

# THE SOPHIAN



PHOTO COURTESY OF SMITH PIONEERS

## Smith Volleyball’s Historic National Tournament Appearance

**HILLARY CONNOR '26** Smith  
SPORTS AND WELLNESS EDITOR Volleyball had a monumental win on Nov. 17 against the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), previously ranked 4th in the nation, in a nail-biting five set game. With their win, Smith Volleyball claimed the New England Women’s and Men’s Athletic Conference (NEWMAC) Conference Championship title for the first time in over ten years and won an automatic bid to the NCAA National Tournament. Abby Hunt '26 and graduate transfer student Taylor Gwynne '26 were also recognized as the NEWMAC Tournament’s Most Outstanding Players. Gwynne, Hunt, and Abby Sweeney '25 were later recognized on the national level as NCAA All-American Honorable Mentions and as members of the American Volleyball Coaches Association (AVCA) Region II

All-Region first team.  
The first part of the NCAA tournament took place at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, Md. The tournament began with 64 teams in a bracket of high-risk single elimination games. Smith defeated Endicott in their first game and advanced to the round of 32, setting a new program record of 31 wins in one season.  
They ended their historic season in a loss against Ithaca College in the second round where each of the three sets were decided by five points or less. “I could not be more proud about what they’ve accomplished here, especially in such a short amount of time,” Head Coach Greg Walker said in the post-game interview.  
The team concluded the season with the most opponent blocks and digs in the conference. Captain Ari Cross '25

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## Abortion Access in the Wake of State and Federal Elections

**CATHERINE NICHOLS '28** In the wake of Pres-  
NEWS WRITER ident-elect Donald

Trump’s recent victory and the potential threat of a national abortion ban that comes with it, students, professors and local organizations are concerned about ensuring ongoing access to reproductive healthcare in the coming years.

Tapestry Health, a reproductive health-care clinic funded by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health, is preparing for the possibility of heightened restrictions to abortion access. With an office located only a few minutes away from the Smith College campus, Tapestry is dedicated to providing accessible health services, including Mifepristone-based abortion pills.

“All reproductive care, including abortion, provides folks autonomy over their body and gives people the ability and freedom to make choices about their own body and how they want to live their lives. We think it is super important to provide that opportunity and we as an office feel very privileged to be able to do that every day,” said Tapestry Northampton manager Liliana Bonilla and counselors Sage Dube, Izzi Bledsoe and Lauren Duhr in an email.

However, there is concern that these services and rights could be disrupted after the 2024 election.

“I fully expect the Trump administration to create a federal abortion ban,” said Loretta Ross, a prominent activist for reproductive justice and Associate Professor of the Study of Women and Gender.

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# The Sophian Crossword

**POORVI SARKAR '27**  
CROSSWORD & GAMES EDITOR

**Across:**

1. Where to put your flowers

5. “Open” signs are this

9. Give it a go

12. \_\_\_\_ Morgan, recent retiree and star of US Women’s Soccer Team

13. Type of snake

15. Opera solo

16. Drunk, in French

17. Recording media format

18 Army training program

19. Left-Edge Cell acronym

20. Example abbreviation

21. Hit 2000s Nintendo Toy

22. Attracted to fire

23. Long periods of time

24. Characteristic

26. Furry domestic companion

27. \_\_\_\_ Piper, one of the largest law firms by revenue

28. Nautical fan

30. Each

31. Eye beam abbreviation

32. Where people go for medical emergencies

33. Stage fighting
34. Unjustified preference

36. A company’s income after expenses, abbreviation

37. Annual deer shedding

41. Arts degree abbreviation

42. Spend less to save

43. Back muscle for short

45. Arizona’s time zone abbreviation

46. “Hard and shiny” music genre

47. Popular ceramic vessel

48. Slimy sea snakes

50. Undercover police informant

51. Self learning virtual assistant

53. Sign of bad luck

54. Specific kind of small water buffalo

55. Keeps locked up in a tight space

57. Jewel, in Japanese

58. Popular froyo chain

59. In philosophy, relating to being

60. In Islam, call to prayer

61. Affirmative consent
62. Canned meat or use-less mail

63. Hit Broadway show or monthly payment

**Down:**

1. Took off one’s hat in respect

2. Air sacs in the lungs

3. Name of one Gossip Girl protagonist

4. C-level corporate leaders

5. Center of the church

6. Describing official and authoritative claims

7. Weird

8. Question for someone panicking

9. Star Wars soldiers, for short

10. Low-level knights

11. Big boat

14. \_\_\_\_ O’Donnell, whose show Ellen DeGeneres came out on

15. Side part of chair

25. Boosts someone’s message on X/Twitter

28. Toxic chemical in plastics

29. Acronym for hit song from Wizard of Oz

30. Shape of phone from Victorious

31. Suffix relating to eyes

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33. Gentle throws in softball or baseball

34. Social Justice movement characterizing 2020

35. Acronym for specialized teaching system

36. Lack of presence

37. Tangible steps of movement
38. Organization once promoting firearm safety

39. Type of fish often known for tasting like chicken

40. A guard of the field in this popular American sport

42. Dry or quick, in terms of playing music
43. Childbirth technique

44. Temporary occupant of a home

45. Substantial or thick

47. Active participant in democracy

49. Vocally claim

52. Isn’t inches

56. Acronym for favorite fictional couple

## Editorial Statement

Dear readers:

We, the members of the 2024-2025 Editorial Board, are proud to present our December print edition.

As we put forth the final edition of the fall semester, we would like to reflect on the strides we’ve made as an organization this term. We have continued to maintain a legacy of rigorous, student-focused journalism while also focusing on expanding the breadth of our publication. We’ve been fortunate enough to wel-

come many new members to The Sophian — writers, translators, copy-editors, photographers and illustrators — who will build the future of our publication. As college students, we are only granted four short years at Smith, and therefore our time at The Sophian has similarly passed in the blink of an eye. However, it is comforting — and a point of pride — to recognize that, come the end of our time as editors at The Sophian, we will be leaving it in good hands.

Additionally, we have launched a new Satire column on our website, continued to fuel a small but growing Sports & Wellness section and expanded the reach of our print editions with our subscription program. Going forward,

we would like to continue putting energy into what we have thus far achieved while also embracing new ideas and innovations within the journalistic practice. Our subscription program, in particular, has helped those outside of the immediate Smith community here in Northampton stay engaged with The Sophian as a limited, but valuable representation of the issues facing current Smithies.

We thank all our readers for their continued support and wish them a peaceful end to 2024.

With gratitude,  
Isabel Birge, Editor-in-Chief  
Brooke Chandler, Managing Editor



2024-25 Editorial Board

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Abortion Access in the Wake of State and Federal Elections

CATHERINE NICHOLS '28  
NEWS WRITER  
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Despite Trump's victory, a federal abortion ban would not necessarily be popular among Americans. "If you look at the polling, the majority of Republicans support abortion rights. In a way, it kind of makes sense, because you don't want the government telling you about what you can do with your body," said Carrie Baker, Professor of the Study of Women and Gender. "The fact of the matter is that the majority of Americans aren't in favor of that, and that's what these Democratic referendums are showing."

The 2024 election saw the highest number of abortion-related state initiatives ever — eleven ballot questions across ten states. Of those ten states, seven approved measures that would protect abortion access, while referendums in Florida, Nebraska and South Dakota failed to pass, the first of such initiatives to fail since Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization.

Gabi McGrath '28, who is from Florida, said "This goes to show how separate [abortion protection] is from party politics, but so many people in power want this to happen. And in Florida there are a lot of elected officials who are not on the same page."

Surgical abortion, the target of many state-wide bans, is not the only concern. According to Baker, Mifepristone, a drug to end pregnancy by inducing a miscarriage, commonly known as "Plan C," would also be under threat of a federal ban.

"I think it's definitely a risk that the FDA might restrict abortion pills [by...] revoking Mifepristone altogether," she said.

"Right now we are the most concerned about Mifepristone getting sent back to the courts and becoming inaccessible for patients, especially since that is the only option that Tapestry offers. I know that we will be monitoring the news as best we can to prepare for anything that would make access harder for folks and will keep doing the work we can for as long as we can," Bonilla, Dube, Bledsoe and Duhr said.

If the FDA were to restrict or revoke access, Massachusetts would face similar problems as the twenty-nine states, including Florida, that currently have bans or restrictions on abortion pills.

Despite national anti-abortion pushback, Massachusetts has been a leader in protecting abortion access over the past two years. An Executive Order issued in August of 2022, one month after the Dobbs decision, "provides a guarantee of reproductive rights that is entirely independent of any protection offered or implicit in the Constitution of the United States," and the Massachusetts legislature enshrined abortion access into the state constitution shortly after.

Trump stated late into his campaign that he would not sign a federal abortion ban. However, previous statements and the anti-abortion rhetoric from people close to him, including vice president-elect JD Vance, seem to contradict Trump's claim.

"It's a really scary thing to feel — to not know if you will be protected," said McGrath.

If a federal ban on abortion were to be enacted, as many predict, it would supersede state laws that protect abortion access, and clinics, like Tapestry Health, would be unable to provide Mifepristone pills.

This does not mean the fight for access will end. "I don't think [activists] are going to give up — not just at the state level, but at the national level too," said Baker.

Bonilla, Dube, Bledsoe and Duhr said that "[they] are constantly being updated about the latest abortion news in Massachusetts by the National Abortion Federation [...] the best thing moving forward is just to learn as much as possible, keep updated with the news, fund local abortion funds and clinics, build community, and keep the fight for abortion and reproductive access alive!"

Ross agrees. "We have truth, time, evidence and history on our side. I'm not in charge of the timeline, but I think our victory is certain," she said.



# From SCAN to Sophian: Smith's Periodical Evolution

**HAILEY KRUEGER '28**  
FEATURES WRITER

Today, The Sophian  
is Smith's only

student newspaper, read and appreciated by many online and through print. However, unbeknownst to many, its start in 1952 was met with more controversy than celebration.

Smith's first weekly newspaper appeared in the spring of 1911, known as the Smith College Weekly. The original staff stated in their first issue "the Weekly ought to help to hold the college together." They further explained that large communities — like college campuses — tend to separate into smaller groups, the activities of each known only to its members. The paper was to serve as a common place of discussion, but functionally served as a message board for clubs and events.

The Weekly only grew from there, beginning to feature coverage of guest lecturers, opinion pieces and advertisements for local shops and restaurants. By 1940, the editors decided to switch from a weekly to semi-weekly release, convinced of Smith's ability to keep up with the newspapers of colleges like Vassar and Amherst which published more than once a week.

With this development, the Weekly required a new name. After much discussion and frustration, editors settled on Smith College Associated News, SCAN for short. In the first issue under this name, the staff wrote "SCAN will be a livelier, more readable paper, and should add greatly to the enjoyment and stimulation of the entire student body."

The SCAN was a success and cherished by its staff. The first issue even featured a cartoon in which The Weekly is depicted as the new father of twin SCAN issues.

However, trouble arose in February of 1948 in the form of a rival newspaper: The Current. The founder, who had previously been news editor of the SCAN, wrote in the first issue, "We believe the principle of two newspapers is advantageous in producing a high quality of journalism through competition; in providing more than one editorial opinion on a single subject; in furnish-



PHOTOS COURTESY OF SMITH COLLEGE ARCHIVES



ing increased opportunity for student participation in campus publications.”

The SCAN did not directly respond to this new competitor, but it did feature a notice of tryouts in the issue directly following the Current's debut, stating "SCAN not only needs you, they want you!"

***“It was a friendly competition — both papers were comparable in regards to quality of journalism and popularity among the student body, but they existed as two completely separate entities. That is, until 1952 when the College Treasurer ‘announced that ‘two newspapers is a luxury that Smith College can’t afford.’”***

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The two papers were required to merge into one: a decree not taken lightly.

The SCAN announced the news in an obituary-like style in the final issue: “May 8, 1952 at 10:15 the Smith College Associated News passed away.” According to the mournful article, “traditional rites were held in the SCAN office [...] as members of the staff, friends and neighbors [...] held a wake to pay their respects to the remains.”

The paper was again personified in a cartoon in which the SCAN and The Current are depicted as new parents looking over the yet unnamed heir.

The Current continued in an even greater

**Sir George Sansom Gives Asia Talk; Discusses Power Pressure In East**

The British Ambassador to the United States, Sir George Sansom, gave a lecture on the situation in Asia for many of the basic elements of civilization. The lecture, which was held in the Par East room, was held last night in the Par East room. The lecture, which was held in the Par East room, was held last night in the Par East room.

**S.Kane, M.Heller To Direct Shows**

Recently announced appointments to the Department of Art, Mr. Kane and Mr. Heller, will be directing a series of shows. The shows, which are being held in the Par East room, are being held last night in the Par East room.

**Crowds, Seek Food, Novelties At I. S. Fair; Posters, Pizza, Chanteuses Highlight Day**

The International Student Fair, which was held last night in the Par East room, was held last night in the Par East room. The fair, which was held in the Par East room, was held last night in the Par East room.

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**Student Committee To Rack Brain, Devise New Money Making Schemes**

The Student Committee, which was formed last night in the Par East room, is being formed last night in the Par East room. The committee, which was formed in the Par East room, is being formed last night in the Par East room.

**Symphony Offers Unusual Program**

The Symphony, which was formed last night in the Par East room, is being formed last night in the Par East room. The symphony, which was formed in the Par East room, is being formed last night in the Par East room.

**“Huffs” Re-elect E. Wright Leader**

The Huffs, which was formed last night in the Par East room, is being formed last night in the Par East room. The huffs, which were formed in the Par East room, are being formed last night in the Par East room.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF SMITH COLLEGE ARCHIVES

**Democratic Clubs Rally On Saturday**

The Democratic Clubs, which were formed last night in the Par East room, are being formed last night in the Par East room. The clubs, which were formed in the Par East room, are being formed last night in the Par East room.

**Herbert Davis Inaugurated As Smith College President**

Herbert Davis, who was formed last night in the Par East room, is being formed last night in the Par East room. The president, who was formed in the Par East room, is being formed last night in the Par East room.

**Brendan During Luncheon Brings Two Presidents To Listening Alumnus**

The Brendan, which was formed last night in the Par East room, is being formed last night in the Par East room. The Brendan, which was formed in the Par East room, is being formed last night in the Par East room.

**Text of Mr. Davis' Inaugural Address**

My fellow students, my fellow faculty, my fellow alumni, I am honored to be the first President of Smith College. I am honored to be the first President of Smith College. I am honored to be the first President of Smith College.

**Wishes for President's Club**

The Wishes for President's Club, which was formed last night in the Par East room, is being formed last night in the Par East room. The club, which was formed in the Par East room, is being formed last night in the Par East room.

**Speaker At Veterans Will Be Dr. David Roberts Of Union**

Dr. David Roberts, who was formed last night in the Par East room, is being formed last night in the Par East room. The speaker, who was formed in the Par East room, is being formed last night in the Par East room.

melodramatic manner, the announcement article stating, “When we heard about a merger we bristled like a new nylon toothbrush, we yowled like a wounded jaguar, we bludgeoned, we bullied, we blustered.” The staff eventually came to the final stage of grief — acceptance — and finished off the article, “and thus we part with Current — because she’s dead, y’know.”

After the SCAN’s 40 year reign and The Current’s strong five-year start, the two papers were laid to rest, but in their place rose The Sophian. The name was coined by physics professor

***“After the SCAN’s 40 year reign and The Current’s strong five-year start, the two papers were laid to rest, but in their place rose The Sophian. The name was coined by physics professor William T. Scott, who entered the naming contest because ‘he thought he might be able to win the free subscription and the prize [...] for his wife.’***

***The name pays tribute to Smith College founder Sophia Smith.”***

William T. Scott, who entered the naming contest because “he thought he might be able to win the free subscription and the prize [...] for his wife.” The name pays tribute to Smith College founder Sophia Smith.

The Sophian has remained strong since, with weekly issues going digital in 2015 and maintaining physical monthly editions. “What, then, is to be the result?” the first editor — Katherine L. Buell, class of 1911 — wondered, “time alone can settle that question.” And, after over 100 years, the legacy of Smith’s student publication lives on.



# Smith Volleyball's Historic National Tournament Appearance

**HILLARY CONNOR '26** said, "Miranda Oakes '26, who *continued from page 1* was leading the conference at one point during the season in blocks, is a huge part of that."

Strong team community and culture were essential to the team's success. "I think that every single person has played a part in really making sure that everyone knows that they have something to contribute to the team and that we play for each other every day," Captain Olivia Smith '25 said. "Our goal is always to protect our culture and protect the people next to us."

For Gwynne, this community was one of the reasons she chose Smith as the place to finish her career. "It's a privilege to join a culture that's been established that's both cohesive, it's a real community, and competitive. I think usually you get one or the other. Like you get a welcoming, fun environment or you get competition," she said. "And [the captains] especially have done a really good job of building something that was really really easy to walk into. And that's a privilege in itself."

Despite their decorated finish, the team had some setbacks this fall and the captains had to fight to rebuild team morale and cohesion. "I think the beginning of our season was a really, really strong start. We had a lot of early wins [...] And so that boosted morale so much and we were all getting really excited going into the NYU tournament," Cross reflected. The team went 0-3 in the NYU tournament.

"Coming off the NYU tournament and going 0-3, we lost to Springfield. And one of the big goals that we set at the beginning of the season was being undefeated in conference and we were up until that point," she said. These consecutive losses made it difficult for the team to stay cohesive and focused.

However, the captains did not let these losses deter them and reminded the team of what they were working for. "We had people rethink about what they were buying into and made sure that everybody was committed to the same goal, the same vision, and then ultimately had our season turn around after that and then came off of that losing streak even stronger," Cross said.

Smith's later wins against Springfield and

MIT in the semifinals were more than just solidifying a ticket to the tournament; it was part of rebuilding Smith Volleyball's legacy. "We called it our revenge tour," Coach Walker said. "One of our bigtime coaches back in the early 2000s was the last to beat MIT on their exact same revenge tour, very similar to ours [...] And then both nights being able to come back five sets and being able to dig out of it; I'm really unbelievably proud to see them be able to leave a legacy here, especially culminating with a NEWMAC championship," he continued.

For seniors Smith and Cross, the journey to nationals has taken their entire collegiate careers and is part of the legacy they want to leave behind. "I think at least for our class, this is something that we've wanted since the day we stepped on campus or the day that we committed to coming here," Smith said.

"The program that we inherited had a very big losing record and a team culture that was not something that you wanted to be a part of," said Smith. "Every day since we've come to Smith, we have started to chip away at that and with the goal of making every season better than the last and we're super proud that we've been able to hit this moment."

Volleyball garnered lots of fan support this season, thanks to the work of Smith's Student Athletic Advisory Committee (SAAC), who secured a fan bus to shuttle students to the Springfield and MIT NEWMAC games. SAAC also organized a watch party of the national tournament on Smith's campus. Cross said these initiatives made their big moment that much more special. "One of the mantras that we live by is 'believe,' so to have that many people there visually that we could see have so much faith and belief in us meant so much," she said.

"We cannot thank the fans enough," Smith said. "It meant the world to us to have that many people there and volleyball is such an emotional sport where you feed off of the energy of everyone around you. So just being able to have the support of Smith behind us and feeling proud of the school that we're representing was just a really cool feeling."

Cross said maintaining high energy both

on and off the court kept their stamina up through the long season. "Another big mantra on our team is like being dominated by joy and I think that that is perfect, a perfect way to describe our team, very much dominated by joy, especially in the face of adversity," she said. "We're always going to crack a joke and have a laugh with one another. And I think that that is what has made the tough moments — I don't want to say easy — but it's made it much easier to, to withstand those tough moments."

Gwynne noted that alumni support was also instrumental to their success this season. "We had a NYU tournament where we had an entire alumni chapter come out and support us," she said. "That was really cool to not only be able to see the generations of support for Smith, but also to get to interact with everybody and to be able to build on a legacy that came before us," Gwynne added.

For the captains, the Springfield and MIT upsets defined their legacy of reaching for big goals and defying expectations. "The Springfield game is a very emotional game for a lot of us. We all wanted the win really bad. And pulling that one off just gave us a lot of confidence going into our MIT game," Smith said. "We knew that we had secured an NCAA bid. And so we just figured, why not go for it? Like they're top five in the country for a reason. But that doesn't mean that it's impossible. And we were able to do the impossible."

"We both just reminded the team of earlier in the season, what we like statistically weren't supposed to be capable of," Cross added. "We weren't supposed to be capable of beating Middlebury, Wesleyan and so many other nationally ranked teams and I think that the reminder of that feeling coupled with the fact that we really, really wanted to complete the goals that we set out to at the beginning of the season was a huge driving force. And we just sort of said to the team at the beginning of the game, what's at stake tonight is very much ours for the taking. We just have to reach for it. And we did."

While this historic season has come to a close, Smith Volleyball's work is far from over. The team will now focus on recruiting as they say goodbye to eight seniors and rebuilding as they strive to maintain the legacy they created.

# Spotify Wrapped 2024 Falls Flat

GRYFFYN MAY '27

ARTS & CULTURE ASST. EDITOR

Long-awaited  
ed Spotify

Wrapped — along with the perhaps less popular Apple Music Replay — arrived on Wednesday, Dec. 4: a vulnerable display of all the music you listened to in 2024. If your Wrapped diagnosed you with something along the lines of a “Rainy Day Indie Pop Acoustic Folk” or “Pink Princess Pilates Catwalk” phase at some point this year, you are not alone.

Every year between late November and early December, music streaming app Spotify delivers reports to its users on who they listened to, for how long and with how much delirium — defining our tastes through its specialized, intangible algorithm we trust to reflect our listening habits. This year’s Wrapped made a dramatic debut, instantly sparking controversy.

*“Every year between late November and early December, music streaming app Spotify delivers reports to its users on who they listened to, for how long and with how much delirium — defining our tastes through its specialized, intangible algorithm we trust to reflect our listening habits.”*

One hotly debated aspect of Wrapped ’24 was the visuals of the slideshow feature, which were widely described as underwhelming and disappointing compared to previous years. The Wrapped metrics were displayed using bright color blocks animated in a vaguely yonic design against dark backgrounds, and while Spotify often chooses vibrant color schemes for their annual music report, users noticed the lack of details, with fewer fun graphics or other visual elements than in previous iterations of Wrapped.

Another unpopular feature was the Wrapped genres, this year called “phases,” which group individuals’ music taste patterns together. The phases seemed to follow a similar style to the

relatively new Daylist feature, which compiles combinations of previously heard and some new songs into an individualized playlist based on our music tastes that changes daily, usually sporting a striking title — examples include “panicked girl dinner evening” and “delulu hopeless romantic wednesday afternoon,” among others. Wrapped seemed to run with this concept, dividing up our music tastes into phases correlating to certain months, with similarly kitschy attempts at following pop-culture and social media discourses.

This development also indicates a shift away from the data surrounding “top genres,” a popular feature that has made appearances in past years’ Wrapped, but seems to have been replaced by “phases.” Top genres informed users about their music tastes more broadly, categorizing individuals’ music tastes in more recognizable genres such as “Indie Folk” or “Chamber Pop.” The shift from “top genres” to “phases” is perhaps reflective of Spotify’s poorly executed attempt to continuously rebrand itself in keeping with the rapidly evolving arena of generative artificial intelligence and the ever-shortening attention span of Gen Z.

The general consensus across social media platforms seems to be that Spotify Wrapped has presented us with a substandard account of our listening preferences. Many Smith students have expressed similar concerns and critiques.

“I thought Wrapped was lame, because it was literally just the Daylist titles for every month. But that was it,” said Rinal Dahhan ’27J. “Nothing about your top albums, nothing about your top genres, nothing. Nothing good on Spotify Wrapped this year.”

Many users also echoed feelings of disappointment or surprise with their assigned top artists and songs, with some saying the analysis seemed an inaccurate reflection of their listening experiences. Spotify’s website details how data is compiled for Wrapped, explaining that editors “monitor in-playlist performance to understand what tracks and artists users are responding to.” In other words, Spotify observes which songs and artists users gravitate towards most while they’re listening, which songs they skipped, didn’t skip, or put on repeat, data that eventually ends up in our Wrapped — so why are people so dissatisfied

with their results?

Indeed, many Smithies appear to be disillusioned over the supposed accuracy of Spotify’s results, a facet of the Wrapped that, in previous years, seemed to carry more credibility.

“[Wrapped] was very isolated to certain times of my life this year, but not actually reflective of my year,” said Lila Miller ’25.

One possible explanation for the declining accuracy of the results could be the difference between what artists and songs people want to think they are listening to versus the actual statistics of what they end up listening to the most. Some of us care so much about our perceived music tastes that we go as far as to use editing software to change our results, rewriting our Wrapped to mirror our desired — rather than actual — musical habits. However, some users are also pointing to AI as a possible reason for the disappointing wrap-up to their year in music.

“I think it’s all reliant on AI, it’s very ingenuine and it doesn’t have the human touch,” said Miller. “It doesn’t feel like people at Spotify headquarters are really looking at our [music]. The Spotify HQ is being run by robots.”

In a society where AI is ever-present, with most social media platforms now offering some type of chatbot, Spotify users have reported disappointment in the use of such “robot” curators in the creation of Wrapped this year. Some elements include an AI Podcast, built with help from Google’s software “NotebookLM” that allows users to “immerse themselves in the top songs, artists, and genres that soundtracked their year,” according to Spotify’s website.

The overwhelming discontentment with this year’s Spotify Wrapped is reflective of a growing vexation with the streaming platform in general. Users have touched on many frustrations with the app, ranging from anger over the removal of the heart button to “Favorite” songs to the shockingly low amount of pay for small artists. Being an Apple Music user used to be something to hide for fear of incurring the wrath and mockery of superiority complex-wielding Spotify users — however, the tides may very well be shifting towards Apple Music, and the day when Replay surpasses Wrapped in popularity could be closer than we think.

# From Hefner to Trump: How the Playboy Bunny Represents a Dangerous Reality

**POORVI SARKAR '27**  
CROSSWORD & GAMES EDITOR

*Trigger warning: This article contains mentions of sexual assault that may be upsetting to some readers.*

During Halloween, a time when many feel free to express themselves and their sexuality, the Playboy bunny costume remains a familiar symbol of sexual allure. Once a hallmark of the Playboy brand, the bunny has made a cultural comeback, now gracing merchandise in stores and still topping the list of popular Halloween costumes. But what does the bunny represent? In the 1960s, feminist icon Gloria Steinem exposed the realities of life inside the mansion and the mistreatment of women by Playboy founder Hugh Hefner. The mansion, which had long been the center of Hefner's empire, became synonymous with sexism, exploitation and abuse. The question arises: can we truly reclaim a symbol so deeply tied to this history of abuse?

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The Playboy Mansion was a place of countless horrendous abuses, something former Hefner's girlfriend Holly Madison exposed. Madison detailed the abusive environment, including the coercive sexual rituals Hefner required of the women, as well as the drug abuse that fueled much of the mansion's abusive culture. Quaaludes, a sedative once called “thigh openers,” were reportedly used to facilitate sex in Hefner's world. Madison describes the isolating nature of her relationship with Hefner as his “No. 1 girlfriend,” eventually driving her to a deep depression. Despite the mansion's lavish lifestyle, she admits that she was initially unaware of the sexual favors demanded by Hefner in exchange for a life of luxury.

Hefner's justification for the bunny as Playboy's logo is telling. He described women as embodying joy, simplicity and youthful beauty, stating they were “never sophisticated, a girl you cannot really have. She is a young, healthy, simple girl — the girl next door [...] we are not interested in the mysterious, difficult woman, the femme fatale, who wears elegant underwear, with lace, and she is sad and somehow mentally filthy.” The bunny has transcended a logo and now represents a distinct cultural phenomenon, later becoming a military aircraft symbol, “for the US Navy's Air Test and Evaluation Squadron Four (VX-4).” In reality and in practice, the Playboy symbol has always represented male sexual gratification.

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Some argue that there's power in reclaiming the bunny as a symbol of female empowerment. After all, taking ownership of one's sexuality is a significant act of autonomy. But can intention alone be enough to change the narrative surrounding a symbol so heavily tied to male domination? Exuding sexuality doesn't have to align with the male-centric ideal of femininity that has been long promoted.

In today's political climate, where traditional gender roles are gaining traction through regressive, conservative legislation — such as the reversal of *Roe v. Wade* and the *Dobbs* decision — the Playboy bunny has taken on new meaning. It is no longer just a costume, or merely an icon. In some circles, it represents submission to a political system that seeks to control women's bodies and choices.

This is reflected in the 2024 Presidential election, where some voters supported abortion rights and former President Donald Trump. Figures like Hefner, who have historically treated

women as sexual objects, reveal a disturbing connection and explain this discrepancy. Hefner and Trump “seem to see women primarily as sex objects and who support abortion and contraception because those tools facilitate male sexual freedom,” said Jill Filipovic for the New York Times. While an advancement of abortion rights can always be considered a win, some view these rights as facilitating male sexual gratification. While the fight for reproductive rights is unquestionably important, it is also deeply troubling when the very men who have perpetrated sexual abuse — like Hefner and Trump — are the ones enabling such rights.

The dichotomy between sexist abusers supporting abortion is a double-edged sword. A win for reproductive rights is a win, but in certain cases it is a win in an attempt to continue their abuse. To men like Hefner and Trump, women exist in their context and in relation to their power only. The Playboy bunny is an outdated and sexist symbol that reminds us of how abusive men “support” women in ways that only cater to them.

The argument for “reclaiming” as an act of female autonomy fails to account for the fact that true empowerment does not mean playing by a male-defined script. It means rejecting the very framework that has shaped our understanding of women's bodies and their sexuality as instruments of male control. Today, where the rights of women to control their own bodies are being eroded, this symbol takes on even darker implications. The argument for reclaiming the bunny as an act of female autonomy misses the point: true empowerment is not about playing by a male-defined script. It's about rejecting symbols that have long been used to control women's bodies, sexuality and identities. The fight for reproductive freedom must transcend reclaiming old symbols. It must be about reshaping the meaning of power, identity and autonomy for women.