The fall of the mall



PHOTO | JJBERS

Westfarms mall in West Hartford, Connecticut.



PHOTO | HANS OLAV LIEN

A two story Forever 21 location, which are all going out of business this year.

By Solé Scott
Editor-in-Chief

The demise of malls is an indescribable feeling that has certainly changed society negatively.

Every Saturday I would go to the mall with my mother and remember the hustle and bustle of it all. Fresh smelling tea from Teavana, delicious pretzels from Pretzelmaker and perfume shops are what I miss today.

Now, I know there are malls still alive, such as Westfarms mall in West Hartford, Milford Mall in Milford and Holyoke Mall in Holyoke, Massachusetts.

However, the majority of the malls we and our predecessors enjoyed are no longer here and have swiftly disappeared, becoming new apartment complexes or something else more useful.

We are slowly but surely losing anchor stores such as Sears, Kmart, JCPenney and Lord & Taylor. There are many more, but these are the stores we all shopped at least once in our lifetime.

There should never be parking spaces available when going to the mall on the weekend. That is when you know the world is truly ending and we are in the early stages and need to prepare for what is to come.

One of my favorite stores, Forever 21 announced they will be closing all stores and filed for Chapter 7 bankruptcy. First it was Sears, then my beloved Justice, now it is Forever 21. The place where I transitioned into a teen during 8th grade.

Another negative of this is the loss of trying clothes on in-store. Now I have to buy something and pray that it fits me. Without malls, there are not many options of clothing stores I like that are stand-alone.

You won't ever see a Free People, Abercrombie and Fitch, PacSun, Bath and Body Works, Claire's or Foot Locker outside of a mall for reasons that are unknown. Pretty soon though these stores will need to make a transition outside of the malls or else they run the risk of high rent and the possibility of bankruptcy.

I do not know when the shift in mall culture happened, but I suspect it was the same time as the hype of Black Friday dying down. You no longer see a sea of people at the malls on Black Friday. I remember the lines would be out the store and wrapped around all the way down the hall.

I remember the excellent deals in store that are much better than online now. Like gaming consoles and electronics really used to be on sale and were bought like hot cakes by customers.

I remember the coin fountain and begging my mother for change so I could make a wish or two. Now, I barely see anyone sitting at the fountain, let alone throwing coins. I am saddened to see once beloved malls become abandoned sitting on lucrative and becoming exploring territory for YouTubers.

I was bummed when my high school years began and the mall was not a place to meet up after school. In fact, we had no meet up location, which is not what old movies promised me. I loathe living in this generation where everything that once was is becoming a distant memory.

Why Iayze is next up

By Jay'Mi Vazquez
Managing Editor



PHOTO | JAYCYE

Iayze, also known as Jace!

The underground rap scene is a breeding ground for innovation and raw talent and among its rising stars, Iayze, also known as Jace! stands out prominently.

Born Jace Lavoer Salter on Jan. 10, 2003 in Fort Worth, Texas, Iayze has rapidly ascended the ranks of underground hip-hop, distinguishing himself through his versatility, authentic storytelling and unwavering dedication to his craft.

Iayze's musical journey commenced at the tender age of 13 when he began recording tracks using just his phone and a laptop. Initially releasing music under the moniker "TGE Duwap," he was inspired by artist Almighty Jay to delve into the world of rap.

However, it was not until recently that Iayze took his craft seriously, driven by the desire to provide for his family.

His early works laid the foundation for a sound characterized by a seamless blend of melodic tunes and hard-hitting beats.

Tracks like "C'mere!" and "556 (Green Tip)" gained significant traction on platforms like TikTok and YouTube, showcasing his ability to create viral hits that resonate with a broad audience.

One of Iayze's standout qualities is his remarkable versatility. He effortlessly oscillates between various styles, from the atmospheric vibes of pluggnb beats to the aggressive tones of rage rap.

This adaptability not only keeps his music fresh but also demonstrates his willingness to push creative boundaries.

For instance, his project "iayze & Jace!" serves as a testament to his multifaceted artistry, catering to fans with diverse musical tastes.

Beyond catchy hooks and compelling beats, Iayze's music delves deep into personal experiences and emotions. He candidly addresses themes such as mental health struggles, familial responsibilities and the challenges of his upbringing.

His raw honesty fosters a profound connection with listeners who see their own stories reflected in his lyrics.

In the fast-paced world of underground rap, consistency is paramount and Iayze exemplifies this principle.

His discography is extensive, featuring multiple mixtapes and albums released in quick succession. Notable projects include "Demons 2," "Virtuous" and "Reverence," each showcasing his evolution as an artist.

This relentless work ethic not only keeps his fan base engaged but also solidifies his reputation as a dedicated and prolific artist.

Iayze's influence extends beyond his music; he is actively shaping the future of the underground rap scene.

His collaborations with other underground artists like Kankan and Summrs highlight his role within a community of musicians who are collectively redefining the genre.

Moreover, his openness about personal challenges and growth serves as an inspiration for aspiring artists navigating their own paths.

At just 22-years-old, Iayze's potential is boundless. His journey from recording music on a phone to becoming a prominent figure in underground rap underscores his resilience and talent.

As he continues to evolve and refine his artistry, there is little doubt that Iayze will leave an indelible mark on the music industry.

The influence of Real Housewives of Atlanta

By Solé Scott
Editor-in-Chief

The Real Housewives of Atlanta is the greatest and most iconic show in the Housewives franchise.

The show premiered on October 27, 2008 and has become a pop culture phenomenon. Nene Leakes, Sherreé Whitfield, Kim Zolciak, Lisa Wu and DeShawn Snow were the founders of this franchise that took place in the cultural hub of Atlanta, Georgia.

I have been watching this show since season one and fell in love with the larger-than-life personality Nene Leakes who reminded me of my beautiful Sagittarius mother who does not play.

Leakes at the time did not have a job but was a popular socialite around Atlanta.

We were also introduced to Kim Zolciak who had two daughters and lived lavishly off of an anonymous married man called "Big Poppa."

Shereé Whitfield was a mother of three who was recently divorced from former professional football player Bob Whitfield and was focusing on launching her fashion line, which is still kind of not a thing as of 2025. This a whole other story that I will not dive into but do me a favor a google She by Shereé and you will go through a rabbit hole.

Lisa Wu was a multi-faceted woman who had her hands full with real estate, fashion designing, acting, producing and screenwriting. She was married to professional football player Ed Hartwell and shared a son with him. She previously was married to R&B singer Keith Sweat and they share a son.

DeShawn Snow and her professional basketball player husband Eric Snow had the most luxurious lifestyle at this time due to her humungous mansion that had a house manager, personal chef, bowling alley, seven bedrooms and seven and half bathrooms. However, their marriage deteriorated quickly.

In season 2, DeShawn Snow was long gone and multi-faceted artist Kandi Burruss and her daughter Riley joined the cast.

In season 3, Lisa Wu was just a friend. Attorney Phaedra Parks, who represented singer Bobby Brown and model Cynthia Bailey were cast. By season 5, Kim Zolciak left for her own show and our wish was granted, when we were gifted Kenya Moore and Porsha Williams.

Kenya Moore was the former Miss USA of 1993, model and actress. Porsha Williams was married to former professional football player Kordell Stewart.

Nene, Kenya, Porsha, Kandi, Cynthia and Phaedra were by far the most iconic cast of throughout the housewive's universe to this day.

What I enjoy about this show is the shady banter that happens and the rawness these ladies have shown.

Until season 9 when Phaedra spread a disgusting false rumor that Kandi had a sex dungeon in her basement and that she and her husband Todd wanted to drug Porsha.

Phaedra was subsequently fired from the show after the reunion, but the damaging implication will always be there.

I admire the realness and honesty that Nene has shown countless times when she was getting divorced from her husband Greg or when she had to give a stern talk to her eldest son for being lazy and inconsiderate while still living at home for free. Also, what she did with the platform by appearing on Celebrity Apprentice, Glee, The New Normal and Broadway.

I admire and respect Shereé for sharing the abuse she suffered at the hands of her ex-husband Bob. She welcomed us into her personal life even though it was difficult.

What I learned from these 16 seasons is that no matter your status in life, we all suffer privately from various issues. Yet, we can also be fabulous at the same time and "twirl" like Kenya Moore would say.

These are the opinions of the Southern News Editoral Staff

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Issues printed by: Valley Publishing, Derby, CT
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Print edition online: OurSchoolNewspaper.com/Southern

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