



HARVARD  
*independent*  
THE STUDENT WEEKLY SINCE 1969

*The  
Holiday  
Issue*

12 Arrow

12

*Issue 32  
Dec. 8th, 2022*



# MASTHEAD

December 8, 2022

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# My Final Editor's Letter: Writing the Words That Matter

BY MARY JULIA KOCH '23

“HAPPY RETIREMENT!” screamed a chorus of voices as I walked into our office on 12 Arrow Street last night. For the first time in my two years serving at the helm of the *Harvard Independent*, I was completely surprised by what my staff had created for me: a surprise “Retirement Party,” featuring the dozens of Indy members who have joined since my tenure. I had planned to spend the next couple of hours writing this very article. Instead, “retirement legend” posters glittered from the walls, handwritten letters crowded the tables, and champagne bottles popped.

If you told me when I walked on campus freshman fall that the next four years would bring me this community of love and talent, this home of an office, and this paper that has become my bible, I would never have believed you.

I sounded quite confident in my first editor's letter from January 2021, proclaiming, “It's a new year. A new semester. A new dawn for our country. And at the *Independent*, a new chapter begins.” In truth, I felt wholly unprepared for the editorial baton handed to me by Marissa Garcia '21. I had never before supervised an article at the Indy or for my high school newspaper — the difference between content and copy editing was foreign to me. I had never before led a storyboard meeting — or any meeting with dozens of people, for that matter.

I asked myself: How can I edit articles to maintain writers' opinions and style without imposing my own? How much work should I take on myself, and how many tasks must I delegate? Will we run out of themed ideas for each issue? Can I earn the respect of our Graduate Board, our staff, and the student body? How can I forge a sense of commitment to this paper when we aren't even publishing on campus, and hardly anyone knows who we are?

But the greatest growth happens at the moments of greatest discomfort. Former president Arsh Dhillon '23 and I were not defeated by the newly virtual nature of our newspaper during the Covid-19 pandemic, but instead saw unlimited potential for its growth. Our mission was to bring to life former Tech Director Michael Kielstra '22's eloquent description of our philosophy — “we belong to no one but ourselves” — a line we adopted as our official motto and printed on the back of every issue. The *Independent* belonged to us now. We could make it our own.

Over the next two years, Arsh and I spearheaded an effort to transform the look and feel of

our paper. We sharpened our reporting to cover aspects of the student experience that are often silenced and overlooked, crafting distinct themed issues (the fall 2021 Welcome Back issue, twenty pages exploding with bright colors and strong prose in the theme of the Roaring Twenties, is our favorite). We implemented high-quality photography and illustrations, completely redesigned our website, and enhanced our social media outreach (check out #indyinthewild on Instagram). We also launched a weekly crossword that we catch professors completing between classes, as well as a newsletter, podcast, and video journalism content. Online readership has hit its highest rates and our masthead has swelled from just a handful of writers when I joined in the fall of 2019 to one bursting with names that Design Editor Piper Tingleaf '24 struggles to fit into each issue.

This semester, the *Independent* sent the only Harvard student inside the Supreme Court to report on the affirmative action case, published provocative op-eds not found in any other campus outlet, and was even cited by the *New York Post*. We also moved from our old home of 2 Garden Street to a new one — beautifully sketched on this issue's cover — fit for our growing community of journalists. The Fall 2022 Comp Class was our largest yet: we onboarded 34 reporters, designers, and business staffers.

But this journey wasn't all purple “Indy-Love” hearts and dazzling issue covers. It was the tens of thousands of words I've read and edited on Google Docs submissions. The weekly Facetimes till 3:59 AM with Arsh or Piper, perfecting font sizes and em-dashes on InDesign before sending that week's issue to our publisher by the 4 AM deadline so it can reach every dining hall by 9 that morning. The two renovations of our offices, the four Graduate Board meetings, and the dozens of Storyboards I've overseen — plus the one misleadingly-named Sex Week promotional party, FuckFest (which, I can assure you, I did not oversee). It was the thousands of issues distributed across campus by hand, the hundreds of articles published, and the 32 issues I had the honor of curating.

Just as much as my tenure has been a lesson in the art of reporting, writing, and editing, it's been a lesson in human psychology. Navigating passionate disagreements, diverse talents, and demanding deadlines — especially for us unpaid student reporters who are also enrolled in four courses, involved in other extracurriculars, and many of whom are planning to become consultants, not journalists, when they graduate — has at times felt impossible. I'm still trying to answer the questions I posed to myself in January 2021, experimenting with how best to create a cohesive community and a culture of creativity that leads to the highest-quality journalism.

But I've learned some secrets along the way, and they should belong to you now, Masthead LIV, as you continue our legacy.



*Learn everyone's names and say them often.*

People will commit most to this paper when they feel recognized and that their work matters.

*Give praise.* Accompany every critique with a compliment, and writers will likely work even harder. Reward rising stars with positions of leadership, and they will likely rise to the responsibilities demanded of them.

*Wine nights are always a good idea.* This one speaks for itself.

*Order pizza.* Whenever you need to incentivize people to come to the office, feed them. Learn from history: several of our Graduate Board members only discovered the Indy because an introductory Comp flyer promised free food.

*Don't switch meetings to Zoom.* Even when it requires trudging through the Cambridge snow, get everyone together, in person. Remember that we weren't afforded this experience for over a year of the pandemic — and make our rent worthwhile.

*Wear your merch.* Prove the rumors correct: the Indy is indeed a cult.

*Be bold.* It's better to fly too close to the sun than never get burned. Remember: we asked Dean Khurana to film a 69-question Q&A video with us and he said *yes*. We theorized sending a writer to the Supreme Court and it *happened*. If you put in the work, you can make the Indy whatever you want it to be.

*Belong only to yourself.* It's easy to feel swayed by cynicism on campus, outnumbered by mainstream opinions, and targeted by Indy snides on SideChat. But this paper is *yours*. While bound by a shared dedication to storytelling, our writers are independent in thought and opinion.

As our President Noah Tavares '24 said at my retirement party, “We write the words. We publish the words. People read the words. And the words matter.” His statement might have garnered a couple of chuckles for its simplistic phrasing, but it rings loud and true. Write the words that matter, own them without shame, and keep doing it, week after week.

Marbella Marlo '24, I'm thrilled to pass the baton to you. I can't wait to see what you accomplish over this next year, and I know I'll one day scream “HAPPY RETIREMENT!” with just as much pride.

MARY JULIA KOCH '23 (MKOCH@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU) IS NOT HAPPY TO RETIRE.





# My First Editor's Letter

PUBLISHED IN JANUARY 2021

BY MARY JULIA KOCH '23

Dear Readers,

The staff of the *Harvard Independent* is proud to present to you our first issue of the new year: “The Transition.”

While thinking about our plans for this issue and this year as a whole, we were reminded of the questions posed by French painter Paul Gauguin, and addressed in an article by our previous President, Jilly Cronin '21:

*Where do we come from? What are we? Where are we going?*

These words capture the enigma of the now — our endeavor to position the *Independent* on a timeline of its past, present, and future.

They also speak to the many transformations we are currently witnessing: on the national level, a political transition, with many Harvard alumni filling the seats of a new administration; on the local landscape, a cultural transition, where Harvard students face a de-densified campus and remote learning for the first time in school history; and, specifically impacting the *Independent*, a transition in its leadership. I'm here — your new Editor-in-Chief — to speak on the behalf of the new Executive Board.

*Where do we come from?* The *Independent* comes from its student protestors of 1969 who sought to break away from the hostile press environment of the time. The *Independent* also comes from the generations of students that followed, who questioned and wrote and drew and printed and did it all over again, week after week, for the past fifty years. We are proud to belong to this history.

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The second ques-

tion is one of the present. *What are we?* Well, we're journalists. We tell stories — short and zippy, long and probing. We interrogate ourselves, each other, and our leaders, at Harvard and beyond. We summon the courage to uncover truths, to illuminate the unknown, and as a result, we shine the spotlight on *who we are*.

Our job is necessary. As it was in 1969, the year 2021 begs for honest dialogue, objective reporting, and keen introspection. This semester in particular demands good journalism: we are physically distanced from many of our classmates. We can't debate each other over trays in the dining hall or serendipitously approach a professor after class. We can, however, carry on the conversation as best we can through published word, bringing us all a little closer together while seizing the journalistic opportunities of the moment.

That brings me to the third question, *Where are we going?*

I think of Amanda Gorman's words at President Biden's inauguration: “We did not feel prepared to be the heirs / of such a terrifying hour / but within it we found the power / to author a new chapter.”

In this issue and future issues, we will continue to derive light from darkness, brilliance from obscurity, and power from a previously blank

page. We will lean into our distinctive edge, the flourish of art and language that links us to the counter-culture in which we were founded.

But this vision is only a fraction of the story. The *Independent* will be defined by a kaleidoscope of voices — our writers, editors, illustrators and photographers; our designers, technicians, and marketers; our committed alumni, whose traditions we inherit; and future Indyites, who will carry on the legacy of our narrative today.

It's a new year. A new semester. A new dawn for our country. And at the *Independent*, a new chapter begins.

Yours,

Mary Julia Koch '23





# Remembering the Victims of the Ürümchi Fire

## THE MARCH AND VIGIL AMPLIFIED UYGHUR VOICES AT HARVARD AND BOSTON

BY AMIYA TIWARI '26

On December 3rd, over 80 people gathered at the steps of Widener Library to remember Uyghur victims and protest the Chinese Communist Party's mistreatment of minority groups in crisis.

On November 24th, 2022, a deadly fire ravaged an apartment block in a primarily Uyghur neighborhood in Ürümchi, the capital of East Turkistan, also known as China's Xinjiang region. After an electrical issue started the fire in the apartment complex, victims — who were almost entirely Uyghur — could not escape because apartment doors were locked from the outside to maintain China's "Zero Covid" protocol.

While official Chinese Communist Party data reports ten deaths and nine injured civilians, actual estimates were reported during the demonstration to be as high as 44 dead.

The Chinese Communist Party's quarantine restrictions in Ürümchi have been particularly severe as yet another system of control over the Uyghurs, one of China's largest minority groups in the East Turkistan region. For over a hundred days, residents of Ürümchi have been prohibited from leaving their homes as part of this policy.

"Before the fire, I was supporting Chinese Covid-19 policies. I sincerely hoped these policies would save lives, but this fire woke me up," said a Chinese international student who spoke under the alias Ruth. "I began to think, [are these measures] protecting or controlling? Are we protecting people's interests or someone else's?"

The recent demonstration united Harvard activists and students from other universities with members of the Boston Uyghur Association (BUA). For fear of subsequent violent repercussions to their families in China, many demonstrators hid their faces. Some attendees — primarily Chinese international students — wore tinted sunglasses, masks, and hoods. Event organizers also offered masks to attendees at the beginning of the event.

Uyghur students Kay, an undergraduate at the College, Esedullah Uygur, a student at the Divinity School, and Munawwar Abdulla, a research assistant in the Department of Human Evolutionary Biology, organized Saturday's protest and subsequent vigil to highlight the Uyghur identities of the Ürümchi victims.

Kay has been involved with protests supporting other causes in the past, but this event was her first time organizing for Uyghur rights. "A lot of protests aren't highlighting the Uyghur genocide or highlighting that Uyghurs are Muslim, or that almost 40 of the people who were killed were Uyghur," Kay said, who has chosen to be represented under an alias for personal safety.

Kay expressed that other events related to this crisis were "completely in Mandarin and played the Chinese national anthem, which is very harmful to [those from] marginalized and occupied territories in China. [The events] might have had a different context

for the Chinese organizers, but it was definitely different for us. After attending these vigils, I decided that Uyghurs at Harvard should try to organize."

The Harvard demonstration began with a march on Widener steps, which weaved through the Old Yard and proceeded into the Square. While marching, organizers Kay and Uygur chanted, "when families burn in their homes, what do we do?" Protesters responded, "stand up, fight back." Additional chants included "step down Xi Jinping," "step down CCP," "close the concentration camps," and "stop Zero Covid."

In China, Uyghurs are barred from practicing the Islamic faith and from learning their native language. Uyghurs are experiencing systematic ethnic cleansing in China through detainment in concentration camps—dubbed "vocational training centers" by the CCP. The mass internment of Uyghurs in such camps is the largest-scale detention of ethnic and religious minorities since World War II.

Uygur read the Surah Fatiha, the first chapter of the Qur'an, and the first page of the Qur'an's 36th chapter, Surah Yaseen. Before paying his respects to the victims, Uygur addressed the crowd, saying, "unfortunately, right now, Uyghurs are having difficulties practicing Islam, so they cannot read Qur'an passages to honor their dead." During the reading, Uygur wore a Doppa, a hat traditionally worn by Uyghurs during special occasions such as funerals.

After the march, demonstrators paid their respects to the victims of the Ürümchi fire. Kay reflected, "it was powerful. Uyghurs dying in China are not getting a proper Islamic burial. Even if [we just read] a page out of the Qur'an, this is probably the closest they can be to their religion."

Abdulla shared a poem with the crowd written in 2017 when the internment of Uyghurs began. Before speaking, Abdulla said, "unfortunately, this poem is still relevant." The piece spoke of the suppression of Uyghur identities, and opened with, "He is 'at risk' if he grows a beard, or if she wears a scarf. If she dresses too modest, if we try to fast. If I own a prayer mat and pray in my home, if I say 'salaam' instead of 'hello.'"

The event concluded with a series of speakers visiting from the greater Boston community. Representatives from Students for a Free Tibet and the Taiwanese organizing community shared their support for their Uyghur peers.

Following these speakers, a member of Northeastern University's Student Coalition of Pro-Uyghur Advocates and Free Uyghur Now encouraged his fellow undergraduates to "hold our institutions accountable for investing in Chinese companies who use Uyghur labor." He shared, "I am an example that you do not have to be Uyghur or Chinese to support this cause. This is a human rights issue, and we all have a stake within it."

A representative from BUA reminded the audience that "Chinese oppression did not start after the Ürümchi fire or the Covid lockdown. It has been going on for years and years." In 2017, the speaker's father was sent to a concentration camp in East Turkistan at the age of 42. She said, "[my father] is now suffering in unknown places because he sent his daughter abroad to study. China has stolen five years of my father's life. My biggest challenge is living in a free world while my father is in a dark cell somewhere unknown."

The speaker concluded by saying, "The Ürümchi tragedy has finally shaken up the world. Global movements like this are historic. With unity, we can stop the genocide and atrocities committed by the Chinese government."

Uygur agreed with the BUA speaker: "We've lost so many people in the past, and these people are forgotten. I hope we'll remember [those who died in the Ürümchi fires]. I don't want to lose more people to



stop this. I hope this will be the end, and I hope their loss will be the beginning of a great start to freeing the people experiencing harshness in the concentration camps today."

The vigil concluded with statements from Han Chinese international students standing in solidarity with Uyghurs. To protect their safety, students shared their thoughts with the audience under aliases.

The first student shared that due to student protests in mainland China against the Ürümchi fires and the harm suffered by Uyghurs, he was inspired to protest individually by standing in Harvard Square holding a blank sheet of paper. In Chinese protests, blank sheets of paper represent what protestors wish they could say but lack the agency to express. This movement has since been dubbed the A4 Revolution, named after the size of the printer paper held in protest.

He said, "during my three hours of protest, a passerby bowed to me. In my life, this has never happened to me. Perhaps that's because I did something right."

Regarding Chinese censorship, Ruth said, "I don't want to have to [cover my face] to say something I think is right. To the Uyghurs, I stand with you."

Kay said that "it was important to have a Han Chinese perspective [at the demonstration] as well, because even though the CCP is repressing all groups, I feel that the Han Chinese have enjoyed much more privileges compared to other groups, and I applaud them for using their privilege to protest."

Reflecting on the event, Abdulla said, "I'm very appreciative of all the new faces [I saw at the demonstration] and how that might mean we'll have more people working on these issues in our community. A lot of the time, we lack manpower in this movement because of censorship and self-censorship. This phenomenon has affected the whole [Uyghur] community psychologically. Seeing new people come to support was really, really moving, and I hope some of them join in on our activism."

Of the over 40 victims, seven were named during the demonstration: Heyrinsahan Abdurahman, who was 48 years old, Sheyide who was 13 years old, Imran who was 11 years old, Abdurahman who was nine years old, Nehdiye who was just five years old, Elzat who was 14 years old, and Gulbahar who was in her 30s.

As Harvard's Uyghur community continues to organize, students can remember the Ürümchi victims through active participation and support using their platform to speak out against global injustice

AMIYA TIWARI'26 (AMIYATIWARI@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU) STANDS IN SOLIDARITY WITH UYGHUR PEOPLE ACROSS THE GLOBE.





# A Retreat from Rankings

## HARVARD LAW SCHOOL'S WITHDRAWAL FROM THE U.S. NEWS & WORLD REPORT WILL HELP IMPROVE LEGAL EDUCATION AT LARGE

BY **MARBELLA MARLO '24**

Just hours after Yale Law School announced its official withdrawal from the U.S. News & World Report's Rankings on November 16th, Harvard Law School followed suit. Yale's decision became a catalyst for an exodus of other prestigious law schools from the annual report, including Stanford, Georgetown, Berkeley, and Columbia.

While I'll admit I appreciate discovering which of the top five spots my higher education institution falls into each year (perhaps subconsciously validating my status as a college student), this superficial sense of superiority ignores and discredits the thousands of students who might have similar, or even more promising, academic qualifications than I do. University rankings falsely order institutions and their students on a system that often fails to consider individual merit, qualifications, or trajectory.

Columbia University's fraudulent data submissions, exposed by Columbia mathematics professor Michael Thaddeus this past summer, pressured the university to withdraw. Thaddeus published a twenty three page release of the findings behind his investigation of Columbia's legitimacy in rankings, revealing discrepancies in reported numbers of class size, faculty with terminal degrees, student-faculty ratios, graduation rates, and other spending data.

While Thaddeus recognized that these rankings provide helpful information, especially for college applicants, in deciding which schools to apply, the ultimate anguish that rankings cause in pitting colleges and universities against each other—grading institutions on often unquantifiable, or highly personalized measures, does not justify their contributions towards universities' credibility. The goal for universities then becomes the ability to achieve, in Thaddeus' words, "a proxy for merit, rather than merit itself."

While Columbia's transgressions do not compare to Harvard's or Yale's sovereign choices to withdraw, all three schools have moved to delegitimize rankings as measures of a school's merit.

Although certain schools offer more opportunities for their students than others, a definitive, numeric ranking system draws lines between qualities that can't really be quantified. Harvard professor and renowned philosopher Michael J. Sandel recognizes that categorizing certain institutions as "prestigious" or not is somewhat arbitrary. "For the top sixty or eighty colleges and universities, the quality of education and academic performance would not be noticeably different," he writes in his book

**FORUM | 6** *Tyranny of Merit.*

Unlike undergraduate institutions, law schools provide a much more streamlined experience, offering courses, programs, and resources to a student body of relative academic homogeneity. This specialized nature of law school, as with most graduate schools, yielded a smaller range of ranking variability, as the number of course offerings and programs between the top schools resemble each other. Since 1990, the annual law school rankings have been more rigid than college rankings, with Yale Law taking the lead for the past thirty years.

"It never really made much sense to me why schools were providing data to a private, for-profit, magazine in a way that enabled the magazine to exert influence on the decisions law schools were making with respect to where they allo-

focus not on incubating student well-being but on climbing the ladder of a singular ranking system.

"Getting rid of the rankings process is going to be really good for the university to be able to enact changes in its admissions process, in its student body, and how it funds certain programs without a concern for dropping in the rankings," said Chloe Kimball, a first-year student at Stanford Law. The school also withdrew its participation in the Report just two days after Harvard and Yale, with an announcement from Stanford Law School Dean Jenny Martinez claiming that the list "distorts incentives in ways that are harmful to legal education as a whole."

"This is going to have a really positive effect on the diversity of the students and diversity of the education provided," Kimball expressed.

"I did not refer to the ranking before applying to law school and it did not bear any relevance to me," said Harvard Law student from Poland Ewa Tokarewi. "My decision to apply to Harvard specifically was rather based on the general prestige and relevance of the school rather than a ranking."

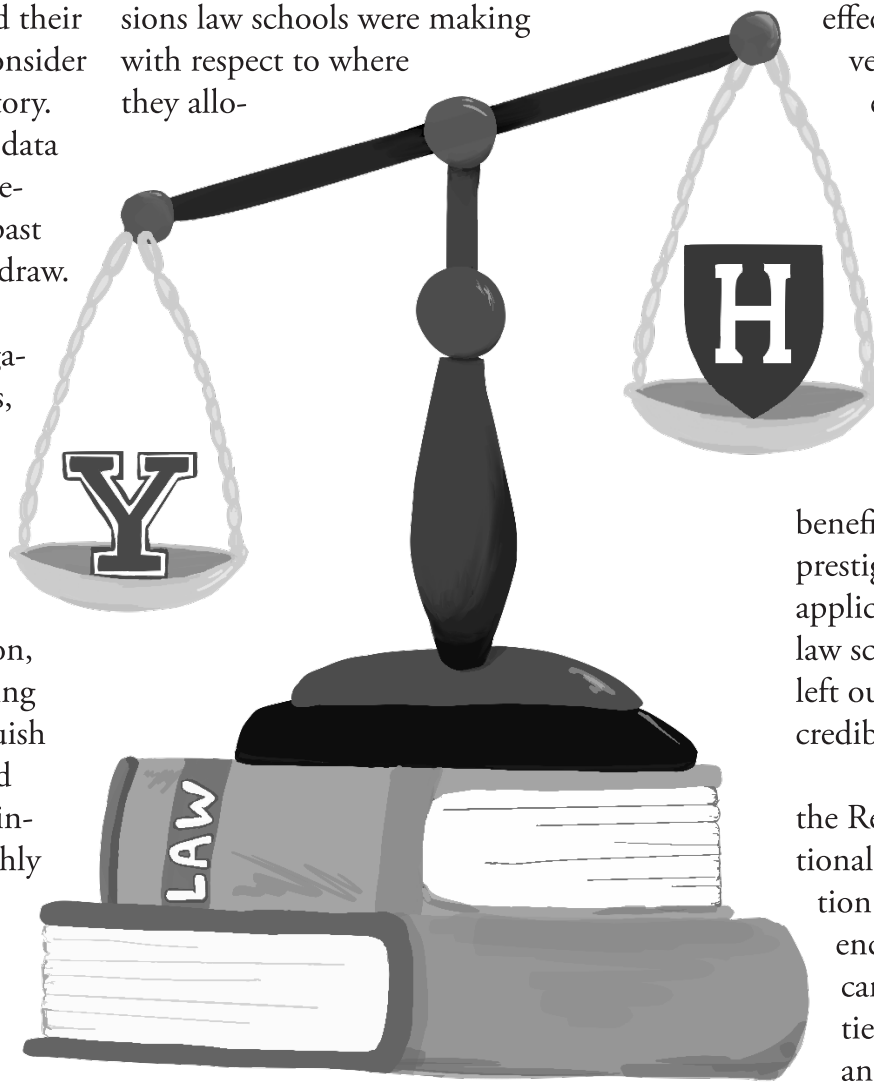
Stanford and Yale, like Harvard, benefit from what Ali refers to as a "historical prestige" that is unaffected by "the number of applications we receive each year." Other top law schools will likely not suffer from being left out of the rankings due to their established credibility around the world.

Even for schools that do not to get into the Report's top 14 or "T-14," earning a national ranking on the list improves the reputation of smaller, lesser-known schools, in effect encouraging more and higher-quality applicants and expanding their career opportunities upon graduation. Prospective students and law firms are more inclined to apply to or hire graduates from those schools.

Yet this arbitrary ranking system—essentially a rat race for law schools to lower their acceptance rates and graduate the most students into high-paying firms—should not hold the level of national or global significance that it currently does. Insofar as we continue to regard only what the U.S. News and World Report deems "prestigious," we will continue to perpetuate the same cycle of glorifying certain schools and shaming others.

**MARBELLA MARLO '24 (MMARLO@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU) IS FRANTICALLY STUDYING FOR THE LSAT.**

**GRAPHIC BY ANNELOISE FISHER '26**





# The Pregame Always Prevails

## AT HARVARD-YALE, UNIVERSITY POLICY WILL NOT STOP STUDENTS FROM FORMING THEIR OWN 'UNOFFICIAL' TAILGATES

BY ANDREW SPIELMANN '25

For the first time in four years, The Game came home to Cambridge on November 19th, sparking anticipation and excitement among Harvard students, alumni, faculty, and family. While students scrambled to make their celebration plans with each other and the large number of visitors, Harvard's failure to announce a viable tailgate proved yet again our obsession with exclusivity—and subsequent difficulty to celebrate.

While the weekend was ultimately a success, the Harvard Dean of Students Office was no help in providing or hosting a platform to preserve The Game's historical holiday.

Yet again, the 2022 Harvard-Yale Game perpetuated the preference for the annual Game to be hosted in New Haven. Students remembered last year's Game at Yale more fondly, although this could perhaps be attributed to the adventure that comes with traveling to Connecticut.

Elisha Thornton '25, a Harvard sophomore, put it succinctly: "If Harvard-Yale at Yale was like a crisp hundred dollar bill, then Harvard-Yale at Harvard was like a crumpled up ten you found in your pocket."

This year, first-years were eager to experience their first

Harvard-Yale, while sophomores, juniors and seniors hoped this would beat their adventures to New Haven last year or in 2019. Among undergraduates, only super-seniors, those who have taken time off since their freshman year, remembered a Harvard-Yale hosted here in Cambridge. Even non-Harvard affiliates who simply sought to spectate the football rivalry and its festivities were in attendance, cheering on either side in Harvard's ultimate loss.

The weekend festivities typically begin on Friday, the day before the game. Yale students arrived in full force in the afternoon, finding Harvard friends or tagging along to any Harvard student that could host them in dorms. Many students settled for a piece of common room floor.

The largest parties Friday night were off-campus, hosted by student social clubs at venues in Boston. While most attendees reported having a good time, the reality was that tickets sold out early on, or many students refused to pay the spiked up prices from second-hand sources. While plenty of opportunities to celebrate ended up crystallizing on campus, some students were greatly disappointed to not be able to participate in these club events, while Yale students were surprised and frustrated by this subsequent exclusivity.

The University did nothing to aid social inclusivity: house officials announced they would not approve events in common spaces or even in suites. Alternatively, Harvard proposed the hosting of an "Official Tailgate" to be the only tailgate allowed on Harvard property. Entry would be restricted to only Harvard and Yale students, with those of age getting a pass for three drinks. This was poor planning.

With the bulk of undergraduates under 21 but certainly expecting to drink, as well as countless

non Harvard or Yale affiliates, the Official Tailgate did not seem like a viable option. It failed to provide a space for students to drink safely, instead encouraging students to be more covert, and therefore more able to get in trouble by non-Harvard authorities.

Jude Herwitz '25 explained "until they are willing to accept the fact that students will drink, and then try to construct a social scene accordingly, we are never going to be able to look to the administration for support."

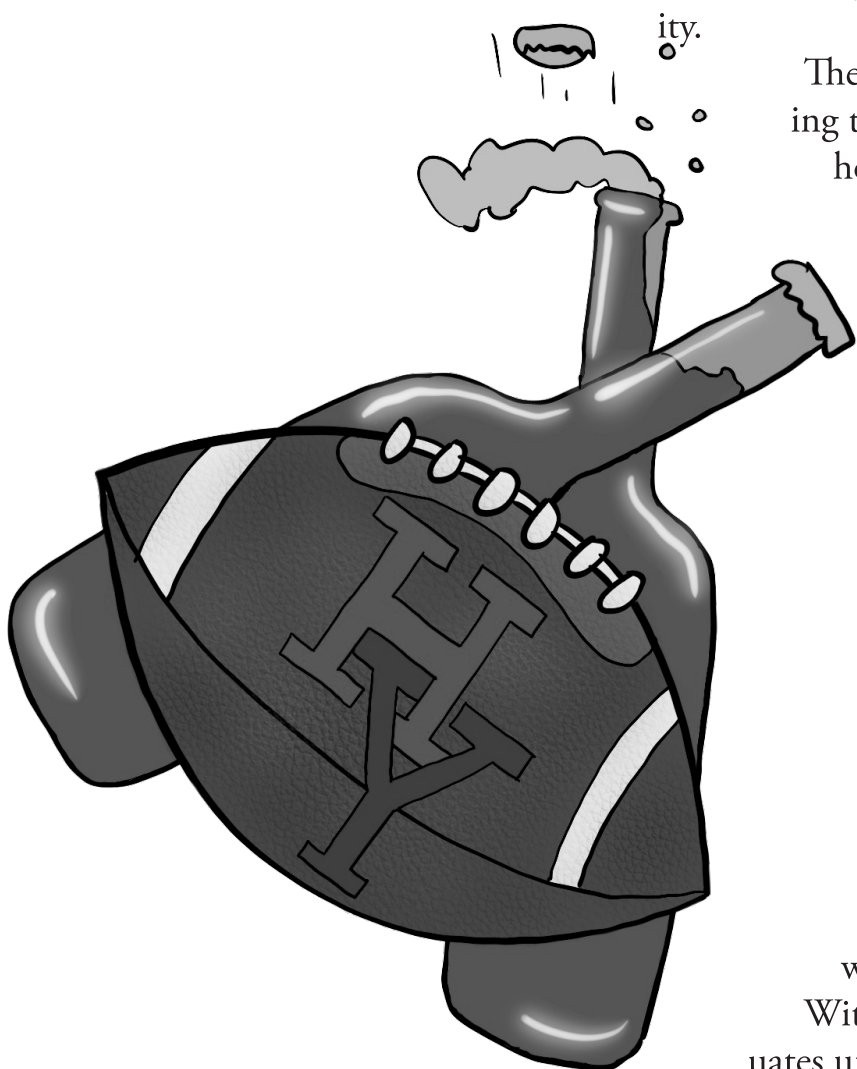
Students were always going to find a way to party. They set up a tailgate in a field south of the river, before being shuffled along by police twice on Saturday morning. Speakers, drinks, and entire tents were carried to the riverbank in front of Winthrop House and eventually to the MAC lawn, where they remained until the Game was well underway. In comparison with the previous night's elusive ticketed parties, this was a very open, collective celebration. "Harvard-Yale showed the best that the social scene can be at Harvard, and felt like the most inclusive it's been during my time here. Everyone was all together, everyone was outside, and it was a beautiful thing," Herwitz continued.

While the Game itself had the potential to top off the weekend beautifully, Harvard instead suffered a 14-19 defeat to Yale. Our football team fought hard, keeping the scoreline close, but we will have to wait another two years to see a home victory.

As the exhaustion from 24 hours of excitement kicked in, students headed to bed for the evening. I personally enjoyed the loveliest nap of my life between 4 and 9pm, before making the tough decision to go out once more on Saturday night rather than do my CS test.

ANDREW SPIELMANN '25 (ANDREW.SPIELMANN@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU) DISLIKES AMERICAN FOOTBALL.

GRAPHIC BY DAVID LI '25





# The Holiday Markets You Must Visit This Month

LOOKING FOR A PLACE TO GO WITH FRIENDS OR A SPOT TO BUY HOLIDAY GIFTS FOR YOUR LOVED ONES? THIS ARTICLE HAS GOT YOU COVERED

BY LAYLA CHAARAOUI '26

With the winter season comes everything festive, from music and food to decorations and lights. Ringing in the cold months ahead, holiday markets in Cambridge and Boston allow local businesses to sell their products and shoppers to come together in holiday spirit. Explore the festivities on display and the talented entrepreneurs behind them at the best local markets this season.

## Cambridge Arts' Holiday Market

The Cambridge Arts' Holiday Market, located right in the Smith Campus Center in Harvard Square, features a variety of art vendors selling hand crafted artwork, jewelry, clothing, and more. Featuring live music and a large selection of local vendors, the market will run from December 8 to December 10, from 11 AM to 6 PM each day.

The Market was home to all sorts of business owners selling their products, from artwork to accessories to calendars. Rakel Papke Seixes's festive stand showcased various Christmas gifts, tote bags, and humorous drawstring backpacks from her business "By Papke."



Across the room, Laura Quincy Jones was selling greeting cards with watercolor and ink illustrations that she designs. Jones, whose business is named after herself, has participated with the Cambridge Arts Council in open studios for almost twenty years. One of her favorite parts of the Market is meeting people who are interested in art. "Of course, it is important to support your work, but it is really nice to communicate with buyers," she said.



Daisy Hebb from Green Blossom Painting, who joined the Cambridge Arts' Market last year, echoed also likes selling at fairs because of the interpersonal interactions. She sells calendars which celebrate nature, and she said she loves speaking to people about their relationships with nature at the market. But the engagement with people extends beyond the selling stage. "These calendars are collaborations between myself, the artist, and scientists, like native bee specialists, a professor of entomology, and an herbalist specialist," Hebb shared.



Lloyd Williams of Boston Custom Cards, sells acrylics on canvas, along with holiday notecards. He said conversations with shoppers at markets help guide him on what kind of products people are interested in. "I do a lot of landscapes and cityscapes of Boston, so I figured out that people in Boston like a lot of Boston-related artwork," Williams explained. The Cambridge Arts' Market was just one of a few holiday shows he attends every year. Find him on Instagram @varsudan999.



## Snowport

Nestled in Boston's Seaport neighborhood, Snowport features over 120 local small businesses, food, a tree market, and other essentials. In its second year, this widely popular holiday market transforms Seaport into the perfect destination for holiday shopping or a photo-op.

Simply Placed, owned by Sydney Ortega and located in Beverley, Massachusetts, specializes in home decor, and sells Christmas decorations at the market. "This is our first time here in Boston," Nancy Foster explained, an employee of Simply Placed. Foster said the holiday market gives Simply Placed good exposure, considering they also sell online, allowing them to expand their customer base. "All of our business cards are gone. People are always asking about us."



Katie Gogishvili, who sells handmade jewelry in her company MOTTIVE inc., also appreciated the opportunity to gain exposure for her business. She explained she wanted to sell at Snowport because it allows for small businesses such as hers to get attention and recognition. "This is a perfect place for people to find me. Everyday, there are new people who I get to know, and they get to know my brand." Markets like this help businesses grow, Katie said. "It is important to keep my jewelry in the community."





While some business owners only had one stand, others ran multiple. The Happy Cactus is just one of several businesses that owner Tucker Gaccione has at Snowport. Donald, an employee at The Happy Cactus, explained they specialize in gift items, such as 1000-piece vintage puzzle sets and butterflies that were sourced ethically from Peru and other South American countries. “The items are beautiful,” Donald said. He said the appeal of markets like this are the foot traffic, explaining he loves seeing customers reacting to the items on sale. . “There’s nothing else that could put a smile on my face. We could do online sales, but we lose that people-aspect.”



Yamacu Gift Shop sells African-based products, such as spices, teas, shea butter, snacks, and more. Khalifa, who works for his aunt, explained that his aunt wanted to sell at Snowport due to its popularity. “There are a lot of people [who go to Snowport], so it is a great way to make money.” Khalifa explained that these markets help Yamacu grow, and though it is a lot of work, “being at this kind of market gives exposure, allowing more people to see and try your business. In the long-run, it is good for the business.”



## Boston Women’s Holiday Market, Brighton

The Boston Women’s Market, co-founded by owners Cara & Africa, is a market made to help support women-owned businesses. The Holiday Market, which runs at a variety of locations on various days, from The Speedway in Brighton and The Station on Boylston Street, features local women-owned businesses selling jewelry, pastries, art, clothing, and more.

Rachel Kashdan sells cupcakes, gingerbread kits, and hand-designed cards in her business “batter+bloom.” Kashdan spoke positively of the Boston Women’s Market. “The organizers, Cara, and Africa, are great to work with,” Kashdan stated. “Everyone who sells at the markets are really creative and great people to be around, especially during the holidays.” Kashdan has a lot of fun getting to interact with the community through selling at the market, getting to know people she hasn’t met before, and seeing them enjoy her work, as she is “proud of what she makes.”



Willis & Bell sells handmade clothing and other handmade items. “It would be a great burge of different types of people getting to see all of my items,” Amy, the owner of Willis & Bell said, when asked why she wanted to sell at the market.



Dani, the owner of Best Friend Supplies co., sells dog accessories, including bandanas, bows, and leash sleeves, an “advocacy tool that helps owners advocate for the space for their dog. Dani wanted to sell at the Boston Women’s Market because of the people. “We have a really nice community here. Sometimes as small-business owners, you feel isolated in the way you are alone and making everything,” Dani said. “When you come here, you are amongst a lot of other women who get it. You feel supported, and the markets themselves are very uplifting spaces where you can meet a lot of new people.”



Julia of Celia Jane Designs, named after her daughter, makes handmade jewelry. Julia agreed that the Boston Women’s Market offers a supportive environment for sellers. “This is my third one. [The owners] are great about creating an unique environment for shoppers,” she said. “I am in some stores around the area, but this is the best way to meet and see people.”



**LAYLA CHAARAOUI '26 (LAYLACHAARAOUI@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU) WILL CONTINUE TO VISIT HOLIDAY MARKETS THIS DECEMBER IN AN ATTEMPT TO GET A BREAK FROM FINALS.**



# Winter Wishes

## THE HARVARD INDEPENDENT'S HOLIDAY HOPES

BY MADDY TUNNELL '26

As both the year and the semester draw to a close, it is time to reflect on the events of the past months and profess our hopes for the next. We present to you the Indy's holiday season recap, featuring our staff's hopes and dreams for our Harvard experiences that hopefully Santa Bacow can fulfill.

*All the Indy wants for Christmas is...*

Hot breakfast in all the dining halls. Toasty treats in the morning do sound festive. We have been missing hot breakfast since the FAS budget cut of 2009, but the largest university endowment in the world should be able to buy us some pancakes.

Better tailgates. Our rivalry with Yale is about more than The Game itself: not only must our grades, athletics, and community surpass those of the bulldogs, but our tailgates must as well. They should at least be less mobile than the one this past H-Y, which was shut down in two different locations before succeeding on the Mac Lawn.

No more 9 am classes. A communally felt plea.

No more turkeys in the Yard. We missed our chance over Thanksgiving Break to push out this species protected by Massachusetts law.

Free laundry services. The piles of dirty clothing cluttering our 4 x 6 dorm rooms demand it.

Some spirited decorations for the John Harvard statue. The tourists would love some decor for their selfies.

A renovation of the Science Center bathroom. Could we add the Lamont Library restrooms to this request?

While the Harvard community always strives for greatness, some aspects of the student experience that reflect quite the opposite. From students playing with fire in risky situations to local businesses erupting in scandals, those who've participated in the following "naughty" acts should expect a lump of coal in their stalkings this year.

### The Naughty List

Watching Primal Scream. On the final night of Reading Week every year, the tourists have something other than John Harvard's foot to catch their eye. The spectacle should be one to participate in, not watch from lawn chairs in the Yard!

The closure of Darwin's Ltd. The owners cited health and workload concerns for their decision to shut down all four locations of students' favorite coffee chain in Cambridge. Everyone must mourn the loss of their choice sandwich.

The Sackler Building. See Marbella and Manny's debate over whether this one is naughty or nice.

Dining halls with mice. "Not a creature was stirring, not even a mouse" unfortunately does not ring true in the Harvard dhalls.

Sex in the stacks. A romantic holiday ambiance for your literary and other needs. Given little time to spare during finals season, our studious community appreciates the collision of work and pleasure without ever having to leave the library.

Even though being naughty may be more fun, there will always be those who choose kindness during the holiday season.

### The Nice List

Running in Primal Scream. Run for your mother and freeze your chestnuts off! Participating in this long-standing tradition will make all of Santa's elves proud.

The brave souls caring eliciting speakers to the eliciting tailgate. To you we bestow sainthood of the highest honor.

Life Alive's acai bowls and lemon, ginger, and honey tea. The perfect treats for any season.

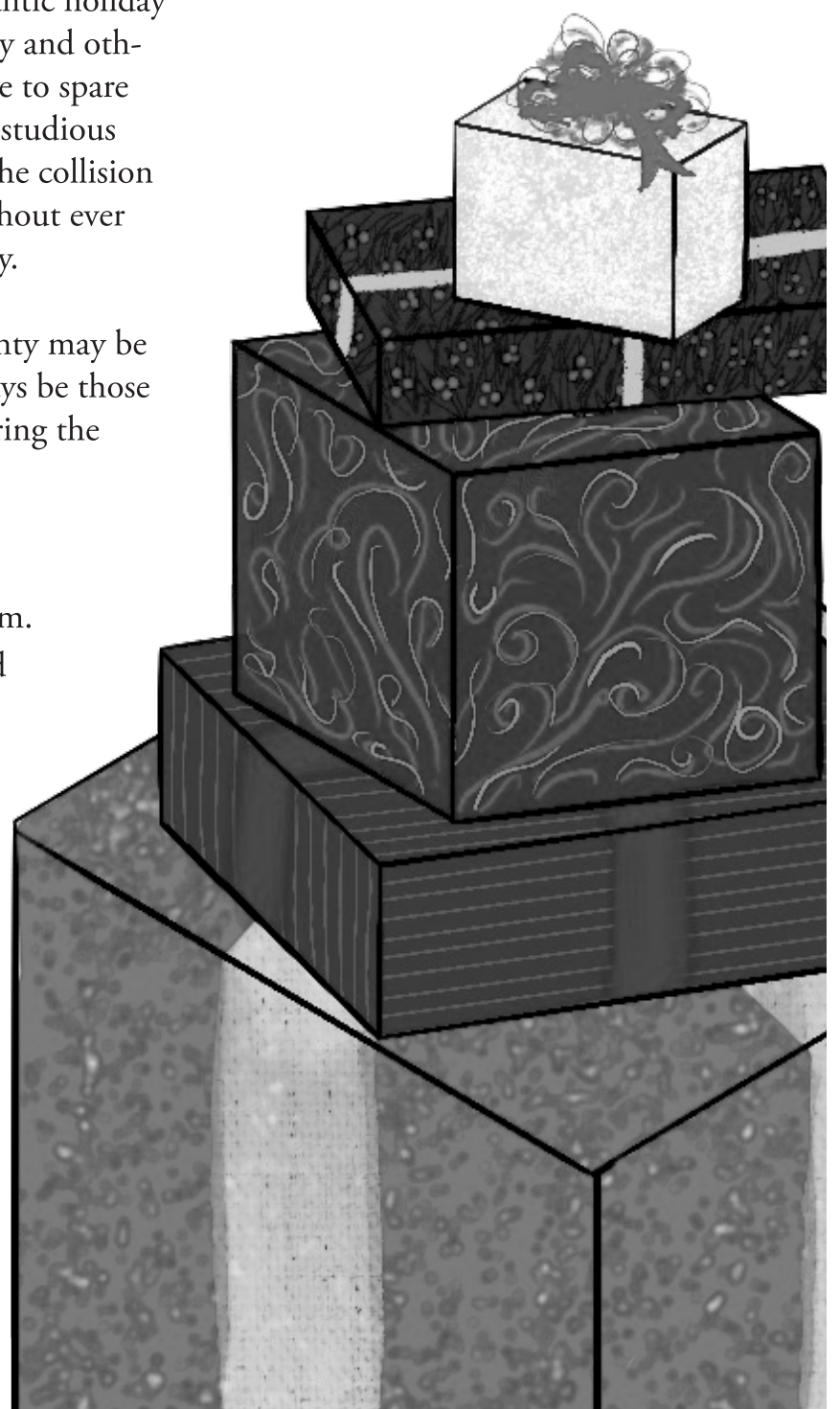
HUDS eggnog. We wish this dining hall delicacy existed year-round.

Sex in the stacks. Counting as both naughty *and* nice, this risky move is bound to fill your stomach with butterflies in the best way.

With the new year afoot, we look forward to pursuing the many opportunities Harvard has to offer when we return to campus. More important than what we deem naughty and nice what we wish for, we have a community to fall back on for support. This holiday season, all of us at the Indy wish you many good meals, many good times, and an excellent winter break. See you in 2022!

MADDY TUNNELL '26 (MADDY-TUNNELL@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU) IS STILL TRYING TO DETERMINE IF SEX IN THE STACKS IS NAUGHTY OR NICE.

GRAPHIC BY CANDACE GARDNER '25





# Stop Pretending You Don't Care About My Spotify Wrapped

## SPOTIFY WRAPPED ISN'T WHAT IT SEEMS

BY MATT SAKIYAMA '25

It's that time of year again: Spotify Wrapped has come and gone, signaling the end of 2022. Generated by Spotify every year since 2016, these colorful slides took Instagram feeds by storm last week, showcasing users' personalized Spotify statistics from the past year, from their total minutes of listening to their favorite genres.

But what gives Spotify Wrapped a coveted spot among holiday staples? What makes it such a viral phenomenon every year? And why do you pretend you don't care about my Spotify Wrapped?

Some enjoy Spotify Wrapped as a way to reflect on how their music taste evolved over the course of the year. "You can see how new releases and your own classics have changed your listening habits," said Nick Lopez '25.

Others like to see their listening habits represented visually, through succinct compilations of their top artists, songs, and genres. "As someone who listens to many types of music, it is interesting seeing how they compare in an easily digestible way," said Elliot Chin '25.

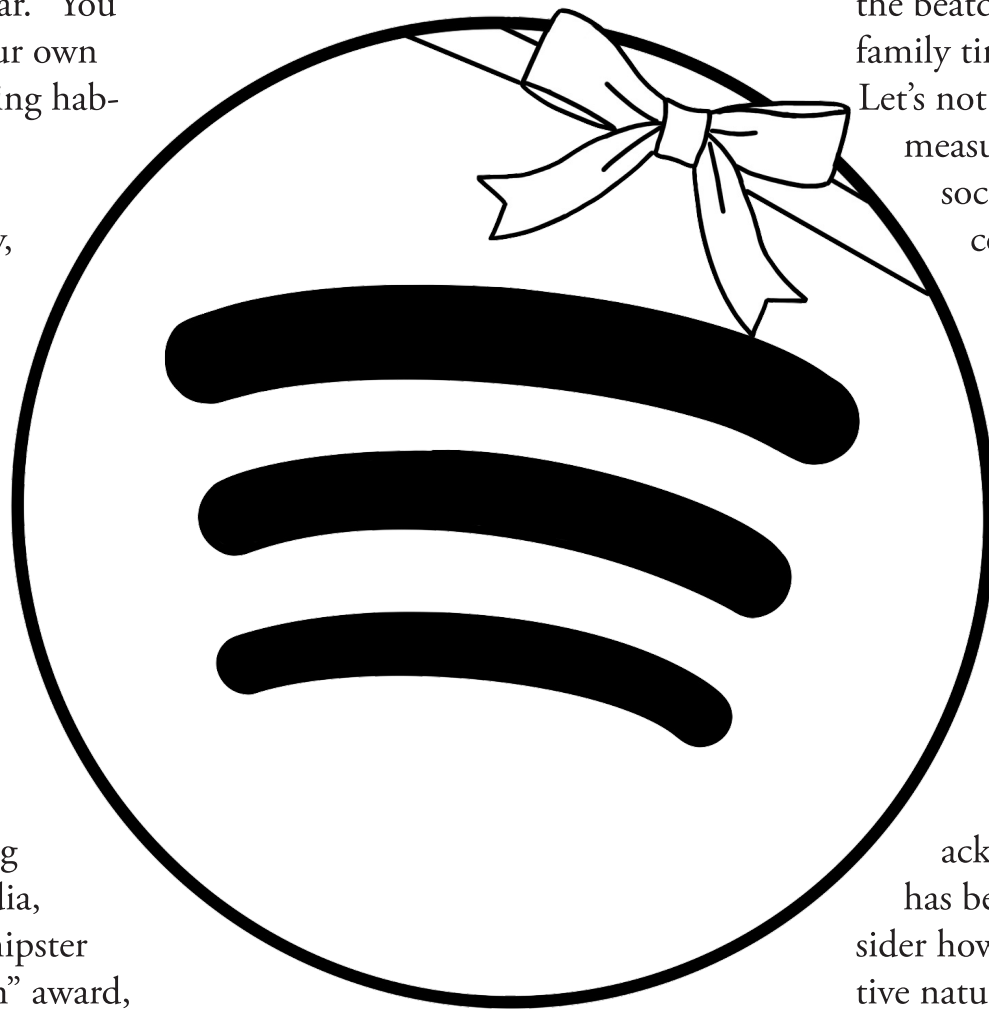
But the real answer to the question of why Spotify Wrapped is so popular is that it has turned into a competition—and people like to win. In posting your listening data on social media, you're competing for the "most hipster taste" award, "biggest Mitski stan" award, or "listening to podcasts makes me special" award. Whether you realize it or not, your Spotify Wrapped lets everyone know you did Spotify better than them.

And there's nothing wrong with that. By all means, let everyone know you were in the top 0.05% of Mitski listeners this year, or that you spent 6½ hours a day listening to music. But there is something wrong with pretending you don't care about anybody else's Spotify Wrapped. If you care enough to post your Spotify statistics, to put in your entry for one of those awards, you care enough to scope out your competition. If you're playing to win, you're making absolutely

sure that you win.

It's the same type of competitiveness that makes people grill you when you say you're a fan of Metallica: "Oh yeah? Name 5 Metallica songs." It's the same type of competitiveness that makes you want to be the one to show your friend drill music. There's a sense of pride that comes with saying, "I'm a real Metallica fan," or "I showed you drill."

You also gain some legitimacy when you "win" at music. It's like anything else in life: if you demonstrate your expertise in something, people will respect your opinion on that topic. If you're listening to more music than everyone else,



and you can prove it (maybe by posting your Spotify Wrapped), people will respect your takes on music.

"People listen in general because they want their minutes to be higher than others, all for social clout that doesn't actually exist, but exists to those they try to get clout from," said Brent Smith '25. But social clout is like money: it only exists if people assign value to it. In this case, musical social clout has been assigned value as a measure of one's musical expertise. And if you're trying to prove your legitimacy as a connoisseur of music, chances are you're combing through every Spotify Wrapped

you see on Instagram to see if anyone has more music cred than you.

On the other hand, posting your music stats can create a sense of community. Discovering that your classmate also listens to Mitski might provoke conversation, or at least some sort of unspoken bond—not competition. My top genre this year was hyperpop, so if I someone else has a hyperpop song in their top tracks, I know how to start our next conversation. But I still can't deny that I hope I know more about hyperpop than they do.

In the end, Spotify Wrapped is just a way for us to get in one last win before the beatdown of finals and the grueling family time spent during winter break. Let's not pretend it's anything other than measuring the musical tastes of your social circle against your own and convincing yourself of your superiority. This makes sense, given that many of the students who end up at Harvard are of the hyper-competitive variety. It's about being able to describe yourself using the words "first," "best," and "most." It's about making sure no one else knows music better than you do, and making sure you get your respect.

But at the same time that we acknowledge what Spotify Wrapped has become, let's each take time to consider how we can phase out the competitive nature of sharing our musical interests and do just that—*share*. Music shouldn't be treated as territory to be fought over; it is art to be appreciated and build community.

**MATT SAKIYAMA '25 (MSAKIYAMA@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU) IS LISTENING TO BETTER MUSIC THAN YOU.**

**GRAPHIC BY REEVE SYKES '26**



# Out of Order and Slightly Out of It

DOMINIC FIKE'S PERFORMANCE AT THE HOUSE OF BLUES ON DECEMBER 3RD BROUGHT ALL SORTS OF SURPRISES TO THE AUDIENCE

BY GAURI SOOD '26

As the lights flared at Boston's cozy House of Blues, out of the fog came Dominic Fike—swaying slightly, but very enthusiastic about the performance that was about to begin. “What’s up Boston? I’m wearing green pants right now. Let’s fucking go!” This somewhat unconventional start opened a concert packed with comical statements, crowd pleasing favorites, and promising new music.

Fike's *Out of Order Tour* setlist did not follow a new album as most tours do. Instead, most of the setlist featured old songs. Fan favorites such as *Babydoll*, *Why*, *3 Nights*, and *She Wants My Money* were interspersed with slightly lesser known songs, causing the audience to never tire.

Indeed, the energy in the crowd was thrumming no matter what the singer sang or said—and he said many interesting things.

Between songs, his commentary riffed on musicians in the band, and on his own personal drama offstage. Fike's relationship with Hunter Schafer, his co-star in the Emmy Award-winning series *Euphoria*, has been in the spotlight since rumors of their relationship first emerged in January. Fike suppressed rumors of a breakup by referencing his “wife” who came with him on tour. “We’ve gotten a lot closer, if you know what I mean,” he said boldly, to the



audience's laughter.

Of course, the centerpiece of the show was the live performance. Despite his exclamation after one song that “I was using autotune for that entire song,” Fike's natural live voice rivaled his recorded hits. Surprise guitar riffs and unexpected harmonies glittered his performance, as did one soft moment on piano in *Rollerblades*. The romantic, reflective ballad about young, fleeting love was a high point of the show, as the audience energy shifted around the lyrics: “When I loved your body from your shoulder blades to your rollerblades / And you taught me how to leave the everythings in the moment... When you love somebody but you know it's only for a moment 'cause / There's so many different dimensions but you're the only one.”

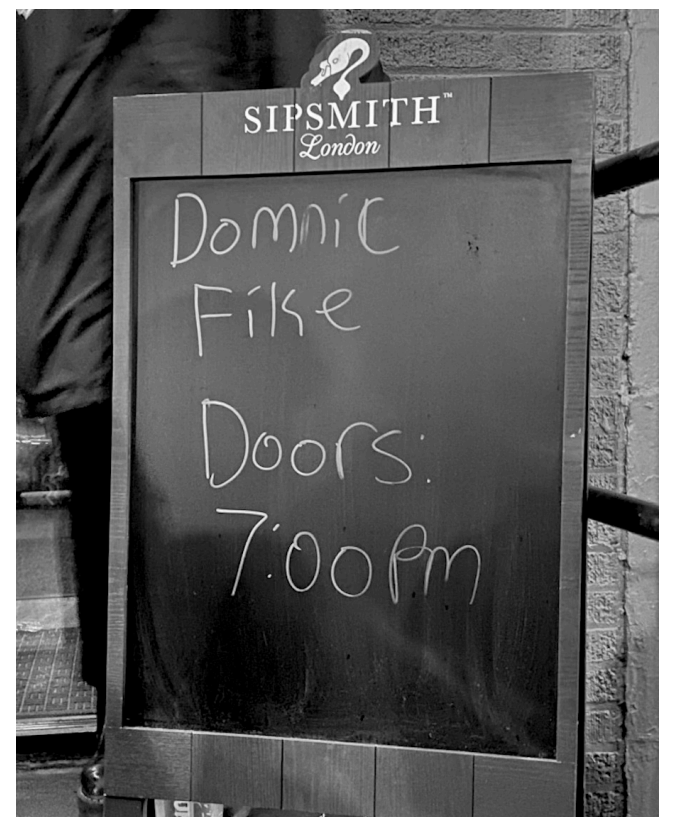
A second tender spotlight on Fike at the piano came later in the show, when he introduced a new unreleased song called *Think Fast*. Here, Fike's music talent shone brightly, not only through his piano skills but with an unanticipated spotlight on his falsetto, a contrast to his well-known and well-loved rasp. In that moment, everyone in the audience fell in love.

Fike incorporated all kinds of musical surprises. His openers, a space rock band called BAIRD, slightly shocked the alternative indie audience in their opening act, sporting dinosaur masks

and screaming into the mike. But after a few gentler songs, BAIRD proved their promising talent, and Fike even gave their lead guitarist a solo during *Vampire*, another audience favorite.

Fike himself summarized the concert experience well describing his guitarist: . “Sometimes it pisses me off how talented he is.” Indeed, even as he poked fun at himself and his band members, Fike proved his musical talent with each and every song. As a friend of mine suggested at the end of the night, Fike's talent combined with his unexpected honesty and the crowd's dynamic energy made this a concert experience that will be hard to beat.

**GAURI SOOD '26 (GAURISOOD@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU) WAS SADLY NOT WEARING GREEN PANTS AT THE CONCERT.**





# The Gravy Train Comes to Boston

YUNG GRAVY BROUGHT THE ENERGY TO MGM MUSIC HALL IN NOVEMBER

BY ALICE KHAYAMI '25 AND ALEXANDRA DOROFEEV '25



On Wednesday, November 16th, the Gravy Train made a stop at Boston's MGM Music Hall for what was promised to be an "absolutely f\*cking sensational experience." Yung Gravy was joined by bbno\$ for an hour and a half setlist of songs from his albums Sensational and Gasanova, as well as hit songs "Betty," "Oops," and "Mr. Clean." The duo certainly did not fail to deliver, as fans jumped out of their seats to scream the lyrics and wave their arms in unison.

Terror Reid, another up-and-coming Soundcloud rapper, opened the show, accompanied by a set by DJ Tiiiiiiiiip to get the crowd riled up. When it was time for the main event, Gravy and bbno\$ strutted onstage in matching, bedazzled white suits.

Gravy's design choices invoked a retro style, exemplifying a crossover between throwback hits and a modern twist: he sported zebra print under white linen suits, and a retro black-and-white animation playing in the intro under LED lights. The

details highlighted his groovy musical style, which samples music from the 1950s and 70s, creating a blend of modern trap and old soul.

The audience certainly loved his performance, screaming, dancing, and even throwing their bras on stage. He collected dozens over the course of the night, draping them across the stage in true Gravy fashion. "I collected 98 bras in Atlanta, but I know Boston can do better," Gravy challenged the concertgoers.

One audience member said that although she "didn't know many of the lyrics," the concert was nevertheless enjoyable, Gravy's performance brought excitement to the room. Younger audience members definitely recognized his viral hits. "It felt like I was in the TikTok ForYou page," reflected one concertgoer.

The show at MGM Music Hall was one stop on Gravy's Baby Gravy tour across the U.S., which ends in December. If this show was any indication of his rising popularity, it's clear people are getting aboard the Gravy Train.

ALICE KHAYAMI '25 (ALICEKHAYAMI@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU) AND ALEXANDRA DOROFEEV '25 (ALEXANDRADOROFEEV@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU) ARE NEVER GETTING OFF THE GRAVY TRAIN.





# Holidays at Harvard

## THE REALITY OF SPENDING WINTER BREAK IN A HARVARD DORM

BY ISABEL EDDY '24



December 17th officially concludes over two months of endless late night study sessions and commences a break to spend away from school. The difficulties of the finals period offer a chance to dream about upcoming holiday festivities, a period of relaxation after a grueling semester, and exciting adventures with friends and family.

Yet, for some, winter break is not a return home. Winter varsity athletes, as well as students with extraneous circumstances, stay on campus during the break. For them, the break consists of a few days home for the holidays, if at all, but is otherwise consumed by short days on an empty campus, faring the Cambridge winter with or without teammates.

Men and women's basketball, skiing, ice hockey, swim and dive, indoor track & field, and wrestling all have seasons that run through the break, making it mandatory for the teams to spend their January in Cambridge competing for Harvard. Varsity athletes in general can

easily spend upward of 15-20 hours a week on their sport, in addition to navigating a course load and other extracurriculars. For the athletes with an added January term season, the lack of a true break can make the risk of burn-out very real.

Denham Wojcik '25, a sophomore on the men's basketball team, articulated the harsh reality of winter athletes. "The truth is we miss out on any chance of a family Thanksgiving, and any Christmas festivities in our hometowns," he said.

The typical basketball season runs from September until mid-March, forcing athletes to miss several holidays, especially if they live far from Cambridge. Evan Nelson '25, a sophomore basketball player from Tucson, Arizona, explained why his Christmas plans included staying on campus. "I personally am not going home to see my family because we have only a day or two travel window and prices are too high."

Despite the challenges of not having a full break to spend at home

or away from campus, these students have found a positive side to their circumstances. "Being on campus when everyone else is gone is odd in the sense that it's empty and the dining halls are closed," Nelson added. "But it's peaceful and quiet and a nice break from the pace of a normal semester."

While these winter athletes will spend most of their breaks training, they will also spend their time off socializing with their teammates or other winter athletes, or working jobs in the Cambridge area. The major advantage of not having other students around or assignments to work on is that teammates often become very close with one another and can grow as a family.

In the words of Wojcik, "It's a grind, but it has been well worth it."

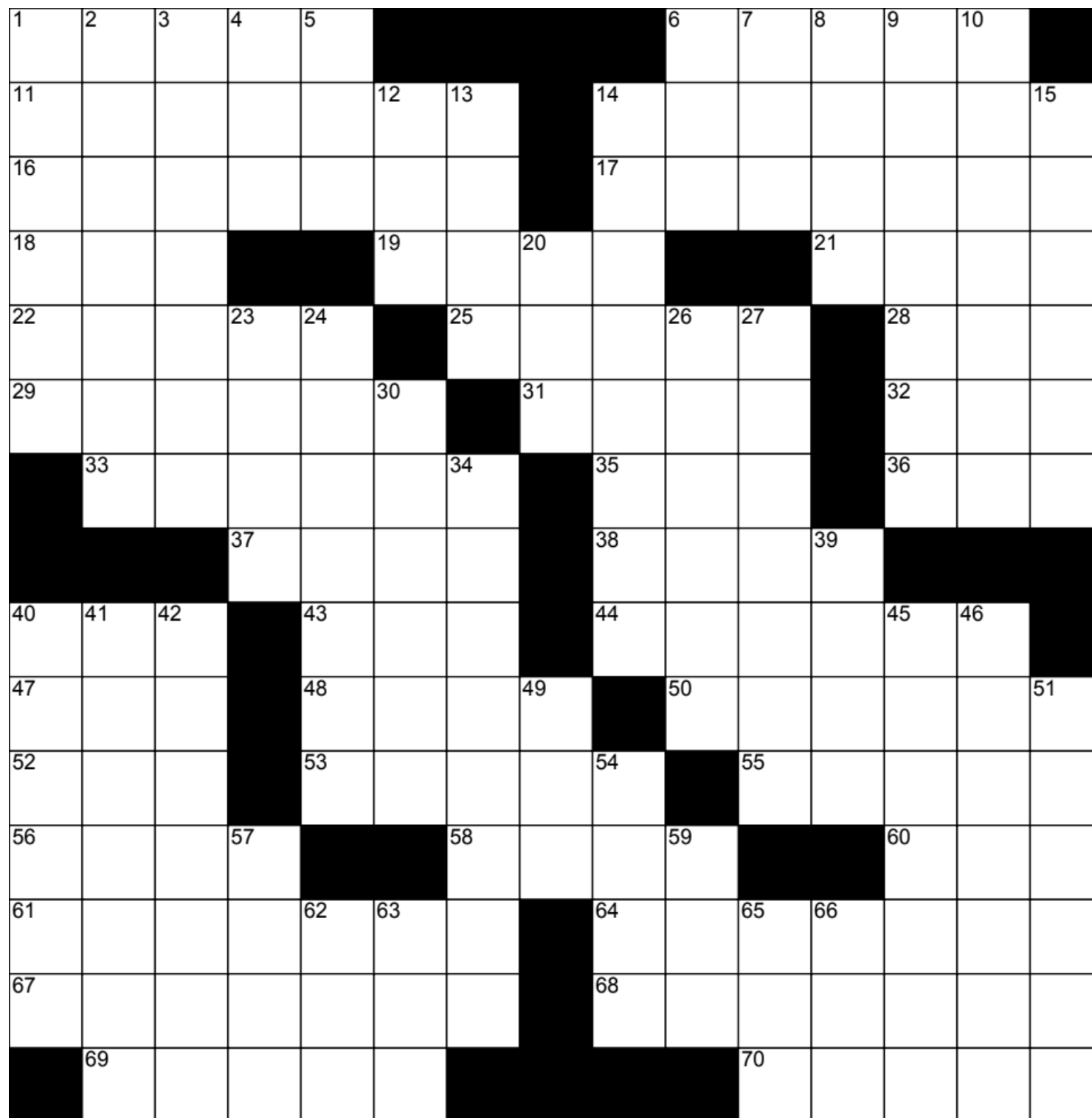
ISABEL EDDY '24 (IAEDDY@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU) WRITES SPORTS FOR THE INDEPENDENT.

GRAPHIC BY MARINA ZOULLAS '23



# Wrapped

BY PETER LASKIN '23



upon”  
**12** “\_\_\_ Gonna Be Me” (song that sounds best on April 30th)  
**13** Math 1a subj.  
**14** Phrase sometimes spoken before proving a point  
**15** Cut a \_\_\_ (mow your fields, in England)  
**20** Caterer’s coffee holder  
**23** Fencing blade with the biggest target area  
**24** “harvardindependent.com” and others  
**26** “Up after this...”  
**27** Pakistani port  
**30** It could go either way  
**34** Profits for fishermen (in more than one way)  
**39** Spa treatment  
**40** It has a crust on top  
**41** Employer in “The Secret Life of Walter Mitty” (2013)  
**42** Of the breastbone  
**45** Czech composer Bedrich  
**46** Soft drink, to an old person  
**49** Prefix with phony or pathetic

**ACROSS**

**1** Didn’t buy, beg, barter, or borrow  
**6** Wolf (down)  
**11** Kind of memory for Akira Haraguchi  
**14** Ejections from office  
**16** It can be harvested or mined  
**17** Technical ability  
**18** Palindromic constellation  
**19** Wallop  
**21** Language for some Pueblos  
**22** Blanched  
**25** Kind of person that Richard Nixon purportedly was not  
**28** Six-legged worker, perhaps  
**29** Device for catching fish  
**31** “Strega \_\_\_” (kid-lit classic by Tomie DePaola)

**32** Cheerleader’s bread and butter  
**33** Animal companion in “The Golden Compass”  
**35** “November Rain” grp.  
**36** Jeanne d’Arc, par exemple  
**37** Dearth of difficulty  
**38** Kind of second that was recently abolished  
**40** The Himalayas: Abbr.  
**43** Ending for social or capital  
**44** Overindulgence  
**47** Small island in a river  
**48** Mile-high hoopsters, for short  
**50** Group of hit-makers?  
**52** British magazine that sounds like an adversary  
**53** Fixes  
**55** \_\_\_ Prince-Édouard (Canadian province)  
**56** Gull’s cousin

**58** Colorful Apple variety  
**60** Shade at the beach  
**61** Some guards  
**64** “Angie Tribeca” force  
**67** Nail polishes  
**68** Experimental biofuel  
**69** Dagger’s counterpart  
**70** Window hanging

**DOWN**

**1** Mexican shawl  
**2** Crowned, like a princess  
**3** Smoothie brand  
**4** Modern lightbulb component  
**5** Prediction after 65-Down  
**6** Parker Probe destination  
**7** Riccardo Muti’s employer  
**8** 238, for U  
**9** Tries again  
**10** Opposite of “smile

**51** Bale (of insurance policies, or maybe streaming services)  
**54** Choir parts, for short  
**57** Mr. Ray’s student  
**59** “In The Heights” director Jon  
**62** \_\_\_ culpa  
**63** Bugler that’s not in the army  
**65** Prediction before 5-Down  
**66** Super Bowl LVI winners

PETER LASKIN '23



COVER ART + LAYOUT BY PIPER TINGLEAF '24

WE BELONG  
TO NO ONE  
BUT  
OURSELVES

THE HARVARD INDEPENDENT PUBLISHES EVERY WEEK DURING THE ACADEMIC YEAR BY THE HARVARD INDEPENDENT, INC., 12 ARROW STREET CAMBRIDGE, MA 02138

NPI — *Mary Julia Koch*