Graffiti Artist Tells His Story

Anonymous

Although the actions described in the following article violate elements of MKA’s code of conduct, we believe that it’s a compelling, valuable description of real life experiences, informing MKA’s students and teachers about the broader community. Printing the article in no way implies MKA’s approval of the actions described.

I don’t really know how the whole thing started. I remember in middle school my art teacher showed me some photos that really got my mind going in places it had never been to before. I tried to get into writing graffiti on my own, but it was tough to learn the basics while trying to stay under the radar. Then three years ago I started talking to a guy, Jim, at a hockey game. We started talking, and when we walked outside I mentioned a huge graffiti piece we passed behind the building. “Yeah,” he said. “I did it.”

Jim, who was twenty-four at the time, told me about an ex-graffiti artist who goes by CRISPO. To this day, I still don’t know CRISPO’s real name, and I’ve only met him once: picture a sketchy guy with a long, scruffy beard living in a bad neighborhood. Jim introduced me to him, and we said we wanted to start putting the name CRISPO back out there for him—at forty-one, he is already too old to do it himself. Graffiti is a young man’s game. Now CRISPO serves as a sort of mentor.

We take pictures of our work and leave them in his mailbox, and occasionally he will leave us a note telling us how he doesn’t like our color choices, or some piece is perfect.

I love it when people say graffiti is nothing but a foolish crime. I just laugh. You can’t understand graffiti unless you get to know it, understand it—feel it. Only writers know that feeling. I remember in the beginning I was so scared of getting caught that I couldn’t even finish a piece because I was looking over my shoulder so often. But that went away once I learned the ins and outs—putting magnets on the bottoms of cans so that the steel balls don’t make noise while I run, always wearing gloves, never looking like a hoodlum teenager about to go graffiti something. You know, the basics.

About 7 or 8 months ago Jim and I went out on a Saturday night to do a piece. That was our first mistake, Saturday nights are no-no’s—too many people, and more people means more cops. We drove to a pretty secluded area and he parked his car in a nice out-of-the-way spot, with only a short one- or two-mile walk separating us from the infinite canvases most would call dismissed freight train cars.

We arrived, and unsurprisingly we saw a few (cont. on p. 5)

Harlan Coben Visits MKA

Aaron Stagoff-Belfort ’14
Staff Writer

Harlan Coben, renowned author of over 20 novels, including the world-famous Myron Bolitar series, was the Book Fair speaker at the Middle School this year. Coben, who grew up in New Jersey and played basketball at Amherst University, is a powerhouse in the world of adult thrillers. Now promoting his first young adult novel, Shelter, Coben granted the Academy News an interview after his Book Fair signing.

Academy News: What were your favorite books to read as a kid and what authors inspired you to start writing?

HC: You know when I was younger, like elementary school age, Roald Dahl and Charlie And The Chocolate Factory were my favorites. I loved Madeline Engel, who wrote A Wrinkle in Time. C.S. Lewis’ Narnia series, those were the books that I would probably list as the most influential from my childhood.

AN: When did you know you wanted to become a writer for a living?

HC: When I was in college, in-between my junior and senior year, I worked a job as a tour guide in Spain, which was my family’s business. One day I sat down and said, “Man, I need to write a book about this experience.” And I did it and it was a terrible book, it was pompous and pretentious and self-absorbed, but from that experience I got what I can only call the writing virus, which is a little bit like when you play basketball and you just want to do it all the time. I just had to keep writing and trying to get better.

AN: I know your parents died when you were in college. How did their death affect your writing?

HC: My parents died when I was in my twenties and I had already been writing by then, so I don’t think it affected my first writing so much. But it did affect my writing now. I think unfortunately I’m a better writer because of it. Tragedy does unfortunately make you a better writer, as any experience will.

AN: Where did the character Myron Bolitar come from?

HC: Well I’m really not supposed to admit it, but he’s me with wish fulfillment. I played college basketball and he was a much better college basketball player. He’s faster, stronger and funnier. He thinks of a line I wish I had thought of. However, I do have him beat in two areas: I am a better dancer and I have had better luck in my love life. I have been with my wife for
During the first week of November, I had the pleasure of participating in MKA’s Model UN trip to Brown University. It is one of the most in-depth and interesting activities that MKA offers: students have the opportunity to role-play diplomats from over 180 countries as members of various committees that discuss and debate current events. The committees range from Crisis Committee, which is known to call students at their hotels in the middle of the night for an impromptu meeting, to SOCHUM (Social, Cultural, Humanitarian and Cultural Affairs Committee), a gathering of some sixty-five people focusing on humanitarian issues such as LGBT rights and stem cell research. During “committee,” one is expected to speak only in UN jargon, beginning a question with “point of personal inquiry/privilege,” or even asking for a five-minute break by saying, “motion for an underequated caucus.”

One of the most intriguing aspects of Model UN is meeting people from all over the country. Some students even take Model UN as a course or competitive club, and are so serious that they talk to you only in their country’s accent, even when meetings are not in session. These students have prepared and researched all year for these few hours of debate. “It’s like seeing the future president in a gathering of high school students,” MKA sophomore, Nadia Uberoi, said of the delegate from Israel in her SOCHUM committee.

Though the various committees and subjects of debate are interesting and definitely worth the trip, there is also a lot of free time to explore the college campus. The meetings themselves take place in classrooms and lecture halls, but it’s even more fascinating to be able to eat in the breakfast hall with Brown students, or shop on Thayer Street. From her experience at Brown University from 2010 Model UN, junior Puja Singh said that the school became one of her top choices for college. Participants can also grow close to the students from other schools who are staying at the same hotel: they range from 9th-12th graders, and are on the trip for all different reasons.

Model UN provides both insight into the way the UN operates and familiarity with the host school, whether it be Brown or UPenn (the February MKA Model UN destination). If you have even a slight interest and familiarity with the host school, whether it be Brown or UPenn (the February MKA Model UN destination), you will get better.

many years, and Myron’s love life is a disaster. I have a family, and that’s something he has always wanted.

AN: So if you and Myron Bolitar were combined, you would be the perfect guy?
HC: Yeah that would be awesome; [laughs] it would be a little too much.

AN: You seem to consistently be able to churn out quality book after quality book; do you think you will ever run out of creative ideas?
HC: I think that every time. When I finish a book a little voice in my head says, “That’s it, you’re done, no more ideas.” And what you learn is that voice is wrong; it’s like a boxing match where you throw every punch you have, and you now you can’t even move your arms. You rest a few days and then you bounce back.

AN: What advice can you give to an aspiring writer?
HC: This sounds so simple, but it’s just to write and keep writing. You’re going to make mistakes but that’s OK. Quantity will inevitably make quality. The same way you may play basketball now, you couldn’t play with the pros. Eventually if you keep doing it, you will get better.

Penn State Scandal

On November 4, 2011, a shock of unimaginable size and consequence was delivered not only to the world of college football, but all of America. Jerry Sandusky, an assistant coach who had worked at Penn State for more than 30 years, was indicted on 40 counts of sexual abuse against young boys by the Pennsylvania Attorney General. This news launched one of the most unexpected scandals in recent history. Despite the overarching culture of dishonesty and unethical behavior within college football in recent years, Penn State had managed to maintain a program noted for its morality and integrity. Unfortunately, this gold standard for how a school should operate recently came tumbling down.

Since November, an astonishing number of Sandusky’s victims have come forward, each sharing his own version of this awful scandal. Many say that they met Sandusky through Second Mile, his statewide charity established in 1977, dedicated to helping troubled, underprivileged boys. Sandusky allegedly used this connection, as well as his access to the college campus, to win the trust of these boys. Sandusky and his victims. Joe Paterno, the revered longtime head football coach at Penn State, was recently fired after it was found that he failed to report the rape of a boy in the locker room showers back in 2002. This fact is almost as stunning as that of Sandusky’s actions; Paterno had always been thought of as one of the true “good guys” in college football, and now he was discovered to have covered up one of the biggest scandals in recent history.

In recent times, when the ethics and morals of America as a whole are often very questionable, Jerry Sandusky, Joe Paterno, and the rest of those involved have delivered an irreplaceable blow not only to the victims, but to our entire country.

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Thank you,
The Academy News Staff

January Corrections

In the November issue, in the article about Stephen Colbert’s Hemmeter Lecture, we mistakenly printed that Colbert opened his speech with an anecdote about a bumper sticker. In reality, it was Mr. Hessler, in his introduction to Mr. Colbert, who told the story about the bumper sticker.
Point-Counterpoint: Legalization of Marijuana in America

The Unrecognized Threat

Alex Besser '13
Staff Writer

It goes by many names: pot, dope, grass, weed, herb, hash, bud, cannabis, reefer, or Mary Jane, but no matter what you call it, marijuana is one of the biggest problems facing teens today. Nowadays, more and more Americans are starting to change their opinions on the use of marijuana. Recently, a Gallup poll reported that public support for the legalization of marijuana has nearly doubled over the past two decades to a point at which, for the first time in history, more people in the United States are for legalization than are against it. What many don’t realize is how detrimental this finding is to society.

Studies show that many users of hard drugs originally started with smoking marijuana. Researchers also found a direct correlation between how young people are when they start using marijuana and how likely they are to engage in other risky behaviors later in life. One MKA sophomore astutely points out that if it becomes easier for people to get marijuana, “it can lead to more car accidents” and other major problems.

Some try to compare marijuana to alcohol, an intoxicating substance that is legal. What they are disregarding is that, unlike alcohol, the sole purpose of smoking marijuana is to achieve a high. They may rightfully argue that marijuana contains no addictive substances; however, it still can cause behavioral addiction, in which smokers are unable to abstain from use, and regularly crave the use of marijuana. The National Institute of Drug Addiction says that addicts report senses of relaxation, sleeplessness, anxiety, and craving for the drug for up to two weeks following their cease of drug use.

For teens, quitting using may be especially difficult, because in many parts of the country, smoking marijuana has become more of a social occurrence. It happens with friends or acquaintances, so quitting marijuana means more than just leaving the drug: it also may mean leaving friends.

One reality we must accept is that regardless of marijuana’s illegality, people will still continue to use it. Some view the drug’s illegal status as a positive force that reduces the dangers marijuana users face. One MKA junior points out, “The kids who smoke it do bad things, and I think that the illegality of it helps keep their misdeeds from getting out of control.” This junior continues on an anti-legalization point: even those who do smoke marijuana, the student says, “don’t want to get caught doing it, so they’re more cautious about doing dumb things after using it. The less they think about their actions smoking it, the less they’ll think about what they do after smoking it, and I think that that could lead to some really bad things.” The fear of getting caught and arrested makes rebellious smokers more careful of their actions and less likely to put themselves and others at risk.

Marijuana is not a minor societal problem that should be ignored, but rather the exact opposite. Let this be a call to arms for us, as students especially, to start fighting this. As public opinion slowly shifts due to a lack of understanding of marijuana’s dangers, the United States is slowly losing their awareness of this issue. With enough work, we can end marijuana’s attack on America’s youth and make our world a safer place.

New Medical Marijuana Clinic in Montclair

Madison Rivlin ’15
Staff Writer

The Greenleaf Compassion Center may soon be one of the first six nonprofit designated medical marijuana dispensaries in New Jersey — that is, if the state grants final approval. Montclair officials have already given the okay to Greenleaf.

If it receives final approval from the state, Greenleaf will be located at 395 Bloomfield Avenue, across from the Wellmont Theatre. This is the spot previously occupied by The Inner Eye, a dispenser of tobacco and rolling papers. Greenleaf will consist of a waiting room in the front and a dispensary in the back. Eating and drinking will not be allowed. Smoking marijuana will also not be allowed on facility grounds. Patients will only be allowed to smoke in their own homes.

Greenleaf president Joseph Stevens, vice-president Jordan Matthews, and partner Julio Valentin (formerly a narcotics police officer of Newark), could not have come this far without former Governor John Corzine’s legalization of medicinal marijuana back in January 2010. Corzine signed the bill on his last full day in office before current Governor Chris Christie was sworn in.

Stevens says he only needs four months to start a crop at an undisclosed location, but cannot start planting until gaining the consent of the Department of Health and Senior Services. Stevens expects to service about 1000 patients, each visiting three times per month, receiving two ounces per month. This would amount to 36,000 transactions per annum.

To receive the marijuana, patients would need to obtain a recommendation from a state-registered doctor, apply for and obtain a state-issued permission card, and then show that card at each dispensary visit. Only people with certain conditions will be allowed to obtain the marijuana. Identification will be meticulously checked against state records, and state and local police will monitor surveillance cameras at the dispensary. There would also be restrictions on how the marijuana is consumed, with all laws pertaining to marijuana use still applying to patients smoking marijuana outside of their homes.

Pro-Legalization

Will Dudek ’13
Issue Contributor

When discussing the legalization of marijuana, it’s not only important to consider the drug’s potential effects on the individual and society, but also to consider our country’s current standards for legal recreational drugs, and how marijuana fits in.

The two most popular legal recreational drugs used in the U.S. today are alcohol and tobacco, which are consumed regularly by an estimated 70% and 23% of the U.S. population over the age of 12, respectively. Alcohol is proven to cause brain and liver damage, and tobacco is proven to cause cancers in the lungs, throat, and mouth. And while previous studies of marijuana have reported finding brain damage among its users, recent studies have failed to discover any damaging long-term effects. In fact, the largest study ever conducted on marijuana users was published this past Tuesday in the Journal of the American Medical Association. This study, involving over 5,000 men who have smoked marijuana about once a day for about 7 years, concluded that smoking marijuana has no negative effect on lung capacity or function.

I find it shocking that our government has the audacity to list marijuana as a Schedule 1 drug, which states that the drug has high potential for abuse, and no medical value, despite the fact that the drug is an accepted form of medicinal use in 16 states and Washington, D.C.

Interestingly enough, while marijuana remains on a government list of the most dangerous drugs, it has no physically addictive properties. The short-term effects of marijuana include senses of relaxation and euphoria, and a distorted perception of reality. But when used in moderation, marijuana simply puts its users at ease, and allows them to relax and unwind, much like a glass of wine, for example. Obviously, people should be careful not to abuse the substance and depend on it for happiness. Marijuana can be used as a safe and responsible way to enjoy oneself, and I think that considering the low health risks of the drug when compared to other legal drugs like alcohol and tobacco, our government shouldn’t spend so much time and money trying to keep it out of our hands.

Every year, our government spends over 40 billion dollars in its attempts keep pot illegal and house prisoners arrested for simple possession charges. Our government could, through legalization and taxation, both save and generate billions of dollars that could be used to improve our education system, and generate jobs, among many other things. Another thing to consider is that our tax money is being wasted to keep marijuana illegal, and we are the ones paying the salaries of Mexican drug lords and American gang leaders. If marijuana were legalized and taxed, the illegal growing, trafficking, and sale of the drug would virtually disappear.

Marijuana’s negative effects are minimal, and it’s legalization would both save and billions of dollars and thousands of lives. I think it’s time for our generation to assume responsibility for our nation’s foolish actions and seize the opportunity that is the legalization of marijuana.
Emeka Leads the People: Column #3

I’m looking for the perfect (Valentine’s, holiday, birthday) gift for my boyfriend. Any suggestions? -Diana

Luckily, I have no idea who your boyfriend might be, Diana, so I can answer this question nice and impartially. I once got a set of clip-on ties as a gift, and I was ecstatic. Why? Because I had no idea how to tie ties, but was still able to look spiffy like my dad. That gift was basically a gateway to bigger and better things and a new, improved Emeka. Obviously you shouldn’t get your boyfriend — whose identity I don’t know — clip-on ties, but my point is that you should consider his interests. What is his primary interest, and in what way is he looking to expand on that interest? If you consider those two simple questions, which I assume you know the answers to, you’ll have no trouble getting him the perfect gift. No gift cards.

I’m going off to college next year and quite frankly I’m worried about living with a total stranger. What should I do to get to know him better, or at least give a good first impression? -Borges

Well, Borges, you’ve already taken care of about 75% of the workload, which is cutting your unbelievable hair. Without such an attention-grabbing palette on your head, your new roommate will be able to focus on those deep, deep eyes and have something reasonable to talk about. Basically what you have to do is walk in there with your game face on, because it’s game day, and decide the game from the first snap. You tell him who you are, what you will do, and how you’ll do it, in as polite and conservative a fashion as possible. Just because you’ve been in high school and had an easy schedule doesn’t mean you’re soft. You can take care of the college guys with the right mindset. But my best advice, seriously, is not to use Facebook before you actually meet him. DO NOT MEET HIM ON FACEBOOK. You will be predisposed to judging him inaccurately, and will not want to know much more when you meet, so your friendship will already feel jaded when you first shake hands.

My unicorn was stolen yesterday. I am extremely emotionally distraught and am having trouble moving on from this tragic event. If you have any advice for me? -Sophie Vandenbroucke

Frankly, I’m turning this article in about a month late, so your debacle has probably been resolved as of this writing. But I’ll answer it anyway because it’s pretty funny and I might be able to aid any future unicorn trouble. And for all you suckers saying, “Hey, this is a corny joke! There’s no such thing as unicorns!” Activate your ignorant brains and do a quick Google Image search to see that unicorns have been proven to exist.

I know how hard it is to lose something or someone close to you, so I know how you feel. Unicorns are wild, so their theft won’t be able to keep control. That means it’s important to call pest control and tell them that a unicorn is at large and dangerous. That should prompt immediate action, which will help you with initial panic. Next, call your best friend and tell her what has happened, then do the same with your boyfriend. These people, being your closest friends, will definitely rush to help you with your problem. If that doesn’t do the trick, call up a good talk show like Springer or Dr. Phil. Coming on one of these shows and letting the world know about your serious problem should kill all your fears. Finally, just sit down and take a deep breath. You’ll get through it.

Do you think MKA has changed since freshman year? If so, in a good way or a bad way? -Allie

Really, it’s hard to judge, because you are forced to judge through the lens of your own class, and that lens changes dramatically each year. Freshman year, many of us cowered in fear at the 6-foot senior boys, class of 2009, and the insane makeup jobs of some senior girls. The school felt big and intimidating like those seniors. I personally think the next senior class, class of 2010 was filled with a bunch of hard-knock guys, who imprinted that particular quality on the school. Next senior class, class of 2011 brought an abundance of artsy theater-y folk, who laid that on us. But I don’t really know all this, because it’s so hard to judge as a member of this particular class, class of 2012. The current senior class is the most diverse I’ve ever seen here, and we might be putting that on the school, but I can’t tell through that class lens. I do believe that the atmosphere of the school is mostly decided by the seniors.

Emeka Uwakenene ’12
Staff Writer

MKA’s New Rules: Are They Overkill?

As I walked through the locker lounge after track practice last week, rehydrating as necessary, I tripped over a backpack on the floor. In what seemed like slow motion, my water bottle slipped from my grasp and floated gracefully through the air, cap loosely fitted upon the mouthpiece. It flipped and crashed to the ground with a resounding thump. I tried not to look, for fear of the chaos that might ensue—but I worked up my courage and peered cautiously toward the carpet. My worst fears were confirmed: the water had spilled. What had I done?

About twenty minutes later, all evidence of the event had evaporated, leaving behind only a damp trace of the mishap.

While the locker lounge was certainly a mess last year, water was not the issue. Starbucks, Skittles, Mountain Dew and Enzo’s were the problem. Complaints of pretzels ground into the carpet could be heard, but no one complained about non-existent water stains. So why has possession of illegal water become a detention-worthy offense?

Photo by Kristyn Moriseseau

One main issue with the rule of no water in the locker lounge is the vague nature of the mandate. The rule cannot be found in the Handbook. Students are permitted to walk through the halls with a water bottle, but cannot walk with closed water bottles in the locker lounge. I see students stuff water bottles in their pockets to avoid receiving a detention while walking from the main lobby to the Arts Wing. I see teachers give detentions to students for walking with water bottles in the halls, while that is perfectly legal under the outlines of the new law. No one seems to actually understand the decree, including many of the teachers enforcing it. Alex Kelly received a detention for holding a closed water bottle in the locker lounge, from a teacher with a cup of coffee in hand. Kieran Powell has received 4 detentions this year for simply hydrating properly so he could presumably work on his jumper or “get big” in the gym after school. Greg Froelich has run into trouble keeping up his necessary intake of water to counteract the protein and supplements he takes, due to the banishment of his trademark water jug.

The locker lounge is supposed to be a place of comfort, and this year an aura of tension has replaced that ambiance. While I don’t necessarily agree with the fact that we cannot drink anything in the locker lounge, I can understand it. What I cannot understand, however, is why a student cannot hold a sealed water bottle in the area unless they are willing to spend a sunny Tuesday morning in Room 24 for detention. If students agree to carry only clear water bottles in the locker lounge, then there should be no issue. It would be understood that anything besides a plastic bottle filled with clear liquid would be worthy of a detention, and perhaps the carpet would be slightly more sanitary with the occasional shower it would receive from a student spilling a bit of the odorless, colorless liquid. Alas, we shall continue to be detained for taking swigs from our water bottles, unless something is done about the rule. Until that day, dehydration will continue to be as common at the Academy as laptops and designer peacoats, perhaps causing us to lose a sporting event, or worse, a student athlete, due to lack of hydration.
other writers going at it on other cars. Needless to say we didn’t make any contact. We had to climb a barbed-wire fence to get into the so-called “junkyard” we had to climb a fence, but there were some areas with openings. See where this is going? I didn’t notice I sliced my knee open on the wire until my feet hit the ground. Still, we had a job to do, and no amount of blood was going to stop us.

With cans in both hands, Jim and I quickly threw the piece up onto the car, marveled for a few seconds, snapped a poorly lit photo, and hauled ourselves out of there. On the way out we ran into an MTA officer on a night-shift. The second we saw the black silhouettes of Jim and me, we sprinted faster than ever before. Every step I ran, more and more blood squirted out of the gash in my knee, but the last place I wanted to end this night was in a local jail cell with some loser. Although I was the one bleeding profusely, Jim fared much worse. Jim is not a very agile or speedy man, and this MTA officer didn’t have to work too hard to get to him. I kept running until I reached Jim’s car around ten minutes later, only to realize he wasn’t with me. Leaving behind hundreds of dollars’ worth of paint and a captured friend, I went home to tell my mother that my bloody wound was from falling on a rock.

Jim got released the next morning and paid a $6,000 fine. We still do graffiti together on good Tuesday nights.

Mac Miller’s Blue Slide Park Shows Promise

Alex Amari ‘13
Staff Writer

Ever since the nonsensical July announcement, it was hard to tell what kind of album to expect from Mac Miller’s Blue Slide Park. Despite being a little disappointed by one of Mac’s live performances at Governor’s Island last summer, my faith in his mixtapes has never faltered. Mac Miller understands his strengths, and knows how to use them on his usually excellent samples, where he couples above-average flow with generic subject matter over eerily sentimental tracks. The High Life, K.I.D.S, and Best Day Ever each offer something special, and as his first commercial release, Blue Slide Park shouldn’t be any different. Unfortunately, Blue Slide Park is perhaps Mac Miller’s weakest addition yet, and almost certainly won’t propel him into the upper echelons of mainstream hip-hop.

First, let’s consider what Mac got right. Right off the bat, you’ll notice a marginal increase in production value from his mixtapes. To Miller’s credit, the album lacks for the most part any 4-chord sell-out tracks designed solely to appear on the iTunes top 100 lists. In terms of instrumental samples, each track is unique and diverse, although the same can’t be said about Mac’s lyrics.

Blue Slide Park’s objective was to introduce Mac to the commercial mainstream, and he deserves props for taking risks and delivering a less than safe album for this task. But there are several major flaws in Blue Slide Park, which must be addressed by Mac Miller in his future projects. One of his greatest strengths comes through his sentimentality. Throughout K.I.D.S and especially Best Day Ever, the subject matter focuses on a sort of fountain of eternal youth. The overarching message of Best Day Ever tells us to always hold on to the memories of childhood and the lessons of our pasts for guidance – that Best Day Ever is really the product of revisiting our childhoods. Mac had built up to this conclusion from the beginning of The High Life and K.I.D.S, and he nailed it by the end of Best Day Ever. On top of a dope sample, he captured the nostalgic theme of the mixtape so perfectly in “BDE Bonus” that the video for the song (a bonus track on the album) has garnered nearly twelve million hits to date on YouTube.

The greatest weakness of Blue Slide Park is that it’s desperately trying to hold onto this nostalgia, but the product is a rather fragmented album lacking a powerful theme. The name “Blue Slide Park” is a reference to a playground from Mac Miller’s childhood, but the tracks on the album, even the title track, fail to maintain the eternal youth theme, which at this point is becoming a little bit old. By no means should we neglect the album entirely, because several tracks deserve plenty of recognition from Mac’s listeners for revealing new sides of him. On the contrary, Blue Slide Park demonstrates that a new, original Mac Miller is lying dormant somewhere in that kid’s brain – it just hasn’t made a full appearance in his first commercial release, and he’ll be trapped in a limbo between mixtape stardom and mainstream success until he gets another try. But with enough thumbs up and optimism, escape from that place may not be too far off.

Stylus Event Is a New Experience

Zoe Ferguson ‘13
Editor in Chief

Never in my life, save for ShopRite, have I been in a room with so many cereal boxes before. I attended the Stylus Open Mic Night on November 29th. There were Lucky Charms, Reese’s Puffs, Honey Nut Cheerios, Captain Crunch, and I believe Rice Krispies. In addition to the cereal, the Upper School’s artistically inclined brought in chocolate chip cookies, oatmeal raisin cookies, chocolate, and other assorted sweet snacks. Apart from the several boxes of pizazz, it was essentially a giant display of sugary death foods.

The first Stylus event of the 2011-2012 school year was an event for arts appreciation. Students were invited to read or recite any piece they wished, play music, or just come and appreciate the atmosphere.

The attendance at the open mic night was surprisingly good: aside from the editors (Sarah Finn, Devon Geyelin, Will Dudek and this reporter), there was a good group of artsy students. Musical performances by MH Johnson and Will Dudek, Sarah Bradley, and Billy Lennon livened up the slightly awkward atmosphere, especially Sarah Bradley’s acoustic guitar versions of her own original songs. (One of them is still stuck in my head.)

As senior Sophie Vandenbroucke puts it, “The Stylus open mic night opened my eyes to poetry - to a whole new world of words and phrases and ideas I had never once fathomed in my wildest imaginations. However, I do believe that the most inspiring and sensational part of that night was in fact the dizzying array of comestibles that was the cereal bar."

The attendees sat in a circle, around a paper tablecloth on the floor with the word “STYLUS” across it in huge magic-marker letters. Emma Sterling and Sarah Finn, along with others, read poems by authors like Billy Collins from books Finn brought along to the event. Across the circle, Emeka Uwakwamere read selections from his own works of poetry and prose, as did Kelsey O’Connor and myself. The combination of poems written by famous poets and MKA writers fashioned an atmospheric of respectful listening and creative appreciation, as everyone in the circle gave “snaps” after each recital. Sophie Vandenbroucke’s unicorn-printed socks also lent an air of fun and spontaneity to the event.

The overall experience of the fall 2011 Stylus Open Mic Night was a positive one. People who might not normally talk were able to connect in a friendly way over music and art. The night ended with a few rising covers by Billy Lennon and his ensemble of instruments and musicians. The editors and faithful members of Stylus look forward to many such events in the future.
War Horse Captures Hearts
Kelsey O’Connor '14
Staff Writer

In theaters on Christmas Day, War Horse is a touching adaptation of the play currently in New York. Sad, heartfelt, funny, and frequently sappy, War Horse is a family flick. The story follows the adventures of a spunky young colt named Joey through his training, and eventually follows him to the war (WWI). His owner, a boy named Albert, trains him to work on their farm, a task that no one thought they could achieve. Through-out their training Albert and Joey form a strong bond that many don’t understand, and Albert is heartbroken when Joey is sold to the military. Joey finds himself with several different, diverse owners as he travels with the army, each with a unique personality. Among his owners is a French girl who tries to teach him to jump, a compassionate army general, and a shy, but nevertheless courageous, military horse master.

Based on the novel by Michael Morpurgo, War Horse explores the extraordinary relationships between men and between horses. As a horse person, I can attest to the fact that the relationships were believable and accurate, despite a fairly saccharine performance by the humans.

Although it was difficult to see David Thewlis (Harry Potter’s beloved Professor Lupin) as an antagonist, the film was well cast. Jeremy Irvine plays Albert in a first-rate debut film performance. He shows potential for a lasting career, which is already shaping up: Irvine is due to play Pip in the play currently in New York. Sad, heartfelt, funny, and frequently sappy, War Horse is a family flick.

Overall, the film did a great job of showing an unbreakable bond between man and horse. The war scenes were fantastic and one of my favorite parts of the movie, and the writers even managed to throw in some extraordinary relationships between men and between horses. As a horse person, I can attest to the fact that the relationships were believable and accurate, despite a fairly saccharine performance by the humans.

Avicii Blows Minds
Devon Geyelin ’12
Editor in Chief

Avicii’s performance at Pier 94 on New Year’s Eve (or, more accurately, New Year’s morning) was a blur of glitter and synthetic beats. Coming on past midnight after several openers, Avicii revealed in all his precise arm-thrashing, square-jawed glory before a crowd of thousands, all pulsing to the same technologic mandate.

It was less a concert than a full-body experience. My troupe entered with excitement and left with tired legs and dazed expressions. Says Diana Lawson of the night, “I danced my heart out. I couldn’t really give you an accurate play-by-play of what happened, or even a vague play-by-play, but I know it happened.” By the end, I don’t even know if we were dancing or just vaguely swaying to the throb of the crowd, within which one man politely asked, “Am I infringing on your personal space?” Yes, yes you are, but there’s nothing we can do about it.

Avicii plays house music, often remixes of other songs and artists. During the night, he played Levels, one of his most popular tunes, multiple times. His remix of Red Hot Chili Peppers’ Otherside brought a calm groove to the festivities, slowing down the bouncing to a more mellowed pace.

Says Aaron Shrensel, “It was like every problem in my life dis-integrated when a new song came on.” Lauren Martin echoes that sentiment, with, “The Avicii concert was like pure bliss. It was the most perpetual and widespread sense of euphoria that I can ever imagine existing. For six hours, thousands of people were connected by the same incredible beating heart that was Avicii.” It was a good time.

Your January Playlist
Diana Lawson ’12
Issue Contributor

1. “Suck”–Yuck
The lyrics and the guitar make this song. It’s just a beautiful bundle.

2. “For Better, For Worse”–Swear and Shake
This song has some really nice “Ooohh’s in it and it’s reassuring.

3. “Tongue Tied”–Grouplove
Makes me want to dance and jump up while releasing hundreds of colored balloons.

4. “Piledriver Waltz”–Alex Turner
From the Submarine soundtrack, this song makes me swoon and will appeal to your inner romantic teenage girl.

5. “Fences (BoomBass Remix)”–Phoenix
I prefer this to the original song because it’s more upbeat and has some awesome drums at the end that I bob to in my car.

6. “Spokes”–Happy Needs Colour
It’s kind of sad, really beautiful, and I get chills when the singing comes in later in the song.

7. “No Hatred (Mike Russell Remix)”–Casey Abrams
Really nice contrast between the singing and the beats.

8. “Eyes Wide (Fools Gold Remix)”–Local Natives
Another remix I prefer to the original because it’s, like, 100x catcher.

9. “I Follow Rivers”–Lykke Li
This song makes me think of the Underwater tribal song.

10. “Rack City”–The Techno Buffalo
This song has been making the rounds and it is very, very catchy.
What Not To Do: The College Process

Nicole Steinberg ‘12
Issue Contributor

The college process is something that every senior in high school must go through. On top of an already demanding workload, seniors have to deal with applications, supplements, and standardized testing. The process is not easy; hence, the countless books and repetitive websites that try to brainwash you. So instead of offering advice that I’m sure you’ve all heard, I hope I can enlighten you on what not to do in the college process.

DEADLINES. DEADLINES. DEADLINES. I don’t care how many times you’ve heard it, or that you may think you’re on top of them, pay attention to deadlines. Time is a college applicant’s worst enemy. Whether starting a supplement too late, or waiting to hear back from a college, time can be annoying. I don’t recommend starting a supplement a week before it is due. Nor do I recommend working on apps in sections; yes, a ‘dream school’ comes before a safety, but don’t wait until the last minute to work on safety applications, because a hasty app can ruin your chances. Most importantly, double-check your deadlines. They can easily elude, especially if applicants are applying regular decision to multiple schools. I learned the hard way and I almost jeopardized my future. So don’t be like me and make a list of all your schools and their respective deadlines. And do not submit that app on 11:59 on January 1st.

Don’t be boring – take a risk. Colleges don’t care what you write about as long as you show passion and a bit of creativity. I wrote about cats for a supplement.

Write about something you care about and don’t try to anticipate what colleges want to hear because it most likely will turn out dull and unoriginal. And remember, the people reading your apps are smart – they know all the tricks. Take time to write supplements, go somewhere unexpected, and don’t get frustrated if you run out of ideas. Explore your quirks and stay away from that life-changing community service trip you took to Nicaragua over the summer.

Don’t stress. The process is tough but if you start early, it could be fun. Frankly, college essays and supplements are a chance to be vain and unoriginal. And remember, the people reading your apps are smart – they can be annoying. I don’t recommend starting a supplement a week before it is due. Nor do I recommend working on apps in sections; yes, a ‘dream school’ comes before a safety, but don’t wait until the last minute to work on safety applications, because a hasty app can ruin your chances. Most importantly, double-check your deadlines. They can easily elude, especially if applicants are applying regular decision to multiple schools. I learned the hard way and I almost jeopardized my future. So don’t be like me and make a list of all your schools and their respective deadlines. And do not submit that app on 11:59 on January 1st.

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Don’t stress. The process is tough but if you start early, it could be fun. Frankly, college essays and supplements are a chance to be vain and talk about how great you are, so have fun with them. Most importantly, realize that rejection is not the end of the world. Don’t convince yourself that you have no future because you didn’t get into your reach. There are thousands of schools out there, so chances are, there is more than one that’s right for you.

Don’t dread the process. Don’t delay the process. Don’t aggrandize the process.

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Billy’s Diary: A Senior Reflects

Billy Lennon ‘12
Staff Writer

I recently started keeping a diary of notable events in my life. I realized that too many of the great times and memories I’ve made will go untold, unremembered; lost in the endless hustle that tends to consume our daily lives. I love my friends. I love every minute I spend with them, and feel our time should be cherished, especially now as we travel down the lazy river that is Senior Year, swiftly and aptly approaching the unnerving waterfall of college. It’s ready to throw us over the edge and effectively separate us from our closest friends, our life rafts. Sure, we will still keep in touch, and see each other over breaks, but that’s really just shouting through the mist at the bottom of the falls as compared to the communication and availability we’re so accustomed to having now. We have to look forwards towards the horizon, just without losing sight of the beauty of the present. Our time together is dwindling.

College is daunting. We think we’re prepared, armed with a private school education and a firm set of goals. We want to be successful, party a bit, and leave college possessing an even higher level of education and a new set of even further refined goals, though we’re not sure exactly what those goals might end up becoming. We’re certain that we’ll do great things, meet great people, and have a great time. We’re probably right, but we can’t know for sure. We might hate our roommates, might fail out of school. We might do everything perfectly and graduate only to be trapped in a drab, gray cubicle, getting paid less money than some bald, uneducated executive who passes off our hard work as his own. Perhaps we may find that college opens up the world, granting us access to the deepest, previously unexplored trenches of our beings, guiding us to our true callings. We simply don’t know. We have no idea what the future will provide for us.

The only thing that we know for sure is that we all love each other and have the next seven months before us, seven months that I would hate to someday exist only as a hazy, sparsely photographed blur. I want to be 65 years old and know without the slightest doubt exactly what my epiphany with Trevor was on November 13th 2011, or exactly why Franklin laughed so hard he cried some time in June of Senior year, or how I Moss’d Mr. Hu for the game winning score in Frisbee Club on the Friday before Spring Break. Life is just too pleasant to let it slip by unnoticed. I want to someday be able to read these diary entries and be brought back to the beautiful present. Our time together is dwindling.

We simply don’t know. We have no idea what the future will provide for us.

Moss’d Mr. Hu for the game winning score in Frisbee Club on the Friday before Spring Break. Life is just too pleasant to let it slip by unnoticed. I want to someday be able to read these diary entries and be brought back to youth. I don’t want to forget—forgetting would be an insult to the memories we’ve made, tossing them aside with such meaningless recollections as church on a humid summer’s day and the long car rides of our yester-year. I should never forget. It would be to throw away the period of life that laid the foundation for whatever I wind up doing later, the groundwork for who I become and who I am long after these diary entries, these fossilized memories, are written. I cannot allow myself to forget.

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Cartoon #2

David Grillo ’12
Staff Cartoonist
An Interview with Sarah Bradley, NYC Marathon Runner

Danielle Charpentier '13
Staff Writer

Recently, MKA has received the news that Sarah Bradley, senior, completed the New York City Marathon. The following is an interview in which the young runner chronicles her experience.

1. So, Sarah, what inspired you to run the Marathon in the first place?

My biggest inspiration is my father. I cheered him on in 2009 when he participated for the first time, and I felt such a thrill as a bystander. I thought it was incredible that my dad completed it. I could not imagine embarking on such a journey myself. In addition to my dad as an inspiration, the supportive cheers of the spectators and the many helping hands inspired me to run the Marathon.

2. How has running track & field and cross-country prepared you for the Marathon?

Running track and cross-country helped prepare me for the Marathon tremendously. My coaches, Tom Fleming and Alden Basmajian, were very supportive during my training. I knew I was in the right hands, because Coach Basmajian is an experienced marathon runner and Coach Fleming is a 2-time winner of the NYC Marathon. I am very thankful to have such wonderful coaches, and I would not have been able to do it without them.

3. Can you give a description of the race?

The hardest part for me was going to bed the night before. I had a lot going through my head about what could go wrong, and the fact that the race was actually about to happen after months of training and anticipation was an incredible thought.

The beginning of the race was pretty intense because people were anxiously running around me everywhere. But after I ran over the first bridge, it became less claustrophobic and I began to enjoy myself. I gave millions of people high fives, and people who didn’t even know me were cheering for me all over the city (I had my name on my shirt, which helped). In the beginning of the race, it was hard to look ahead and imagine everything I had to accomplish, but once I completed 18 miles and continued to work my way closer to the finish line, I began to have faith in myself that I could finish the 26.2 miles. I completed something that I originally thought was impossible.

4. How has completing the marathon affected your life? Can you apply any lessons that you have learned from completing the marathon to your life?

Completing the New York City Marathon affected my life in a positive way. It was the longest and most extraordinary journey I have ever embarked on. I believe anyone can run a marathon as long as they have the right mindset. Completing the Marathon made me realize that I could push through any obstacle. It’s surreal to know that I finished something that originally seemed impossible.

5. Do you plan to run the New York City Marathon again?

Despite the time commitment it took for me to train for it, I would definitely run it again. Maybe even next year, depending on where I attend college.

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