

DEC. 18, 2024

OCCC STUDENT VOICE SINCE 1978

# PIONEER

**'Friendsgiving'**

Time to Resurrect  
**DEAD HOUR?**

**Art Therapy**  
The Perfect Cure

**International**  
Student Day

Three members of the OCCC Music Appreciation Club -- (from left to right) President Ezequiel Montelongo, David Hernandez and Trey Williams -- play and sing for the luncheon.  
Photo by: Trey Brite

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## Volume 54, No. 18

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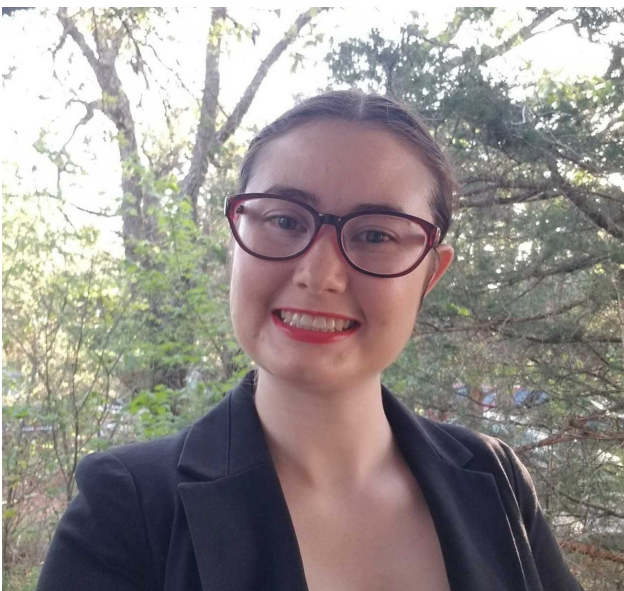
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Breanna Conrad, author of the dead hour legislation sent to administration

# Time to Resurrect the **DEAD HOUR**?

By Trey Brite

Having time to gather notes, meet with peers and prepare for class is the lifeblood of success within a collegiate institution – all things offered by the suggestion of a “dead hour.” If the administration is willing, by fall of 2025, the campus at OCCC could once again experience a daily mandatory time when no classes would be allowed to take place.

Not only could students benefit, but faculty could also secure a minimum of one hour near lunchtime to focus on duties that arise in the second half of their day. If approved, the new dead hour would stretch from 11 a.m. to 1:30 p.m., allowing plenty of time for important activities outside of the classroom.

In 2020, the COVID-19 virus brought numerous changes to the daily activities at OCCC, and one of them involved the dead hour. Previously, the college had a dead hour in effect when Breanna Conrad served as president of the Student Government Association (SGA) while attending classes here on campus. With the arrival of the COVID pandemic, however, the campus closed, and all classes went virtual. Virtual classes meant there was virtually no reason to keep a rule specifically designed for in-person classes. Out went the dead hour, and out it has remained ever since.

This year, Conrad has approached the SGA organization that she once led about the possibility of resurrecting the dead hour.

“The reinstatement of a dead hour, a designated time with no classes scheduled, provides students with a dedicated opportunity to engage in campus activities, events and organizations,” she explained. “These activities are often critical for student development, fostering leadership, teamwork and a stronger sense of community. Without competing academic responsibilities during this time, students can participate more fully, leading to a richer campus experience.”

A formal process aimed at reintroducing the dead hour took place during a Nov. 14 SGA meeting. Presenting before representatives of student organizations from all over the college, Conrad made a pitch to bring the dead hour back to campus.

By then, the proposed time period for the dead hour had already been reviewed by peers interested in reinstating the mandatory break.

“The time frame of 11 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. is a suggested time frame many students I talked to approved of,” Conrad stated. “However, it is only a suggestion. The main goal of the resolution is to encourage the OCCC administration to enact a minimum of one hour where no classes are held to give students the opportunity to engage in student activities they otherwise might have difficulty participating in.”

Conrad believes that faculty stand to benefit from the measure too, not only because their students may become better organized, but also because their own preparation time would enjoy a helpful boost.

“With OCCC’s current structure, I have seen professors having to rush from one lecture to the next, which can be stressful and limit the time available for thoughtful preparation or meaningful interactions with students,” Conrad explained. “The dead hour can provide faculty with a valuable opportunity to hold office hours, collaborate with colleagues, prepare for their next class or even something as simple as have a proper meal for lunch, ultimately benefiting both their teaching and student learning.”

Time will tell if the dead hour returns to OCCC, but if it comes back, students and faculty could be seeing a revitalized age of easy scheduling and study time.

More free time offers students and faculty more opportunities to connect and learn together. ►





# Pancakes & Finals

## The Sweet Taste of Success

Photos by Trey Brite



◀ (Pictured from left to right) OCCC students Michelle Kaalverink, Grady Gulbeth, Heather Lopez and Bar Rosenberg share in the delight of finishing up with their finals.

(Pictured from left to right, standing) OCCC students Heather Lopez, Grady Gulbeth, Michelle Kaalverink and Bar Rosenberg all celebrate by having pancakes after finishing one of their final classes before graduating as nurses. ▶



◀ Dropped on a plate and fixed to your liking, the pancakes served during "Pancakes & Finals" always help students relax during finals week.

## SWEETHEART DEAL

### Project Rosewood Hosts Bake Sale

Photos by Trey Brite



A cheerful mascot, representing Project Rosewood, welcomes students to a bake sale ahead of finals.



Full of heart, a mascot for Project Rosewood offers a warm welcome to potential customers in front of a fundraising bake sale.



# OSCC Counselors Share Insights About Free Mental Health Services

By Ana Arias



◀ Valerie Smith-Risinger, counselor in the Student Accessibility and Support office

Mental health is imperative all year round, but mental health can present extra challenges during certain times of the year, especially around the holiday season. We recently asked a pair of OSCC mental health counselors for some helpful advice, and they happily complied by responding with the following.

**Can you provide your names and your roles at OSCC? How long have you held these positions?**

**Kristal J. Hamm**, MHR, LPC-S. I'm a mental health counselor in the Student Accessibility and Support Department. I started at OSCC at the end of July.

**Valerie Smith-Risinger**, LPC. Mental health counselor in the Student Accessibility and Support Department. I've been with OSCC for eight months starting in April 2024.

**What made you want to pursue helping others?**

**Hamm:** I have always worked in the helping profession. I began my career working for political candidates that I felt would make a difference on the issues I care about, and then I moved into fundraising and marketing for nonprofit agencies that worked to help the underserved in our communities. I left the workforce when I had my children but continued to volunteer on charity boards, city commissions and as a patient advocate for an organization that was close to my heart. During this time, I decided I did not want to return to fundraising when I went back into the workforce, so I went to graduate school. I decided I wanted to be in "direct service" this time and felt pulled to be a therapist. I've received help several times in my life from therapists, and it felt right.

**Smith-Risinger:** My journey toward helping others began with my undergraduate studies in political science, studying and developing an understanding of the structures of the systems that shape our communities. My direction changed over time to directly impacting individual lives through interpersonal connections that can foster change on a personal level through advocacy, education and emotional support.

**Why do individuals tend to stray from therapy or counseling services?**

**Hamm:** I politely disagree with the premise of your question. I have found the students of OSCC to be very open to seeking mental health assistance, and I serve a group of students ranging from recent high school graduates to late middle age. There are some individuals who might have had a negative experience with therapy in the past, or there might be cultural reasons people stay away from therapy, but we are seeing the stigma around mental health issues, and services, to be diminishing.

**Smith-Risinger:** Individuals may stray from therapy for various reasons. Cultural factors and biases often play a significant role.

**Cultural Stigma** – Some cultures may believe seeking therapy is a sign of weakness or failure. Some communities' struggles are deemed as

personal or spiritual issues that need to be resolved within the family or through faith, rather than with a therapist.

**Mistrust** – There may be a lack of cultural representation in mental health service, which can have led to mistrust of the mental health system, particularly among marginalized communities. Feelings or concerns of being misunderstood or judged by therapists from different cultural backgrounds can lead to disengagement.

**Financial and Accessibility Barriers** – Financial barriers are a significant reason many individuals stray from therapy, but (there can be) a lack of awareness about affordable or cost-free services. Many nonprofit organizations and community mental health agencies offer counseling services at no cost or on a sliding scale to ensure accessibility for everyone. There might also be a misconception that nonprofit or low-cost services are lower quality. That is simply untrue. Nonprofit counseling organizations employ licensed professionals, including therapists, psychologists and social workers, who meet the same rigorous education and training requirements as those in private practice.

**Language Barriers** – A lack of therapists who can speak the client's first language fluently or culturally understand nuances can create miscommunication and leave clients feeling misunderstood or frustrated.

**Do you think students see their issues as minuscule and therefore sweep them under the rug?**

**Hamm:** Again, I politely disagree with the premise of this question. I have spoken to many student organizations and many other individual students, and I have found our students to be very open about their needs, and not minimizing them in any fashion. I have been very encouraged by our students and their willingness to seek help when needed.

**Smith-Risinger:** I concur.

**Has there been a moment that has confirmed that you're doing what you're meant to do?**

**Hamm:** Anytime I can work with a client and see a breakthrough, I'm very moved. I have worked with a varied population throughout my career, so it is difficult to think of a particular situation. When a student leaves my office feeling better than they did when they entered, I feel like this is where I belong.

**Smith-Risinger:** I have worked with a varied population, and anytime you see that a client is thriving, it is validation.

**What is one of the most beneficial aspects of counseling?**

**Hamm:** This is personal for each individual depending on what they need to work on, but many times clients just need to feel heard. So many in our society today lack a safe place to go to talk about hard stuff, and if counseling can provide that safe place, that is a win for the client. I try to offer a welcoming environment and "meet the client where

they are at," meaning I work to recognize the client's needs and focus there, even as other issues might arise. I always tell my clients: "You get out of therapy what you are willing to put into it." For some, this might mean they need to work on coping skills to assist with test anxiety, while others might need to work on past trauma, and everything in between.

**Smith-Risinger:** Being able to provide a safe and nonjudgmental space. Individuals can openly express their thoughts, feelings and challenges without fear of criticism. In addition, the client will develop healthier coping mechanisms, improve relationships, build resilience and enhance self-esteem, just to name a few.

**What do you want your students to get out of counseling?**

**Hamm:** My goal for my students is to hopefully meet their counseling goals. I want them to know I am a safe person for them to share (with), and, hopefully, they learn more about themselves through the process.

**Smith-Risinger:** To be able to improve and recognize their emotional awareness/regulation, problem-solve, develop/improve self-awareness and growth, receive academic support and know that they have a safe space for expression. Ultimately, the goal is to empower them not just academically but also personally, emotionally and equip them with lifelong skills for success.

**Can you provide an overview of how the counseling process works at OSCC?**

**Hamm:** To begin therapy, you come by our office or call to make an "intake appointment." The intake lasts approximately 1.5 hours to allow for time to complete paperwork and have an initial session with the counselor. During that session, the counselor and student discuss the student's goals for therapy and how often they want to be seen. Sessions can be weekly, bi-weekly or whatever works best for the student and counselors' availability. Students may see the counselor as long as needed, and that timeframe will be determined by both the student and counselor as sessions progress. There are times we have a wait list, so when you call or come by, you might be placed on that list until one of us has an opening.

**Smith-Risinger:** I agree.

**Are there any final messages you would like to send to students?**

**Hamm:** I consider it an honor to work with the students at OSCC and want all students to feel welcome coming to our department if they need help, or just someone to listen to them. Mental health is a huge issue in higher education, and our student body is no different than any other. Our services are part of your tuition, and if you need someone to talk to, no matter what the issue, please know we are here for you.

**Smith-Risinger:** I agree.



# It's a Small World After All!

## OCCC Celebrates International Student Day

Photos by Khi Davis



"I believe culture is the nurturing ground into which a person's soul is rooted. Culture allows a person to understand their identity. One is more aware of their identity when one knows about their culture and their origin. As humans, we frequently tend to ask ourselves questions like: Who are we? Where are we from? What makes us who we are? Connecting to our culture reduces grandly the pressure of such questions and allows us to thrive and celebrate the beauty and majesty in our culture, origin and identity."

-- OCCC international student Mahan Wolieu

The flags of multiple countries blend in together, just as international students blend in seamlessly with the rest of the OCCC student body.



David Hernandez celebrates his heritage by displaying the flags of Spain and Mexico. ►



◄ As the students gather in the cafeteria, everyone comes together to enjoy the complimentary food from Olive Garden.



Mahan Wolieu shoots a video of himself explaining his major, origin and language to assist the marketing department with a special project. ►



◄ Chiaki Troutman (center), coordinator of the World Languages and Cultures Center, joins others celebrating International Student Day by grabbing a plate of tasty pasta.

Colorful dishes adorn a table set up by the Latina Sisters at a special event held in celebration of International Student Day. ►





# Veteran Services Answers the **Call of Duty**

Troy Williams,  
Coordinator of  
Veteran Services ►



By Trey Brite



◄ Outfitted with desks and office supplies, the Veterans Lounge offers a quiet place to study.

Deserving respect, student veterans at OCCC have a liaison between them and benefits waiting to be explored. Veteran Services offers guidance to all the different grants, scholarships and campus-wide amenities that might otherwise fall under the radar. Whether in-person or over the phone, Veteran Services can meet with and cater to the needs of the individual.

Staff within the Veteran Services office are well-equipped to introduce any advantages that may remain unseen to the lone student. They stay up to date on important developments by keeping in regular contact with the Department of Veteran Affairs and routinely checking in on students' class routines.

"We do that by what we call 'certifying' their schedule," explained Troy Williams, coordinator of Veteran Services at OCCC. "This basically means that we report their academic credit hours to the Department of Veteran Affairs so that in turn the Department of Veteran Affairs can send the appropriate benefits to the veteran or dependent. By our office managing this process, it ensures that they can get their respective chapter benefits in a timely manner."

Veteran Services prides itself on lending a helping hand to student veterans and alleviating the stress that those students might otherwise face if left to search for available benefits on their own. By working with Veteran Services as soon as possible, OCCC students can ensure maximum usage of the benefits available to them.

Students looking for a quiet place to study can take advantage of the Veterans Lounge, a nice gathering place reserved for student veterans on the second floor of the Main Building. The lounge features comfortable sofas and cubicles stocked with computers and office necessities, as well hot coffee and creamer for those in need of extra energy.

In addition to the specialty assistance that it offers to former soldiers, Veteran Affairs helps direct students to other college departments that can help them take advantage of additional services available to the student body as a whole.

"We focus mostly on our core objective of making sure that students can access their benefits each semester," Williams said. "But there are many already existing services offered at OCCC that are stellar resources to veterans, so we try to make sure that we promote other areas of the college, such as The Hub, Student Life, Student Accessibility and Support, TRIO, computer rental in the library, etc."

Students can expect to see further improvements in the future, as Veteran Services is looking to gain software specific to the Department of Veteran Affairs meant to further facilitate smooth communications between student veterans and the department.

When it comes to the staff members themselves, students will not be disappointed. Needs are cared for in the Veteran Services office, as faculty are experienced in helping students find the right path in their college careers.

"I have worked in higher education for over 15 years in various departments," Williams noted. "I have worked in housing, career development, and most recently I was a student success advisor at OCCC."

"I think from the start of my career in higher education, regardless of the position I held, I have always wanted to help students complete their degree because I do believe in the power of education."

Veteran Services is open Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Staff members can be reached by phone at (405) 682-1611, Ext. 7694 and Ext. 7695.

A series of evocative images captures the attention of a mesmerized visitor at the capstone art exhibit.



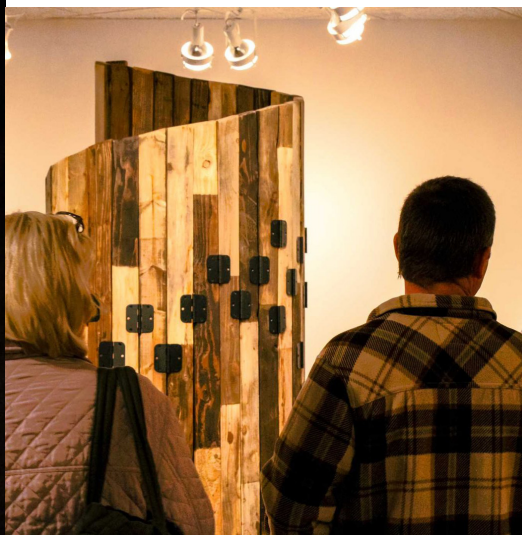
## Masterpiece Theater

Students Showcase Artwork at Capstone Exhibit

Photos by Trey Brite

Visitors study one of the many pieces of impressive art displayed at the recent end-of-semester capstone art exhibit.

Guests admire a unique painting at the recent capstone art exhibit held inside OCCC's Inasmuch Foundation Gallery.





# The Ball Is in Your Court!

Participants exchange volleys, memories at multigenerational 'Pickleball and Conversation' event

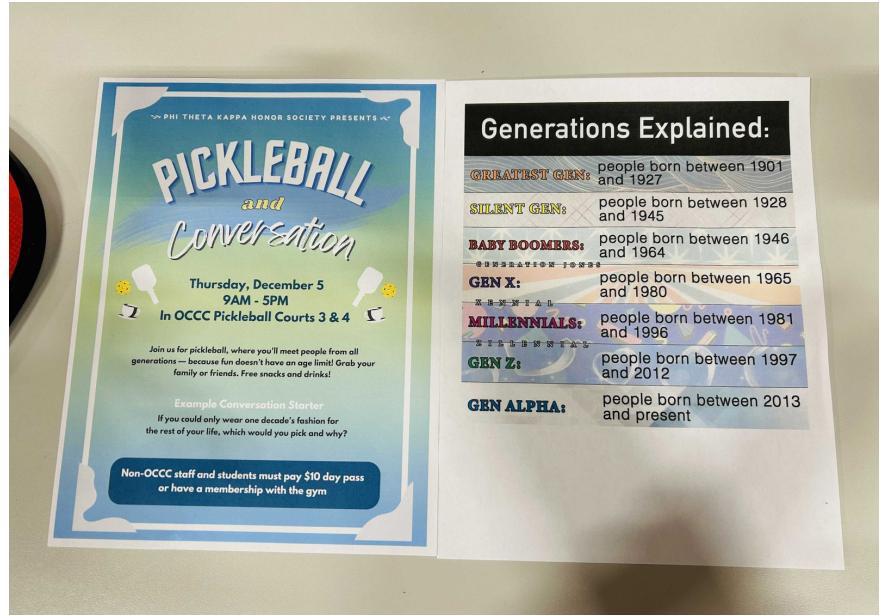
Photos by Ana Arias



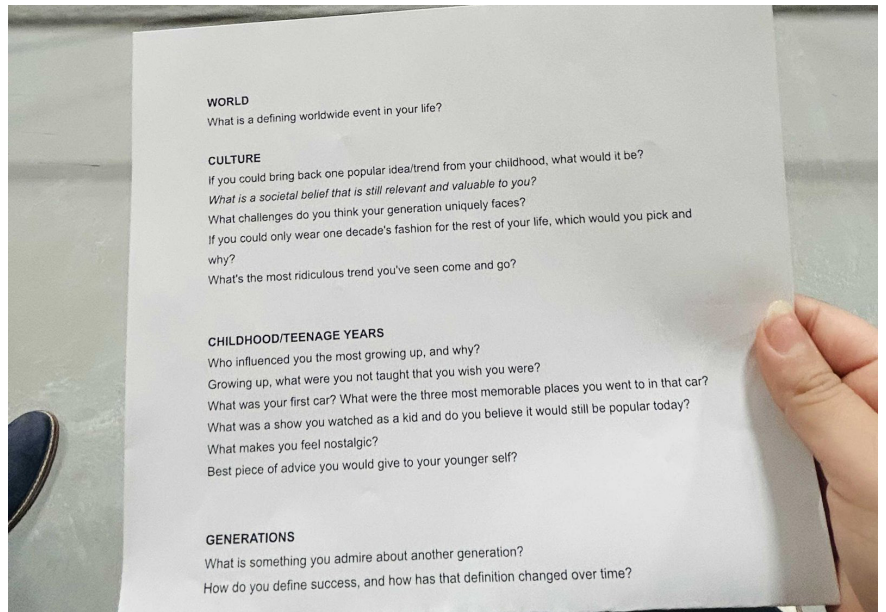
Bob Davis, coordinator of Students Connecting with Mentors for Success (SCMS) at OCCC, gears up for some friendly competition ahead of a recent "Pickleball and Conversation" event sponsored by the Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society.



A wide assortment of tasty sweets awaits attendees at a recent "Pickleball and Conversation" event sponsored by the Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society.



The Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society at OCCC invites members of multiple generations to participate in a special event featuring fun pickleball games and enlightening conversations.



A pickleball player reviews a questionnaire seeking information from members of earlier generations.



Players begin taking to the court at a recent "Pickleball and Conversation" event held at the campus recreation center. ▶





# 'Friendsgiving'

## Feast Attracts a Crowd

Photos by Trey Brite



The annual "Friendsgiving" celebration draws a big crowd -- and attracts the attention of another photographer as well.



An OCCC student exchanges a big smile for a free plate of mouth-watering food.



Faculty members patiently wait for a free plate of delicious "Friendsgiving" food. ▶



◀ Students, faculty and guests line up for a hearty meal during this year's "Friendsgiving" celebration.



# Art Therapy: The Perfect Cure

Photos by Trey Brite and Hao Mai

## OCCC Students Show off Their Creativity



Art enthusiasts prepare to show off their pieces.



Faculty and students take advantage of art supplies provided by the Art Circle.



The Music Appreciation Club prepares for its group performance.



Saxophone player Alonso Phillips, a member of the Music Appreciation Club, soothes the souls of those who listen.



Creative Corner attendees, immersed in their work, pay close attention to the details.



Members of the OCCC community bond over their shared artistic interests.

Khi Davis, a member of the Music Appreciation Club, performs a self-composed hip-hop song.





# Favorite Albums from 2024

By Khi Davis

The past year has been a great one for music. From the debut projects introduced by the likes of 4batz and Doechi to the surprise releases from established players – and even the Drake-versus-Kendrick Lamar feud – fans all around were able to receive new music from their favorite artists.

As for my own experience, this year allowed me to discover new songs from both my personal favorites and from artists I didn't typically listen to. In no particular order, here are some of my favorite albums from 2024.

## 1. "CHROMAKOPIA" – Tyler, The Creator (Oct. 28)

As someone who's been a longtime fan of Tyler, The Creator, I was surprised to see him break the two-year album-release tradition with "CHROMAKOPIA." Serving as one of his most vulnerable releases to date, this album immediately caught my attention with its picture-painting production as well as the lyrical depth it explores. The album resonated with me in multiple ways in its entirety, but my ears mostly gravitated toward "Take Your Mask Off," "Judge Judy" and "Rah Tah Tah."

## 2. "GNX" – Kendrick Lamar (Nov. 22)

Kendrick Lamar has had one hell of a year, from the intense rap beef with Drake to the announcement that he would be headlining Super Bowl LIX. While "GNX" was

released with no promotion or rollout, the 12-track album truly delivered some enjoyable songs and solid West Coast vibes, all while touching on Kdot's thoughts and emotions surrounding his success. Because of my love for old-school samples and the progression of this track, the song "luther" with SZA really stood out to me. I also love the tracks "gnx," "dodger blue," "squabble up" and "heart pt. 6."

## 3. "Charm" – Clairo (July 12)

I've frequently listened to some of Clairo's older music, but "Charm" quickly made its way into my rotation. Her usage of indie and jazz elements gave this album a warm vintage feel that was perfect for the summer, transitioning into the fall. Solid from start to finish, songs like "Juna," "Slow Dance," "Second Nature" and "Terrapin" are some of my favorites of the project. I also enjoy the upbeat tempo of "Sexy to Someone."

## 4. "BLUE LIPS" – ScHoolboy Q (March 1)

I personally believe "BLUE LIPS" is one of the greatest hip-hop/rap albums of 2024. This album is a reminder of why ScHoolboy Q is considered an innovator in the rap industry. His hard-hitting verses over soul samples and progressive bass-filled rap instrumentals made this one a banger. Throughout the year, the tracks "Blueslides" and "THank god 4 me" sat comfortably in my playlists. I also liked



hearing "Yeern 101," "Pop" with Rico Nasty and "Lost Times" with Jozzy.

## 5. "Why Lawd?" – NxWorries (June 7)

An album that explores many levels musically and emotionally, "Why Lawd?" is a neo-soul R&B/hip-hop album presented by the duo NxWorries. Thanks to the verses delivered on songs like "86Sentra" and "WalkOnBy" and the smooth melodies on the tracks "Where I Go" and "Daydreaming," this became one of my favorite albums to revisit throughout the year. While the subject matter goes deep discussing relationship issues and the price of fame, it gives pain a beautiful melody. Great for easy listening, perfect for chill vibes.

## 6. "PLAY CASH COBAIN" – Cash Cobain (Aug. 19)

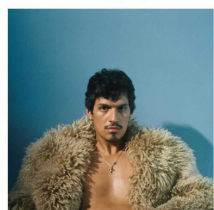
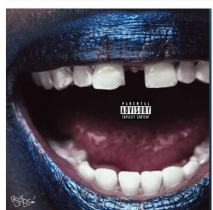
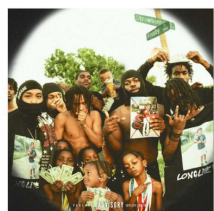
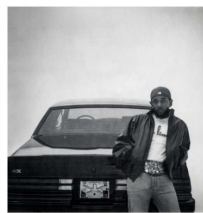
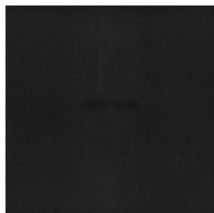
"PLAY CASH COBAIN" gives a new and refreshing sound to melodic rap. As a pioneer of the sexy drill rap genre, Cash Cobain takes the rhythm of New York drill and implements it over smooth melodies to create this laidback yet upbeat vibe that I couldn't get enough of. As I anticipated this LP's arrival, I grew fond of the songs "dunk contest," "rump punch," "cantsleep/drunkinluv," "candle" and "fisherrr."

## 7. "u made me a st4r" – 4batz (May 3)

The debut mixtape "u made me a st4r" from 4batz was one of my top-played albums of the year. As 4batz pours out his heart referencing his previous breakup, the mixtape tells a story through various "acts" focused on his efforts to relieve himself from a toxic relationship. "Act viii: i hate to be alone," "act ii: date @ 8" and "act iv: f\*\*in u (18+)" were actually in my Spotify Wrapped list. In addition to those favorites, I also enjoyed listening to "act iii: on god? (she like)" and the vulnerable "act v: there goes another vase."

## Honorable mentions:

"Dark Times" – Vince Staples  
 "Alligator Bites Never Heal" – Doechi  
 "COWBOY CARTER" – Beyoncé  
 "TIMELESS" – Kaytranada  
 "God Said No" – Omar Apollo



# 'Stereo Type A' Album Review



Suggested by fellow OCCC student Callum Borden, "Stereo Type A" is the second studio album from the New York-based alternative rock band Cibo Matto. While it was originally released on June 8, 1999, with 16 songs and a run time of a little over an hour, the version on streaming services only features 15 songs with one of its tracks ("Backseat") being separately released on the band's greatest-hits compilation.

Before even getting into this album, my anticipation was already high after seeing the album cover. It's appealing to the eye, and it also matches the ideas highlighted in the album.

Thematically, the album explores the various subgenres of self, ranging from the ups and downs of relationships to culture and self-esteem. You could even say it explores a "stereotype."

In songs like "Lint of Love," "King of Silence," "Spoon" and "Clouds," the band brings in a supposed love interest that the artist is trying to make amends with, describing a spectrum of going from admiring the little moments to the struggles of understanding a lover's wants and needs. There are even moments when the singer addresses the love interests about where their energy is lacking, such as the tracks "Speechless" and "Flowers." In addition, the confessions preached in "Sunday Pt. I" and "Sunday Pt. II" add a creative analogy between faith in religion and faith in love.

On another note, "Stereo Type A" "also expresses the feelings surrounding self-awareness and self-esteem. For instance, songs such as "Moonchild," "Sci-Fi Wasabi" and "Working for Vacation" emphasize self-reflection in moments of wonder, making for various relatable moments on the album.

When it comes to the sound of this project, I enjoyed the diversity of instruments all throughout. While some of the genres the band taps into aren't my forte, that doesn't change the fact that the songs are cohesive and well-orchestrated. With the soul of rock and indie, the band also incorporates bossa nova, psychedelia, electronic, jazz and boom-bap elements.

By Khi Davis

Working for Vacation (8.3)	Clouds (9.4)
Spoon (8.6)	Speechless (7.4)
Flowers (8.7)	King of Silence (9)
Lint of Love (6.8)	Backseat (9.2)
Moonchild (9.5)	Blue Train (7.6)
Sci-Fi Wasabi (7.2)	Sunday, Pt. I (6.7)

While some songs feature trippy elements, the unique nature of the LP makes it a well-balanced album. When the tracks go from laidback and rhythmic to intense and upbeat, for example, the album can be dreamy in some moments and grimy in others.

In addition to the instrumentation and lyrics, my favorite moments on this project include the songs "Clouds," "Backseat," "Moonchild" and "King of Silence." I've caught myself casually listening to all of these tracks.

Overall, the album gives me the same vibes as an episode of the animated television show "Adventure Time." The aesthetics and vibes of the album synchronize very well and have a deeper meaning than what the lyrics describe. I think "Stereo Type A" is an AMAZING LP, and I give it an 8.3/10. I suggest listening to this project with headphones, and I recommend it to fans of alternative rock or people who enjoy the sounds of Stereolab and POiSON GiRL FRIEND.

Got an album you want me to review? Send your suggestions to [khi.t.davis@my.occc.edu](mailto:khi.t.davis@my.occc.edu).

