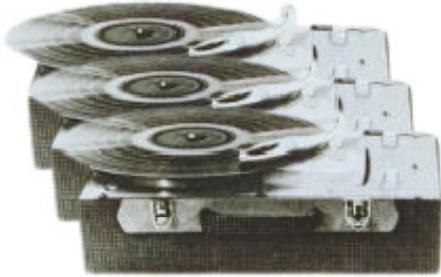


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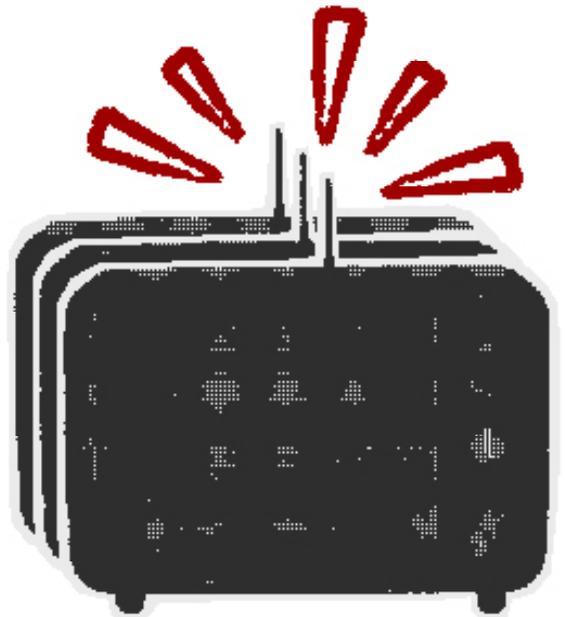
THE



WATTAGE

a quick one before the eternal worm devours julia and maddie

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AN EXPLORATION OF HAYLEY WILLIAMS'S *EGO DEATH AT A BACHELORETTE PARTY* & PARALORE

BY ALESSANDRA GAVRIS

Since Paramore's 2023 Album *This is Why*, it seems as if the band's frontwoman Hayley Williams has been on a series of side quests—joining Finneas, Deftones, Remi Wolf, and Jack Antonoff on stage at random, to name a few. So it's no surprise that Williams dropped her most recent solo project, *Ego Death at a Bachelorette Party*, in a similarly unpredictable fashion.

In early August, patrons of her hair-dye company Good Dye Young received a special code to her website. There, they found 17 brand-new solo songs, each uploaded as a standalone track on a page styled like a 2000s mp3 player. The link rapidly spread through the Paramore and Hayley Williams fanbases but the website disappeared just a day later. Williams later released all 17 songs publicly as singles rather than as a cohesive album. She took to Instagram stories, urging fans to send her playlists sequencing the tracks into an album, to later be put out in a physical format. Over the next few months, she re-released the album three separate times, adding the powerful single "Parachute" in late August, R&B-leaning "Good Ole Days" in late October, and the shimmering synth-pop track "Showbiz" in early November.

The rollout has been confusing, to say the least—but well worth it. *Ego Death at a Bachelorette Party* is Williams's best solo work yet. The album spans dream pop, indie pop, pop-rock; and while the shifts in tone, instrumentalism, and pro-

duction could have made the project feel disjointed, they instead form a strange cohesion. The now 4x Grammy-nominated album opens with "Ice In My OJ," a bold, bass heavy track that begins with a chorus Williams recorded vocals for a child "*I'm spinning circles and I can't deny / Floating on your love like a butterfly.*" The innocent, nostalgic hook is starkly contrasted with the verse, "*I got ice in my OJ, I'm a cold, hard bitch.*" Fans interpret this line as a nod to her early Paramore years, where she often drank nonalcoholic beverages as a teen performer, as well as a comment on her need to assert herself in the industry at a young age. With compressed vocals and a playfully abrasive edge, the opener feels entirely new to Williams—and it works.

Williams continues exploring the juxtaposition between childhood innocence and adulthood on the Grammy-nominated track "Glum." Producer Daniel James pitches her vocals upward on the verses to sound adolescent, lowering them to her natural register in the chorus. Throughout the track, Williams's details the feelings of depression and confusion, glumness if you will, before resolving in the bridge: "*On my way to thirty-seven years / I do not know if I'll ever know / What in the living fuck I'm doing here.*" Williams's bluntness is highly relatable to many. She here defines herself as an incredible songwriter, minus the metaphoric pretense many other artists employ.

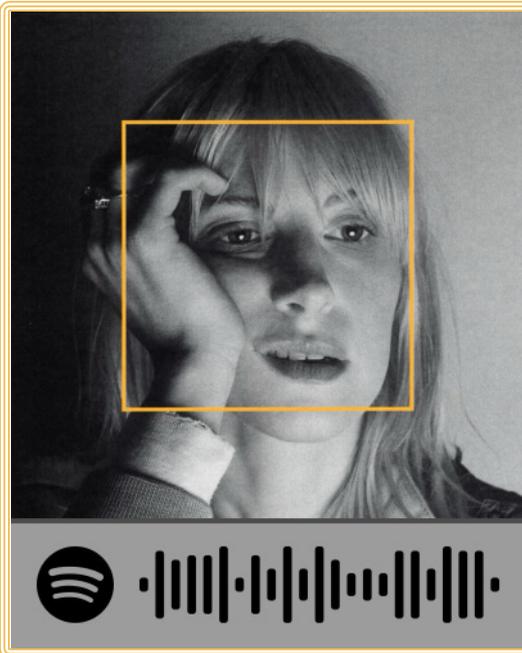
She becomes even more vulnerable on “Kill Me,” grappling with generational trauma she has been outspoken about publicly. She sings, “*Carrying my mother’s mother’s torment,*” eventually pleading “*Go ahead and kill me, can’t get much stronger,*” capturing the painfully cyclical nature of generational trauma.

Williams also writes about her complicated relationship with Nashville. On the title track, She calls out “racist country singers’ bars” (most definitely referring to Morgan Wallen) and paints the city as a place where ego deaths and self-awakenings occur. She deepens her critique in “True Believer,” crooning “*The south will not rise again / Until it’s paid for every sin,*” referring to the city’s history of racism and structural problems. The eerie, cinematic production emphasizes her hopefulness in the line “*I’ll reanimate your bones with my belief,*” resolving that she still believes the city can become better if people are willing to put in the work and address its problems.

Williams also seemingly addresses the long-running controversy and rumors surrounding Paramore, from the messy history of former members leaving to the band’s frequent, nearly Fleetwood Mac-esque break up speculations. On “Blood Bros.,” twinkling guitars and soft vocals evoke a sense of forgiveness and tenderness as she sings “*Now we’re just blood brothers / Covered in paper cuts,*” a line signaling both conflict within the band and forever unity. She closes the track with “*I will love you forever*

/ If that won’t make it worse,” a line that reads as an introspective reassurance to fellow longtime members Zac Farro and Taylor York. In a September 2025 interview with *The Face*, Williams confirmed that the band is in fact on a break, rather than broken up. She stated “In order for us to metabolize shit that we go through as people, it takes the amount of time it takes between albums.”

This news comes as a relief to many fans, especially after Grammy-nominated “Parachute,”



one of the album’s most emotional alt-rock tracks, caused fears of a breakup between Williams and guitarist Taylor York. On the song, she belts: “*I thought you were gonna catch me / I never stopped falling for you,*” capturing a feeling of heartbreak and betrayal. In a screamed verse, she pleads: “*Tell me what was the moment you decided to give up?*” It’s raw, painful, and candid, a tone Williams has embraced so deeply throughout the album.

Ego Death at a Bachelorette Party is brutally honest,

detailing every corner of grief: the end of relationships, the weight of generational trauma, deterioration of a hometown, and mourning identity loss. Williams’s broad lyricism and variety of styles, even if experimental, ensures every listener has something to connect with. Yet, even though it’s broad, the album feels deeply personal. Williams’s powerful, emotional voice ties everything together, making this project her most compelling to date.

The Inaugural Doctors Note

Brought to you by WHCL's very own Music Directors

For too long, WHCL's Music Directors have been hidden by the shadow of station leadership. The charismatic and organized General Manager, the cunning and deadline-enforcing Wattage team, and worst of all, the Studio Engineer who gets to solder things. We can be trusted with power tools too dangit! We have sat, dormant, waiting for our time to strike and offer the populace of Hamilton the reviews and opinions they so ripely deserve. At last, our time has come. It is with great pleasure we present to you a new tradition in music literature. A tradition of cutting honesty, curated music, and needlessly dramatic language. Most of all, it shall be this tradition which restores honor to the name of the MDs. Behold, dear reader, the first of many to come. Bear witness to The Doctors' Note.

Ian O'Reilly, MD, Review of "Viscus" by Oklou

"Viscus" is a song which steps confidently over the line of coherence into musical abstraction. This is to say I don't understand its intent and that's acceptable to me. The bulk of the song is composed of synthesized woodwinds and altered vocals, bordering on spoken word. An atmospheric beat drop offers a moment of cohesion, uniting the otherwise sparse instruments, but it happens in the last 40 seconds of the song and disappears far too quickly for this listener. In the absence of a consistent rhythm or beat, it's difficult to place the intended feel and emotion of the track. Lyrics like "*it would be nice to grow old without being under attack*" suggest a wistful longingness from the artist, but nothing else in the song suggests a compelling message. Ultimately, I diagnose this song to be too scarce to leave a meaningful impression.

Live reaction to "Mirror" by Jeff Tweedy (Eliana Mannes. AMD)

This song starts out with a pretty sweet base. The vibration is deep and rich. His lyrics aren't profound nor are they really that interesting except for the last sentence of the verse where he says "you will be the person taking your place". This lyric is cryptic and almost dissociative. Tweedy's voice is steely and at times raspy. Hm, ok ok, the lyrics seem to follow the same pattern of describing you as containing opposing elements like "*you are the desert and the rain.*" I'm enjoying the chords though. Where the song lacks in lyrics it compensates with the music. This feels like the type of song you would hear at a brewpub while you're being served an IPA from a bartender wearing a plaid shirt, with many tattoos, and a millennial mustache. This song feels like it's from a decade ago. I like those ending chords, they're tickling my brain right.

Sullivan Gaffney, AMD: A Take On “Executioner” by John 5.

John 5’s “Executioner” feels like an expansive, electrifying study of what the guitar can become when treated as both a weapon and a world of its own. The track pushes forward with a sense of urgency that makes you feel as if you’ve been dropped halfway into a tense video-game bossfight, surrounded by rising danger. Each passage opens into a new texture—grinding, spiraling, or exploding into sharp bursts of energy—yet it all stays tightly controlled, like a player navigating patterns they only barely understand. There’s a cinematic weight to the way the melodies build and collide, turning raw technique into atmosphere. Even the quieter moments serve to build your anticipation and pull you deeper into executioner grasp. It’s a piece that I can ultimately describe as “wicked” and is one that I quite enjoyed.



L to R: Oklou; Jeff Tweedy; John 5

Best of 2025 Playlist

By Carter Lefkowitz

We have made it to the end of the year! Now is the time to look back on all of the wonderful music released between January and when this Wattage edition comes out! This playlist is an excerpt from a longer playlist that I kept (keep) adding to every week when new music is dropped (shoutout Will Kretz for the inspiration). So you would not have to comb through 400+ songs, I narrowed it down to singles I really liked and my favorite tracks from some of my favorite albums. To cut down even more, I limited it to one artist per song on this playlist. Just over 2 hours, this playlist will take you on a journey through genres, from Tyler Childers to Earl Sweatshirt to Florence and the Machine, and everywhere in between. 2025 has been an incredible year for music, let’s hope this energy continues into 2026! Happy listening!



A Night of *Mellon Collie and the Infinite Sadness*: A Reminiscence

by Maddie Cloutier

I was lucky enough to be able to attend A Night of *Mellon Collie And The Infinite Sadness* over Thanksgiving break. This is a show at the Lyric Opera in Chicago which reimagines The Smashing Pumpkins' grand album into an orchestral and operatic experience. *Mellon Collie And The Infinite Sadness* is, to me, one of the albums that truly defines the creative output and artistry of Chicago, right up there with *Yankee Hotel Foxtrot* by Wilco. I knew that I had to find my way into the show, especially upon learning that Billy Corgan, frontman and lyricist for The Smashing Pumpkins, was heavily involved in the orchestral arrangements, set design, and even costuming for the show.

After a wonderful dinner at nearby restaurant Sepia, my stepmom and I made our way to the imposing Lyric

Opera. The interior was decorated with stylized suns, moons, and other celestial bodies that felt ripped straight from a *Mellon Collie* artbook. The show started with the orchestra, which played a lovely version of "Mellon Collie And The

Infinite Sadness" before a choir filed in for the stage-setting "Tonight, Tonight."

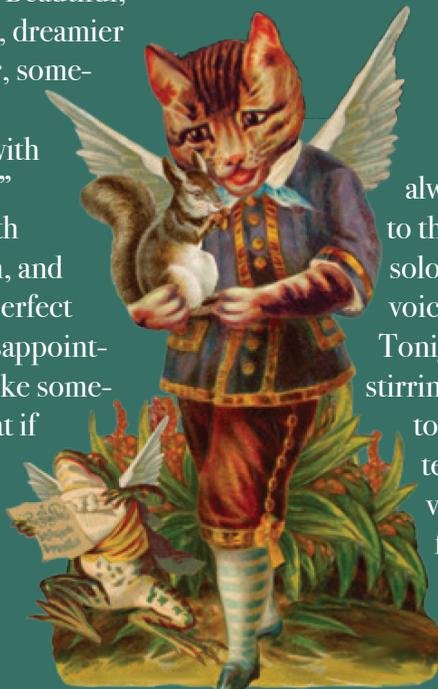
The rest of the show, though it didn't follow the order of the original album, grouped songs together thematically. This allowed the show to really emphasize the sonic variance throughout *Mellon Collie*, which contains songs that range from soft and dreamy to harsh and passionate. In addition to the choir, there were four solo opera singers covering the songs, as well as Billy Corgan



himself, who came on stage a few times to sing his songs.

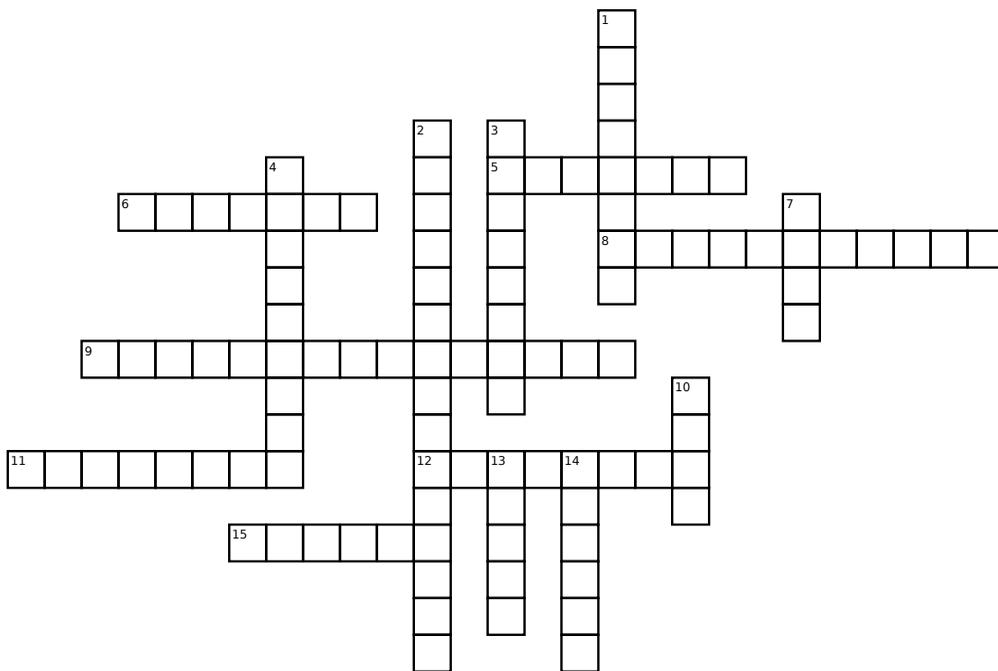
On the whole, this was a magical experience. The Smashing Pumpkins' songs translated so well into the complex and nuanced orchestral arrangements. Also, the orchestra didn't try to recreate the songs exactly, they always had their own takes on the instrumentation, which made me appreciate the songs even more. I would have been happy if that were the whole of the show! Getting to see Billy Corgan perform live was a massive cherry on top. He has kept his voice remarkably healthy, and getting to hear him backed up by a full choir was pretty amazing.

Honestly, the weakest part of the show for me were the solo opera singers. Don't get me wrong – they were immensely talented. I did also enjoy their takes on songs like "Cupid De Locke" and "Beautiful," which are some of the slower, dreamier songs of the album. However, something felt lacking with their covers of songs like "Bullet with Butterfly Wings" and "Zero." These are powerful songs with more than a little grit to them, and hearing them sung as pitch-perfect opera was honestly a little disappointing. It felt almost sanitized, like something was missing. I think that if Corgan had performed these instead of the opera singers, I would've appreciated it more. His voice is so unique and powerful, and it really makes these songs.



All quibbles were put out of my mind, though, when "Tonight, Tonight" was brought back for the finale of the show. The orchestra got to shine with an extended instrumental introduction, which I always enjoy. Then, I was treated to the sound of the choir, all four soloists, and Billy Corgan joining voices for the chorus. "Tonight, Tonight" is already such a beautiful, stirring song, and so I am not ashamed to admit that I was brought to tears by the power of all of these voices joining as one. This performance sealed the deal on an already outstanding show, and I left awestruck, counting my lucky stars.

Wattage Crossword



Down:

1. Fiona Apple song and an eco-friendly alternative
2. indie rock band and a safety feature in cars
3. frequenter of Grammy nominations and one lined up to perform at the Super Bowl's halftime show
4. song by Haley Williams and subject of beatings in an idiom
7. what Carly Simon accuses you of being in her '72 song
10. a folk rock band that performed at Hamilton on 11/20
13. Geese song and an inevitable part of life
14. ___ Soul, a Beatles album and an elastic substance produced by some plants

Across:

5. country and a 70s band formed, shockingly, in London
6. Aretha Franklin song and an important part of the golden rule
8. Lady Gaga song and magician's saying
9. a song name shared by both Tyler, the Creator and the Talking Heads
11. Taylor Swift album and bits of cultural mythology
12. Doechii song and what Mr. Hyde was to Dr. Jekyll
15. last name of indie artist Cameron and a season

Done? Check your work in the answer key at the end of the issue!

The Ultimate Hanukkah playlist

by Ilana Frid-Madden

If you know Hanuka, you know... it's all about the vibes. And nothing helps get those vibes right better than music. Jewish artists have already proven their talent in the making of some of the most well-known Christmas songs, and now it's time they get recognized for making some serious Ha-bangers. In making the Ultimate Chanukkah Playlist, I looked across genres – from traditional classics, to iconic celebrity songs, to reggae-EDM-pop hits (hey Matisyahu), and of course, the infamous Jewish acapella boy bands.

I set the scene with America's favorite, opening to an applauding SNL audience in 1994, when Adam Sandler shared "The Chanukah Song" with the world. It's silly, it's catchy, it's interesting, and it's genuinely a great song. Next up, we move onto one of me and my family's all-time favorites, "Burn" by the Maccabeats. This parody of Ellie Goulding's song isn't included in the Maccabeats' Hanukkah albums, as it came out before their creation, yet should be regarded as one of their all time Hanukkah songs. Next up, the iconic and fun, "Feliz Chanukah" by rival acapella group Six13. The catchiness of this song should come with a content warning. "A Land Called Sufganiyot" is pretty underground and kind of an odd one, possibly because it sounds like a drug-induced children's song about jelly donuts. Definitely recommend. "Judah Maccabee, The Hammer" is great with its chill-er rock vibes, and honestly a song I'd listen to outside the holiday. I really struggled with where to put Jack Black's "Oh Hanukkah", as with everything Jack Black, it's unique in a very particular

way. Fantastic, wonderful, and very unique. A classic, I'd say. And for those who noticed (not to get political) but I didn't include the Glee Cast's "Hanukkah, Oh Hanukkah" because I'm a little pissed it's in their Christmas Album. Feel free to add it to your playlist, though.

To me, the Barry Sisters are one of (if not the) most iconic duo in Jewish music and I really hope people still listen to them. Active from the 1930s through the 70s, their collections of Yiddish, Hebrew, and English klezmer-inspired songs are timeless gems and should be incorporated into every Jewish holiday playlist. Perhaps in every playlist ever (let's hear them in the club). Matisyahu's "Happy Hannukah" and Nissim Black's "Hashem Melech" transition into pop dance songs that I genuinely do think should be played at parties – and not just Bnei Mitzvahs. From then on, I've included the Maccabeats and Six13's Chanukah albums, *A Maccabeats Hanukkah* and *Hanukkah*

Anthology, as well as *The Chanukah Collection*. My favorite of the three, *Hannukah Anthology*, contains show-stoppers like "Latke Recipe" (covering "Shut up and Dance" by WALK THE MOON) and "Pan Fry" (a take on Billie Eilish's "Bad Guy"). I highly recommend watching the Maccabeats music videos for this album, as they themselves are absolute works of art. Oh, and they released a Chanukah version of "Defying Gravity" last year. I don't know how I feel about it yet.

I hope you enjoy this playlist and may those who celebrate have a Januca full of love, laughter, and light!



Listen to Ilana's Hannukah playlist here!

The Art of Olivia Dean

By Julia Ritzenberg



Olivia Dean's second studio album, *The Art of Loving*, is a tender rebuttal to the modern break-up record. Rather than offering vacuum-sealed accounts of desire and heartbreak, the UK soul-pop singer leans into the fragility of real romance—the hesitations, the missteps, the push and pull. With unapologetic warmth and honesty, she details the trials and tribulations that make love both difficult and deeply human.



The album opens with the brief but moving title track, “The Art of Loving (Intro).” Instead of launching into a grand statement, Dean offers a hushed meditation: “*It wasn't all for nothing... something lost and something gained in the art of loving.*” Her patience sets the tone for the album, suggesting that love isn't some dramatic confession, but a quiet, worth-while experience.

That introspection carries into “Nice To Each Other” — a playful exploration of the uncertainty of new relationships. Here, love is less a sweeping spectacle and more a simple act of kindness. Dean celebrates the joys of the present, instead of getting bogged down in complexities of early infatuation. With echoing vocals, she sidesteps the clichés of romance, acknowledging the precarity of new attachments while urging listeners to loosen their grip and (quite literally) just be *nice to each other*.

“So Easy (To Fall In Love)” further showcases Dean's lyrical prowess. As in much of her work, she perfectly balances buoyant, bright sound with surprisingly poignant lyrics. Light trumpets accompany Dean's jazzy, soulful vocals as she accounts both the thrill and risk of falling. Blending self-confidence with flirtation, she playfully celebrates self-assurance without arrogance: “*I'm the perfect mix of Saturday night and the rest of your life, anyone would agree.*” In balancing the fleeting and the permanent, Dean suggests that love doesn't need to be overcomplicated to feel meaningful.

Dean has always excelled at articulating the subtleties of emotional dynamics, and “A Couple Minutes” is a testament to that. Using the scarcity of time as a metaphor for fleeting relationships, she paints a portrait of love as messy, ephemeral, and still worth every moment. Through sparse vocals and intimate snapshots, she avoids wallowing in nostalgia; instead, she treats each memory as beautiful moment in time

Mirroring *The Art of Loving*'s quiet opening, “I've Seen It” closes the album with sweetness and contemplation. It's not a climactic break-up anthem or a sweeping love confession, but an acceptance: that love is complex, that it arrives in many forms, and that its imperfection is part of its beauty. Dean refuses to mythologize love or to fold it into neat conclusions. She doesn't treat it as an unattainable fantasy. She approaches it like an artist mastering their craft—imperfectly built from moments of tenderness and moments of failure.



Katy Perry Returns to Her Pop-Rock Roots on “bandaids”

by Alessandra Gavris

It seems like the public hasn't been entirely on Katy Perry's side in recent years. Her widely criticized April 2025 space mission, combined with her collaboration with controversial producer Dr. Luke on her most recent album *143* only intensified the sense that her efforts were simply ploys for relevance. *143* received largely unfavorable reviews, with critics citing surface level lyricism and uncreative EDM production as the culprit of its downfall.

However, things may be looking up for Perry. Her latest single “bandaids” marks a nostalgic return to the pop-rock sound that defined her early career; best seen on her debut album *One of the Boys*, which produced hits like “Hot N Cold,” “I Kissed a Girl,” and “Waking Up in Vegas.” The production on “bandaids” is rhythmically driven, with classic pop-rock drums, booming bass, and a strong rhythm guitar line. This type of production builds on Perry's strengths—an emoting, powerful voice—far more than the EDM-heavy sound of *143*, where her vocals often ended up buried instead of reinforced.

Throughout the album, Perry's lyrics are vulnerable, albeit somewhat predictable, but her emotional delivery compensates. With power, she belts “*Telling myself you'll change, you don't / Bandaids over a broken heart.*” The song appears to reference her July 2025 split from Orlando Bloom, as the couple maintained a very on-again-off-again relationship. She becomes even more candid in the chorus, crooning, “*Tried all the medications/ Lowered my expectations.*” This level of honesty—largely missing on *143* (see lines like “I'm just a prisoner in your prison” on “Artificial”)—is central to the pop-rock genre. Perry truly expresses her heartbreak, yet she does not hold ill will towards Bloom, singing “*On the bright side we had our good times/ never faked our pictures.*”

If this is the opening statement for Perry's next album, it is likely her next album will embrace this strong pop-rock sound. Controversy still follows Perry, but “bandaids” hints at an artist remembering where she started and why it worked.



WHY IS IT TRENDY TO HATE TAYLOR SWIFT NOW?

BY LUCIA KITSOS

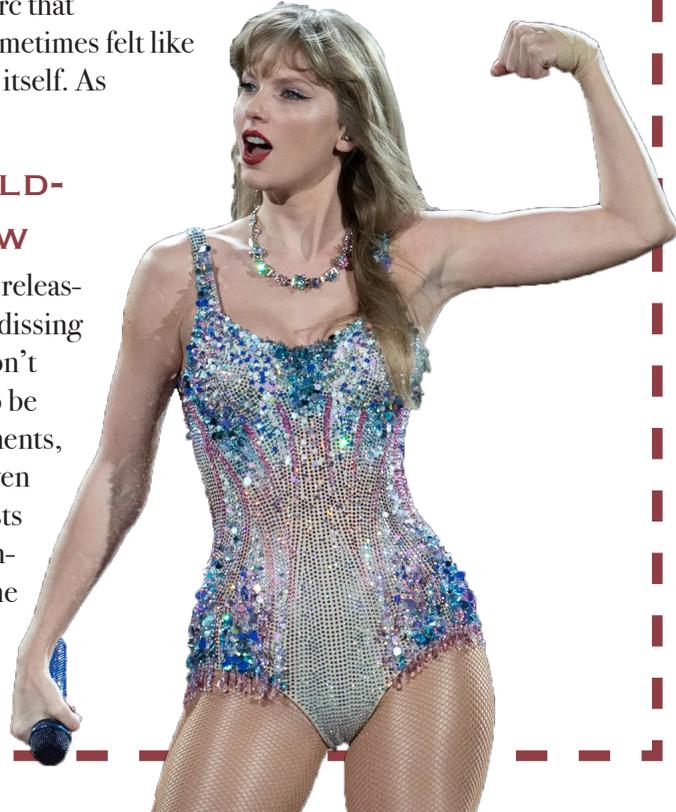
Taylor Swift's new album *The Life of A Showgirl* has received...mixed reviews. It seemed to have opened (for lack of a better term) a pop culture can of worms. As someone with no credentials, except having access to the internet at a young age and being generally opinionated, there are many reasons why it is trendy to hate Taylor Swift. Here are a few theories as to why that may be the case.

BECAUSE THIS ALBUM DIDN'T MEASURE UP TO HER PREVIOUS WORK

Let's be honest, Taylor has had some amazingly artistic eras in the past. So, when I first saw the pictures for this album I was quite excited! The album looked interesting and different. Showgirls are also an underappreciated group when it comes to people who have had a major impact on music and the entertainment industry at large. In Taylor's past work, especially *folklore* and *Midnights*, there was clever lyricism and an encompassing emotional arc that felt very full. However, *The Life of A Showgirl* sometimes felt like it was less about depth and more about the show itself. As if shows cannot, or should not, have depth.

THE DISLIKE HAS BEEN BUILD- ING FOR A FEW YEARS NOW

Between the controversies about her private jets, releasing multiple forms of the same album, and subtly dissing people in her songs that people (although they don't know her personally) believe she has no reason to be dissing. Taylor has long faced misogynistic comments, hate for having music that was too flowery, and even public interruptions of her speeches by male artists like Kanye West. While this is unfortunately nothing new for female artists, her position has become increasingly controversial as our political and social climate evolves and people begin to pull back the curtain on the mystified celebrity.



IT FELL GENERALLY FLAT, ESPECIALLY IN LIEU OF HER ENGAGEMENT

Taylor has been in the public eye for years – even more so given her engagement to Travis Kelce, the Eras Tour, and winning back her masters. As she rides that attention high, expectations for her art have subsequently spiked. It is very, *very* hard to follow up on the past few years of her eventful career with music that still feels authentic.

SHE'S BECOME A PUBLIC FIGURE IN MORE WAYS THAN JUST BEING A POPSTAR

Taylor has been in the public eye for years – even more so given her engagement to Travis Kelce, the Eras Tour, and winning back her masters. As she rides that attention high, expectations for her art have subsequently spiked. It is very, *very* hard to follow up on the past few years of her eventful career with music that still feels authentic.

IS IT THE ARTIST OR THE FANBASE?

Swifties get a very bad reputation in pop culture due to the way some of them interact with Taylor Swift's music. Is this just another story of people villainizing an artist simply because they are liked by fangirls, or has this grown into something broader considering how impactful she has been in the past few years? Fame, to some fans, makes someone untouchable, and maybe this is people's way of biting back, trying to humble someone who has maybe climbed very high atop of a pedestal. After all, seeing success sometimes makes people bitter. Maybe she has gotten to the point in her career where nothing she can do will ever be as relevant as the concept of her image.

The WHCL E-Board's Favorite Songs of 2025

This end-of-year playlist encompasses every WHCL E-Board Member's favorite song released in 2025. Included in this playlist are two Oklou songs, some very underground Welsh power pop, and "Playing Classics" by Water From Your Eyes, which was two E-Board members' favorite song of 2025. Hope you enjoy and hopefully add some of these songs to your best songs of 2025 playlist!



Top Five Favorite Albums of 2025

by Dylan Buckser-Schulz

I am happy to share my third year-end top five albums list for *The Wattage!* This year was fantastic for music, my favorite since I've been in college—it was hard to pare this list down to just five albums. Some other favorites of mine include the releases by Earl Sweatshirt, Water From Your Eyes, Florry, Frog, Alex G, caroline, Wednesday, Sharp Pins, and Nourished by Time. These five, though, are extra special.

5. Oklou - *choke enough*

Oklou makes spare, delicate pop songs that are at once nostalgic and futuristic. Even after many, many listens, the French artist's new album maintains a sonic allure: I can forget how well I know these songs, and delight, with each new listen, in its cool familiarity. Her melodies surface as if from one's own subconscious; her digitally-processed vocals shine through the mix like lamplight through fog. The nocturnal soundscape is fitted with twitchy, shimmering synths, electronic drums that sound sampled from crystals. An ambient spirit runs through the project—this is pop music that beckons close attention.



4. Ryan Davis and the Roadhouse Band - *New Threats from the Soul*



Kentucky's Ryan Davis isn't just the chief jokester and lowkey poet of the new alt-country school: with *New Threats From The Soul*, he might qualify as the genre's valedictorian. Though Davis is my favorite lyricist in the game right now, this album is far better than the sum of its quotable moments (which, by the way, are countless—profound witticisms accumulate like snow). These songs can rock *hard*, sprawl *far*, pivot on a heel. The arrangements are expertly produced, roomy but layered, filled with quirks. Juicy riffs and surprising flourishes wait around every turn. "Better if you Make Me" is a classic—an infectious barnburner, sung by a flawed bachelor ready to get fixed by his new sweetheart: "I'll clean it up if you bleed me out." On the grand closer "Crass Shadows," a drifter down to his last buck brings all his crap to Walden Pond and waits, patiently, for heaven to arrive. Across the record, the ridiculous bleeds into the spiritual. The title track is the crown jewel—nearly ten minutes

of singalong country-rock bliss, complete with the album's best punchlines and closest glimpses of the divine.

3. MIKE - *Showbiz!*

MIKE is a gift. The third of four killer albums he's released in the last two years, *Showbiz!* marks a slight but deep awakening for the Brooklyn rapper. His flow is more insistent than ever—that way his bars bend time; that way he catches rhythms like waves, riding the crest til it crashes. The record's front half is super-fueled and fast, the back half trance-inducing: hazy, catchy soul samples stitched together in a perfect, raggedy patchwork. He's fired up on some tracks, rightly boastful: "*Can't barter crowns / Can't bargain with me.*" Still, he's deeply in tune with himself, with the ebb and flow of depression. On "The Weight (2k20)" labor and loss pile on his shoulders as he grieves in a relentless, blurry draw: "*My mother in the air, I just ask for my stewardess / Amazed it took this year to feel the fact that I do exist.*"



The words are stunning, but MIKE almost doesn't care if you parse them. It's as though he's exorcising the bars out of his body. There's a full-send faith in the slurred, bassy tone of his voice, its defiant pulse, to deliver the message. On other tracks, though, his lyrics command attention. On highlight "Artist of the Century," he delays a brutal final couplet: *"I been putting up with strife since a youngin' / The prize isn't much, but the price is abundant."* If the toil doesn't pay off for MIKE, thank MIKE it pays off for us.

2. Friendship - *Caveman Wakes Up*

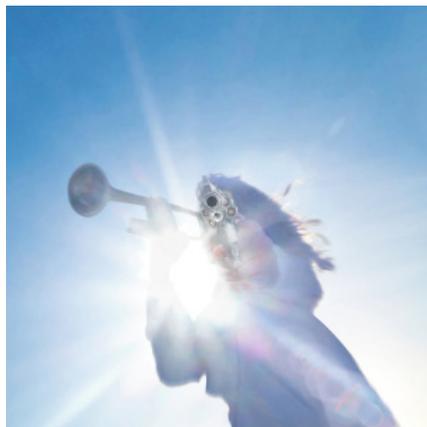


Friendship, a folk-rock quartet from Philly, make profoundly unfussy music. Their new album *Caveman Wakes Up* is the humblest of breakthroughs, chock-full of songs as memorable as they are lived-in. Simple guitar hooks, intuitive bass-lines, and textured drums anchor frontman Dan Wriggins' frank reflections on getting by. Wriggins is a raw performer, but his songcraft here is sharply refined. He scores the day-to-day slog, spotting poetry in detritus cluttering the apartment, in sidewalk weeds, in Busch Light cans. The first five songs form that blue-moon kind of run where each track is unbelievably better than the last. At a few climaxes, Wriggins' voice almost becomes a total bark, but he just barely holds back. Take "Hollow Skulls," a three-verse exploration of the emptiness shared by "boring stars," a "shut-off radiator," and "dreams unremembered"—all of which Wriggins likens to "hollow skulls." At the song's end, over a gentle electric strum, a brushed snare backbeat, a hushed synth, Wriggins croons like a wounded wolf. It's funny, it's bleak, it's brilliant.

1. Geese - *Getting Killed*

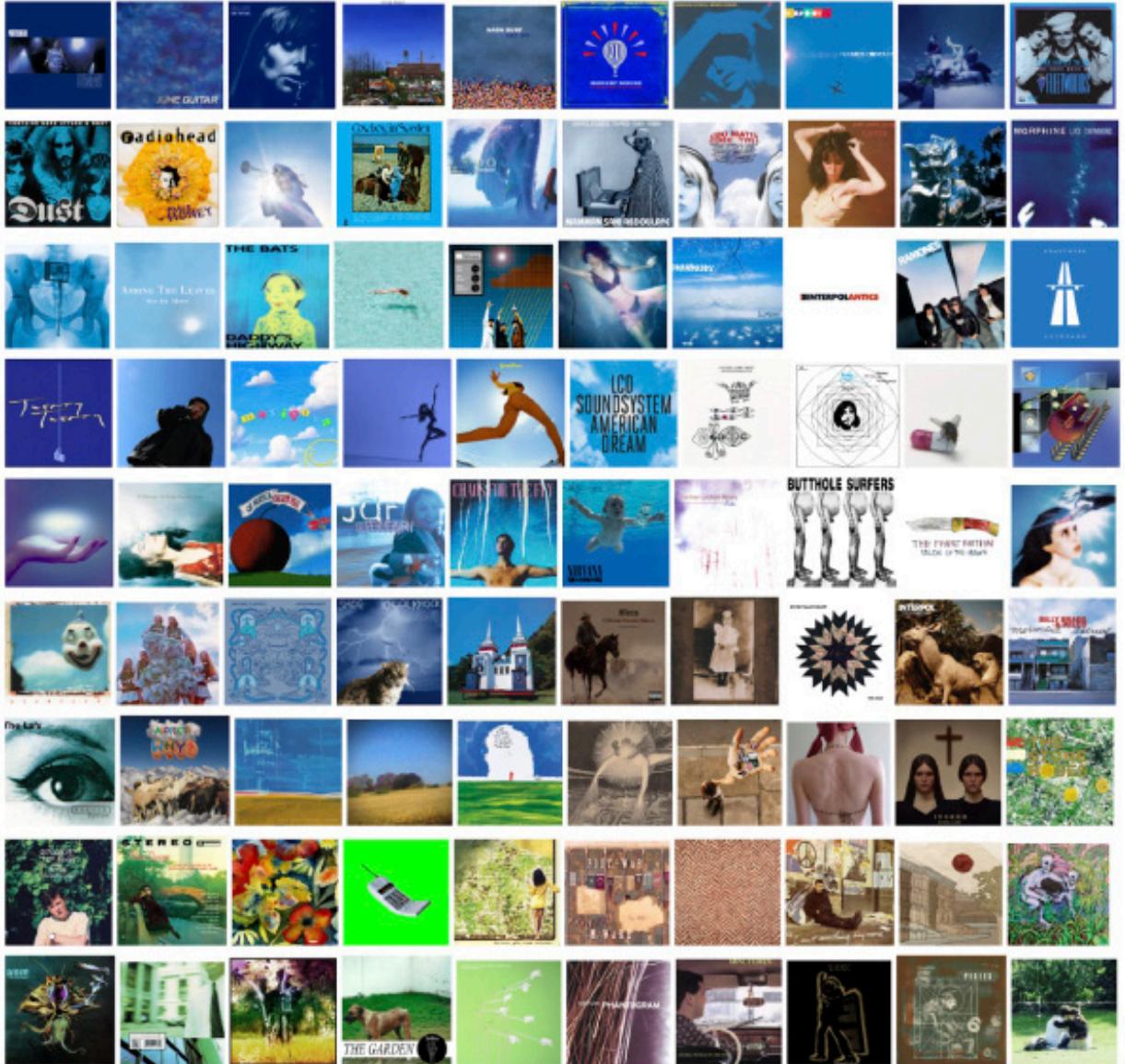
Cameron Winter converted me into a lifelong devotee with his gorgeous, onerous, and unbelievable solo album *Heavy Metal*, whose ten songs have each taken residence in my spirit's deepest, ugliest chambers. It shouldn't have come as a surprise, then, that Winter's band Geese—an ascendant four-piece rock band out of New York—won me over, too. *Getting Killed*, though, is nothing but surprising. Geese put together a collection of rock songs so raucous yet infectious, so primal yet contemporary, and so counterintuitively fun—that succumbing to the craze is not just easy: it's thrilling.

Emily Green's guitarwork is the record's electrified lifeblood; prepare to hum her riffs day-in, day-out. Max Bassin's drumming, though—tactical and abrasive—might just be the record's throbbing heart. He opens up the cathartic, feral pop of "Husbands," a song that has dug new pleasure centers in unlikely parts of my brain. When Winter careens up to that first chorus—a choir of enveloping harmonies, and that fat, buzzy bass below—it's a moment of unteachable magic. Here's an eccentric, generational performer and his band at their peak-chemistry, stitched together in a studio like a mad science lab. On the last leg of the ecstatic title track—which goes full-on jam band, supersizing all the best impulses of Geese's last album—Winter sings again and again, his voice in overdrive, *"I'm getting killed by a pretty good life."* Winter's feverish voice transforms lyrics that seem, at first, nonsense, into rallying cries. It doesn't matter what the rally's for—*Getting Killed* makes it clear that the noise matters most.



The Chapel

by Amanda Scholz



Annika Bennett

By Amanda Scholz

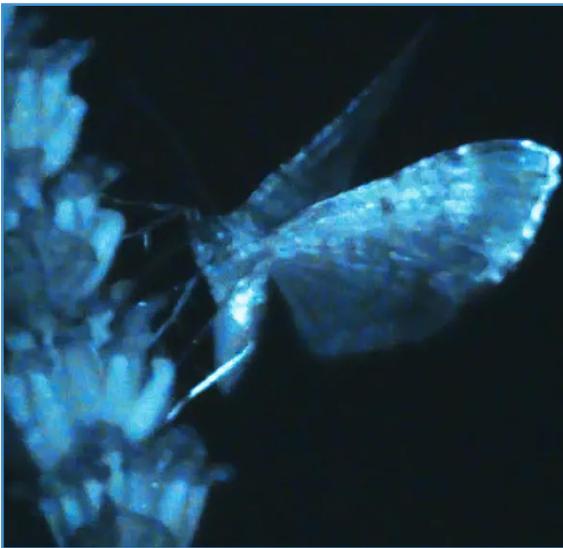
Allow me to introduce you to my second cousin Annika Bennett. Annika is a singer/songwriter based in LA, currently touring across America with musician Leith Ross. On tour, she has been performing songs from *Triple Shooting Star*, an album she released on November 14. This tour has been an opportunity for her to bring her new project out into the world. She says “having real world interactions around it and hearing people hear the songs feels really good.”

This is one of the projects she is most proud of, “I did it totally by myself... it was a super intuitive process.” This was the first project she produced all alone. She brought me into the world of her creative process, “I think about it almost like I’m holding it like a little orb and I’m looking at it from all angles ... I try to figure out what feels the most intuitive and follow that thread.”

She is also proud of a song she wrote with friend/musician ROLEMODEL called “slipfast”, “we wrote almost stream of consciousness and it was about something really real and it was so cathartic.”

Annika moved from Rockland, New York to Nashville at 18 years old. The roots of her musical sound from childhood were nourished and transformed within Nashville’s country-indie-folk-alternative-american music scene. “I had always made music but it was always something I very much kept to myself and when I moved to Nashville it became the real core of my life... It became a bigger part of who I was in a really nice way.”

She describes the experience, “I would play a lot of shows with friends that went to the colleges in Nashville and I was getting into songwriting for people that were in the industry.” Annika was able to make connections in Nashville to begin her career as a songwriter. After spending COVID doing songwriting sessions online, she moved to LA to continue her career in person.



Annika swims in the depths of creativity on a daily basis, “The biggest thing I learned and am continuing to learn is if you try to control it too much or if you judge it too early it could make it shut off. It’s a very specific feeling ... And the more that you just follow that and you just follow it the more it will show up.” Annika enlightened me about the different worlds she wears as a songwriter, “When you are creating music in a vacuum it’s just you alone, sometimes it is easier to make something that is true to you.”

On the other hand, she discusses existing in community with other songwriters. “I don’t think there is anything more inspiring than a friend’s song, especially when you know your friend and you know their life and you know the situation they are writing about and then you get to hear a song they wrote about it.”

PREDICTIONS FOR GRAMMY NOMINATIONS (NOT ALL INCLUSIVE)

BY ARYA MATTOO

Record Of The Year:

Nominations: “DtMF” by Bad Bunny, “Manchild” by Sabrina Carpenter, “Anxiety” by Doechii, “WILDFLOWER” by Billie Eilish, “Abracadabra” by Lady Gaga, “luther” by Kendrick Lamar with SZA, “The Subway” by Chappell Roan, “APT.” by ROSÉ, Bruno Mars

Prediction: “DtMF” by Bad Bunny

Why: This record reflects the cultural nostalgia for one’s homeland and has the impact and critical praise required for the Record of the Year award.

Album Of The Year:

Nominations: *DeBÍ TiRAR M&S FOToS* by Bad Bunny, *SWAG* by Justin Bieber, *Man’s Best Friend* by Sabrina Carpenter, *Let God Sort Em Out* by Clipse by Pusha T & Malice, *MAYHEM* by Lady Gaga, *GNX* by Kendrick Lamar, *MUTT* by Leon Thomas, *CHROMAKOPIA* by Tyler, The Creator

Prediction: *DeBÍ TiRAR M&S FOToS* by Bad Bunny

Why: Bad Bunny is one of the most popular artists, and for good reason – he’s captured the culture of Puerto Rico through his music paired with catchy beats.

Song Of The Year:

Nominations: “Abracadabra” by Lady Gaga, “Anxiety” by Doechii, “APT.” by Rose & Bruno Mars, “DtMF” by Bad Bunny, “Golden” [From KPop Demon Hunters] by HUNTR/X:, EJAE, Audrey Nuna, REI AMI, “luther” by Kendrick Lamar with SZA, “Manchild” by Sabrina Carpenter, “WILDFLOWER” by Billie Eilish

Prediction: “WILDFLOWER” by Billie Eilish

Why: Billie Eilish is a well-known Grammy darling, potentially propping her up to win Song of the Year.

Producer Of The Year, Non-Classical:

Nominations: Dan Auerbach, Cirkut, Dijon, Blake Mills, Sounwave

Prediction: Sounwave

Why: Sounwave is a notable hip hop producer, whose best known creative works are with Kendrick Lamar, setting him apart from the rest of the producers nominated.

Best New Artist:

Nominations: Olivia Dean, KATSEYE, The Marias, Addison Rae, sombr, Leon Thomas, Alex Warren, Lola Young

Prediction: The Marias

Why: The Marias’ blend of dream-pop and bilingual artistry has built enough critical buzz to make them the standout choice for Best New Artist.



Best Pop Solo Performance:

Nominations: “DAISIES” by Justin Bieber, “Man-child” by Sabrina Carpenter, “Disease” by Lady Gaga, “The Subway” by Chappell Roan, “Messy” by Lola Young

Prediction: “The Subway” by Chappell Roan

Why: Chappell Roan represents the current shift of new generation pop stars, and this heartfelt pop ballad fits into it, setting her up to win Best Pop Solo Performance.

Best Pop Duo/Group Performance:

Nominations: “Defying Gravity” by Cynthia Erivo & Ariana Grande, “Golden” [From KPop Demon Hunters] by HUNTR/X: EJAE, Audrey Nuna, REI AMI, “Gabriela” by KATSEYE, “APT.” by ROSÉ, Bruno Mars, “30 For 30” by SZA With Kendrick Lamar

Prediction: “Defying Gravity” by Cynthia Erivo & Ariana Grande

Why: This song was the most famous duet song and the most well-recognized song from a movie/musical, due to the powerful blend of vocals Cynthia Erivo and Ariana Grande offer.

Best Rock Performance:

Nominations: “U Should Not Be Doing That” by Amyl and The Sniffers, “The Emptiness Machine” by Linkin Park, “NEVER ENOUGH” by Turnstile, “Mirtazapine” by Hayley Williams, “Changes (Live From Villa Park) Back To The Beginning” by YUNGBLUD Featuring Nuno Bettencourt, Frank Bello, Adam Wakeman, II

Prediction: “Never Enough” by Turnstile

Why: Turnstile delivers a high-intensity performance that captured critical acclaim.

Best Dance Pop Recording:

Nominations: “Bluest Flame” by Selena Gomez & Benny Blanco, “Abracadabra” by Lady Gaga, “Midnight Sun” by Zara Larsson, “Just Keep Watching” (From F1® The Movie) by Tate McRae, “Illegal” by PinkPantheress

Prediction: “Abracadabra” by Lady Gaga

Why: Lady Gaga’s powerful vocals and club music production make this recording a standout track.

Best Dance/Electronic Album:

Nominations: *EUSEXUA* by FKA twigs, *Ten Days* by Fred again..., *Fancy That* by PinkPantheress, *Inhale / Exhale* by RÜFÜS DU SOL, *F*** USKRILLEX YOU THINK UR ANDY WARHOL BUT UR NOT!! <3* by Skrillex

Prediction: *EUSEXUA* by FKA Twigs

Why: This album took a lot of creative and artistic risks, differentiating it from the other dance/electronic albums of the year.

Best Pop Vocal Album:

Nominations: *SWAG* by Justin Bieber, *Man’s Best Friend* by Sabrina Carpenter, *Something Beautiful* by Miley Cyrus, *MAYHEM* by Lady Gaga, *I’ve Tried Everything But Therapy (Part 2)* by Teddy Swims

Prediction: *MAYHEM* by Lady Gaga

Why: Lady Gaga proved herself again with this album that she can still produce pop bangers.

PREDICTIONS FOR GRAMMY NOMINATIONS (CONTINUED)

Best Rock Song:

Nominations: “As Alive As You Need Me To Be” by Nine Inch Nails, “Caramel” by Sleep Token, “Glum” by Hayley Williams, “NEVER ENOUGH” by Turnstile, “Zombie” by YUNGBLUD

Prediction: “Glum” by Hayley Williams

Why: Hayley Williams showed that she can stand alone from Paramore and make a rock song that pushes herself out of the Paramore association.

Best Rock Album:

Nominations: *private music* by Deftones, *I quit* by HAIM, *From Zero* by Linkin Park, *NEVER ENOUGH* by Turnstile, *Idols* by YUNGBLUD

Prediction: *NEVER ENOUGH* by Turnstile

Why: In terms of cultural impact and innovation, Turnstile’s album helped redefine modern rock.

Best Alternative Music Performance:

Nominations: “Everything Is Peaceful Love” by Bon Iver, “Alone” by The Cure, “SEEIN’ STARS” by Turnstile, “mangetout” by Wet Leg, “Parachute” by Hayley Williams.

Prediction: “Alone” by the Cure

Why: The Cure is an iconic ’90s rock band with lots of influential work, and this performance is included in that.

Best R&B Performance:

Nominations: “YUKON” by Justin Bieber, “It Depends by Chris Brown” Featuring Bryson Tiller, “Folded” by Kehlani, “MUTT (Live From NPR’s Tiny Desk)” by Leon Thomas, “Heart Of A Woman” by Summer Walker

Prediction: “Heart Of A Woman” by Summer Walker

Why: Summer Walker’s vocal performance is top-notch in this performance and encapsulates the classic R&B sound.

Best Alternative Music Album:

Nominations: *SABLE, fABLE* by Bon Iver, *Songs Of A Lost World* by The Cure, *DON’T TAP THE GLASS* by Tyler, The Creator, *moisturizer* by Wet Leg, *Ego Death At A Bachelorette Party* by Hayley Williams

Prediction: *Songs Of A Lost World* by The Cure

Why: Due to the previously mentioned cultural impact of The Cure, their newest album is well-suited to win this award.

Best R&B Song

Nominations: “Here We Are” by Durand Bernarr, “UP-TOWN” by Lalah Hathaway, “LOVE YOU TOO” by Ledisi, “Crybaby” by SZA, “VIBES DON’T LIE” by Leon Thomas

Prediction: “Crybaby” by SZA

Why: SZA has the most commercial reach, critical acclaim, and songwriting ability in this category.

Best R&B Album

Nominations: *BELOVED* by GIVEON, *Why Not More?* by Coco Jones, *The Crown* by Ledisi, *Escape Room* by Teyana Taylor, *MUTT* by Leon Thomas

Prediction: *Why Not More?* by Coco Jones

Why: Coco Jones has major momentum in the R&B space, giving her a leg up compared to these other albums.

Best Rap Song

Nominations: “Anxiety” by Doechii, “The Birds Don’t Sing” by Clipse, Pusha T & Malice Featuring John Legend & Voices Of Fire, “Sticky” by Tyler, The Creator Featuring GloRilla, Sexxy Red & Lil Wayne, “TGIF” by GloRilla, “tv off” by Kendrick Lamar

Prediction: “The Birds Don’t Sing”

Why: This song carries sharp writing, emotional weight, and a standout rap track, which fits the criteria of Best Rap Song.

Best Rap Performance

Nominations: “Outside” by Cardi B, “Chains & Whips” by Clipse, Pusha T & Malice Featuring Kendrick Lamar & Pharrell Williams, “Anxiety” by Doechii, “tv off” by Kendrick Lamar Featuring Lefty Gunplay, “Darling, I” by Tyler, The Creator Featuring Teezo Touchdown

Prediction: “Darling, I” by Tyler, The Creator, Featuring Teezo Touchdown

Why: A standout track from Tyler, The Creator’s *CHROMA* album.

Best Rap Album

Nominations: *Let God Sort Em Out* by Clipse, Pusha T & Malice, *GLORIOUS* by GloRilla, *God Does Like Ugly* by JID, *CN̄X* by Kendrick Lamar, *CHROMAKOPIA* by Tyler, The Creator

Prediction: *Let God Sort Em Out* by Clipse, Pusha T & Malice

Why: *Let God Sort Em Out* has all the aspects of an award-winning album; it has storytelling, lyricism, and production to speak for it.

Best Melodic Rap Performance

Nominations: “Proud Of Me” by Friday Featuring Meek Mill, “Wholeheartedly” by JID Featuring Ty Dolla \$ign & 6Lack, “luther” by Kendrick Lamar with SZA, “WeMaj” by Terrace Martin & Kenyon Dixon Featuring Rapsody, “SOMEBODY LOVES ME” by PARTYNEXTDOOR & Drake

Prediction: “luther” by Kendrick Lamar with SZA

Why: This song dominated the charts, and its laid-back production and SZA’s feature made it a beloved song.

Wattage Wordsearch

N F O Z N Q V Z M U Z G F Z C H R Z R H
G E E S E H R V L A O Q U I K R A X O S
H A X L I V R E U Y S H G L O R I L L A
K X O X O J U G F K A T W I G S O Q S X
A C M B O A A S K X H P D E N X Z P J X
H Q N G M E L L O N C O L L I E L V O C
D H O U H L K S R M A Y H E M T I H P T
Q Z A L P U M P I N T H E W A T T A G E
A Y S Y I B C O W T N Y D M L I A I A Z
H X A I L V X I Y L W F J R J F N I Q U
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O I A B N N T W D Y V T S Y I O P Q N N
W R O S A L Í A I E Z I L Z B J K L A F
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I E A A K A C B W O L N M X M H U N O H
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P C A F J W V U Y U O D A R P Y F G L G
B O Q E U W B I K V D H W M A F I P Y I
P L A Y I N G C L A S S I C S V T T U J

Pumpin the Wattage

Playing Classics

Hayley Williams

Olivia Dean

Mellon Collie

ROSALÍA

FKA Twigs

Laufey

GloRilla

Mayhem

Dijon

Oklou

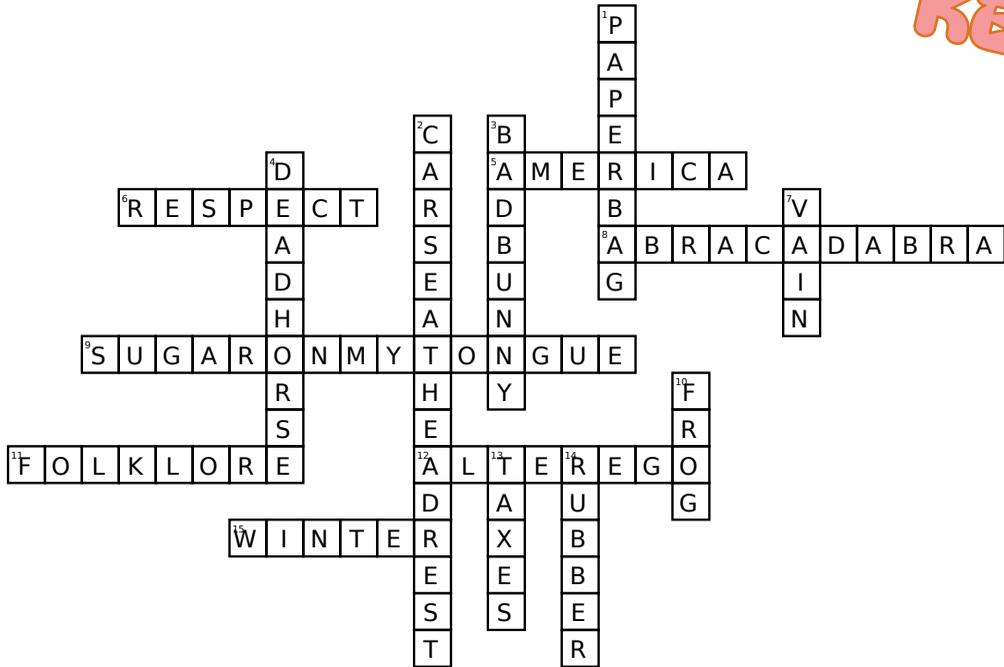
Geese

Samia

Showbiz

Wattage Crossword

KEY



Down:

1. Fiona Apple song and an eco-friendly alternative
2. indie rock band and a safety feature in cars
3. frequenter of Grammy nominations and one lined up to perform at the Super Bowl's halftime show
4. song by Haley Williams and subject of beatings in an idiom
7. what Carly Simon accuses you of being in her '72 song
10. a folk rock band that performed at Hamilton on 11/20
13. Geese song and an inevitable part of life
14. ___ Soul, a Beatles album and an elastic substance produced by some plants

Across:

5. country and a 70s band formed, shockingly, in London
6. Aretha Franklin song and an important part of the golden rule
8. Lady Gaga song and magician's saying
9. a song name shared by both Tyler, the Creator and the Talking Heads
11. Taylor Swift album and bits of cultural mythology
12. Doechii song and what Mr. Hyde was to Dr. Jekyll
15. last name of indie artist Cameron and a season

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