SPRING FLING

Summer 2016 is coming to Yale

// BY STEPHANIE ALTSCHUL

Minutes past midnight at Spring Fling's Toad's Place release party, the crowd erupted as Swedish superstar Zara Larsson was revealed as the headliner for the 2026 Festival. Her 2015 hit "Lush Life" filled the room, and members of Spring Fling danced along on stage while multicolor dolphins and technicolor sunsets filled the screen behind them. Larsson's iconic summer energy is bringing 2016 back to New Haven, and we're all a part of her symphony.

The buildup was as electrifying as the reveal. Sitting by the entrance of Toad's Place 15 minutes before the lineup was released, I watched crowds of students chatter excitedly and file into the dance venue, each paying the price of a Common Grounds coffee to get past the doorman. Fresh off Bass Library cramming sessions and still stressed about impending midterms, groups of friends ditched the stacks for synths and a study break.

2010s pop hits blasted over the speakers and students in sweatpants gossipped and wandered towards the barricade at the front of the venue. Ella Kraynak '29, Kat Dubrow '29 and Morgan Damiba '29 giggled with me as they entered, describing the scene as "electric, vibrant." Morgan told me she came to "support friends on the team" and because she "loves art." I asked the girls who they'd be most excited to see perform at Spring Fling, to which Kat replied, "lowkey, Zara Larsson ... maybe Pitbull."

As the countdown dropped to single digits, Spring Fling members filled the stage, boasting custom painted T-shirts and way too many mini skirts for February. A projector whirred, and the Spring Fling release video began.

Dramatized skits of the committee's deliberations foreshadowed each artist's genre. Grant Pool '29, effortlessly disguised with a backwards baseball cap and a heavy "fraccent," told the audience how much electronic dance music means to him on a personal level. Coupled with synths and kick drums, Aluna's name filled the screen. The British DJ-singer-producer was the first in Spring Fling's lineup to grace the public's ears. Aluna's inclusion in the festival signals a pronounced shift towards house and EDM for Spring Fling, moving towards a genre popularized through party culture and international influence.

As the crowd danced, anticipation for the festival's other headliners built. The next skit rolled. The rap fans in the Spring Fling committee emphasized the "cultural influence" of the genre and the impact of Ken Carson's performance of "Yale" on Old Campus last year. A trap beat sounded over the speakers. "Sheck Wes" appeared in all caps over the crowd, and the one-hit-wonder's track "Mo Bamba" sent jostling waves of energy through the audience. The song, which peaked at number 6 on the Billboard Hot 100 in 2018, is Wes' most anticipated track this year. The audience seemed unsure of what else he'd play. Maybe an extended cut?

With tensions high, Lelah Shapiro '27 appeared on screen, wearing a hot pink Elle Woods-adjacent set. Adorned with her best Valley Girl accent, she told the audience, "I just, like, want Coachella." Iconic. Zara Larsson's name flashed on screen, and Toad's Place burst into screams. I received half a dozen texts: "I'M SO GAGGED," among my favorites.

Zara Larsson will be the first woman artist to headline Spring Fling since 2014. It's belated, but considering the resurgence of 2016 pop culture icons, it'll really just be two years ago by the time April 25 rolls around.

Afterwards, at a Brick Oven debrief, I spoke with Wyatt Fishman '27, who told me he was elated about the headliner. "I love Zara Larsson." He also remarked on the "decent attendance" and "great vibes" of the Wednesday night event.

Between midterm cramming, mini skirts in February, blow-up dolphins and the promise of "Stateside" echoing across Old Campus in a few short months, the release party felt like a cultural reset — perhaps not a genuine 10-year rewind, but certainly a promise of "tan lines, low-rise" and Midnight Suns to come.

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PERSONAL ESSAY

The beauty of a 'daak naam'

// BY FABEHA JAHRA

At Yale, my name is printed cleanly on syllabi, ID cards and email signatures. It travels easily through classrooms and meetings. Professors pronounce it carefully. Friends shorten it when they get comfortable. It exists in public — legible, formal, steady.

But at home, I'm no longer Fabeha. At home, I'm Faboo.

Faboo is the name shouted from across the kitchen. The name said with a sigh when I'm being stubborn, that my mom uses when she's half scolding, half laughing. It's rounder, softer, less polished than Fabeha. It doesn't belong on a resume. It belongs in voice notes, in family group chats, in the space before I learned how to introduce myself in rooms like this one.

In Bengali culture, many of us grow up with two names: a "bhalo naam," the formal name meant for school forms and official documents, and a "daak naam," the name used by family — sometimes playful, sometimes affectionate, oftentimes completely unrelated to the "real" one. The daak naam isn't meant for the outside world.

So, Faboo lives inside the house.

No one at Yale calls me that. And most days, I don't think about it. I answer to Fabeha. I introduce myself confidently. I correct mispronunciations. I write my name at the top of exams.

But every once in a while, I'll get a call from home. My phone lights up with "Ma." And before I even say hello, I hear it: "Faboo."

Just like that, I am somewhere else.

There is something disarming about hearing that name in a place where no one else knows it exists. It reminds me that the version of myself that walks through Sterling or Cross Campus isn't the only version. Before Yale, before internships and majors and carefully curated introductions, there was a girl being called Faboo for no reason other than love.

At Yale, names are tied to reputations. They carry accomplishments, majors, and clubs. They're printed in programs and said into microphones. A name here is something you build.

Faboo isn't something I built. It was given to me. It carries no resume and asks nothing of me. There's a quiet comfort in that.

Sometimes I wonder what would happen if someone here called me Faboo. Would it feel exposed? Too intimate? Would it collapse the careful distance between my public self and my private one?

Because that's what a daak naam does — it collapses distance. It assumes closeness. It belongs to people who knew you before you became polished.

Holding both names feels like being in two places at once. Fabeha moves through Yale — steady, ambitious, learning how to speak in seminar rooms. Faboo belongs to a different rhythm: kitchens and cousins and Bangla spoken quickly and without translation.

Neither is more real than the other, but one requires more effort. Faboo doesn't need Yale to recognize her. She doesn't need to network or perform. She is proof that I existed before this campus and will exist after it.

And maybe that's the quiet gift of a daak naam. It reminds you that your identity is layered. That you are more than the version that fits neatly on a syllabus. That somewhere, beyond the stone and structure, there is a name that means home.

At Yale, I answer to Fabeha. But when my phone lights up late at night and I hear "Faboo" through the speaker, I am reminded that not every part of me has to travel. Some names are meant to stay inside the house.

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WEEKEND RECOMMENDS:

EATING THE BROWN SNOW