

Scepter

The Students' Voice

Kingsborough Community College

Spring 2023

The City University of New York



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Scepter welcomes letters to the editors and opinions from the entire Kingsborough Community.

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Embracing the Globe

KCC Tries to Ease the Struggles of Foreign-Born Students

By Jon Sosa

The international flags over the cafeteria give us a feeling of the international community; of 142 different countries and 73 different native languages throughout Kingsborough, one may find students from each part of the world. According to the Enrollment data profile of Kingsborough, there are an estimated number of 14,214 enrolled students. Distributed by ethnicity, the largest demographic, would be 37.4% Black, 29.1% White, and 17.7% Hispanic.

Nevertheless, Kingsborough collection data shows in 2019, foreign-born students made up 35.6% of enrollment. The greatest portions are from Asia and the Caribbean. Asia, for example, includes China, Pakistan, Hong Kong, Philippines, Israel, and India, and the Caribbean has representatives from Dominican Republic, Jamaica, and Trinidad & Tobago. Despite these places having a lot of representation, South America, and Eastern Europe also appear on the list: countries such as Colombia and Ecuador, or in Eastern Europe, Ukraine, and Poland. National origin USA territories represent 64.4%, while 35.6% are born outside the country.

There are obstacles that international students face when they transfer to KCC from their countries of origin. First, the new education system: even with the knowledge they possess, when they get enrolled at college in the U.S. it can be confusing thinking about G.P.A or financial concerns. In fact, they are not familiar with this type of education. Secondly, a new country's culture can be unfamiliar. Meeting friends who share some similarities might be hard, and differences in decorum can impede communication. However, there is a diversity of student groups where they can start to meet new friends.



Furthermore, one of the hardest issues is the language. Learning English can be a challenge, whether students took classes in their own country, or they just are beginning. Fortunately, KCC has the necessary tools to tackle that issue. Kingsborough English Language Institute (KELI) helps students to improve their English Skills to be ready for college and they learn new education concepts as well.

If you are an international student and you are lost, you should not be worried. There are services to aid foreign students such as International Students Affairs (ISA), where you will find support in academic concerns and extracurricular activities. These services could help you to develop your student life and successful college experience.

You may notice that you're sharing a class with international classmates. So, do not forget to ask about culture, gastronomy, or about foreign countries. You could build a good international friendship relationship.

A Message from Antheon

KCC Literary Journal Wins Honorable Mention

KCC's 2022 Antheon has won an honorable mention in the Graphis New Talent 2023 competition. It was designed by Graphic Design and Illustration students Nicholas Martinez and Armani Ferreira under the watchful eye of their professor, Kristin Derimanova, director of the program. Published annually in the spring, Antheon is a collection of the best student literary and visual artwork created during the academic year, as chosen by a team of student designers and editors. Submissions for the 2024 edition are currently being accepted for consideration. It's open to all enrolled KCC students.



Antheon Submission Form

JOIN ODYSSEY

Odyssey, Kingsborough's yearbook, is looking for graphic designers and photographers. If you are a Kingsborough student and are interested in photography and/or graphic design, please talk to us in M230.

Campus News

Fasting is a Powerful and Cheap Drug KCC Student Shares Their Experience with Anorexia

By Susy Grison Manzan

Living in a busy day-to-day life, in the middle of a city of skyscrapers and deviating from the number of people around us on the streets of the big city, makes us see that today we are increasingly busy and less concerned with things like our mental health. In these days where fake is worth more, correct body image sells more, people are unconcerned about how children grow up, go through puberty, their first sexual experiences, and their mental health.

We human beings can be so superficial that nowadays we are more concerned with our appearance for that “significant” Instagram photo. This is more relevant than seeing if we are healthy or if everything we do for that “perfect” body is healthy. But how far are we capable of going to find the “perfect” body and feel accepted today? Would we get to the point of not eating to fit this stereotype that everyone wants? All of you are probably drawing the same conclusions that you will find on every page of books, articles, and news that you can find on the internet: anorexia, also known as anorexia nervosa. It is a condition in which the patient expresses excessive anxiety, an uncontrolled desire to lose weight and maintain beauty.

Data informs us that anorexia and bulimia are diseases that affect at least 1% of the world's population. This represents 70 million people and 90% of them are women. Most common in adolescence, eating disorders are psychological problems with immense physical consequences and there's nothing glamorous or romantic about being anorexic or bulimic, that is, fasting is a powerful and cheap drug. But have you ever wondered what anorexia really feels like? Because in these lines I want to present to you my anorexic reality. Presently I'm an “ex-ana” – as we call people who suffer from the disease online – an anorexia survivor.

Having a mental illness at such a young age, as it was in my case, makes us afraid of everything we will face in life. Anorexia nervosa is an eating disorder that is difficult to treat and has high morbidity. Let's begin with the false fairy tale that I created in my head when I moved to Argentina in 2012 to pursue my medical studies – in Latin America medicine is different from the United States, studies begin during the Bachelor's program – and I decided to improve my health. At that time, I weighed 216 lbs. and my intention was to lose weight in a healthy way. However, our minds are amazing at playing with ourselves.

I began to do physical exercises correctly. I looked for a nutritionist who could help me start my diet. Like every beginning in history, everything was flowers. I was losing weight correctly and managing to reach the weight I wanted to reach. However, as the days went by,

the stress of college pushed me to lose more weight. I believed that the thinner I would be, the more energy I would have to deal with all the studies and tests I was having. That was my biggest mistake. Everyone told me that I was already at my ideal weight, but my mental mirror showed me something else in front of the real mirror; I didn't see myself as thin, I wanted to lose more weight every day.

I stopped using my personal trainer at the gym, started doing Pilates, started looking at all the calories in every grain of food I ate, started walking the streets looking for scales in pharmacies – very common in Argentina and Brazil – to weigh myself and see how much I could eat that day. In addition, I began to question whether my friends were really my friends and whether my boyfriend really loved me, because everyone warned me about my low weight; what my head said was that they were jealous of my willpower, and my new achievement: the famous perfect body.

The dream of the most ideal body came true when I decided to invest in this amazing body, however, it was not exactly what I wanted. I looked for modeling agencies to invest in my career and somehow show my friends how right I was and how jealous they were. However, I want to make it clear that not all agencies are irresponsible with models like the one I ended up looking for in Argentina. Despite being visible that I was very lightweight – 98 lbs – that my hair and nails were weak, and that my skin was not cared for at all, the agency said that I was “ideal” for the modeling job that I would be hired for. At that moment I believed that I had reached the height of my achievement, but in my head, I still needed more.

Meanwhile, my fairy tale was about to become the most painful nightmare of my life. This is when a friend of mine, not knowing how to help me anymore, took a picture of me from the back and sent it to me via message. I, however in my innocence asked who the person was because she was very thin. She looked at me and commented that that person was me. At that moment I didn't believe it. I thought she had reached the limit of envy and moved away from her.

Days after my mother decided that she had to somehow save me before it was too late, she traveled with my father to Argentina. When I arrived at the airport, she started crying when she saw me so thin. She began talking to me about how I had allowed myself to get to the point where I couldn't walk very far. I got to the point where I didn't have my periods anymore, to the point where I practically couldn't eat anything. It was at this moment that I woke up from the dream and received the worst reality I could have wanted. I was

sick, I was anorexic.

It was exactly on that day that I decided to start my years of struggle, because my case was too complicated, because I was too weak. I started to follow-up with six doctors: a cardiologist, gynecologist, general practitioner, psychiatrist, endocrinologist, and my psychologist. Also, I started looking for groups with other girls where I could help and be helped because I wanted to be where people could help me understand what I was going through.

I was judged, I was looked at as something abnormal, with people always telling me, “she doesn't like to eat,” but these people don't know that I suffered and suffer from a disease that goes beyond the fact of liking food, a disease that messes with your head. Every day, despite being in treatment, I had to see myself as I was in the mirror, this time the real me. Few know that the days of a person with anorexia are filled with pain from having to eat, forcing their stomach to increase in size. They spend nights afraid of dying in their sleep due to cardiac arrest because their heart does not have the necessary strength.

At that time, I ended up having to stay in the hospital because I really couldn't control my emotions; I ended up having panic attacks where I thought I was dying. This nightmare is painful for everyone who went through it with me. As the days went by, I learned how to control my emotions, to eat healthily and gain weight to be stronger.

Nowadays I see thousands of people selling the perfect body on social networks, encouraging weight loss, and selling products and courses for people to achieve this false form of happiness. After these years of struggle, because there is no cure for anorexia, I learned how beautiful and perfect my body is, with its scars and shape. Today I'm a model, but conscious, knowing my limits and knowing I must follow the right steps to keep my body healthy. I learned that I am not alone in my illness and that thousands of women and men are out there on the streets with the same problem. I reached the deepest and darkest point of my life to know the value of living and to fight for it.

In addition to all that has been mentioned in these lines, I want the reader to know that there are people asking for help, there are people wanting to help and you can be both or at least one of them, but above all, know that you are not alone. I am a “former ANA,” current fighter, and forever warrior against a disease without cure. However, treatment and the days will get better and better. May we choose not to judge, but to help those who are lost in the virtual image of a mirror without seeing their real reflection.

JOIN SCEPTER, BE PART OF OUR TEAM!

Scepter is always recruiting new team members to contribute to monthly editions of the paper.

If you are a Kingsborough student and are interested in writing, photography, layout design, or copy editing, talk to us in M230. You can also email your opinion or letter to the editor to:

scepterpublications@gmail.com

Finding Your Own Way to the Runway

KCC Fashion Show: Spring 2023

By Joseph Bucci

On May 18, Kingsborough students manifested their passion for fashion on the runway.

With the help of volunteer models, Fashion Design faculty, and student government, students from both the FD-22 and FD-92 courses were able to show off the looks they have been developing this past semester in the *KCC Fashion Show: Spring 2023*.

The 20 featured students had complete control and responsibility for their designs, from sketching to garment construction and tailoring. Two awards for outstanding excellence were also presented, one for each course.

Professor Sharon Parker announced the recipient of the award for FD-22: Athene Wilcox. "It's not just about design: it's about the craftsmanship, it's about how you execute and display your talents, your draping, your sewing skills, and your sketching abilities. Most people don't understand that, but she had all of the components," said Parker.

Professor Katherine Nareski, the host of the event, presented the outstanding excellence award for FD-92 to Melissa Zephyr. "As you can see, she did a wonderful job with construction: the accessorizing, the styling, the makeup. The whole collection goes together, and all works cohesively," Nareski said. "These fabrics are not easy to work with, and she did a fantastic job."

Held biannually, the *KCC Fashion Show* not only lets students show their stuff, but serves as a route to complete a professional portfolio. The Fashion Design department aims to create the next generation of fashion designers.



Photos by Papan Shill

A New Home in Fashion

Yemen-Born KCC Student Manages the Runway and a Family

By Joseph Bucci

Ashgan Naji, 22 and born in Yemen, is a first-generation college student, married, with a 1-year-old son. As a Fashion Design student, Naji makes her runway debut in the *KCC Fashion Show: Spring 2023*, while balancing being a mother, wife, and student.

Scepter: You moved to Brooklyn in 2016? Where did you move from, and how do you like Brooklyn by comparison?

Naji: I moved from Yemen. First, I moved to Egypt, then to Jordan, and then I came here. So, I made it in three trips. Brooklyn, it's not that busy, you know, not like the city. I don't know how to explain it; it's calm, quiet, and it's really good. It makes you feel like you are in a new place.

Scepter: How was it adjusting to Brooklyn up until college?

Naji: I had no idea about the United States and everything. I was 16, so I went directly to high school, so I knew not even a word of English; I knew nothing. I was in 11th grade, in Rachel Carson High School, when I took some ESL classes and started to learn English. I graduated from there, and the YPC program, and applied for college in 2020.

Scepter: Why did you choose Kingsborough specifically?

Naji: I first started out as a Nursing student, and Kingsborough has a really good Nursing program, but I realized it was not for me and switched to Fashion Design. I like to do things on my own; I thought about maybe opening my own business, selling my stuff, and I wanted to work with big companies and big brands.

I also had experience in fashion, like I knew

how to sew and how to drape. Also, the beach here, that's the second reason why I chose to come here: the beach and the view are beautiful.

Scepter: Where did your prior experience with sewing and draping come from?

Naji: My mom, actually, taught me how to sew and how to set up the machine. If I have ripped pants or another garment, I just sew it. My mom went to fashion school in my country and got so many awards. I was like, "oh, I like that," and I wanted to be like her.

Scepter: Your pieces in the show, they have big bows on the back and tapered sleeves, is there any particular influence that went into your design?

Naji: Yes, first, the fabric. I chose the fabric because I wanted it to be a bridal. The second reason is because I wanted to design something I haven't done before. Mikado is very thick and very hard to work with. I wanted to challenge myself and work with this fabric. The bow, I did the last second actually. I was thinking, "maybe, it would be more beautiful if I added the bow."

The real secret behind my designs is that I wanted to stand out. I wanted to bring the audience's attention to the shining fabric. But, it didn't quite come out the way I wanted. Mostly, I wish the fabric was brighter; I wanted it to glow.



Photos by Papan Shill
Naji's Model Shines
in her Mikado Dress

Scepter: How did it feel finally seeing your pieces on the runway?

Naji: Amazing! I was like, "I'm gonna be the one! My pieces are out there, they're just incredible." I was just so proud, "how did I make this?" I went through a lot, and at one point I didn't think I would make it to the fashion show. I made it at the last second; I'm so proud of myself.

Scepter: Would you like to share any of those struggles?

Naji: It's life, you know? Babies, married life, all that. I've been married for two years, and my son is 1-year-old. I'm struggling a lot to balance it: my own problems, my husband's problems, my son, and then you add school and all that. Currently, I'm working in the Admissions Information Center with the work study program. I am also taking five classes, and plan to take two more over the summer. It puts me down, which is why I'm always focused on keeping up.

My family takes care of my son during the day, and when I get home, I focus on work and taking care of my baby. Then I sleep, and it's sort of the same routine every day.

Scepter: Is there anything else you would like to mention?

Naji: My professors are the best. Really, I mean Professor Parker has taught me a lot of things, so I have learned a lot from her. Also, Professor Cutting: he helped me with a lot, especially with draping. For sewing, I learned from Professor Parker. My professors, really, are good.

Navigating Life's Waves

From Foreign Literature to Brooklyn Boats

By Kimber Nelon

It's 6pm on a Wednesday evening in Kingsborough Community College's Coastal Piloting and Seamanship class. Captain Donovan Withers, Deputy Director of KCC's Maritime Technology program, is explaining sailboat right-of-way rules. Suddenly, he pauses mid-lecture and begins to inscribe a series of esoteric scratches on the board, overhead lights illuminating the two dragons and stylized scorpion tattooed on his shaved head.

Turning back to his puzzled class, he solemnly intones the opening lines of a 12th century Tang Dynasty poem, first in Mandarin and then in English, "Bright moonlight before my bed..."

When asked by a student what prompted this unexpected tangent, Captain Withers, who has a bachelor's degree in Chinese Language and Literature from Hunter College, replies that he likes to make sure that he hasn't forgotten it. "I still find it fascinating and I practice every day." During breaks in his work day, one can sometimes find him in his office, sheets of paper filled with Chinese characters strewn across his desk. Further evidence of his passion for the language is his phone ring tone which announces in Mandarin "He is my friend".

So how did a passionate Sinophile end up teaching budding boat captains in Brooklyn? It was a curious journey.

As college graduation loomed over the horizon,

the twenty-something Withers began to feel unmoored, unsure what to do with his very cerebral degree. Although his single mom had made it a point to instill a love of literacy in him, a career in academia held no appeal. Neither did business – or law. "I was – and they don't really use this phrase anymore – a 'man of action,'" says the high-school drop-out – Withers earned a GED – "I realized I was gonna spend the rest of my life under fluorescent lights if I wasn't careful. So I started to go in another direction."

While researching his options, he learned that a graduate degree in International Transportation Management and Administration from State University of New York Maritime College came with a tantalizing bonus – a ship's officer's license. At that point Withers – who had zero recreational boat experience – said to himself, "Self, if you wanna go drive big ships, maybe you should learn how to drive a boat first." To that end he enrolled at KCC, simultaneously earning an AAS in Maritime Technology while finishing his last two years at Hunter.

It looked like smooth sailing for the newly-minted mariner when fate unexpectedly forced him off course; his new bride announced she was expecting and the soon-to-be father needed a paying job, stat. He quickly found work as a deckhand on New York Harbor dinner boats. With his valuable professional training from KCC, Withers says he was promoted 'almost

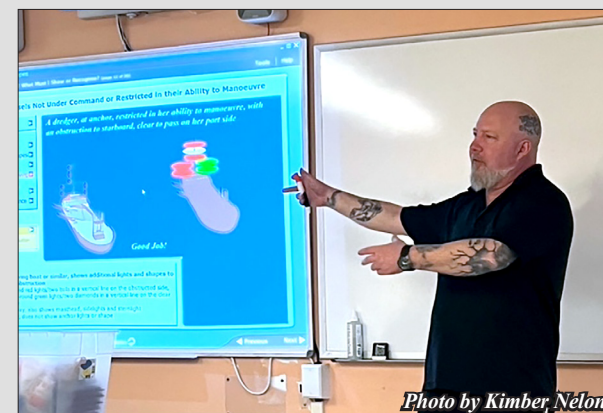


Photo by Kimber Nelon
Captain Withers Brings a Wealth of
Experience to the Classroom

immediately' to mate, accumulating experience and sea hours, which he eventually parlayed into a captain's license.

After eight years crewing and commanding dinner boats, Withers applied to be the facilities manager at Seaplane Base #1 – 'the busy one' – on East 23rd Street in Manhattan. The job was challenging, but he eventually grew tired of the corporate environment. So when a college laboratory technician position opened up at KCC, Withers jumped at the opportunity to pass his love of seafaring on to the next generation.

"It is supremely honest and ethical work. There's no dissembling or rhetoric. The boat has to get where it's going safely and the people have to be safe and that's the job. There's no room for many of the human foibles that we encounter when the goal is to make money or to get published or to climb the corporate ladder and this kind of stuff. The only thing that is rewarded is performance."

Entertainment

Family Owned, Family Feels

Local Bar, Wheeler's, Brings a Sense of Community For All

By Kimber Nelon

The sign in the window says "No Sushi." So if a spicy dragon roll is on the evening's agenda, there are plenty of other places on Sheepshead Bay Drive that can make that happen. If, on the other hand, you're hankering for a heaping helping of human connection, you can't go wrong with Wheeler's Bar and Restaurant.

"It's like Cheers, where everybody knows your name," says long-time regular Omar Rodriguez, referencing the hit 80s sitcom set in the titular Boston bar. The retired law enforcement officer estimates he has been visiting this popular local hangout for the past twenty years. "If you don't come in, they worry," he says as Van Morrison's Moondance plays on the jukebox.

It's an atmosphere owner/proprietor Mike Starace and his family have strived to cultivate ever since his parents, Peter and Rita, opened the place way back in 1979. "Everybody feels comfortable here," says the Sheepshead Bay native.

Starace is not exaggerating when he says 'everybody.' On the days when he's not out picking up fresh fish and meats from local suppliers, you can find the powerfully-built retired firefighter circulating among the guests – whether it's a young Russian couple, toddlers in tow, looking for lunch, a middle-aged woman unabashedly savoring the restaurant's excellent buffalo wings in solitude at the gleaming 42-foot long cherry wood bar, or a cluster of 20-something construction workers catching a game on one of the establishment's ten TVs.

Given its proximity to the college, it's no

surprise that KCC community members have long made up a significant portion of Wheeler's customer base. "We get quite a bit of nursing students. Before finals, after finals, graduation," says the one-time Kingsborough student – Starace studied business law for two semesters before leaving to join the fire department. "We always get KCC security guards. And employees going to the train."

Wheeler's clientele reflects the area's ever-changing demographics. In addition to the neighborhood's established Irish, Jewish and Italian-American denizens, "We get a lot of new immigrants. Some of them right off the boat. They love it here. This is Americana to them" Starace says of his Russian, Ukrainian, and Asian customers. "Plus," he adds, smiling, "they like my Brooklyn accent."

It's this diversity that draws Fiona Barsck, 26, back at least once a month. Well, that, and the reasonably-priced drinks. "I'm always looking for this kind of pub-like atmosphere. But outside you have to pay, like, \$14 for a drink, while here they're \$8 or \$9 dollars," she says, taking a sip of her Jameson and ginger ale. Oh, and also the food. "The mussels in white wine sauce are amazing."

Starace's genuine hospitality extends beyond his customers to his employees, some of whom have been with Wheeler's for 25, 30, even 40 years – a phenomenon almost unheard of in an industry notorious for its high turnover.

Mert Celik, 24, busboy and soon-to-be-waiter credits this to the camaraderie among his co-workers.



Photo by Kimber Nelon

Owner Starace is always looking for conversation

"It's the friendship and trust in each other," says the Turkish immigrant. "We all love working in this place."

This devotion from both customers and employees has paid dividends over the years, especially during the tough times. "The day after Hurricane Sandy hit [when the water level reached 39 inches inside], I came in the side door and the place was just trashed. Every table and chair was overturned. Bottles all over the place," Starace recalls, his voice trailing off. "But everybody showed up and we went to work immediately. Christmas Eve we re-opened. It was packed. You know, we've been established here a long time."

The pandemic hit even harder. "We have nice weekends, but it doesn't feel like we're back 100%." Luckily, the restaurant's now booming take-out business has helped it stay afloat. "We do DoorDash and Grubhub. It helps, but it hurts," says Starace, who is counting on his loyal customer base to once again see this beloved neighborhood haunt through. "[When an order comes on], you can see it's your customers; you recognize the names. But you'd rather see them sitting here eating and drinking."

Dare to Embark on a New Journey

Deep House Album Guides You Through an Imaginary World

By Joseph Bucci

Through sublime synergy of individual parts, music can elicit much more than just sound. Antman Ant, in his newest EDM album, *Resonate*, does just that: scrolling vast dreamscapes before your eyes while you chill or strut.

The English artist took advantage of COVID lockdowns to hone his production talents and that wise time investment yields an engaging ambient experience across 13 tracks. However, rather than total monotony, a few tracks turn the energy up just the right amount to keep a start-to-finish listen dynamic and fun.

Smooth, drifting melodies greet the listener on every track. While maintaining the obvious qualities of electronic instrumentation, the notes somehow ebb and flow like currents. The note quality excellently outlines both the most ambient tracks like the intro "Asleep 100 Years," and tracks with a funkier pulse like "You Know."

Underlying the melodic elements, strong percussion and bass pulls you through the nebulous journey. "Tin Man" illustrates the importance of these grounding parts, as well as Ant's adept incorporation. The rolling drums provide enough

thrust to keep the song moving, despite the vast and empty atmosphere. More than anything, no part of any track feels out of place or overly centered. Balance is the star in every way.

Within individual tracks, however, the sound can feel repetitive, as ambient EDM and house often does. Ant's incorporation of vocals in tracks like "At Night" and "Won't Let Me" does quite a bit to enhance the dynamism and ward off some of that monotony. The vocals flow into the complete image just as well as the instrumental parts and provide some needed contrast. But as sparse as they are, the vocals can leave you wanting a little more.

Ant also works to hold interest through song structure, often with a retreat towards ambience

in the middle of a track, followed by a swell in energy. While the transitions between are certainly interesting, the individual sections, like the last third of "Resonate," can get old quickly. Despite the precise production, dense repetitive phrases are an apparent weakness. More variation in melody within

these smaller sections would be appreciated.

Though in most cases, the lively rhythm and melting tones keep your body interested even if your brain finds itself elsewhere. The nature of ambient music certainly excludes itself from those who want to belt along to their favorite tunes, but for fans of the deep house genre, or people who need to wiggle their shoulders while working, *Resonate* sends the right signals down your spine.



Antman Ant creates a full album experience

Bigger Budgets Smaller Imagination

How the Film Industry is Incentivized to be Less Interesting

By Joseph Bucci

While watching a movie trailer, have you ever gotten the feeling that you have already seen it? Why did we just see the ninth *Rocky* movie release? Cinema has been fed through a funnel, and, like everything else, it's all about the money.

As films have become more grandiose in setting, more reliant on digital effects, and more ambitious in reach, budgets have had to rise to accommodate large studio goals. This of course, means movies are a larger risk to produce, and need to bring in a proportionately larger audiences to turn a profit. The studios best positioned to invest in film, like Disney and Universal, turn to safe stories and trite tropes, overall lowering the quality of their work.

Due to the price of advertising, distribution, and other post-filming expenses, the rule of thumb is that a film needs to make about twice its production budget at the box office to break even. The recent *Guardians of the Galaxy Vol 3* cost \$250 million. With a goal of \$500 million, at \$15 per ticket, *Guardians 3* would need to motivate more than 3.3 million people to leave the comfort of their home and show up to theatres, just to break even. Appealing to such a massive audience requires creative compromises to maintain mass appeal.

Why then would film studios subject themselves to such restrictions? The answer to that lies within their monetary potential. The sitcom *Community* suggested that all you need to make a hit movie is "a Chris Pratt type and some CGI gaggos," and the market seems to corroborate. Using conservative estimates, the top 10 highest grossing films of all

time average about a \$290 million production cost, and .3 Chris Pratts per film.

The Lord of the Rings trilogy, by contrast, had a total budget of \$281 million across three films. The largest budget movies do not have the highest return on investment, but in line with any other long-term thinking, the business is one of scale.

While *Avengers: Endgame* grossed nearly \$2.8 billion, the \$356 million production budget means the cultural juggernaut yielded a 667% ROI. A much cheaper cultural phenomenon, *My Big Fat Greek Wedding*, with its miniscule cost of \$5 million, earned \$369 million and a 7280% ROI, over tenfold *Endgame*'s. Including post-production costs, that difference in ROI might be even larger, but those exact numbers are disputed. However, Marvel Studios still cleared \$2.4 billion over their production budget in under two years from filming start to film debut.

To secure such large investments, however, the art suffers. Very obviously, story scope is limited. Out of the 10 movies with the highest box office sales of 2023, all of them are sequels or adaptations of well-known IPs. This is not necessarily bad, *Puss in Boots: The Last Wish* brought a wonderful new perspective to the fearless cat, but an obsession with brand familiarity stifles the flexibility of new releases.

Characters are constrained into familiar roles. Two of that same list of 2023 bestselling movies also feature Chris Pratt, in two of the most common protagonist roles: a sarcastic guy who makes relatable quips, or a serious and ambitious vessel for the audience to project themselves into. Stronger

characters with deeper arcs run the risk of alienating those who do not immediately connect with them.

Expression is limited in the same way. Never once, has anybody walked out of an *Avengers* movie stunned by the bravery of its message or confounded by the nuance. The new *Super Mario Bros. Movie* was resolved because Mario and Luigi picked up a super star. These movies just cannot get that deep or interesting, because again, they cannot risk alienating any section of the audience.

None of this makes a movie outright bad; everybody wants to fall back to the familiar every now and then. The issue is the ubiquitous nature of this homogenizing trend. So often, every part of a movie, from the trailer to the comedic timing and camerawork, feels like a paint-by-numbers exercise in mass appeal. Without new premises, new stars, and enticing characters, it's hard to stay excited about new releases.

Everything Everywhere All at Once is the perfect film to contrast to these budget behemoths. With a production cost of \$25 million, the film hit a decent profit point of \$100 million: proportionately great, but nowhere near the ballpark of *Avatar: The Way of Water*'s \$2.3 Billion. However, compared to the *Way of Water*'s 38 award wins and 108 nominations, *EEAAO* hit a whopping 264 Wins and 404 nominations. Unencumbered by the same level of risk management, *EEAAO* could take more risks in character personality, representation, story complexity, and message, and that freedom paid off in quality. Rather than mass appeal, creative freedom allows films to connect to a smaller audience much more intensely.

Meandering Melodies Fall Flat

Into the Great Beyond is a Bumpy Ride From Start to Finish

By Kimber Nelson

Listening to a good music album from a band you have never heard of is a bit like being whisked away on a surprise road trip by your BFF. The detours are often as delightful and entertaining as the destination itself. Stan Snow's latest release *Into the Great Beyond*, on the other hand, feels – at least on first listen – more like being scammed by a crooked taxi driver, subjecting the passenger to a succession of vertigo-inducing U-turns and switchbacks before unceremoniously depositing them at a cul-de-sac in the middle of nowhere.

Take, for example, the tune "Now", which starts smoothly with a simple guitar chord and is soon joined by a shimmering cascade of cymbals and easy male vocals. Things quickly pick up speed with an electric guitar/drum riff reminiscent of the Who's "Won't Get Fooled Again." But then, just as the tempo is building towards its natural crescendo... there's a sudden deceleration and the song is back at the original tempo, limping weakly along for the remaining few bars before finally ending in a whimper.

This pattern – if it can be called that – is repeated on several songs, including "Chemical Fallacy," which starts with some thumping Funkadelic guitar work, but then oddly disintegrates into a lounge



Stan Snow experiments within an americana sound

lizard groove; the titular single "Into the Great Beyond" with its disconcerting key changes; and the tracks "Jungle" and "Try," which both have the complex, textured feel of a Kate Bush rock opera.

Unsuspecting listeners are likely to breathe a sigh of relief once Snow leaves off from the musical J-turns and powerslides. The southern-fried "Fight,"

for example, starts – and more importantly – maintains a solid, guitar-led beat that could get any bar crowd out on the dance floor while "Trouble's" simple, thumping baseline makes for fun, easy listening.

When not having to contend with aural whiplash, the listener is also better able to appreciate Snow's thoughtful, often heart-breaking lyrics, many of which center on internal conflict, regret, and redemption. "On Guard," one can hear echoes of the Shin's John Mercer as Snow sings "Long ago in a faraway land/ You took your decision and it got out of hand/ Hard times/ You'll find/ Will get better if you let your guard come down."

On the Pink Floyd-esque "Insanity Repeats," Snow tackles the war in Ukraine. "Tragedy and hypocrisy/carry all/things down to a depth unknown/ insanity repeats/History doesn't learn to see/until the midnight hour takes its toll/insanity repeats. The ballad "Gone Too Fast," which was written during COVID and inspired by the death of Snow's parents, will resonate with anybody who has lost a loved one.

In the end, it is the mix of straightforward and difficult that redeem the album. As long as you're prepared for a bumpy ride, *Into the Great Beyond* may just be worth a second or third listen. Just don't forget the Dramamine.

Sports

The Wave Takes Two Baseball Championship Titles

Cultivating the Next Generation

KCC Athletics Director

Looks Beyond the Now

By Chris Peña

Students from our communities and parts of the world are choosing Kingsborough Community College to guide their academic career to the next level. KCC has become a pivotal point for many who look to advance in many areas of their lives. One such case is men's baseball. As relaxed as the team is, we often forget the high level of critical thinking that goes into developing and executing game plans, all while maintaining composure.

"The Tampa Bay Rays tied the world record for most consecutive wins in a season, our team has won 15 straight," said Robert Allison, Director of Athletics at KBC, "You can win a multitude of ways if you're a good kid and I know we have good kids on our team." The impact of those words is apparent while watching the team enjoy baseball. With the concoction of positive vibes from the team, the involved viewers, and pumping music throughout the game, everyone looked young at heart. Their focus never deterred from what was important and that set a chain of reactions that resonated throughout the field and stadium.

"We go out, actively recruit them, prepare them for what is needed to further their career and advance them to division one colleges where they can get to the next level," Mr. Allison said. The process gives an opportunity to those who, for different reasons, did not receive the resources necessary to make the progress they deserve and aim for. As someone who has been involved in higher education since 1998, Allison knows what was missing and what the process should be for an optimal chance at growth in this sport.

Rule changes in the Major League bring new challenges and lessons down to the college level. "A pitcher's clock may be implemented by 2025 given the little amount of time that the collegiate organizations had to process it," said Allison who doesn't mind the new changes as a die hard Mets fan. There are so many rule changes that in recent times one would have to surf the web to compile a list, as well as a multitude of opposed opinions on each. Seems like America is only beginning to digest the changes of their favorite pastime, but that doesn't seem to slow down Director Allison's plan to keep guiding those interested to the next stage of their athletic career.

New Frontiers

The Wave Wins First Region XV Title in School History

By Joseph Bucci

For the first time in history, KCC's Wave wins the NJCAA Region XV Baseball Championship.

After defeating Bronx Community College 14-4 for the CUNYAC title and a fantastic Region XV season – regularly posting 10 to 20 run leads, The Wave was seeded fourth in the eight-team double elimination bracket.

First round, May 11, KCC took on the first seed, Suffolk Community College, and emerged unphased with a 14-7 victory.

The next day, The Wave clashed with a team they lost to earlier in the season: Monroe College. The team found its revenge, and more, with a solid 15-4 win.

Monroe, however, would not go out quietly and the players found their way back through the lower bracket; Monroe met KCC one last time for the championship game. The Wave was prepared and one-upped themselves with the championship victory, 16-3.

Tournament awards were given out. Francesco Bonvini, Jonathan Fonseca, Manny Ariza and Aldo Thomas earned All-Tournament Team awards. Justin Ramsey earned Most Outstanding Player, and Brian Dowd earned Coach of the Tournament.

The Wave then set their sights on the Northeast District Championship, where they were knocked out by Northern Essex Community College, losing both games 5-2. Still, the team should be proud for making KCC history.



Francesco Bonvini – Played Key Role in the Region XV Tournament – Received an All-Tournament Team Award

Back to Back Second Consecutive CUNYAC Title Carries Community Vibes

By Chris Peña

The Wave proves they have not ebbed with their second consecutive CUNYAC title.

The game ended early due to an impressive ten run lead by the seventh inning, crowning The Wave as the CUNY Baseball Champions in a 14-4 ending. The optimism was there from the beginning.

"I think the mood is very positive; we are very optimistic. We are playing a very good opponent today and we are going to come out on top," said assistant head coach Robert Muccio, who has been involved with the Kingsborough Community College Baseball department since 2017. Although the game began neck and neck, The Wave's morale began to rise and the results were massive. "We have a number of players that are very positive and keep the other players positive when things aren't going their way," said Muccio. Many are coming to KCC for education because we are highly ranked in the country and within the state of New York, but the baseball team also includes the coaching staff in their decision.

The Wave had an energetic crowd full of supporters. From strangers who wanted to simply pass the time to loved ones who have been there throughout the season. At the end everyone had a different purpose to attend, but still enjoyed the pastime. While some were focused on the game, some were using the game as an ambience. Photographers, children, deejay, and people from many walks of life all with a unique purpose of being there. The coronation of The Wave was a moment that linked everyone together.

From your screen the game seems faster because of it, but live... the pace of baseball is so slow that you are able to have all kinds of thoughts not related to the game. You think about food, hydration, the fun sites that you witness from Stillwell avenue train station to Maimonides Park. The DJ's music selection was very diverse ranging from songs commonly heard in New York City, to things you have never heard before. You get to hear the baseball players' nicknames and wonder about their origin stories. We saw one game and left knowing many players' names and numbers, because the teams were playing like families and friends.



The Wave Celebrates First Ever Region XV Victory
From Left to Right:
Aldo Thomas, Christopher Jace, Tyreke Griffith