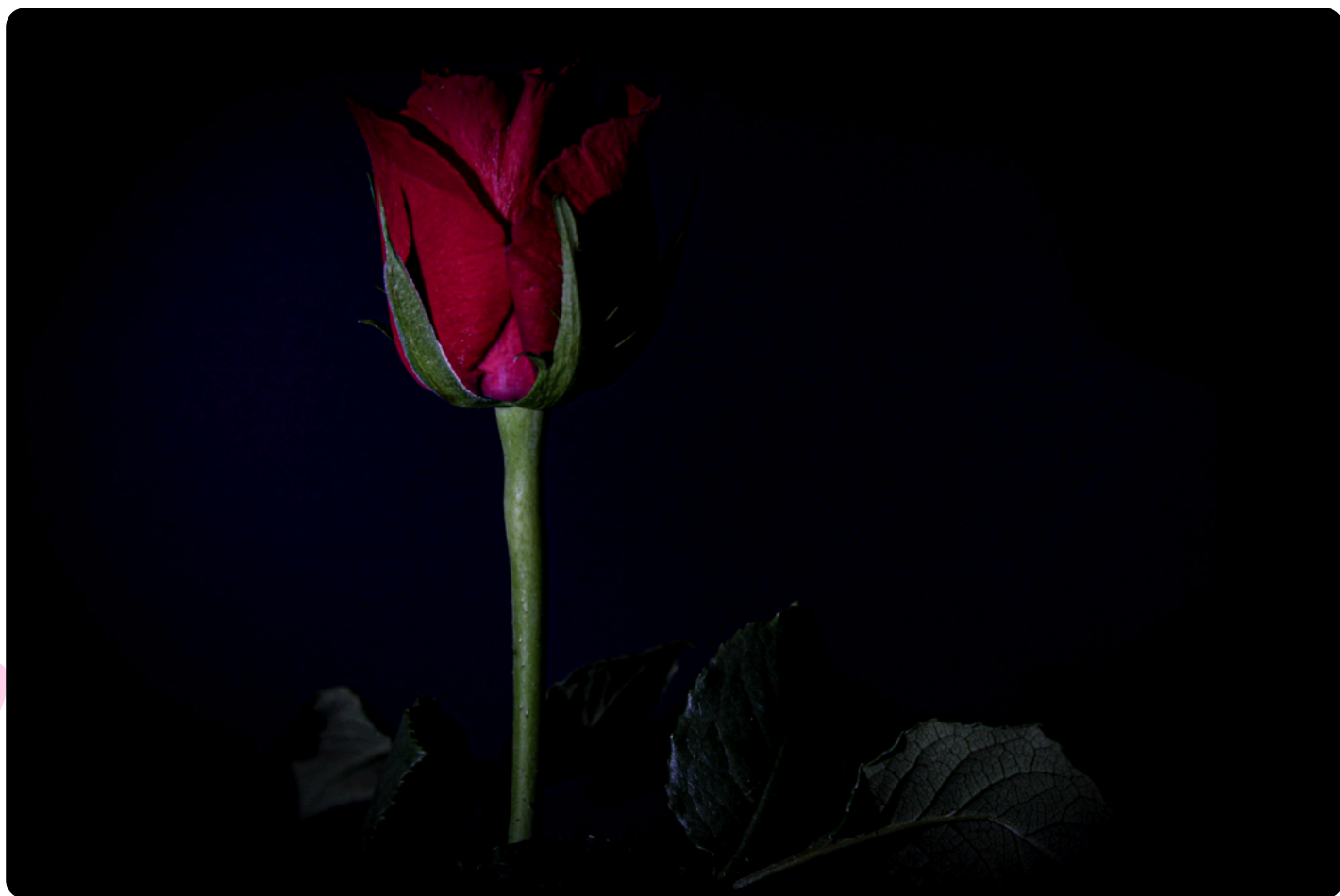
Issue 6



The Human Connection Issue

We're celebrating Valentine's Day the Waffle Way--shining a spotlight on all forms of human connection, from professional courtesy to friendship to romantic love.

So buy yourself some chocolates and enjoy this Valentine from us to all of you!



Art by Robyn Larty, Year 11

Work Besties

The staff at Longbenton celebrate their 'work besties'

Mrs Porter and Dr Barker

I met Dr Barker in 2021 when she came to work at Longbenton. I quickly began to admire her gentleness, her kindness, her inquisitive mind, and what I can only describe as her 'realness'. I love that she can be sarcastic and sincere, sad and silly, weird and wonderful. She never sugar-coats anything difficult but she is endlessly hopeful. Dr Barker has introduced me to countless amazing books and I love meeting her for a coffee to discuss said books and to 'put the world to rights'. She has an amazing singing voice. She has a poet's soul. She is a fantastic mam and advocate for students at LHS. I admire her so much in so many ways and I want to thank her for her friendship.



Mr Hay and Mr Lazell

Joe (Mr Lazell) and I (Mr Hay) have worked together for a number of years now (since 2016 I think!) but have worked more closely within the last two years at both this school and our previous school. We have a shared passion and interest for walking, often going to walk up hills in the Lake District (see picture from Jan on Arthur's Pike), as well as winding each other up about football - unfortunately, Joe is a Chelsea fan!! Joe is a brilliant person - he is eternally positive, optimistic and enthusiastic - no matter how tough the day is you can always rely on Joe for a pep talk, a smile, some positive words and a platform to share your thoughts!



Ms Doucet and Mrs Oliver

I met Mrs Oliver on my interview day and I remember thinking she had great style and looked 'cool'. When I got the job I remember hoping I could make friends with that 'short, friendly, interesting' teacher (I couldn't remember her name--interview days are nerve-wracking). About six months later we made our first plans to meet up for a coffee and now we are fast friends, even going away on walking weekends in the Lakes, when we talk so much we sometimes get lost. Mrs Oliver is the person I go to when I need good advice or a pep talk. I value her positivity and her dedication to being a good person in big and little ways. Above all things she is fair and thoughtful and takes care of others. Thanks for being you, Rosie!



Mrs Jackson, Mrs Wouldhave and Mrs Lambert



I have been friends with Mrs Lambert and Mrs Jackson for a very long time - over 15 years! We all started at the school within a couple of years of each other and got on straight away. Every big 'adult' event in our lives - we've gone through it together. Buying our first houses, getting engaged, getting married and having children. Our lives have changed dramatically, even our workplace has changed but through it all we've still been friends! Our lives don't let us see each other as much as we'd like outside of work but we still try our best to go out for tea together when we can and share our news in our group chat.

- Mrs Wouldhave

When I first started working at LHS I had hoped to get along with my colleagues but I didn't expect to find new best friends. I remember wanting to speak to Mrs Wouldhave and Mrs Lambert and within a few weeks we were chatting and making plans to meet up outside of school. We have had so much fun over the years becoming better friends and have truly grown up together. They have been by my side through major life events such as buying houses, getting engaged, getting married, having children, They have also really supported me through some extremely difficult times and I will always be grateful that LHS brought these girls into my life. These girls are my friends for life, working together is just an added bonus!

-Mrs Jackson

I will always be deeply grateful to Longbenton High School for introducing me to Mrs Jackson and Mrs Wouldhave when I was just a fresh-faced 22-year-old starting my career in teaching. What started as a working relationship quickly evolved into lifelong friendships as we navigated milestones like buying first homes, engagements, weddings and raising children side-by-side. We have championed each other's successes and provided strength during life's toughest moments, proving that we are no longer just colleagues, but best friends who have truly grown up together. Our bond has transcended the staff room, they cheer the loudest for my successes both professionally and personally; I am so lucky to have them in my corner. Our bond is unbreakable - two friends who I know will be forever in my life.

-Mrs Lambert

Mrs Hutchins and Miss McKenna

When Miss McKenna and I found ourselves forever quoting the same writers, we realised we were both in love with annotating texts until there was no space on the page. Our lunch time annotation stations soon turned into a shared appreciation of fashion, popular culture and buying each other increasingly ridiculous gifts at Christmas. We are often inseparable (even sharing the same name) and lean on each other for support when needed; professionally and personally, I am a better teacher and human because of Miss McKenna.



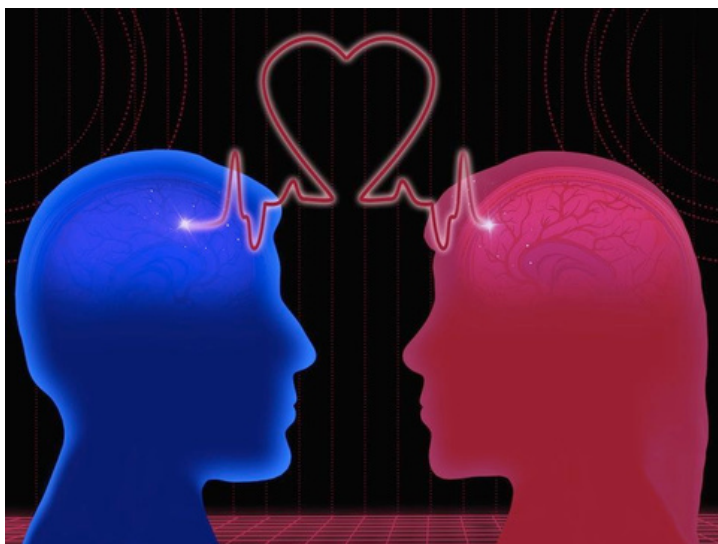
Alesia's Deep Dives . . .

Love, *actually*?

"So, you think love is just a chemical reaction??" was a question a very bewildered friend of mine asked when we were discussing whether the human 'soul' is real. We were raised with the same culture, traditions, religion, and so forth. So why did I end up a raging atheist whilst he stayed religious? Of course, we can never truly know the answer, but I believe it ironically has a lot to do with love. I grew up loving to question everything, loving to not be 'restrained' by the thought of eternal life. Harsh, I know! But, Alex (the friend in question) also has the things he loves that led him to religion. His love for a belief so deeply rooted in generations of culture, a love for the freedom of eternal life! My point here is, real or not, love affects us in our everyday lives, whether we want it or not.

I think the actual question here isn't whether love is 'real' or if it truly 'exists' because I could go down a never-ending rabbit hole about it... and then I'd go crazy, fulfilling my duty as a self-proclaimed thinker. Instead, let's focus on how love affects us, and if it's all just something we evolved to have in order to survive as a species. Romantic love can easily be traced back to the need to reproduce, the fear of isolation, and desire to 'fit in' with the rest of society (amongst other reasons). To me, this is the simplest form of love. It makes sense, biologically.

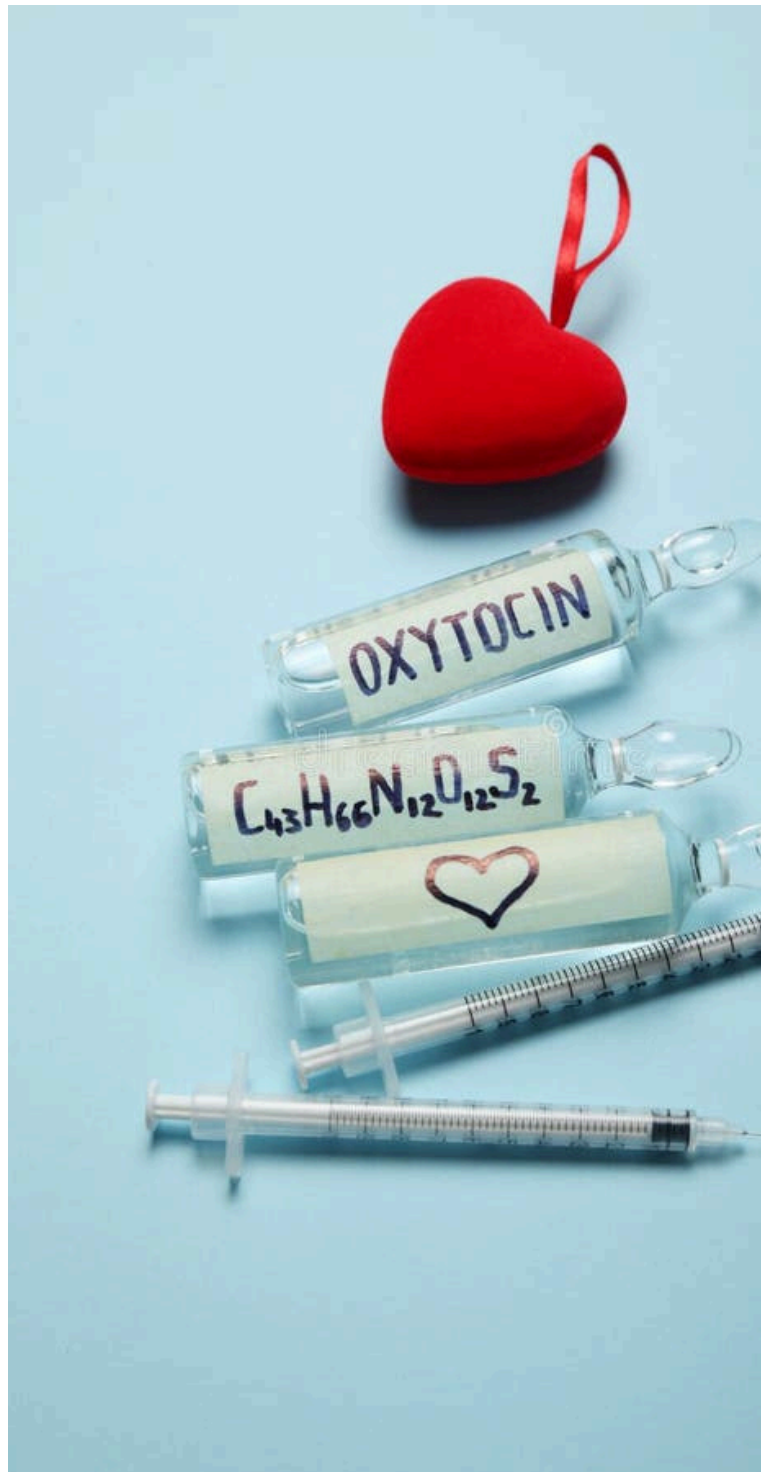
Oxytocin!! The love hormone, released after women give birth partially to stop the mother from literally abandoning the baby right then and there! To me, it's insane how people can hear this and still believe love is 100% a conscious choice we make. Yet, does it matter? I mean, it works because as far as I know the art of abandoning babies is pretty much gone, which is a good thing! Humans have empathy and morals because of 'biological love'. But, does that mean it's less meaningful? Would it affect you if you found out that someone you loved dearly only loved you back because they needed someone to love, and not because they loved you, as a person? I think this is widely overlooked in society, due to the fear of being misunderstood, which is understandable. If I went up to my parents right now and told them that they technically never really loved me, they would be pretty angry considering the sacrifices they made to move to England in order for me to have a better education and life. So, maybe it is really love. But the love you hold for your family is different than that you have for friends, or partners. Your family is blood and DNA! Personally, I couldn't care less if my family's love for me is based on a primal instinct developed millions of years ago, because family is family. It's not something that I can philosophically analyse, it's just one of those things that I—and lots of others—know. However, not everyone will have the same experiences which possibly suggests that people love their family because of their experiences with them: it's not guaranteed that every single person feels this biological reaction towards their family. Perhaps this does mean there is something outside of just biology making us feel love?



Platonic love is different. I'm sure everyone will have a story about the time a friend used them for their own gain, or maybe they were that friend once. Humans no longer need friends for survival, we don't need to hunt anymore, and we don't live in fear of being hunted. So, other than needing dopamine or serotonin, having friends is meaningless, unless you need them to help you with things. But at that point does it become selfish? If you go out with a few friends because you don't want to feel alone, who are you really doing it for? If you're always asking friends for favors, even if you help them in return, is that really a friendship, or is that just a form of codependency? That's not to say having friends is bad, the very reason I'm happy is that I have friends I know I love and can rely on; selfishness is needed. If we never get anything we want then why would we do anything for anyone? It's just that if we can continuously link features of love to basic survival skills developed in the Paleolithic period, we may be over-exaggerating its emotional worth to us.

However, there are smaller, less talked-about versions of love, ones I can't put a name on. This is what really stumps me. For example, music! For millenia of years we have loved music because of the dopamine it gives us and the people it has connected us with, but now that we have these hand-held shiny rectangles we can get endless dopamine from with endless methods of communication, what's the point? What intrinsic instinct says we need music, when there's social media, which surely should have enough variation to keep the human brain satisfied? Humans are so closely bonded to music, but we can't talk to music, it can't take care of your cat whilst you're on holiday, and you can't watch a sitcom with it. Maybe if I were a neuroscientist I could give you a smart, detailed answer as to why this is. But I honestly don't want to know, music is one of those things that when you think about it, sounds like fiction or magic. Another example could be objects we have sentimental value for. When I started playing guitar, I stabbed a hole through a cheap guitar pick I found lying around in my room with a metal skewer I held over a flame before putting it on a spare necklace. I've worn it almost every day since. In fact, a few days ago I had a scare where I thought I'd lost it. My heart completely stopped, I felt this pit in my stomach till I saw it had fallen on the ground - luckily it was red and easily identifiable. I didn't know this, but I do really, really love this necklace. It's definitely to do with the memories I have with it, but how would that help me in a life-or-death situation?

I do still have a hope that maybe love does have a deeper meaning than just survival, and instincts. Sure, I probably won't be going down the spiritual/religious path any time soon, but you can't live a life without loving, which is incredible because you get to see how differently yet similarly everyone is affected by it. Now, hopefully, I haven't said the word 'love' to the point of exhaustion, but my point still stands. If by some miracle, we no longer needed to depend on others for survival, would we still love as deeply as we do now? In fact, would we love at all?



By Alesia Macovei, Year 12

The Book Nook

Convenience Store Woman by Sayaka Murata

Convenience Store Woman by Sayaka Murata is a Japanese literary fiction novel set in Tokyo that follows Keiko - a 36-year-old convenience-store worker. Keiko's never really fit in: she's never had a boyfriend, has been working at the same convenience store for 18 years, and is socially inept to the point of alienation. Her family and friends pester her to get a husband, have kids and get a proper job, but all Keiko wants is to work at her convenience store, and she won't let anyone take her away from it.

This book is a fun little read, silly enough to be entertaining but still capturing all the nuances of systemic sexism and oppressive social norms. It does a great job at exploring alienation in a quirky, idiosyncratic way, keeping it light-hearted and witty while detailing the comical absurdity of the pressure to fit into a traditional life. I mainly chose this book for a Valentine's Day-themed review due to its Aroace representation and themes of choosing yourself over social conformity. While Keiko is never confirmed to be Aroace (aromantic and asexual), she is widely interpreted as such by readers and considered a great representation of the asexual experience, especially when intertwined with a neuroatypical upbringing. Moreover, this book is autistic representation heaven, with Keiko never knowing how to react appropriately to social cues, or what tone of voice or facial expressions to use. What Keiko loves most is her work, finding peace only in the convenience store with its scripted greetings, predictable rhythms and general lack of pressure to get a husband - at no point feeling any attraction towards another person, despite her family's wishes. She chooses to live a relatively solitary life, doing what's comfortable for her, and consequently struggles to fight the society that wishes to restrain her: facing judgement, ostracism, and getting into some pretty unsavoury situations.

The book has become incredibly popular within the Japanese literary community, selling over 1.5 million copies worldwide since its release in 2016 and being translated into over 30 languages. It's considered a masterclass in modern contemporary literature, with the author even being named Vogue Woman of the Year, and it's easy to see why. The representation of the struggles to fit into society rang true for many people (especially in a culture like Japan), and the way itself is written is very droll and dreamlike that you just have to enjoy it. The book is only around 160 pages, so I'd recommend it for a nice, light read when you're not trying to get into anything too deep, but still want to learn some lessons about society. Happy reading!



By Keira Nightingale, Year 12

Ms Doucet's Poem of the Moment

love is more thicker than forget

love is more thicker than forget
 more thinner than recall
 more seldom than a wave is wet
 more frequent than to fail

it is most mad and moonly
 and less it shall unbecome
 than all the sea which only
 is deeper than the sea

love is less always than to win
 less never than alive
 less bigger than the least begin
 less littler than forgive

it is most sane and sunly
 and more it cannot die
 than all the sky which only
 is higher than the sky

e. e. cummings

Valentine's Day

Valentine's Day

A day we celebrate year after year
 Again we pay
 For flowers and cards, because:

It's only fair, we honour tradition,
 Make sure everyone's included,
 But what about our disposition?
 "It's just commercial" I concluded.

But deep down I'm scared
 What if no-one loves me?
 I'm unprepared, forever lonely,
 Waiting for someone to find me.

For valentine's Day,
 Well, its a holiday for some,
 But on that day, I hide away
 And shut myself down.

Until it's all over, and I can relax
 Until next year, when It all happens again
 The worst holiday of the year,
 Valentine's Day.

-A Longbenton student

SAVE

**QUIZ
 NIGHT**

LONGBENTON SIXTH FORM

WEDNESDAY
18 MARCH

THE

DATE



6PM-8ISH

MAIN HALL, LONGBENTON
 HIGH SCHOOL

Keep your diaries free for our first annual
 Longbenton Sixth Form Quiz Night!

Cash prizes!
 snacks available!
 £1 a person entry!

Lines on Love with Elisha and Sophia

What's your love language?

Sophia: Hugs. I only hug people that I'm really close to. Also, gift giving is really important because it allows me to make something that's really personalised.

Elisha: A mix of physical touch and gift giving. I don't get to give gifts a lot because I'm broke. But when I do, I love making people feel happy and wanted and nice. I don't hug people I'm not close to.

How do you know when you love someone?

Sophia: When you're in a relationship, it just happens. You don't have an awakening, it's more of a gradual thing. You feel you have a connection, you open up, you feel safe with them.

Elisha: I don't think that there's been an exact point where I was like 'oh my god i love this person'. I don't know how it happened but i just realised this is my person.

Describe your ideal date

Sophia: A pottery class, have a coffee, just chill. Maybe watch movies.

Elisha: Nothing vague or elaborate, because that's overwhelming. Just like a museum or something, and enjoy each other's company.

What qualities in a person do you find most attractive

Sophia: Kindness, loyalty, honesty with each other. A relationship won't work if you're dishonest.

Elisha: Honesty, kindness. Someone that communicates their feelings and doesn't beat around the bush.

Name some people that you love

Sophia: My family, my friends.

Elisha: Cali, Sophia, Daisy, Alma, Grace, my family.



Career Questions: Interview with a Counsellor

by Isobel Dillon and Maisy Kinghorn, Year 11

Lynn Elsdon-O'Brien is a BACP registered counsellor based in North Tyneside that works with 16 year olds and above. During our interview with Lynn, we explored and consolidated ideas previously mentioned on her website (<https://twowingstherapy.co.uk/>) questioning what specific therapeutic methods entail and how to possibly begin a future in the 'helping' profession. Working as an English teacher before working her current job, even the name of Lynn's practice contains a sort of metaphor; the 'two wings' representing an understanding of the mind and the heart, comparing it to wings of a bird that work simultaneously to achieve success.

When working with her clients, Lynn strives for the same, ensuring her clients are too by initiating a review with them around the 6-week point. Although it is an effective way of measuring success, Lynn doesn't expect "[progress] to be in a straight line, as that's not how we grow as human beings: life has ups and downs" this understanding, approachable mindset that Lynn has attained, stating that these qualities have "happened more naturally than [she] had thought before [she] took the job" has allowed her to create deep and real bonds with her clients without feeling the need to pretend, lightly criticising other professionals working as counsellors, or other caring careers for feeling the need to "put up a front" which only hinders the "therapeutic relationship". An example of how Lynn maintains this equally genuine and professional bond is by setting up systems outside of therapy sessions, such as organising the money aspect in a way that doesn't interrupt the time dedicated to working through the clients' possible struggles or thoughts that they bring with them to the session. This helps—in Lynn's opinion—to avoid any potential awkwardness surrounding the private idea of money, especially when the environment doesn't deem it the most appropriate.

Lynn has previously worked as an English teacher, which has developed her interest in Literature, and the therapeutic benefits of it. This approach, named Bibliotherapy, is carried out in sessions by reading a poem aloud, and allowing space for the client to process and respond to the poem, and correlating it to the struggles that they've been exploring in previous sessions". Lynn mentions one client in particular she believes this approach has proven helpful for: she mentions that after reading a piece of poetry aloud to the client, they kept a copy and left it on their bedside table, returning to it in order to make them feel calm. Lynn's response was, "how amazing is that, taking therapy out of the space and back into their life through Literature!"



"Bibliotherapy is merely one of many approaches used in Lynn's sessions, such as somatic techniques (which entails focusing on the body, regulating breathing to calm physical sensations), and inner child work, which is operated through transactional analysis; Lynn typically places her client in a situation which enables their adult self to save or help their younger self from danger or discomfort. This is typically done through letter-writing or other creative activities. These methods, especially the latter, are described as "very deep and can be difficult work and needs to be carefully handled with people and you need to make sure you've got that strong, trusting relationship with them", but confirms the method is extremely effective and rewarding.

Finally, when asked on how to explore the therapy career in the future, Lynn does touch upon the slightly elitist nature of some training routes due to the expense, stating that the profession is somewhat "unregulated", which enables countless ways to explore therapy as a career choice. For private therapy work, Lynn highlights university as a popular pathway, typically needing A-Level subjects such as Psychology, Biology, Sociology, English or History in order to continue a degree in Therapy, though "it's one of those things where the training never ends, [Lynn continues] to do lots of bits and pieces of training" despite her already being qualified, even mentioning an interest in returning for a second Master's. Another job in the 'helping' profession that isn't only limited to private work is being a counsellor in GP surgeries, something Lynn introduced as an exciting new opportunity in her future. Working in GP surgeries ensures therapy is accessible for everyone through the NHS, as private therapy notably isn't financially viable for everyone. Other careers include a counselling supervisor, a career Lynn highlighted an interest in, stating, "My values lead me there." Ultimately, we were also recommended some strategies to prevent burnout which proves itself relevant in the upcoming exams this year; "Reading [...] yoga, swimming in the sea, being in nature, and walking in the woods" are all methods that personally help Lynn, and act as an activity to help calm us in times of stress.

Avneesh's Aviation

by Avneesh Mohapatra, Y12

Small Plane, Big Love

The commercial airline industry is the classic duopoly. In the US there's Boeing, the long successful manufacturer most known for its iconic 747, and in Europe there's Airbus, the more recent of the two, formed as a partnership of various European manufacturers, and that's pretty much it. 2/3 of all aeroplanes currently flying commercially are made by one of these two manufacturers. But there's something these manufacturers don't do: they don't make small planes—but that's not for lack of trying. Airbus tried when they made the a318, a variant of their successful a320, but only sold 80 of them. Boeing did as well with their 717 but it too was a commercial failure with only 156 sales. That doesn't mean that there's no place for small planes, however. In fact, it's a significant market that the giants of the aviation industry have not been able to touch. If you step on a plane to a small airport nowadays, there's a good chance that it's either made by Embraer or Bombardier. Embraer, the Brazilian manufacturer, launched their E-Jet family just over 15 years ago and to date have sold nearly 1,500 of them. By all accounts it's a fantastic aeroplane and there are whole airports that rely on them. Nearly 70% of the more than a hundred daily flights out of the small London City Airport operate using an Embraer E-Jet. Due to the noise restrictions, steep approach angle, and short runway this is one of the few planes that can operate there and some airlines, such as British Airways, own the E-Jet exclusively for use at this airport. The US, with its nearly 400 commercial airports and vast size, has service to many more smaller airports than Europe or Asia thanks to government subsidies so hundreds of airports in the US are served by non-Boeing or Airbus jets. There's a serious place for small planes, and Bombardier knows this.

Bombardier, while still one of Canada's largest companies, is a small player in the commercial aeroplane market only making about 6% of the world's commercial planes. The company has long made the successful CRJ regional jets, but 20 years ago Bombardier had an idea for something else. They were going to make a larger, more efficient aeroplane to fit between the size of small regional jets like the CRJ and the larger planes of Boeing and Airbus like the A320 and the 737, the C Series. This plane was going to take advantage of all the modern advancements in aircraft design, composite construction, advanced aerodynamics and high-bypass engines, to make one of the most efficient small aeroplanes on the market. From 2007 onwards the parts were selected, the plane was developed, and sales were booked. Then, on September 16th, 2013, it took flight for the first time. At this point the company was adamant that the aircraft would enter into commercial service just one year later in 2014. But then the problems began. While doing routing testing on the ground at the Mirabel airport manufacturing base, one of the test aircraft suffered an uncontained engine failure.. Not only did this strike a serious blow to the aircraft development timeline, it also prevented the manufacturer from exhibiting their new plane at the Farnborough Airshow: the largest and most important trade-show in the industry where the company expected to secure crucial aircraft orders. The show only happens every two years so this was a significant setback. Some questioned whether the program could even survive this blow, and it only barely did.



(HB-JCP is an Airbus A220-300 operated by Swiss International Air Lines)



(The uncontained engine failure on the CS100(now the A220-100))

The program was nearly out of money in 2015. Without the significant financial support of the governments of Canada and Quebec, the program and company likely would not have survived, but it did, and on June 15th, 2016, the aircraft entered service with Swiss Airlines on its first ever commercial flight from Zurich to Paris. By all accounts the C Series is a fantastic aeroplane. For airlines it's efficient and versatile while passengers praise its rare level of passenger comfort for a small plane. It even has a range of up to 3,800 miles, meaning it could hypothetically fly transatlantic into small airports like London and Belfast City Airports. As of January there are 400+ C series planes currently flying, but they have 949 orders, enough to make the program very profitable. Until 2017 however, they lacked the most valuable kind of order: American ones. With its tendency to use smaller planes, the American market at that time would make or break the program, and Bombardier knew this

They were desperate for an order from one of the main three US airlines to prove its viability, so much so that they allegedly sold 75 of them to Delta for only \$20 million dollars each—a quarter of the \$80 million list price. That was an amazing price for Delta, but it was low enough that it might have been illegal. This is a practice known as dumping. The cost for Bombardier to make a C Series plane is about \$30 million so it was selling these planes that they hadn't even made yet at a loss because they wanted to gain prevalence in the US market. Predatory pricing techniques like this are against the law in the US and many other countries, so Boeing took action and filed a dumping petition with the US department of commerce. But here's the problem: Boeing doesn't make an equivalent aeroplane to the C Series. They say that the dumping will curtail the sale of its smaller 737-700 planes, but Delta themselves has said that they didn't want the 737. Boeing couldn't offer them a delivery slot before 2020 and the 737 is a fundamentally different plane. The C Series has better range, can take-off from a shorter runway, is more efficient and the simple fact is: it's just a smaller aeroplane.

Boeing claims that Bombardier received subsidies that allowed for the below-market pricing, but the money Bombardier received from the governments of Quebec and Canada came in either exchange for ownership of the program or in the form of interest-free loans that will be paid back. Boeing, on the other hand, has received over \$14 billion in subsidies in the last 20 years through tax breaks from US state and federal governments.

Nonetheless, Boeing asked the US Department of Commerce to impose an 80% tariff on the plane to bring the price above the manufacturing cost. The US Department of Commerce responded by placing a 300% tariff on the plane. At this point it seemed like the end of the line for the Bombardier plane.

With a tariff that high, it could never be both competitive and profitable in the crucial US market. But then Airbus stepped in. On October 16th, 2017 the two companies announced that Airbus would be acquiring a 50.01% stake in the C Series program and taking control of the marketing and sales of the aircraft, renaming it to the A220 series.

Bombardier is just giving away this stake for free, but the reason this is so great for them is, for one, Airbus is a marketing and sales powerhouse. Their resources far outstrip those of Bombardier and they will be able to sell more planes than Bombardier could ever have dreamt of. On the other hand, since the C Series doesn't really overlap in size with any Airbus plane, Airbus gains a new, modern aeroplane in their line up that will allow airlines to have truly all-Airbus fleets. But the real reason Bombardier partnered up with Airbus is because of this



Airbus's final assembly line in Mobile, Alabama. By assembling the A220 Series aircraft in the US, they'll essentially be American planes which means that they won't be subject to US import tariffs, at least according to Bombardier. Boeing believes that that they will still be subject to the tariff since they're still the same planes that received subsidies, while some external observers have suggested that only the 48% of the plane manufactured outside of the US will be subject to the 300% tariff. Well in the end on January 26, 2018 ITC shocked everyone and officially cancelled the 300% tariff by a massive unanimous vote of 4-0, Boeing lost, Airbus and Bombardier won.

The A220 Series now has real potential to become an iconic aeroplane. Bombardier and Airbus are the big winners with this outcome. While it would have been hard to predict this turn of events, this takeover, directly brought on by Boeing's actions, proves a hard-hitting blow to the company. Without spending a cent on development, Airbus now has a plane in a market segment that Boeing cannot compete with. The A220 Series will dominate this market segment and every cent Airbus and Bombardier makes is money lost on Boeing's part. Just as Boeing expected, the A220 Series will hurt its business in the US but now it will happen with a fully-legal, American made plane.

By Avneesh Mohapatra, Y12

The Melomaniac: Artist Spotlight

Ethel Cain

When I found out we were releasing a Valentine's Day issue, I knew I had to write about Ethel Cain. I only discovered her about a year ago, but she's quickly become one of my most anticipated artists, and it would be wrong of me not to share her sonic brilliance with you all. In a season of romance, few artists capture its beautiful, brutal complexities like she does - exploring love's raw, perverse forms and the darker edges of human connection. Her music has absolutely touched my soul, and I'm thrilled to share it with you.

Hayden Anhedönia (aka Ethel Cain) has built a devoted cult-following amongst the indie scene. Her stage name draws from a fictional character, Ethel, whose story is the main focus of her projects. Her sound is mainly a slowcore/sadcore, americana, southern-gothic style, with major dream-pop, folk and drone influences. While her genre is hard to describe, just know that it's indescribably beautiful and you NEED to listen to it immediately. As well as making her own music, Hayden has opened for Florence + the Machine, collaborated with artists like Ashnikko and Wicca Phase Spring Eternal, and even gained the title of being the first trans artists to reach top 10 on US Billboard 200.

If I am to discuss the unparalleled sonic goddess that is Miss Anhedönia, I must first mention her debut record, 'Preacher's Daughter'. Released in 2022, this concept album follows the character, Ethel Cain, and her escape from the southern, religious town where she was raised, only to find herself travelling down a dark journey of self-destruction and violence. The record explores themes of religious trauma, womanhood, transgenerational trauma and toxic relationships, all while employing a southern-gothic, almost cultish aesthetic. The album is the first of a three-part trilogy detailing the generations and lore behind Ethel's family, with two more planned that'll explore the lives of Ethel's mother and grandmother respectively, and even with novelisations in the works!

Now, I'm not overstating when I say that 'Preacher's Daughter' is probably the most impactful album I've ever heard. I'm far from the only person who shares this sentiment - PD is well-revered as a religious experience, and it's basically gospel that hearing it is life-changing. Each song on the record is its own cinematic masterpiece, with outrageously cathartic instrumentals and lyricism that will make you cry. The entire record takes on this HEAVILY reverbed, atmospheric soundscape, where the americana, goth-rock and alt-pop really come to light. Hayden's lyrics unite all kinds of people - from teens to grandparents, religious to non-religious, those who've been in love to those who haven't - with her vivid poetry of religion, depression and life in general. The songwriting is so down-to-earth and excruciating that this album made me understand what people mean when saying a song makes them cry - truly, I've never teared up to a track before hearing the gorgeous penultimate song 'Sun-Bleached Flies'. 'A House in Nebraska', for instance, is a fan-favourite due to its lyrics of intense regret and yearning after losing



'the one who got away' (great pick for a sad Valentine's Day!) and is one of the best examples of her music uniting generations (I really have seen both war-veterans and teen lesbians cry at this song). The album was entirely written and produced by Hayden herself, and let me tell you, the woman is INSANE. I've never encountered someone who uses reverb so freely and with such good sense for instrument placement in a soundscape. When I heard the intro track 'Family Tree (Intro)', I knew right then and there I was in for a wild ride. To give a couple examples of production, 'A House in Nebraska' basically just consists of four long piano drones that slowly build tension over the song, only to break into an epic, cathartic bass drop that'll make your room shake after Ethel spews out her words to a lost lover; or 'Ptolemaea', where Hayden employs aggressive metal sludging and drums that underline chilling screams and a ritualistic chant to demonic forces. Vocally, of course, the album leaves nothing to be desired, with an angelic voice that's been likened to Lana del Rey or Nicole Dollanganger. I've seen people cry at the mere sound of her voice, and if that doesn't convey to you its beauty, I don't know what will. The fact that this was Hayden's debut only says wonders about her virtuosity, and it's no wonder the artist gained such traction after this release.

Her sophomore album 'Willoughby Tucker, I'll Always Love You' released just over six months ago, and is the main reason I'm writing this article today. The record serves as a prequel to Preacher's Daughter, detailing Ethel's teenage years and her first love, Willoughby. Labelling this as a breakup album wouldn't quite be doing it justice - it's more of a depiction of two very struggling people building a relationship based on shared terror, and ultimately failing to provide the comfort the other so desperately needs. It's an unfortunate story, with Ethel and Willoughby both severely depressed and forced to separate because they just can't handle taking care of another dysfunctional person (at least, that's how I viewed it). The project touches mainly on the terror of love: the fear of a lover dying; of not living up to their needs; of losing everything you both have; and of course, of them giving up on you. While the first album was more an emotional rollercoaster knockout, this one is just pure agony, with lyrics that will change your brain chemistry ("How much of a cruel year can you call my fault?") and a surprisingly softer, more shoegaze sound taking inspiration from the Twin Peaks OST. Despite all of the anguish, I must say, the production levels have reached an all-time high with this project: the instrumentals are so much richer and textured and dreamier, and you can tell Hayden really upped her game to create a summery, magnum opus of a soundtrack. About one third of the album are instrumentals, and let me tell you, I have never cared for instrumental music before Miss Anhedonia fed us this project. While the songwriting of PD is what gets me every time, I have never cried at simply a SECTION of an instrumental before this album. WTIALY is the record that made me realise instrumentals can be twice as beautiful as lyrical songs and are just as worth listening to. To shout-out some favourites, 'Tempest' is a 10-minute-long devastation delivering soul-crushingly miserable lyrics on top of hazily distorted synthesisers like sirens blaring, and is the best musical representation I've found of a mental breakdown. 'Waco, Texas' is the whopping 15-minute-long ending track that utilises a sweeter, poignant sound after the break-up is done and gone, and is the GREATEST break-up song I've ever heard, I'm not exaggerating, it's actually the most euphonious thing of all time.

Hayden handles her music production with a genius reminiscent of Joanna Newsom, Paris Paloma or even Kikuo. The compositions are mainly 'thin' or 'simple', but I feel those terms undersell the magic that they hold. Each instrument is chosen and placed so carefully to create a bubble of sonic exquisiteness that I've seen the most seasoned artists jump in excitement to. Her process of production is the self-named 'Ring and Pull', where she connects each point of 'the Ring' to build the foundation of the instrumental, and then draws it all in with 'the Pull'. There are drawn diagrams and videos of Hayden discussing it, it's very interesting if you're into music production! An unusual example of



this is her 'Perverts' project - a 90-minute-long EP with no ties to the Daughters of Cain trilogy, consisting of lo-fi drones, dead space and dark-ambient noise, punctuated by distorted lyrics transcribing the lives of different 'social deviants' - similar to Vyva Melinkolya. It's quite an atmospheric listen - a perfect blend of comforting and deeply unsettling - I'd recommend it for trying to sleep or study. Hayden is well-known for her longer song lengths, averaging at around 6+ minutes. What's so charming about her music is her confidence in her ability to pull you in with instrumentations, unafraidly letting them take the spotlight, which you can especially tell with the 'Perverts' EP, filled with empty space and where the shortest track's 6-minutes-long.

And that notes the end of my yapping your ear off on Ethel Cain. I hope I managed to convey Anhedonia's musical genius to you all and even convince you to listen to one of her albums. Her projects have completely changed the directory of my life, and nothing would make me happier than knowing I got to change someone else's too by introducing them to an amazing artist. Thank you for reading and happy Valentine's Day!



Top Tracks:

'Nettles', 'Ptolemaea', 'Amber Waves'

Best Love Songs:

'Thoroughfare', 'Dust Bowl', 'Crush'

Best Break-up Songs:

'Waco, Texas', 'A House in Nebraska', 'Strangers'

By Keira Nightingale, Year 12

Part of what makes him so threatening is his incredible power. Imhotep may well be the strongest of all the classic Universal monsters, perhaps eclipsed only by Dracula. Imhotep has immensely powerful magic powers that allow him to kill people seemingly instantly without even being near them by watching them from his magical, all seeing pool. Whilst he is quite powerful, the thing that really makes Imhotep a tangible threat is the spectacular performance of Boris Karloff, one of the greatest horror actors in history. Karloff is most notable for bringing Frankenstein's monster to the big screen for the first time in an incredible performance of dubious novel accuracy. He is often considered to be one of the greatest horror actors of early Hollywood, challenged only by his contemporary Bella Lugosi and his predecessor, the man of a thousand faces, Lon Chaney sr. Karloff's performance, along with the makeup he wears both as the mummified corpse and as Ardath Bey, elevates the film's villain from a schlocky appropriation of Egyptian culture to a legitimately threatening presence.

The Mummy would never receive a formal sequel like many Universal monster movies did, instead receiving a sort of remake in *The Mummy's Hand* and its three sequels. *The Mummy's Hand* does not continue the plot of the original film, nor does it star Boris Karloff. After *The Mummy's Hand* sequels stopped, the Mummy would not officially appear again until meeting Abbott and Costello in 1955. The series would supposedly be rebooted in 1959 with Peter Cushing and Christopher Lee, although this series of four films are reboots of *The Mummy's Hand* series rather than the original film. The most notable revival of the Mummy would be the Brendan Fraser series, which brought the franchise to a new level of popularity for a new generation. The only major attempt to revive the series since was with the ill fated *Dark Universe*, a Marvel esque series that was supposed to span several series and star all the classic Universal monsters, although *The Mummy* would be the only one of these movies actually made; I mentioned this *Dark Universe* in my *Gill Man* article, as the *Gill Man*'s arm can actually be seen in a shot from *The Mummy*. I have mixed feelings on this failed universe because I very much would have liked to see these classic monsters in a more modern form but if *The Mummy* is anything to go on then they likely would have all been pretty bad, so perhaps no new movies is better than terrible new movies.

I'm not hugely attached to *The Mummy*, although I love Boris Karloff I think it's among the weaker Universal monster movies. I wish we could have seen more of the actual mummy, as opposed to Boris Karloff playing an ominous but mostly normal looking Egyptian man. One thing about it especially irks me. Nearly everyone who has watched *The Mummy* and paid any attention to the opening credits will leave the film with one burning question: where was the Saxon Warrior?! In the opening credits, right at the bottom, Henry Victor is credited as Saxon Warrior but no such character appears in the film. Well, a little bit of digging will reveal why this is the case. The director of the film, Karl Freund, was to put it lightly absolute scum. Originally there had been a scene in which we got to see Helen's past lives, including a scene in which she is surrounded by Saxon warriors. This incredible sounding scene was cut after a disagreement between Zita Johann (Helen's actress) and Freund. I can't go into detail about the nature of this disagreement but it makes Freund seem like a deeply unpleasant man. So Freund, the little worm that he was, cut the flashback scene out of spite and robbed us of the chance to ever see it. The injustice of this loss is, to me, perhaps the most interesting part of this film's story. If only a better, more respectable director had been placed in charge of making *The Mummy*, it could have been far more notable.



Labyrinth: Family Love and David Bowie!

Labyrinth is directed by the magical Jim Henson (the creator of The Muppets) and stars the superbeing David Bowie as Jareth the Goblin King, who I argue is one of the most misunderstood characters ever since he literally just does what Sarah asked him to do. But anyways: character judgement aside, this was my favourite childhood film and practically made me the way I am; my worrying knowledge of David Bowie's entire life, my obsession with puppets (and stop motion), and just overall dramatic essence. I mean, I used to watch this every single day and if I wasn't watching it I was singing something from it, so you can probably imagine I jumped at the opportunity of getting tickets for an anniversary screening.

If you aren't aware of Labyrinth, the plot is basically this girl called Sarah is made to babysit her brother Toby by her stepmother, and Sarah is obsessed with this book called 'Labyrinth'. She begins to quote part of the book, which makes Toby get taken by the Goblin King, and if she doesn't complete the labyrinth in thirteen hours Toby turns into a goblin. So you know just an average night really. The film itself is one of, if not the most beautiful film, I have ever seen in my entire life. I still think about the ballroom scene every day; the costumes, the set design, the music. Everything is perfect. That scene is like a more whimsical version of the ballroom scene in The Masque of the Red Death.

I still have 'Underground' and 'Within You' in all of my playlists, while Underground is super catchy. Within You perfectly represents his thoughts when the Goblin King realises Sarah isn't really doing what she thought he would. The songs are just perfect really, there isn't one song that I don't like from this entire thing. I really feel like everyone should watch this at least twice in your life. I say twice since you really need more time to soak up the beauty of it. I genuinely can't put into words how truly stunning it is.

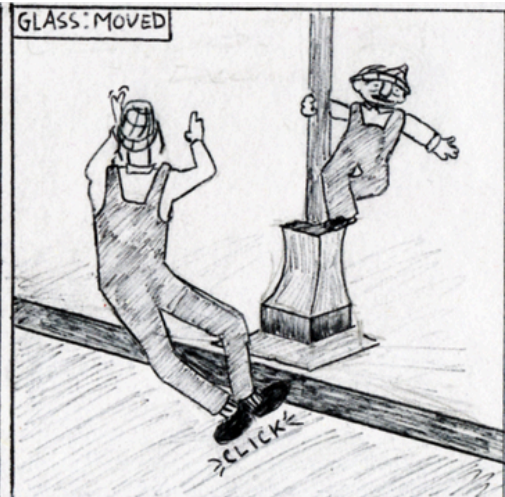


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As it is our Valentine's Day issue, and we're celebrating human connection, I want to end with a celebration of the family aspect of the Labyrinth, which is quite heartwarming. At the start of the film you can see a clear divide between Toby and Sarah. This divide is slowly broken down as the film progresses and they are separated for longer and longer, she ends up realising the fact that they are actually family. The Labyrinth itself is a metaphor for Sarah working out who she truly is as a person, the fantasy ends when she tells Jareth "You have no power over me". Jareth represents the negative aspects of her personality (like her disconnect from her brother), all the characters she meets represent a part of her good or bad. When she says "I don't know why but every now and again in my life, for no reason whatsoever, I need you. I need all of you", she is telling us that she will still need to keep all parts of herself, which means she accepts herself for who she is and becomes a better person because of it. Her stepmother also mentions that Sarah sees her in the start as a "Wicked stepmother in a fairy story" and in the end Sarah takes down the poster of her birth mother and David Bowie as some Broadway actor, which implies that maybe she thought her actual dad was him, but her taking it down represents how she is no longer escaping into ideas like this and is now accepting of her family. She also starts off extremely protective over her possessions and even getting angry at Toby for taking one of her teddies, but in this really sweet scene at the end she ends up giving it back to him. The thing about this film is that it can be interpreted in so many different ways since the writing is done in such a complex way that leaves it open to interpretation. It is so interesting to me since you can look back and apply new ideas or perspectives about the film each time, it just proves that Jim Henson's mind was so incredibly fascinating.

Bert and Ernie : Glass Movers

Written and drawn by Aidan Rickard



Each issue, these three comics will share a theme. As an example, the theme this issue is 'love'. See if you can work out the theme next issue!

Valentine's Day Songs!

Love Songs:

True love will find you In the end
- Daniel Johnston

Fantasy - Mariah Carey

satellites** - Enter Shikari

Head Over Heels - Tears For Fears

LIGHT SHOWER - Melanie
Martinez

Focus - NIKI

Ecstasy (Apple of my Eye) -
Strawberry Switchblade

Melty Love - SHAZNA

Strangers In The Night - Frank
Sinatra

Seven Days in Sunny June -
Jamiroquai

I Want You (2012) - Pulp

Daisy Lady - Tír na nÓg

Romance is Boring - Los
Campesenos

Silly Love Songs – Wings

Would You Be So Kind? by Dodie

Oxygen - Porch Light

Break-up Songs:

Don't think twice, it's Alright -
Bob Dylan

Baby, Baby, Baby - Aretha Franklin

Delilah - Tom Jones

Who Is It - Micheal Jackson

I Must've Screwed Up Really Bad
- Joanna Wang

**Bigger Boys and Stolen
Sweethearts** - Arctic Monkeys

Wonderful - Adam Ant

Action Cat - Gerard Way

Want You Gone -Aperture Science
Psychoacoustic Laboratories

Down With The Prophets - Lift
To Experience

Yeti - Paris Paloma

Mistakes - Lake Street Dive

**Wildfire (Gone, Gone, Gone) /
Death Song** - Rabbitology

Can't Love You Anymore - IU and
OHHYUK