Card Corner: The Community in Cards

by Connor Lafferty
DIGITAL EDITOR
HE/HIM/HIS
connor.lafferty@uconn.edu

Making friends at college can be awful. It wasn't until my second semester here that I really began to find my people. In the meantime, it can be quite isolating and lonely. Trading Card Games (TCGs) make the process of finding friends and a community a whole lot easier.

Three summers ago, I picked up Magic the Gathering, and my hometown friends bonded over playing until all hours of the night during our collegiate breaks. The next summer, I picked up Pokémon and began making new friends at my local game store (LGS), Tabletop Gaming Center. I slowly began to realize an obvious fact that a lot of people often forget: Making friends can be as simple as showing up.



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

I love playing TCGs, and the people that I'm surrounded with at LGSs all carry the same interest. After playing a little bit once a week, people started to recognize me. Instead of just telling my opponent what attack I was going to use, now I was telling them about how badly I failed my math exam a few hours prior. It's very easy to have banter and conversation when you have the perfect medium of a card game to break the ice.

For a lot of people, making friends can be hard, and it's my belief that TCGs are one of the best ways to find a community if you're looking for one. So, where do you start?

For location, I have an entire column covering exactly where and how to play TCGs in Storrs! Go read that and then come back here.

For which TCG to play, I'll give you a quick rundown of how to decide.

If you're a big anime fan and have watched all 1,180 episodes of "One Piece," the best place to start is the One Piece TCG. I've played a few weeklies at Tabletop Gaming Center with the "One Piece" community, and they're all incredibly welcoming. Some even donated me some stronger cards to upgrade my deck with! If you've watched "One Piece," you'll have plenty of ways to start a conversation beyond the current board state. Even if you haven't though, this is a great community of people, and is never a bad spot to start.



People play the card game Magic: the Gathering. This is a recognizable but complex TCG in the community.

PHOTO COURTESY OF WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

If you're more of a video game fanatic, Riftbound could be more up your alley. Riftbound is the official TCG of Riot Games, with all the cards based on the League of Legends universe. I again have only good things to say about this community, as everyone is incredibly welcoming.

While there aren't currently any on-campus clubs to play Riftbound or One Piece in, heading to a LGS in the area is a great way to make friends through these games.

Penultimately, Magic: the Gathering is the staple of TCGs. It's the older brother to effectively every game there is, and you'll find tons of support for this game no matter where you are in the world. Commander is the format that people usually find best for community building and having fun, but I personally have some trouble keeping up with all the things happening across a four-person board. While Magic is an amazing TCG competitively and a great foundation, starting with a more straightforward one-on-one format could be useful to learn the fundamentals before diving into the communal aspects of commander.

Finally, my favorite: Pokémon. This TCG is amazing for beginners and starters alike, with a pretty low skill floor. It's easy to pick up, incredibly cheap to purchase and very fun to play. The community is warm and welcoming, and I'd recommend any person looking to make friends to find this game!

In the next edition of the Card Corner, I'll be looking more at the competitive aspects of TCGs, and how the scene is functioning as a whole right now. I hope you have an amazing rest of your week, and best of luck on all your projects, homework and exams!

"Life 1;" The portrait of a man coming to terms with looking at the rest of his life

by Zola Bloom
CONTRIBUTOR
SHE/HER/HERS
hyl25003@uconn.edu

Can we relate to a gamer/YouTuber-turned-musician more than we thought?

Benjamin Fernando Barajas Lasky, known fondly by his supporters as Quadeca, began his career on YouTube at the age of 11 in 2012. His name and signature logo come from a superhero he created as a child and embodies. He gained popularity from gaming, mainly FIFA gameplay and tutorials. What many don't know, however, is that some of his very first videos were faceless piano performances, which he returned to music as his main focus in the late 2010s. He has since performed at Grant Park in Chicago for Lollapalooza in August 2026 and will soon sell out Citizen's House of Blues in Boston on Oct. 23, as part of his "Life 1" tour.

Quadeca's sixth studio album, "Life 1," is a collection of songs exploring art — pop, indietronica, folktronica, alternative R&B, rap and folk. Personally, I'd never even heard of some of these genres. The track list floats into a listening ear, sparking nostalgia for some, as Quadeca questions how time has surpassed him so quickly. Leaning into a more melodic sound, "Life 1" tells a tale that is more digestible than his more abstract previous albums, like "Vanisher, Horizon Scraper." The levels of meaning written between lines of electric synthesizers travel as deep as one chooses to burrow.

"I know the palm of your hand like the back of mine" is a lyric on track 11, "Hell of a time." After first assuming this phrase was referring to a past romance, digging into fans' reactions translated this to be a reflection of the self. Quadeca has recently decided to abandon his stage name, leaving with it the character he has been bound to across all stages of his renown. While it is unclear what exactly is next for the young artist, "Life 1" explores the experience of stepping back from a version of yourself; a version which can be both past and present at once, and choosing to move forward.



Artist Quadeca sits in front of a piano. This YouTuber-turned-musician had able to gain a platform focused on his music.

PHOTO COURTESY OF @QUADECA ON INSTAGRAM

In another song from the record, "Baby steps," Quadeca walks the listener through navigating the anxieties of growing into adulthood. He writes, "That baby don't like the view, He's looking at the rest of his life." The singer won't sever the connection to his younger self and chosen career yet decides it is only part of his whole self.

As a musician, Quadeca tells stories that everyday people are able to relate to. He also expresses his grappling with the bond he has with his fans, and the vulnerability that comes with sharing one's life online from such a young age. Quadeca asks his listeners, "Will you drive me when the wheels fall out?" in track two, "Dark Magic." I interpret this song to mean that there is a certain sacrifice of selfhood a celebrity must make to satiate the expectations of hungry admirers.

One highlight from the assemblage is "CELERY," a song which honestly cracks me up. It dwells on the fact that the vegetable is made of 95% water. A cartoonish "crunch" sound effect plays over a solemn bassline. Does Quadeca mean to suggest that our perception of celery as merely solid overlooks its liquidity, and therefore the model of himself displayed online is only a fraction of what there is to be found? Or is it just a song written one night after eating ants on a log?

Even for those of us who are not famous, who are not met with thousands of intently listening ears each time we speak, the battle between individuality and conformity is universal. I can't claim to be a longtime devoted follower as many of his fans do, but I think the fact I was still able to connect to this album further proves its accessibility. After all, Quadeca is embarking on an expedition toward reinvention, which means drawing the attention of a new crowd.

The internet is home to parasocial relationships, where we may feel as if we have grown up alongside someone who doesn't recognize us as anything more than a profile picture. This album means a lot to those who have been consistent in their following of this 26-year-old content creator. The album also resonates with folks who are reading Quadeca's name (and perhaps trying to decipher its meaning) for the first time today, and that is the magic of "Life 1."



Graphic for artist Quadeca's "Life 1" tour. The concerts will take place during the fall season and travel across the United States.

PHOTO COURTESY OF @QUADECA ON INSTAGRAM