Arts & Life

‘The Waiting Game’ pays off with Harry Styles' new album

By EMILY ADORNO
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If I had to count the amount of times I’ve been scammed by a fandom to believe that an artist was dropping an album at midnight, well, I’d be embarrassed.

Actually, I am embarrassed anyway. Thinking that singer-songwriter Harry Styles would emerge after completing what I believe to be the greatest tour of all time to casually release a surprise album would be unrealistic. But on Jan. 15, he took to social media to show the album cover for “Kiss All the Time. Disco, Occasionally.”

Despite my only driving ticket being for using my cell phone while driving, I am normally very disciplined about leaving it alone behind the wheel. Unfortunately, that was the exact moment Styles decided to announce the album. I did not see it until I checked my phone while pumping gas.

Crying tears of joy while holding my breath to the smell of gasoline, I realized that Styles might singlehandedly make 2026 the greatest year yet.

The anticipation surrounding Styles’ fourth album is fueled by patience. It has been nearly four years since his last album, “Harry’s House,” and more than two years since the end of his “Love on Tour” concert series.

That tour itself seemed endless in the best possible way. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Styles released two albums while still technically touring the same era. Fans held onto tickets for years before actually being able to see him live. I was one of them, patiently waiting until the day arrived.

And when it did, Styles proved what I, and many other fans already knew: he is an exceptional performer.

With many show dates for his upcoming tour already announced, I have no doubt it will be another celebration filled with “Satellite Stompers” and boa feathers. Unfortunately, I already lost the Ticketmaster war, so I will stay listening to “American Girls” from my car at full blast.

The track offers a reflective side of Styles. In it, he watches his friends settle down and marry American women while he remains single.

Despite exploring themes of loneliness, the song does not feel heavy. Its catchy chorus, “I’ve seen it in stages all over the world/ My friends are in love with American girls/ I’ve known you for ages/ American girls,” makes it impossible not to sing along.

The track also carries a nostalgic feel, reminiscent of his earlier days in the pop boy band, One Direction. With its bright pop sound and ugly, scream-singing chorus, the song would not feel out of place on the band’s fourth album, “Four.”

And as an American girl myself, it’s hard not to feel slightly seen.

Even through my bias as a Styles’ lover, there were some tracks that I did not connect with totally on first listen.

“Carla’s Song” is one I can easily see growing on me over time. It feels like the kind of track that reveals more with each listen, even if it did not immediately click for me. “Taste Back” is already starting to do just that. The more I replay it, the more I find myself appreciating its rhythm and can picture it being a favorite.

“Dance No More,” meanwhile, carries a groovy beat that feels made for getting ready for a night out with friends. It is upbeat, easy to listen to and fits comfortably into the album’s overall disco-leaning essence.



ILLUSTRATION BY EMILY ADORNO

Other tracks, however, resonated with me immediately on a personal level.

“The Waiting Game” and “Season 2 Weight Loss” both struck a deeper chord. “The Waiting Game” reflects on the pause in situationships, the avoidance of responsibility in relationships and the romanticization of toxic cycles.

This song made me reflect on my own suspension to change, waiting for others to clarify something for me or just waiting for something to move forward. The track highlights the emptiness of that waiting and the realization that change rarely comes without action.

While those songs felt deeply relatable, two tracks in particular on the album nearly had me tearing up.

“Coming Up Roses” is an emotional ballad written by Styles that reflects on cherishing the beauty of a relationship, even if it does not last forever. It feels vulnerable, as it guides an idea that meaningful relationships leave behind positive growth, even when they end.

“Paint by Numbers” takes a more introspective approach. The track is a metaphor for living within the public image and having a predetermined status. Styles has been navigating this for his entire career, coming into the spotlight very young alongside his One Direction bandmates.

In an interview with radio DJ Zane Lowe for Apple Music, Styles reflected on the loss of a close friend and the way that grief shaped his perspective. Many fans have speculated that this track is tied to the loss of One Direction bandmate Liam Payne who died in October 2025.

“It’s so difficult to lose a friend who is so like you in so many ways,” Styles said. “I saw someone with the kindest heart who just wanted to be great.”

He continued by explaining that the best way to honor someone you have lost is by living your life to the fullest.

That sentiment feels embedded throughout the album. There is a need to escape and seek freedom woven through many of the songs, and I believe it reflects Styles’ literal need to find a sense of normalcy after concluding his extensive “Love on Tour.”

After the emotional weight of those tracks, the album finds its way back to playful energy.

“Pop” has already been compared by fans online to the cool older sister of “Cinema” from “Harry's House,” and the comparison feels fitting. “Are You Listening Yet?” reminded me of something I would hear in the car with my dad, with its almost spoken, monotone rock style of singing.

Then there is “Ready, Steady, Go!,” a track that genuinely made me want to jump on a plane and see Styles perform live in London.

Released on Jan. 22, the album’s lead single, “Aperture,” set the tone early, hinting that something special was on the way. Thankfully, the rest of “Kiss All the Time. Disco, Occasionally” proves that expectation right.

The album moves easily between vulnerability and disco-infused fun, reminding listeners why Styles has remained one of pop music’s most compelling performers.

So while I may not be attending this tour thanks to Ticketmaster, at least I will have the soundtrack ready when I inevitably pretend I am front row in my car.

‘School (Spirits)’ is back in session

A review of ‘School Spirits’ season three

By LILLIAN CURTIN
Opinion Editor

I have to admit, it’s often the case that a show with such a niche plot dies out after the first or second season because the writers can’t come up with anything new. That’s definitely not the case with Paramount+’s “School Spirits.”

The first season follows Maddie Nears (Peyton List), who appears to be missing to her classmates and family. Her spirit was actually trapped in her high school, and her body was stolen and possessed by a ghost named Janet (Jess Gabor), who was killed in a fire in the 50s. With the other ghosts she encounters in the school (who also died there) they spend the season trying to find out what happened to Maddie.

She falls in love with ghost Wally Clark (Milo Manheim). Yes, Emma from “Jessie” and Zedd from “Zombies” are in love in another life — or afterlife.

If I had a nickel every time Manheim played an undead football player, I’d have two nickels. Talk about a niche typecast.

In the second season, after finding out that Maddie isn’t actually dead, the characters continue searching for answers. They realize Janet is in Maddie’s body and have to find a way to get everyone back to where they’re supposed to be, whether that be on Earth or in the school to continue spending their afterlife.

While the first two seasons were mostly mystery, this third season was definitely the creepiest.

In the second episode of the latest season, Simon (Kristian Ventura) goes into one of the ghosts’ “scars.” These “scars” are basically just the memory of how they died in the worst possible way, and considering basically every character died a horrific death, it can get pretty dark.

The “scar” that he went to in particular was a 2004 bus crash that killed members of the high school’s marching band. The scene is pretty graphic and insanely creepy, with students sprawled out in insane positions due to their broken bones and injuries.

The creative minds of the producers are impressive, with little things such as ominous marching band music playing in the background. One student was creepily playing his drums while he was impaled with a stop sign.

It gets creepier. In the second half of the third season, we spend a lot of time in a buried Finnish church, with ghost children and a decomposing old man. It honestly reminded me of “The Nun.”

It wouldn't be that surprising if it were intentional. Maddie and Simon are horror movie fanatics, but with the horror movie references sprinkled throughout the show, you can tell the creators are too.

I’d be amiss not to mention that Superintendent Deborah Hunter-Price (Jennifer Tilly) was one of the main antagonists this season. If you’re a horror movie fan, Tilly’s name may sound familiar to you. She’s most famous for playing Tiffany in the “Chucky” franchise.

Superintendent Price is set on destroying the school (where all of the student ghosts are) and reconstructing a new school. What’s found out throughout the season is that if a haunted place is destroyed, the ghosts get trapped.

The Finnish church that I mentioned? Yeah, those children are trapped under the school that was built over it. The cycle would just continue.

Tilly wasn’t the only famous star to appear in this season. A random, but oh so welcome guest star was singer Lizzy McAlpine. She appeared in a flashback of one of the ghosts, singing “House of the Rising Sun.” If you haven’t given it a listen,


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please do. It’s heavenly, per usual with her music.

I’m sure there will be another season. They did a pretty good job with leaving just enough questions unanswered that it’d make sense, but not enough that you’re still confused.

In the second-to-last episode, Wally goes through his door, which is what you’d assume would be their ticket to heaven. When we get to the last episode, we see that’s not the case. Maddie, who is still alive, manages to make it to the forest where the rest of the ghosts that have “crossed over” are. We see Dawn (RaeAnne Boon), who “crossed over” in season one, and Janet, who did at the beginning of this season.

Wally went through his door to try to find Simon, who is alive, just stuck in the ghost world.

Every living person made it out. But where is my precious baby boy, Wally? I will riot if he’s not in the next season, and even worse, if Maddie ends up back with her cheating season one boyfriend (yes I’m ignoring the great character development right now), Xavier (Spencer MacPherson). Xavier has been great, but I’m worried by how much it felt like the writers were trying to make us ship them again, as if they’re planning on bringing them back together.

I don’t care if he’s dead; Maddie belongs with Wally. End of story.

The writers are doing a great job at keeping the stories and excitement alive, even if most of the characters aren’t.