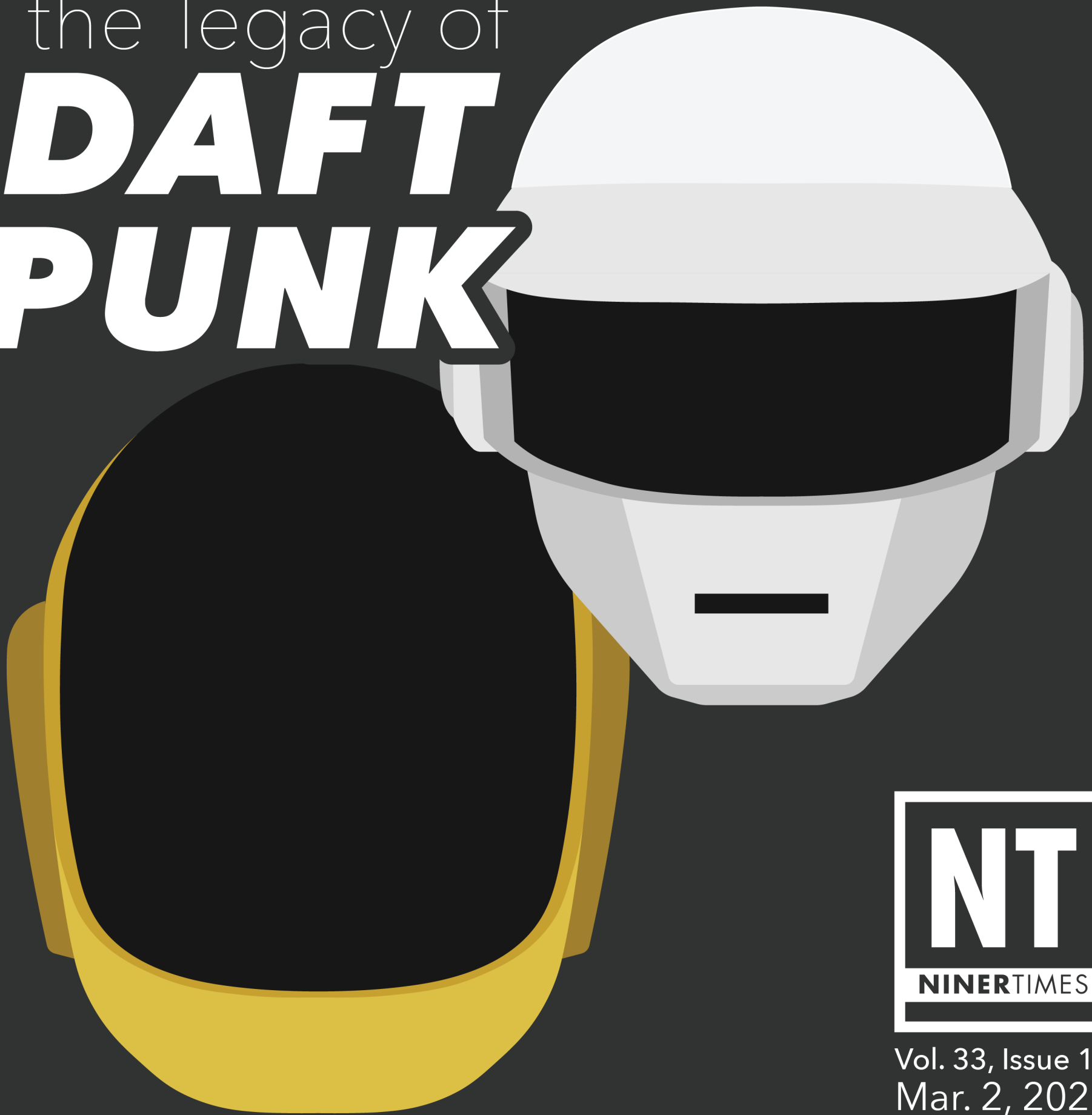


the legacy of
**DAFT
PUNK**



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POLICE BLOTTER

2/26: Verbal Confrontation

Officers responded to Barnard in reference to a verbal confrontation.

2/27: Harassment

Officers responded to the Police Lobby in reference to harassing emails.

2/27: Stalking

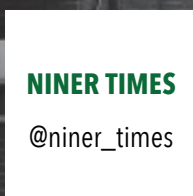
Officers responded to Lynch Hall in reference to a stalking incident.

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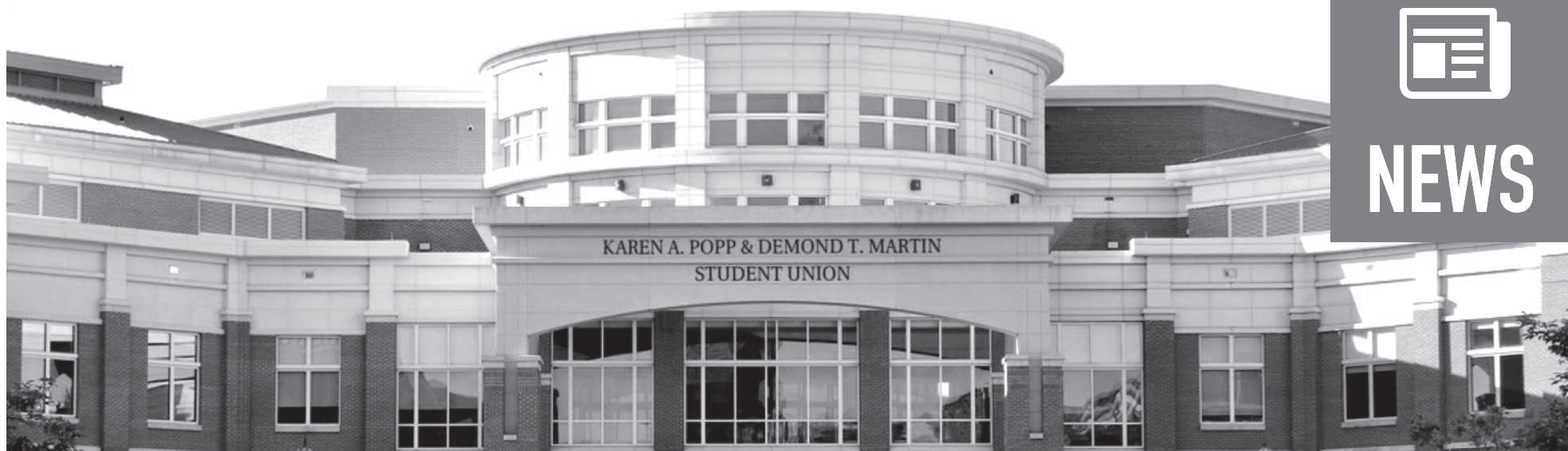


Photo of Niyathi Sulkunte

WHEN WILL STUDENTS GET VACCINATED?

Chancellor Gaber addresses vaccinations and opening campus this fall

by Sam Bujanowski
Intern

As COVID-19 vaccination distribution ramps up, it remains unclear when the University will inoculate UNC Charlotte students.

“The University is working closely with Mecklenburg County on the distribution of the vaccine to our employees and students, following the ordered groups the state has outlined,” explained Chancellor Sharon Gaber in a welcome back message to the community. “Right now, it is still unclear exactly when everyone will be able to receive the shot, but we will share more information with you as soon as we receive it.”

North Carolina currently ranks as the 39th most efficient state for COVID-19 vaccinations in terms of the percentage of state residents who have received at least one vaccine dose. As of Feb. 26, 13% of state residents had received at least one vaccine dose, and 79% of delivered doses had been used. The current North Carolina vaccine distribution plan only allows Group 1 and 2 individuals (frontline healthcare

workers, people aged 65+, and long-term care residents and staff) to be vaccinated. On Feb. 10, the state announced limited vaccine eligibility for Group 3, which is made up of frontline essential workers, beginning on Feb. 24. UNC Charlotte students employed in either childcare or the PreK-12 education system are eligible to receive their vaccine.

Originally, UNC Charlotte students could have been receiving the vaccines a lot sooner. According to an Associated Press report from Jan. 14, the original NC vaccination distribution plan prioritized college and high school students aged 16+ but was modified to simplify vaccine rollout. The new plan lowered the eligibility age of seniors who could receive the vaccine from 75 to 65 and moved students from their prioritized position in Phase 3 to the general population as part of Phase 4.

Other states have established provisions allowing for younger residents to be vaccinated. New Mexico, the second-best performing state in terms of vaccinations,

is currently vaccinating residents aged 16 and older who have underlying conditions. As it stands, North Carolinians who are currently unable to be vaccinated are waiting for Group 4 (adults at high risk of exposure and medical complications) or Group 5 (the general population) to become eligible before receiving their vaccine.

Wasted vaccines are another major challenge with current distribution plans. Vaccine waste statistics are limited, but according to a WCNC Charlotte report, an estimated 1,100 doses have been thrown out since early February in North Carolina alone.

UNC Charlotte does not currently have plans to require the COVID-19 vaccine, but Gaber encouraged students to retain the vaccination cards if they can be inoculated.

“It is our goal to open the campus as fully as possible this fall, which largely will be dependent on a significant percentage of our population receiving the vaccine,” said Gaber.



Photo courtesy of UNC Charlotte

“It is still unclear exactly when everyone will be able to receive a shot”

-Chancellor Gaber

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DR. CHAVIS

Dr. Benjamin Chavis Jr.
Remembering influential
Black UNC Charlotte
alumni



by Elijah Simpson
Intern

Photo courtesy of Beyond My Ken

Dr. Benjamin F. Chavis Jr. is a prominent Black civil rights leader and 1970 graduate of UNC Charlotte. He was born in Oxford, North Carolina, in 1948 to a family with a history deeply rooted in activism and education. His mother, Elizabeth Chavis, served as a teacher for over 30 years, and his father, Benjamin Chavis Sr., was also an educator. His grandfather, John Chavis, was one of the first African Americans to graduate from college in the United States in the 19th century, obtaining a degree from Washington and Lee University and later Princeton University. John Chavis was a well-known religious leader who taught formerly enslaved peoples as well as white students. At the age of 13, Dr. Benjamin Chavis Jr. became the first African American to receive a library card, making the libraries in his area integrated. This was the beginning of what would become a long future in activism for Chavis.

One of few Black students at UNC Charlotte

Dr. Benjamin Chavis Jr. attended Saint Augustine University, where he had the opportunity to work alongside Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. as his assistant. In 1967, he transferred to Charlotte College during its

transition into what we know now as the University of North Carolina at Charlotte. Chavis expressed in an interview with J. Murrey Atkins Library that there was a “warm spirit” on campus. As one of the few African Americans on campus at that time, and one of very few in the chemistry department, Chavis was motivated to further his work in activism on campus. He served as one of the founders of UNC Charlotte Students for Action and later became a co-founder of the Black Student Union. He received his Bachelor’s in Chemistry from UNC Charlotte in 1970 and furthered his activism and education.

Wilmington Ten

In 1971 Chavis was assigned a new role as a field officer for the Commission for Racial Justice to help desegregate the school system. He then relocated to Wilmington, North Carolina, where much racial conflict began to rise between Black and white students. A demonstration eventually rose to violence, leading to a local grocery store being incinerated during a protest. Chavis and nine other citizens were all falsely convicted of conspiracy and arson in relation to the incident. Out of the ten citizens arrested (nine young Black men

and one white woman), Chavis received the longest sentence of 34 years. After serving almost a whole decade in prison, all ten individuals were released due to prosecutorial misconduct. It wasn’t until Dec. 12, 2012, when Chavis’s case would be pardoned, and he would be paid approximately \$50,000 per year he was incarcerated. This case was internationally known and widely referred to as the “Wilmington Ten.”

Remembering Chavis

Dr. Chavis earned his M.S. in Divinity from Duke University and earned a Doctorate in Ministry from Howard University. He served as the executive director of the national chapter of the NAACP for a year and continued to join different organizations to advocate for African American rights. Chavis has been featured in movies like “Belly” and many major moments in hip hop and African American culture. Today, he remains a minister, civil rights leader, TV Host/ Executive producer, author, business CEO, and is a father. Chavis will always be known for his leadership and activism and his huge role in making North Carolina the integrated state it is today.

THE PROBLEM WITH CHARLOTTE'S PUBLIC TRANSIT

OPINION



by Abena Atiemo
Intern

Photo by Patrick Magoon

In Charlotte, 93% of residents own cars. For the remaining 7%, they either live close enough to their respective areas of work and social life, or they must struggle with the inadequate transportation systems we have in place now. For those struggling residents, the inequalities that plague the city manifest themselves in subpar bus stations. The recent additions to public transport like the Lynx Blue Line have attempted to create more variety in getting around. However, there is a long path to heal the deeper issues under the surface of this problem. Transportation in the Queen city reveals the long history that many neighborhoods have with racism, economic injustices and subpar environmental welfare. By breaking these issues down, we can build a better city back up.

Problem one: Segregation

According to a 2010 Mecklenburg demographic map created by UNC Charlotte, it is plain to see that Charlotte is still an incredibly segregated city. More than 75% of Charlotte's Black and Latinx population is found within an 8-mile radius from the city's center, whereas the inverse (less than 25%) is true for Charlotte's white

population. The combination of systemic measures like redlining and gentrification leads to this separation.

Charlotte's Black residents have long pointed out this division. Before the summer of 2020's plethora of public "support" for organizations like Black Lives Matter, Charlotte did the work of protesting against racial injustice in 2016. The shooting of Keith Lamont Scott brought many to uptown to march. This wasn't the city's first and only time reckoning with its dark past and viewing the injustice on display. It was, however, indicative of the mistreatment of Charlotteans of color.

Problem Two: Transport Access

Referring back to the census map mentioned previously, 51-79% of the families that live close to the city's center are facing poverty. NoDa is just outside this range, with 18% of its residents facing poverty. The current bus lines have stops located in more areas of wealth. People in high-poverty areas need to travel close to over two miles to reach a stop. Charlotte Area Transit System (CATS) has oriented its bus lines in a "hub-and-spoke" structure, commonly found in city planning. The system sets up a single

hub, (where opportunity in Charlotte originates) and spokes are the outlying points that get connected to the hub through transportation. The downside is that anywhere outside of a seven to ten-mile ring around uptown is difficult to access. Rider's demand controls the routes. If not many people ride, the rates can go up, or lines can get dropped. Since the majority of Charlotteans as a whole do not drive, the demand is low. The residents of Charlotte can make a change by simply riding the bus where they can. If we all increase ridership, we can leverage the power that we do have and create better options for our neighbors.

Problem Three: Air Quality

In the historically Black neighborhoods of Charlotte, the air quality tends to be poorer. Air Keepers Charlotte, an organization that tracks bad air quality and strategizing ways to clean it, has documented this disparity. Their 2018 report highlighted how this community has a disproportionate amount of pollutant sources like freeways and interstates that go straight through parts of the neighborhood. It is also worth noting the Myers Park/Dilworth area has a largely white

population. This area has not sustained air quality problems and has the best progress raising the area tree canopy coverage. The effects of prolonged negative air quality include asthma and cancer. In a study by the NC Medical Journal, researchers found that asthma rates were higher among more impoverished minority communities. Still, we are potentially dooming generations to illness without solving this problem.

The city is currently experiencing a resurgence of new residents and has begun to create a plan for change. The new 2040 plan proposes key changes. However, it needs to center equity in transportation, or else it will only further the disparities that currently exist. It is important to have these discussions early to make changes that can benefit our city and the people who live in it.



GETTING TO KNOW JHERY MATOS

16 Questions with Charlotte Basketball's Jhery Matos

by Bryson Foster
Staff Writer

Photos by Chris Crews

Charlotte basketball's Jhery Matos has only been with the team for one year but has provided a little bit of everything for the 49ers. Matos, who hails from the Dominican Republic, joined the team this offseason after playing the past two seasons with the Dayton Flyers.

Matos has started every game this season and is fourth on the team scoring, averaging 8.3 points per game on 42.3% shooting. Matos is also third on the team in rebounds at 4.3 per game.

Head Coach Ron Sanchez spoke highly of the veteran.

"He is a mature guy who has been around the block a couple of times," said Sanchez in a weekly press conference before the canceled UTSA series. "He is a guy who is here for a reason. He has done a great job taking care of the basketball."

We see Jhery on the court, but what is he like off it? Matos sat down with the Niner Times so we could get to know the real him.

Bryson Foster: You didn't get much time to prepare for this season, but how do you think you've adapted so far?

Jhery Matos: Covid has made it hard when it came to our final times working out. I feel like the coaches did a great job creating zoom meetings and all that stuff, and we watched a lot of films. I think that helped us get ready mentally before the season started, so we had the time to prepare physically. We went into the season not far behind.

BF: You have one more game in any college arena you've already played in; where would you pick?

JM: I would love to get to play at the UD arena at the University of Dayton.

BF: How have you passed down your knowledge to the younger players?

JM: Communicating. They already know where I'm coming from, and they know what I've been doing, so I feel it's like being able to communicate and be able to listen and just translate. The best way for me to tell the young guys what they need to do better is showing them. When I get on the court, they can just see how it works. I feel like the best way for me to communicate and follow through with my words is through my actions.

BF: What has been your favorite part about the city of Charlotte so far?

JM: I haven't been able to explore the city really well because of the pandemic. We had to stay in our house, and we weren't allowed to hang out with a lot of people or go to a lot of places because of COVID contact tracing, but I feel like the variety of food that we have here is something that I've been able to enjoy. I have been able to find many good restaurants with Spanish food, which I was looking forward to.

BF: Which teammate has helped you get acclimated to your new team the most?

JM: Overall, the majority of them, but I would say Jahmir is one of the guys that I hang out with the most on the team. Marvin Cannon, which is my roommate, who's a transfer from Washington State. We have Milos, which is one of the international guys. I feel the closest to him [Milos Supica] because we come from different backgrounds and have shared different cultures, and that's something that really made us bond. I feel like everybody here has welcomed me with open arms, and I'm just happy to be here with these guys and play the game that we love.

BF: Playing at Dayton, what was it like having current New York Knick Obi Toppin as your teammate?

JM: It was a cool experience, but at the same time, it was normal because he is just a regular guy. Even though we knew how good Obi was, he never went out of his character just because he was a good player. I feel like Obi made it easier to go through tough times, and because of that, we were winning a lot. But he was just fun to be around, and he was just like a little kid. Obi was doing what he loved and enjoyed the game. We all bonded, and we hung out together a lot. I think that was one of the parts that really helped us to be the team that we were.

BF: Who is the funniest teammate on the team?

JM: The funniest teammate has to be between Anzac Rissesto and Marvin Cannon. Marvin is a goofball who always brings smiles to our faces. I can't really tell you any specific examples

because they are constantly making us laugh.

BF: Would you rather have a slam dunk or hit a three?

JM: Right now, I would say hitting a three because that's part of my role on the team, so I know I will be able to do that. I would rather hit a three to win a game or go up with a few seconds left.

BF: How important has Coach Ron Sanchez been to you in just one year?

JM: Coach Sanchez has been great. We have a connection because he is also from the Dominican Republic, and he coached the Dominican national team at some point. Even

"I had to grind every day and do everything I could just to stay in school and do the right thing. It was hard to go through, but at the same time, it taught me a lot. It gave me what I needed to be the person that I am today."

MATOS

though I didn't get to work with him personally when I played on the Dominican national team, I knew about him. I was really looking forward to playing for him when I decided to come here. He's been great, and he knows a lot about the game, and because of our background, it's been a lot easier for me to understand and do what he wants me to do to become a better basketball player. It's a lot easier for him to communicate with me because of our background and our sharing of the same culture. It has been a really good experience for me.

BF: What is your go-to genre of music or artist to listen to before a game?

JM: I'm very open-minded when it comes to music, but mostly I listen to a lot of Spanish music. Many Dominican rappers you guys probably don't know about, but I would say the artist that I listen to the most has to be Bad Bunny. Bad Bunny gets me hyped up and ready for the game.

BF: Who has been the most influential person in your life?

JM: I would say my grandma from my father's side is the most influential person in my life. I feel like she's the one that has kept the family together all this time, and everybody respects and loves her for who she is. "

BF: You mentioned the Dominican Republic; what was it like growing up there?

JM: It was tough. My dad and my mom separated when I was a little kid, and I was three years old. So I had to live with my stepfather since I was a kid. I had to grind every day and do everything I could just to stay in school and do the right thing. It was hard to go through, but at the same time, it taught me a lot. It gave me what I needed to be the person that I am today. So I'm grateful for all the things that I had to go through in order to be here right now.

BF: I'm sure you play 2K; how good are you, and what's your team of choice?

JM: I'm good, it's the only video game that I actually play. I like the Clippers because of Paul George and Kawhi Leonard. Those two are my favorite players in the NBA right now, so I like to play with them.

BF: Favorite postgame food to eat. Are we going for fast food or something more healthy?

JM: I mostly have pasta and Chinese food. I'm not a big fast-food guy. I love rice and chicken or some chicken alfredo pasta. Just talking about it makes me hungry.

BF: What do you hope your legacy will be once you leave Charlotte?

JM: I have many goals that I want to accomplish right now. Accolade-wise, I want to be able to make the first-team all-conference and be a defensive player of the conference as well, stuff like that is nice, but I just want to be able to do something special. Bringing the team to the NCAA tournament and somehow win the conference tournament. I'm willing to do whatever it takes to help my team win. I feel like I'm not really worried about personal accolades. I just want to be the guy that was a part of one of the best teams in Charlotte history.

BF: Looking at the rest of the season, what are some expectations for the final games?

JM: We have (one) more series left before the conference tournament, so I feel like right now we're working more on the defensive side of the ball. I also think we were lacking communication and understanding of what we needed to do in order to win games so I feel like we are especially working on that. These last games are going to help us get the job done and just prepare for the conference because at the end of the day that's where we need to win if you want to make the long run. I feel like we're in a pretty good position right now. We have to face the best teams in our conference so we are pretty confident that we can make a statement. Even though we have lost some, we still can compete against anybody in this conference.

Editor's Note: *This interview has been edited for clarity and brevity.*





The legend of

DAFT PUNK

The legacy of electronic music's ceaselessly creative French duo

by Arik Miguel
Staff Writer

Photo courtesy of
Corey-Adam Crowley via
Flickr

On Feb. 22, Daft Punk released an eight-minute video in which the robotic duo split ways in the vast expanse of a desert when one of them explodes. A title card then reads “1993-2021.” The video is a cheeky and wonderful way to end one of the most impactful, imaginative, and playful careers in electronic music history. Daft Punk birthed entire subgenres of electronic music with ease. It seemed like they appeared once or twice a decade to alter the course of pop and electronic music, just to retreat back into hiding. The duo's infamous robot costumes are ingrained in our cultural psyche. Their legacy is nearly impossible to overstate.

The duo first met in secondary school in 1987 and started making music in 1992 under the name “Darlin.” The music they made under this name was released under Stereolab's Duophonics Records label and was very much rock-focused. A music critic quickly dismissed them as “a daft punky thrash.” With that, the duo pivoted towards electronic music and found a new name.

Daft Punk's debut album “Homework” was released in 1997 to critical acclaim. The album reignited house music and focused the world's attention on the so-called “French Touch” genre. 2001's “Discovery” saw the duo pushing more towards 80s influences and mutating things like Eurodisco and hair metal into futuristic and enticing electropop. Around this time, Daft Punk also introduced their robot costumes, which became a pivotal part of their image. “Human After All” was released in 2005, allegedly written and recorded in six weeks, and saw the duo

further developing their sound and image.

At this point, Daft Punk had already cemented an incredible legacy. A trio of genre-altering albums had earned them a massive following. Critical acclaim and their influence could already be seen clearly in music and pop culture. LCD Soundsystem released a song called “Daft Punk Is Playing at My House.” Kanye West used Daft Punk as the key sample on “Stronger.” Busta Rhymes sampled their song “Technologic.” Daft Punk was bringing house music into the mainstream.

The “Alive 2006/2007” tour was their first since 1997, and it ended up being their last. Its impact, however, is undeniable. Their Coachella set is still heralded as one of the greatest in the history of the music festival. The duo managed to build incredible hype around their live sets through word of mouth and flip phone videos alone. Skrillex allegedly went to a show on the tour, and the set inspired him to pursue music. The live album “Alive 2007” captures Daft Punk's show in Paris in all its rowdy and dynamic glory.

After swiftly rewiring how electronic music shows are experienced—it's not a stretch to say that the flurry of 2010's EDM festivals would not have existed without Daft Punk's live shows—the French duo went on to soundtrack the film “Tron: Legacy.” In 2013, they released the incredibly polished and gorgeously crafted “Random Access Memories.” Their only album to top the Billboard charts became certified platinum, won several Grammys, including Album of the Year, and spawned the hit song “Get Lucky.”

Since the tour-de-force of “Random Access Memories,” Daft Punk remained relatively low-key (aside from being featured on a few songs by The Weeknd), but their star power only grew. After breaking through into pop culture in the early 2000s, they created space for electronic music to flourish in a public and creative way. Through them, genres like dubstep and electro house were able to flourish. In the early 2010s, the radio was filled with EDM-pop collaborations. They proved that electronic music could appeal to the masses and that houses can be combined with pop sensibilities with fantastic results. Music is more playful, more energetic and more interesting

because of them. They achieved new craft levels in electronic production, new catchiness levels in five-second grooves, and new futuristic funk levels. It is certainly tragic to see them go, but we have to remember the legacy they left behind. A legacy of chrome-plated alien-disco songs that, after an almost 30-year career, still sound like nothing but unbridled creativity and dance floor euphoria.





GAME REVIEW:

Super Mario 3D World + Bowser's Fury

by Jake Pierce
Staff Writer

Photo courtesy
of Nintendo

Platform: Nintendo Switch

2013's "Super Mario 3D World" was met with a fair amount of praise upon its Wii U release, but there were some (myself included) who felt it was missing that certain something special. Fast forward to 2021, and Nintendo has taken yet another unique step in its seemingly endless quest to bring over every single heavy-hitting Wii U title to the Nintendo Switch. Not only has "Super Mario 3D World" been tweaked and touched up for a modern re-release, but Nintendo has also crafted a brand new adventure known as "Bowser's Fury," opting to bundle both games together for the price of one. So, the question becomes, how does "Super Mario 3D World" hold up in 2021's gaming space, and what does the all-new "Bowser's Fury" add to the overall package? Let's grab our red caps, exclaim "Let's-a-go!" for at least the 400th time, and find out.

The first half of this package comes in the form of a new-and-improved version of 2013's "Super Mario 3D World." Dozens of stages, full four-player local co-op, multiple playable characters, all with unique gameplay styles, everything that made the original release so much fun has made the transition over to Switch. Following the pattern of Nintendo's other

Wii U to Switch conversions, the game has received a bit of a graphical facelift as well. Nintendo has also implemented a myriad of gameplay changes, the biggest of which being a revamped control scheme that brings the game a bit closer to more recent Mario adventures like 2017's "Super Mario Odyssey." Character movement has been sped up across the board (about 50% faster by my estimations), making the minor complaint of the original game's somewhat sluggish controls null and void. This revamped control scheme makes "Super Mario 3D World" a joy for veterans of the original release and players experiencing it for the first time. The final major addition comes in the form of online multiplayer, though this can't escape the fickle entity that is Nintendo Switch Online. Your results may vary as always with online experiences, but the unplayable lag and low framerates made for one of the worst first impressions an online mode has ever left me with.

Also included on the same cartridge is the all-new Mario adventure "Bowser's Fury." In this game, Mario finds himself trapped in the mysterious "Lake Lapcat," where he is tasked with repairing 10 broken lighthouses to dispel the unknown force that has sent Bowser into a furious rage. "Bowser's Fury" brings the Mario series

the closest to a fully open world that it has ever been. In many ways, this is a brilliant move, as the game manages to capture a very "Breath of the Wild." Players can see points of interest in the distance and make their way over to them, all while hunting for secrets and picking up collectibles along the way. There are 10 main stages where the game's most tightly packed platforming challenges can be found. Still, there is a virtual avalanche of bonus objectives spread across the map between these main areas, and these are perhaps the most satisfying to find and complete.

While the central idea of "Bowser's Fury" is fantastic, the execution is not without its problems. For starters, progression in "Bowser's Fury" can sometimes feel a bit arbitrarily limited. While each main area has multiple objectives, they often require different objects and layouts for Mario to traverse. Nintendo has attempted to mask these transitions with careful loading practices, but this requires players to leave the area temporarily and come back later. It's a good idea on paper, but in practice, the system comes off as incredibly confusing until you figure out what's going on. Once you understand the rules, it becomes easier to deal with, but the mechanics could be communicated more clearly to

the player. One final point of contention is the game's technical performance. The lush environments on display here combined with the towering "Fury Bowser" often prove a bit too much for the Switch's mobile-oriented chipset to handle. The result is the framerate and overall responsiveness of the game slowing down to a snail's pace in certain circumstances.

While both parts of this two-in-one offer certainly have their flaws, it's hard to deny the value here in terms of sheer content. "Super Mario 3D World + Bowser's Fury" provides players with dozens of hours of platforming goodness across two very distinct gameplay styles. The visuals are gorgeous, the music is delightful, and Mario (as always) controls like a dream in both settings. The gameplay enhancements seen in "3D World" combined with the novelty of the brand new concepts on offer in "Bowser's Fury" should be more than enough to pique the interest of even those who played the Wii U original. It may not be perfect, but the portly plumber's latest adventure still reminds players why Mario always remains close to the top of the pack.

Rating 8/10

What is NT listening to?

by Arik Miguel, Madison Smith, Tyler Trudeau, Lauryn Massenburg, James Levison, Anders Hare, and Madison Dobrzanski

The beauty of music streaming services is that we can discover new audio from any genre and any time, and consume as much of it as we please. As avid music listeners, we thrive off of expanding our musical palettes into uncharted territory; so much so, we often turn to poorly curated playlists in search of what's hot or what's next. But oftentimes, we get stuck in musical ruts. It's okay to admit it: we've all had times where we get stuck listening to the same music over and over again. Sometimes we want to turn off the same five songs we listen to and put on something fresh and exciting. The answer to this solution is the Arts & Entertainment Staff-curated playlist. Straight out of the A&E staff Spotify think tank is a list spanning decades, genres and musical tastes. From Lucky Daye to Little Mix, from Playboi Carti to the Chicago Underground Trio, this playlist has something for everyone. Whether you're into pop, jazz, R&B, rap or any other genre under the sun, the A&E staff has you covered with an eclectic mix of some of their favorite tracks.



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Cultural Self-help Books

A look into Japanese mindsets and the books that introduce them

by Marina Klimova
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LIFESTYLE

The ensuing pandemic has put a hold on many of our trips, whether within the United States or abroad, so we've had to find ways to travel locally or virtually. All of those plans of seeing new cultures and trying new rhythms through different countries' mindsets have been set aside for later years. I was planning on studying abroad in Kyoto, Japan, during the spring semester but had to cancel and leave Japan for another time. Still, I offer you another way of exploring Japan with me through these books, offering pieces of Japanese philosophy and aesthetics. They present a view of happiness that can be achieved by changing yourself from the inside out. Immerse yourself in Japan with me in what I call cultural self-help.

These easy-to-read books are full of fun illustrations, photos, quotes, recipes and ideas for various activities centered around a unifying concept. This little guide briefly describes each book and suggests those that you might want to read. Learning about the little quirks of different cultures can be inspiring!

Here are a few books introducing some mindsets of the Japanese people:

- "A Little Book of Japanese Contentments" by Erin Niimi Longhurst
- "Ikigai: The Japanese Secret to a Long and Happy Life" by Hector Garcia
- "The Book of Ichigo Ichie" by Hector Garcia and Frances Miralles

Since I've been a fan of Japanese culture for a few years, I've bought my own copy of "A Little Book of Japanese Contentments" after I had checked it out at the library one too many times. Every time I read it, I find a new activity or piece of wisdom to incorporate into my life.

The book is separated into three sections that encompass Japanese values and how to implement them. "Kokoro" meaning heart and mind, "Karada" meaning

body and "Shukanka" meaning forming habits. Altogether these sections display Japan's love of nature and simplicity and a lot of the advice springs from Japanese philosophies such as Zen Buddhism. There are explanations of traditional activities like kintsugi (the art of repairing broken pottery with golden paint), shodo (Japanese brush calligraphy), shinrin-yoku (forest bathing), and ikebana (flower arranging). Additionally, they give a sense of the little rhythms that form Japanese life, such as the mindset of shoganai (increased flexibility to accept what cannot be changed) and mono no aware (the beauty of the intransient). Anyone can try participating in Japanese culture and celebrate how different we all are!

I loved the part about shinrin-yoku, forest bathing, which basically immerses yourself in nature and fully focuses on it to relax. I tried doing it with my family, and it was a fun outing to the woods! I like to practice shinrin-yoku whenever life starts to get to me and stress is breathing down my neck. It gives me a moment to enjoy the weather, soak in the shapes of trees and flowers and slow my mind down for a second.

I was also inspired to try Shodo and joined the Shodo Calligraphy Club at UNC Charlotte. It has been a journey to learn the way of the brush and familiarize myself with the peaceful mindset that comes with writing Japanese Zen phrases. I encourage you to try it too! There will be a special event on Mar. 11 called "Calligraphy from a Monk's View" that introduces the concept of Shodo. You can find more information about the event on Niner Engage by searching for the Shodo Calligraphy Club.

The next two books, "Ikigai: The Japanese Secret to a Long and Happy Life" and "The Book of Ichigo Ichie," are by the same authors, so they have a similar writing style.

They structure the books through a central theme focused on one Japanese concept such as "Ikigai," which means finding the one activity that you enjoy, are adept at, and which will give you purpose for the rest of your life. "Ichigo ichie," which encapsulates the transience of specific meetings and moments in time, somewhat like carpe diem. These concepts are accompanied by little anecdotes of the author's experiences in Japan, scientific studies, and other Japanese cultural topics.

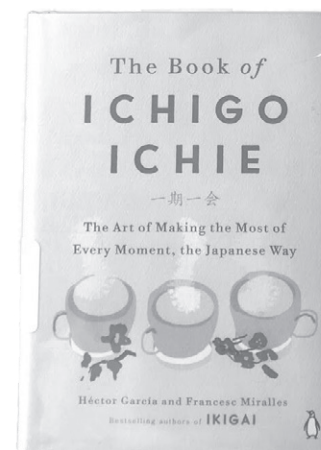
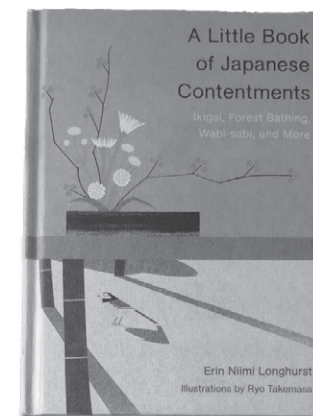
"Ikigai: The Japanese Secret to a Long and Happy Life" presents a study of finding why Japanese people are such champions of longevity and explores the elderly and their secrets. Time and again, they find it is because these individuals have found their ikigai and pursue life with passion even after retirement. It shows that ikigai is about looking deep inside yourself and finding happiness through doing what you love with who you love.

"The Book of Ichigo Ichie" is different from "Ikigai: The Japanese Secret to a Long and Happy Life" in that it pinpoints the present moment. Ichigo ichie is a way of living every day and minute with meaning. The book surveys this mindset through every part of life to transform your home life, work and parties from day-to-day blips of time into inspired living. Pick this book up if you find yourself drifting through life and need to meditate on what it means to make the most of every moment.

I found this last book full of sweetness, cheer and light-heartedness. I picked this book up because there was a Shodo Calligraphy Club meeting about ichigo ichie and

I wanted to learn more about this concept. I wasn't disappointed in this overview and became inspired to live life more fully.

I hope at least one of these sparked your interest, persuades you to pick them up at your local library or buy one of them. The UNC Charlotte library doesn't carry these books, but the Charlotte Mecklenburg Library system does. May your curiosity for other cultures inspire you to become more informed and happy!



All about Norm the Niner

The history, relevance and fun facts of the UNC Charlotte mascot

by Emily Kottak
Lifestyle Editor

“Go Niners!” students shout in excitement and anticipation when cheering on their team. Pick-axe hand signs are thrown in the air, seas of green, white and gold apparel cover the stands and, if you are lucky, you will see Norm the Niner running about.

UNC Charlotte has not always had this name. Originally established in 1946, the school was Charlotte Center of the University of North Carolina (CCUNC). CCUNC was a night school, so the athletic teams were known as the Owl's. However, in 1949 when the school risked being shut down by the state, Bonnie Cone helped save the school and it then became Charlotte College. Cone definitely felt that the “49er spirit” was a crucial part of the university

Did you know?

You can request a Norm appearance! Norm is available to attend events such as weddings, charity, corporate, school and church events, birthday and graduation parties, etc. Simply submit a request by completing an appearance request form.

because of how much settlers had to endure when traveling to the U.S. in hopes of striking gold. This is why the 49ers became the mascot.

Norm the Niner first made his debut in 1962 after a student vote in November 1961 to change the mascot. The miner was chosen as the mascot for our school because of the nearby Reed Gold Mine in Concord, NC. This gold mine was actually the site of the first documented gold find in the United States, occurring in 1799. In fact, UNC Charlotte's main campus front entrance is located on North Carolina Highway 49 (a coincidence).

Throughout the next couple of years, Norm's design and wardrobe continued to update. Nowadays, Norm is always seen wearing his slouch hat, a 49er athletic uniform and carrying his trusty pick-axe. Norm is a member of the spirit squad and travels to away athletic events. Norm also makes frequent appearances around UNC Charlotte at events as well as the surrounding Charlotte area.

While most UNC Charlotte students know who Norm is and know that he is our beloved mascot, he is not super well-known among non-Charlotte residents. I feel that this is because Norm is rarely represented

in UNC Charlotte merchandise. Usually on UNC Charlotte apparel and merchandise, the logo is the only thing you can find. It seems like the only time we see Norm is if he is on a picture around campus or if he is seen in person. I would love to see Norm featured more prominently, including, on more merchandise or seen on things around campus more often. I also don't think it's out of the question to ask if Norm will ever be rebranded. In some images, Norm appears to be smiling, kind and happy looking. In other words, not threatening. This isn't a bad image but it also wouldn't be a bad idea to consider rebranding Norm and making him more intimidating and fierce. This would especially appeal for athletic and sporting events, when we most often see Norm. While Norm is not irrelevant, our mascot definitely deserves some more attention and prevalence in Charlotte and beyond.



Niner Times File Photo of
Norm the Niner