CARD CORNER: A GAME OF CHANCE

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A common rhetoric I hear about TCGs is that they're just 'games of chance' that require you to be lucky rather than skilled. At the end of the day, you are drawing a random card every turn, so how could it not come down to luck? Today I'll be showing you why that couldn't be further from the truth.

Let's start by looking at the data, specifically Pokémon's, one of the most notorious TCGs for "luck-based gameplay." Some cards require you to literally flip a coin to get a better effect, yet even in such a luck-based game, skill is still the deciding factor. We can see this demonstrated by the 2026 world champion, Andrew Hedrick.

Hedrick began playing the Pokémon TCG competitively in April of 2020. Since then, he has competed at 33 regionals and has an average placement of 25th across all of them. For context, these tournaments have an average player pool of around 2,500, so at every tournament Hedrick attends, he's consistently beating 2,475 other people.

The data shows that luck isn't the main factor for doing well, but what, then, is making the game skillful? You start off with seven random cards and you draw a new random one every turn. How in the world does Hedrick keep winning?

One of the key ingredients to performing well in a TCG is oftentimes the most overlooked: deckbuilding. When you enter a tournament, you can only bring the 60 cards that you designated beforehand, no more, no less. Each turn, you're drawing a random card from your deck, so your job as a deck builder is to maximize the statistics in your favor.

The reason why every TCG puts a max on how many of a specific card you can have in a deck is simple. Statistics is incredibly important, and being able to push the numbers just a bit in your favor is a complete game changer.

In the vast majority of Pokémon decks, people use four copies of Lillie's Determination. Most of the time you won't use all of them in one game; that's not the reason that you play four copies. You put four copies of one card in your deck just to increase your odds by a small percentage.

With one copy of a card in your deck, you have a 2.17% chance of drawing it each turn. With four copies, that number jumps to 8.7%. Your goal as a deck builder isn't to build a deck that can win a game; it's to build a deck that can win games consistently.

Beyond the statistics there's an even more, albeit much less quantifiable, skill in playing TCGs. Every turn you can have anywhere from zero to 40 cards, depending on the TCG you're playing. As your hand grows in size, and the options on your board grow, the number of permutations of decisions that could be made grows exponentially.

Chess is one of the hardest games ever made, and there are typically around 20-40 possible moves on the board at any given moment. Most TCGs follow those numbers relatively closely.

If you play one of your seven cards, you'll open the option of two attacks being used. If you play a different one, you could draw six new cards that then create a whole new array of possibilities. In TCGs, there are always an incredible number of moves you can make, leading to only the best players being able to find which ones are actually going to win them the game.

At the end of the day, you draw a random card every turn in TCGs, and some games do just come down to luck. The vast majority of the time, though, truly skilled players can win through a combination of game knowledge, skilled decision making and knowledge of their probabilities for what that next card is going to be.

Thanks for reading this week's edition of the Card Corner! On an unrelated tangent, for those local to the Storrs area, there's a TCG trade night at Action Packed on Oct. 23rd at 5 p.m. Alongside that, there's a tournament on Nov. 7th at 2 p.m. for Pokémon! If you're interested in TCGs, show up to the events! The community is incredibly kind and very welcoming; I hope to see you there! Until then, have an amazing mid-terms season, and I'll see you back here in two weeks for another edition of the Card Corner!



LOGO BY COLBI LORANGER, ASSOCIATE ARTIST EDITOR/THE DAILY CAMPUS



Photo of Pokémon cards across a table. Pokémon players are only allowed to bring 60 cards to tournaments.

PHOTO COURTESY OF FLICKR

BLONDIE MAKES STRONG RETURN WITH NEW SINGLE

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For the first time since 2017, legendary rock band Blondie returned with new music last week with "Spectral Eyes."

The song is the first single from an album, "High Noon," set to be released on Feb. 26, 2027.

A collaboration with former Smiths guitarist Johnny Marr, who wrote the song and contributed on guitar, the song also features Sex Pistols bassist Glen Matlock. Matlock has been a touring member of the group since 2022.

Despite the star-studded lineup, it is Blondie drummer Clem Burke's performance that immediately stands out.

One of the final recordings of Burke's career before the drummer died from cancer in 2025 at 70 years old, Burke's driving drum beat powers the track throughout. Burke has the unmistakable sound that the best drummers are capable of.

The syncopated bass drum rhythm and occasional double backbeat is reminiscent of "Sunday Girl" and "Hanging on the Telephone," both from Blondie's 1978 album, "Parallel Lines."

The intro to the song is also similar to the bridge of "Sunday Girl," which, in addition to Burke's drumming, immediately gives the song a classic Blondie feel.

Being centered on an ascending guitar riff, the composition of the track matches the same approach of some of Blondie's upbeat hits, such as "Dreaming" and "Atomic."

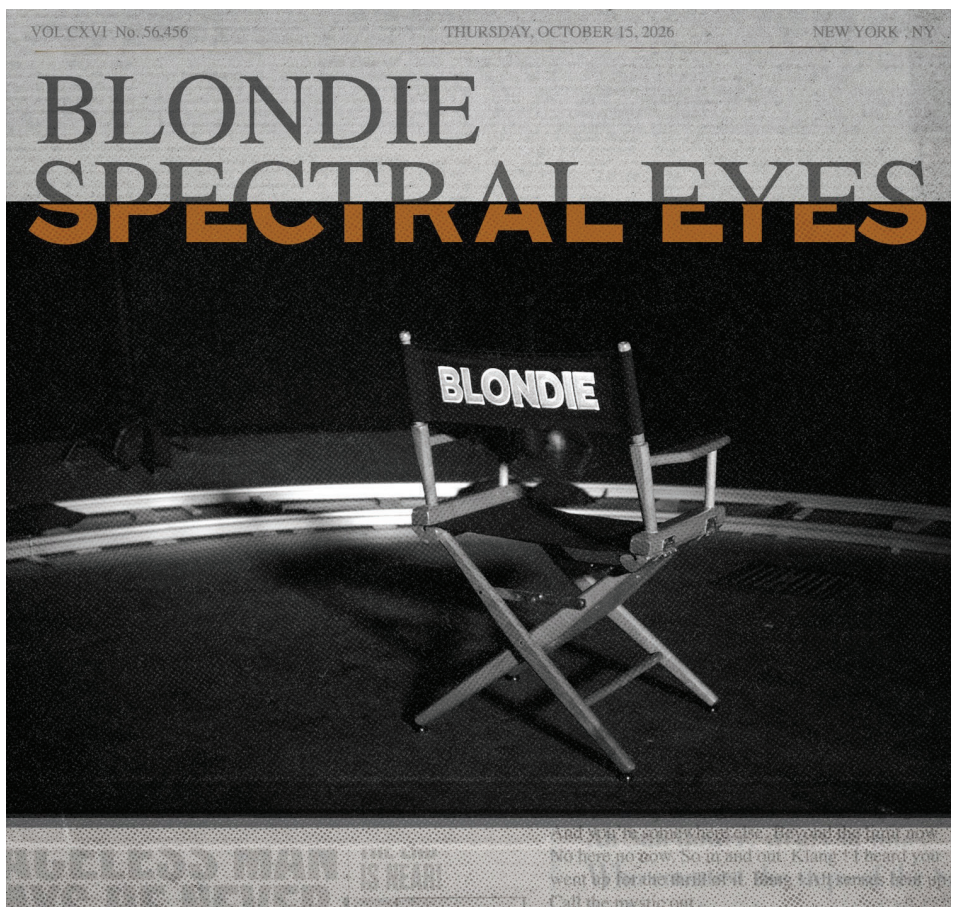
While it is not exactly in line with the powerful riffs provided by Chris Stein and Frank Infante that defined their heyday or even songs like "Maria" from their first comeback in the late '90s (when Infante was already out of the group), "Spectral Eyes" relies on the guitars to set a foundation for the synths.

One of the aspects that makes "Spectral Eyes" feel timeless is Debbie Harry's voice. While the 81-year-old lead singer obviously sounds different than she did in the '80s, very minimal vocal production is needed on the track to make Harry sound strong. Instead, the slight raspiness of her voice is embraced and adds more character to the song.

One criticism of the song is that it may run a bit long for some. For a song that sounds mostly the same throughout, it does not introduce enough new components to stay fresh over its more than four-minute run time.

Still, the song harkens back to the Blondie of old and was a good pick to create excitement for the new album. The way the song fades at the end and begins to drop in pitch teases that it could potentially lead straight into another, one which I'm excited to hear.

Rating: 4.2/5



Album cover of Blondie's new single, "Spectral Eyes". "Spectral Eyes" appears on their 12th studio album, "High Noon."

PHOTO COURTESY OF @DAVIDWRENCHMUSIC ON INSTAGRAM



The members of the band Blondie line up for a bow after a concert. While the band was first established in 1974, they're still going strong with their new music today.

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