Opinion

The Daily Campus

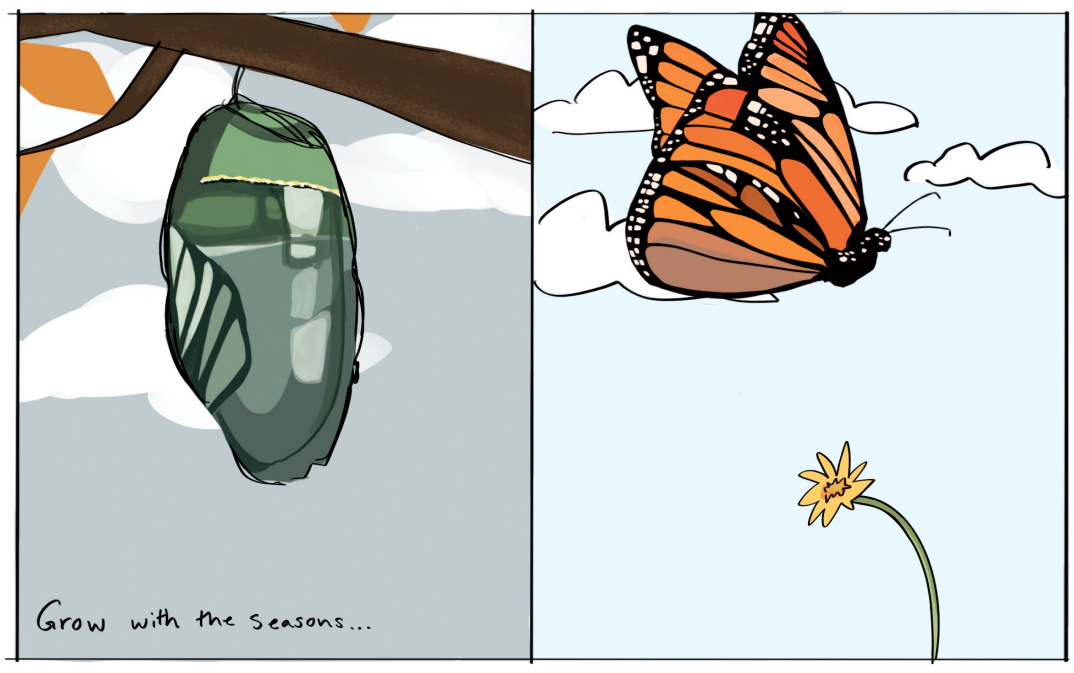
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COMIC BY COSETTE ELLIS, STAFF ARTIST/THE DAILY CAMPUS

Is slang just not hip anymore?

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In my humble but very correct opinion, slang has been one of the best and most interesting things that language has created. The notion that an entire generation can slosh together jargon, forming an entire language of its own, is as "gnarly" as it gets. Slang, or "a type of language that consists of words and phrases that are regarded as very informal," has historically been used for some "in-group" to communicate with each other in a way only they understand. That's pretty rad. However, what is not rad is that this spring break (or "spreak" if you will), I heard a 50-year-old man string together "6-7" and "looks-maxing" into a sentence. I don't think I've ever wanted to rip out my ears and cry more. This wasn't a one-off occurrence, either. This year alone, I've heard several men and women with law degrees and PhDs rifle off words like "looksmax" and "mog." I'm really starting to think that slang has simply become uncool.

For one, slang has arguably become too accessible. Because of the internet and our addiction to social media, everybody from toddlers to grandparents are tapped into (or at least have the potential to) web culture. For all intents and purposes, slang is effectively one big inside joke. Some people get it, most people don't. It takes years, if not a whole generation, for it to be colloquially infused into the public lexicon. In the early 1930s, "groovy" (derived from the term "in a groove") was coined as a term used within the jazz community (primarily African Americans) to describe a song's rhythm and smoothness. By the 1940s, almost 10 years after its inception, "groovy" simply meant cool (funnily enough, another word to describe jazz) and was used by just about everyone, not just jazz listeners. Slang nowadays feels like it has skipped over the marinating it needed to do and everyone is using it all willy-nilly. Slang can no longer define cultures or generations if everyone of every age is acting as the propeller for its popularity.

In any case, can slang truly be cool if it's not really based on anything? Because of the high-speed velocity of the internet, the origins of slang instantly become obscure and irrelevant. The word or phrase thus loses all meaning because no one really remembers what it means: it simply becomes a buzzword to throw around. Our most egregious offender of this is, of course, "6-7". I'd argue most people have forgotten the term came from a video of a basketball player describing his height. It is for this exact reason that we don't even call these words slang anymore: it's been degraded to "brainrot." Just like how everyone is taking part in modern day slang and thus degrading any generational culture, the lack of longevity further strips away slang's potential to have a lasting impact on language.



Minimalist design of the word "rizz" in letter tiles. "Rizz" is a slang word shortened from "charisma." PHOTO COURTESY OF PEXELS.COM.

I am not saying that slang should go obsolete, or that it will. There are so many vernaculars that are being used by groups, creeds and people I simply do not know about. There are so many cultures that I am positive are making slang on a smaller scale that are poignant and informative. I really can only report on what I know or what I have researched. Furthermore, I'll concede that sometimes internet slang does work. "Rizz," as overused as it is, is a clever shortening for "charisma." It is simply that the slang being used as the throughline between Generation Z and even Generation Alpha is unsophisticated at best and irrelevant at its worst.

A NEWFOUND ADMIRATION FOR ACOUSTIC MUSIC

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If you have found yourself feeling fond and drawn towards acoustic music anytime during the last couple of years, you might not be the only one. I have found there to be a recent pattern: a newfound sophistication for acoustic music, one with few instruments and no electrical alterations. In acoustic music, the musicians and the instruments are both the main actors (you can add bonus points if they are sitting down with casual attire and constantly sipping on a drink). Due to widespread production of sound effects, electrical music and music pedals, we tend to romanticize simple and raw versions of music. In these settings, an artist can demonstrate melodies in their simplest form and most of the time simplify the room for judgement of their vocals.

Music has been a main component of artistic life in our human history, being one of the most popular forms of expression (with good reason). It has embodied love, revolution, protest and much more. Just as with any other component of this life, it has evolved. Evolution, as we all know, is an inevitable process that every single thing surrounding us undergoes. With music, people found new ways to improve the ways in which they could express themselves.

The history of music dates back to percussion instruments like tambourines and drums in Mesopotamian civilizations, stringed instruments like the harp and lyre mentioned in the Bible and wind instruments made of bone in Ancient Greece and Egypt. Music used to serve different functions from education to religion, but its most important and most enduring purpose is mere entertainment. Moving into the 19th century, it transitioned into orchestras, which later acquired lyrics. In the 20th century, different variations and genres derived from the same instruments, such as jazz, soul, rock and roll, folk, and many more. Music has just kept on progressing and making new combinations, which is part of its beauty. There are no written rules for what is right or wrong, making it a very subjective matter.

This has led to an infinite creation of sounds using new technologies, putting on hold the classical timbre with no alterations, making this the most mainstream, even most popular type. Throughout the 90's and 2000's, with the popularization of hip hop, acoustic music decayed, still being in the picture, but now in the background. But throughout the last two decades, when artists include an acoustic song in their discography, it is usually thought of as "deeper" or "more personal." Examples such as Tiny Desk concerts, which started in 2008, were created for artists to show their most genuine and fresh performance with music, usually with an acoustic guitar and altered vocals. In present times, being surrounded by so much modernity, we often find ourselves romanticizing old times, when simplicity and efficiency was at its finest not by choice but by lack of exploring and other alternatives.

Small venue concerts such as Tiny Desks, coupled with musicians releasing acoustic versions of their music on separate albums, have made a positive impact on the fans and listeners. Not only do fans consume this kind of music, but they find it innovative and sophisticated even. This newfound admiration has brought a resurgence to the simplicity of music, such as in the folk genre. We can see this reflected in places like The Newport Folk Festival, where popular artists such as Lizzy McAlpine and Diana Silvers will be performing their acoustic sets even though they are primarily known as pop artists.

Music is now so advanced. We have discovered many sounds using effects, electrical pedals and even everyday noises. This is great and demonstrates why music is a very tangible form of expression, but this has also made us long for music's more organic side. This is the music that you know you can replicate in the comforts of your home sitting down on a couch with a guitar and your voice, or in the living room playing the violin. There is something personal in knowing that your favorite artists' song is approachable, which has resurfaced the simplicity of music in modern times. This is not to say there is a better form of music than another; both altered and acoustic music have their own beauty. It is simply a matter of connection and romanization that has brought us back to admire and create more acoustic music.



A wooden lyre with a tortoiseshell soundbox found in Athens. A lyre is an example of a traditional acoustic instrument.
PHOTO COURTESY OF WORLD HISTORY ENCYCLOPEDIA