Daily Opinion

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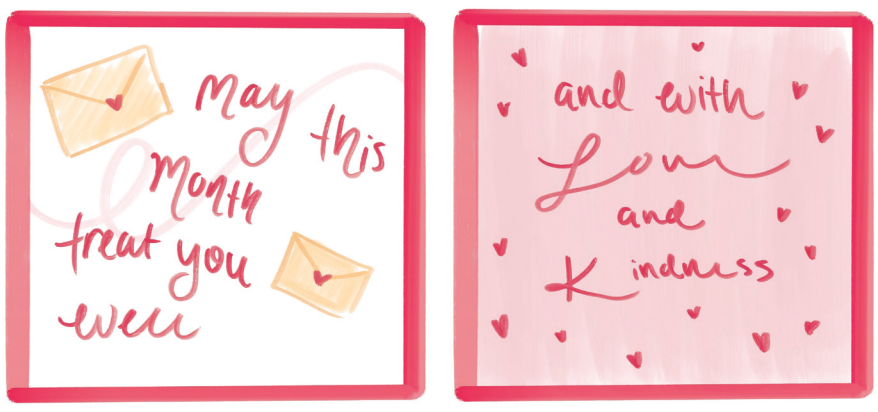

COMIC BY ALEXA PAPPAS, CONTRIBUTING ARTIST/THE DAILY CAMPUS

Turn off the phone, go play in the snow



Students walk past a snowy Gampel Pavilion in Storrs, Conn., on Jan. 25, 2026. They wore their winter jackets in preparation for the upcoming storm. PHOTO BY ELLA GORHAM, GRAB PHOTOGRAPHER/THE DAILY CAMPUS

by Alexander Renzulli
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The New England snow day is quite possibly the greatest tradition to bless this uniquely seasonal region of the United States. To wake up an hour past your alarm as a child in the middle of winter could only mean one thing to a boy like me in Connecticut: a glorious day of backyard shenanigans was inevitable. To stumble inside the foyer with your sister and shake out the clinging bits of snow from your frosted-over hair. To do anything but type away at a laptop. They're beautiful memories, and they're quintessential to my growth. But I have a sneaking fear that the youth right now are simply not going to take advantage of the marshmallow world they have been gifted.

Generation Alpha is growing up, and growing up far quicker than they should. With far-too-easy access to short-form content targeted towards young adults and teenagers, the children of today are skipping over normal child-like experiences in an effort to imitate they see on the cellphone. There is a reason children using profane language is jarring: they are, simply put, not supposed to say obscene things, because they should not know them yet. Why we are not as irritated when children profess their knowledge of "brainrot" aggravates me. It is a clear signal to the world that they are spending more time on devices and far less time indulging in the sweet and simple activities that the world has to offer them. This may seem like an egregious claim, but an hour spent scrolling down into a world of people you'll never meet is more often than not a waste. That time could easily be used to instead build a snowman with your family, making a memory that lasts forever. A memory that'll make you smile for years down the road when building a snowman with your loved ones just can't be done any more. A memory that lasts longer than the minute after your time limit interrupts your scrolling. Can you even name the last five short-form videos you watched before reading this article? Can you remember the times as a child you went sledding? The latter appears far more vivid in my mind.

Coming back to school after break, there was a lot going on in the sports world. The New England Patriots were set to play the Denver Broncos in the AFC Championship, which would determine who advanced to the Super Bowl, and the UConn men's and women's basketball teams were playing home games. Yet the majority of conversations I found myself in were about the holy 14 inches of snow that Storrs, Conn. was about to receive. Talks of sledding down Horsebarn Hill in trash bags and building snowmen outside of the dorms was all I could hear my peers conversing about, and I loved this. A universal sense of nostalgia for days experienced years ago was unlocked, and childlike wonder was thrust upon campus.

Gifted two sublime snow days, I spent my time making long hardy treks to Horsebarn Hill to sled with friends, make snow angels and hurl snowballs at each other. Evidently, we acted in a way reminiscent of our youth. It was an unequivocal success in the name of human spirit, and it is rather important that it is translated for the screen-induced generation that follows us.

As we grow out of school, it is the responsibility of the next parenting generation to ensure cell phones are not present on snow days. They should forever be replaced with carrots, buttons and a top hat. Toboggans, sleds and memories that make for wonderful holiday card photos. Play until the sun sets, then huddle up under the warmest blankets you can find and watch Sunday night football. Together.

I am so positive the kids of tomorrow would much rather be invested in the stories of their siblings, parents and friends than the influencers who make their screen a menagerie. Electronics can be fun, enticing and engaging when used in a social setting, but on days when the snow comes down heavy, and the grass is nowhere to be seen, leave the phone on the kitchen counter. Don the jacket your mother insists you wear and bask in the loveliness of the snow day.

HS4 At Midnight Is Real:

WHY HARRY STYLES' COMEBACK IS SOMETHING NEW

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"HS4 at midnight" is a phrase that's been tossed around by Harry Styles fans for years, usually popping up online whenever there was even the smallest hint of new music. It became shorthand for the collective hope that Styles would surprise-drop a fourth album at midnight, fueled by speculation, screenshots and a lot of wishful thinking. Most of it came from a place of pure delusion: the collective belief that if fans said it enough times, it would eventually come true. Manifestation, if you will.

And finally, that day has come.

I've been a fan of Styles since the infamous One Direction days. He's come quite a long way from those boy band beginnings, and his solo career has been a mix of keeping fans on their toes, never staying in one genre, one look or even one version of himself for too long.

From his self-titled debut album, "Harry Styles" in 2017, to "Fine Line" in 2019 and "Harry's House" in 2022, Styles has dabbled in hints of rock, pop and folk. Each album felt like a chapter of his life, not just a collection of songs. They were distinct eras with their own sound.

That's why his newest single, "Aperture" from his upcoming fourth album "Kiss All the Time. Disco, Occasionally," feels so interesting. It's not what fans expected, and that's exactly the point. The song doesn't scream comeback. There's no obvious grab for virality and no attempt to recreate the mass appeal of "As It Was," the lead single off of "Harry's House." It feels almost inward-looking and atmospheric, like whoever is listening is fully enveloped by the hazy synth chords. Overall, it sounds less like Harry Styles announcing his return and more like Harry Styles deliberately resetting.

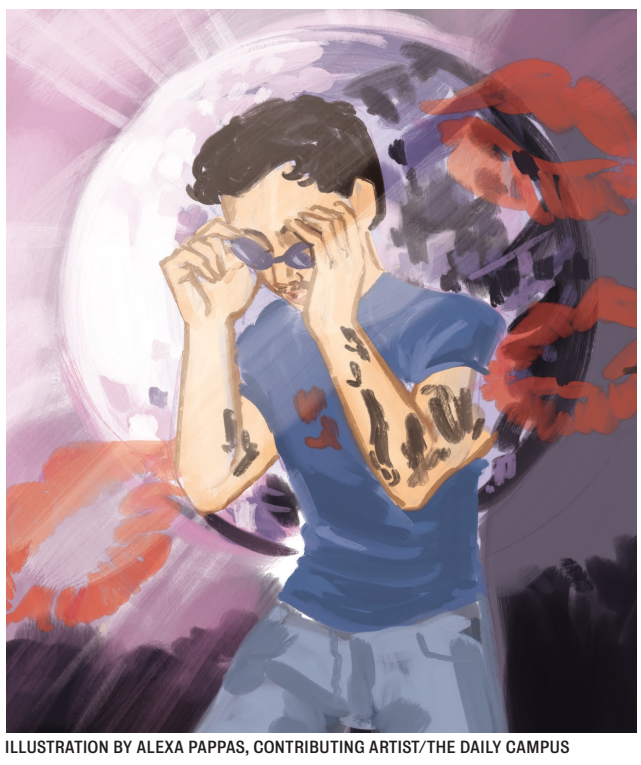

ILLUSTRATION BY ALEXA PAPPAS, CONTRIBUTING ARTIST/THE DAILY CAMPUS

The track hints at where the full album is headed: shaped by the music, the people and the scenes Styles has been immersed in while dancing through nightclubs across Europe during his break from the spotlight. You can almost hear it in the rhythm of the song itself; it's looser, more nocturnal. It carries the feeling of dim lights, late nights and dancing alongside friends and strangers. It's disco-adjacent, (as the album title hints at) meant to be experienced, rather than performed.

That influence isn't accidental. In recent radio interviews, Styles has spoken about the album title and his overall inspirations, describing a love for music that is meant to be lived in, not just streamed.

Fans, of course, are already building the world around it.

Outfit predictions for the Together, Together 2026 world tour are already everywhere, mixing disco textures with the return of feather boas, the unofficial uniform of Styles' 2021 "Love on Tour." His concerts have always been as much about self-expression in the crowd as what's happening on stage, and this new era seems primed to double down on that. That same emphasis on feeling and immersion is already present in the music itself.

"Aperture" isn't asking everyone to immediately understand it. It's a slow open rather than a grand reveal. Instead of leaning into what he's already mastered, he's letting the music point forward, toward nights that blur together, toward inspiration found on dance floors instead of charts. If this single is the blueprint, the album as a whole won't be about proving anything. It'll be about presence, movement and letting the music exist where it wants to. And judging by how quickly tour dates are already selling out, fans are obviously more than ready to follow him there.

Still, that doesn't make the Ticketmaster wars any less terrifying. I've already had to fight for my life in the queue, refreshing my screen like it's a full-time job.