

- Obama releases new memoir
- Sun suggests safe holiday activities

CULTURE

EL GATO • FRIDAY, DECEMBER 11, 2020 • LOS GATOS HIGH SCHOOL • WWW.ELGATONWS.COM

TORREY REVIEWS SMITH'S MOST RECENT ALBUM

by **Senji Torrey**
Media Production Editor

Since March, the music industry has run dry of new albums due to the coronavirus pandemic that has distanced artists from their producers, managers, and even other musicians. However, Sam Smith's new studio album, *Love Goes*, provides an oasis for listeners to quench their thirst with Smith's unique style of heart-felt ballads that pierce the soul.

Instead of releasing an album full of new songs, Smith decided to sprinkle song releases throughout 2020, and then assemble them together later on. Because of this, many of the songs on their album, such as *Dancing With a Stranger*, featuring Normani, have already been heard by millions.

Other than *Dancing With a Stranger*, instant hits that made their way onto the album include *How Do You Sleep?*, *Diamonds*, and *Promises*. In an interview, Smith revealed that they wrote these songs over two years ago and that only after the shutdown did they have time to reflect and realize that "these songs are fun. They're not talking about right now. I was literally just having a laugh, and I think that right now, we all need a little bit of a laugh."

Despite the many pre-released hits somewhat overshadowing the songs that debuted on the album itself, there are also many hidden gems that shine in their own right. The track's first song, *Young*, is the only piece that is sung entirely a cappella, or with only human voices.

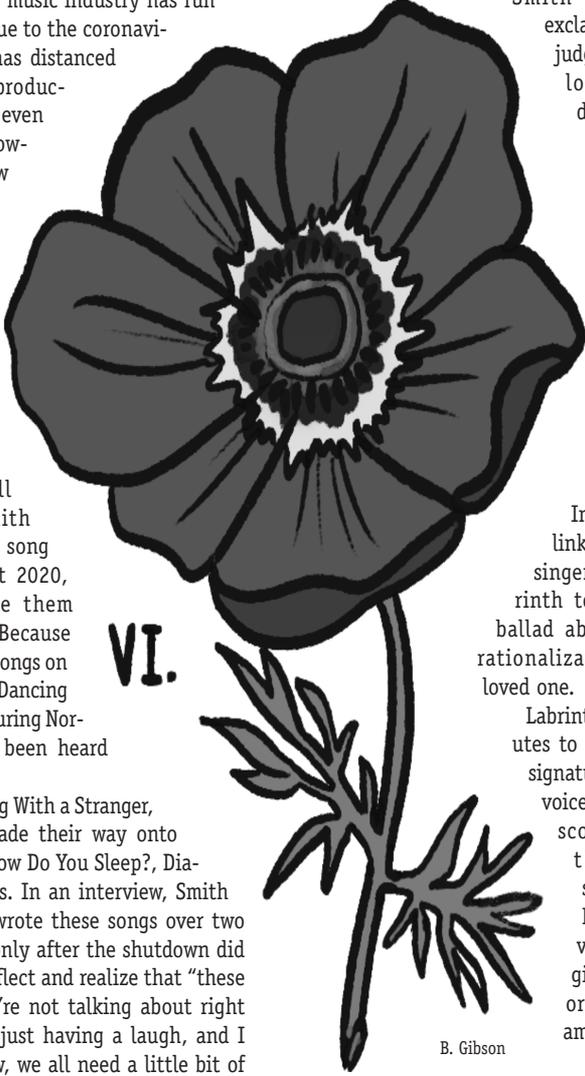
The piece reflects on Smith's past and what they believed others thought of them. At one point, Smith unapologetically exclaims: "If you wanna judge me, then go and load the gun/I've done nothing wrong, I'm young."

In spite of the powerful messages exhibited by all the aforementioned pieces, this album's namesake song, *Love Goes*, possesses perhaps the most impressive lyrics out of all 17 tracks.

In this song, Smith links up with legendary singer-songwriter Labyrinth to create a soulful ballad about the pain and rationalization of leaving a loved one.

Labyrinth not only contributes to this piece with his signature raw, yet smooth, voice, but he also underscores Smith's lines throughout the song. In doing this, Labyrinth produces a vocal layering that gives a defined and original feel to this amazing piece.

In *Love Goes*, Sam Smith culminates their personal experiences with powerful lessons about love, loss, and moving forward from both. With so many superb tracks that examine so many of humanity's largest mysteries on a singular album, the question is no longer if one should listen, but rather when. (Sources: Billboard, Genius, LyricFind, Capital FM)



B. Gibson

Obama releases his new memoir

by **Sonali Muthukrishnan**
National/World Editor

Former President Barack Obama released the first volume of his memoir, *A Promised Land* on Nov. 17. The book is filled to the brim with wisdom, lessons, mistakes, and memories, summarizing Obama's journey of becoming president, as well as the hardships he faced upon entering the highest office in the country.

Obama reflects on the moments that shaped him and the people who put him on the right track. For the former president, his wife Michelle Obama and other friends from his time before he became a senator grounded him. Through the book, readers get a glimpse of Obama's pure, raw humanity.

The way Obama crafts his memoir is incredibly impactful. Instead of separating the chapters based on American issues, Obama chose to move through his life in chronological order. Through this writing style, Obama recalls the thoughts and feelings he had in the moments he writes about, allowing the reader to feel as though they experienced these events by his side. More than that, Obama reflects on the mistakes he made while in office. One notable mistake was Obama's naivety about the experience of female White House Officials during his first term. After hearing rumors about complaints, Obama sat down with the women on his staff to understand their concerns and find solutions. Through these mistakes Obama became a better leader.

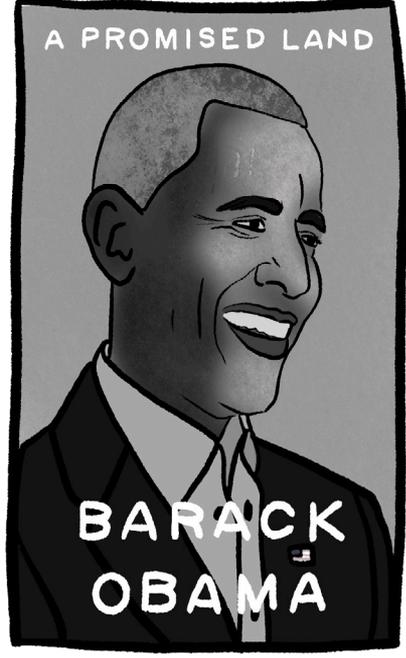
After reading *A Promised Land*, it is abundantly clear that Obama carefully handled issues regarding race during his presidency. He did not allow himself to share his entire perception of these situations because

he understood that many Americans would not be able to handle the brutal truth. Many Democrats critiqued Obama for his reluctance to address issues of race while he was in office. In a press conference regarding the arrest of a Black Harvard

professor who was trying to get into his own home, Obama critiqued the police's actions, leading a backlash. According to Obama, though he understood that race played a significant role in events that occurred during his presidency, experiences like these made him feel that he could not share these beliefs with the entire country. Obama's reflection on race in America during and after his presidency was brutally honest and refreshingly contrasts with how he discussed race while in office.

Additionally, Obama discusses the truth of American politics, the way it has changed, and the major players within it. The former president was not afraid to tell it like it is, revealing that, in politics, the public perception of a bill is just as important as what it does. He recounts his frustrations with the lack of compromise in Congress, and shares his wish that the political scene will change with the next generation of voters.

Overall, Obama's hopeful and masterful narration of his time in office and the path he took to get there is a must-read. It is undeniable that the first volume of *A Promised Land* leaves readers wanting tons more.

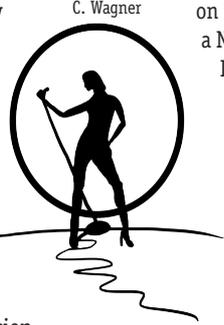


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EGR: From video games to brand new music albums

Plastic Hearts: After Miley Cyrus left the Disney scene in 2011, she evolved through a variety of chapters in music — everything from swinging on a wrecking ball to a cathartic and breezy summer melody of *Malibu*. Cyrus has produced albums featuring pure pop, rap/pop fusion, Nashville hippie, and now indie rock-star with her newly-released album *Plastic Hearts*. After Cyrus covered *Blondie's Heart of Glass* at the iHeart Music Festival, teens began listening to the same music their parents enjoyed in the 1980s. On *Plastic Hearts*, Cyrus's music portrays a 2020's version of Stevie Nicks. The album imbues iconic rhythms from the past with today's revolutionized pop scene that radiates a modern nostalgic aesthetic. -Jenna Roselli, *Center Editor*

Assassin's Creed Valhalla: Ubisoft released the newest edition to the *Assassin's Creed* video game franchise, *Assassin's Creed Valhalla*,



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on Nov. 10. The new game centers around the life of a Norwegian viking named Eivor, nicknamed "Wolf-Kissed." Players have the choice to play as either a female or male, or let the game choose for them. Previous games in the series restricted the player to one gender, but switching back and forth between male and female is free and has no effect on the storyline. Eivor completes quests and eventually becomes involved in a conflict between the Brotherhood of Assassins and the Templar Order. In addition, there are many games and side quests available that allow players to earn money in the game and level up. I highly recommend *Assassin's Creed Valhalla* for its unique character design, intricate storyline, and ferocious fights that are fit for a viking. -Alia Arafah, *Editorial Editor*

Clouds on Disney+: On Oct. 16, *Clouds*, which was quick to become one of the greatest tear-jerkers in Disney movie history — hard to



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believe, I know — made its way to a "screen near you." DisneyPlus released the heartwarming tale about a senior in high school, Zach Sobiech, whom doctors diagnose with a terminal illness. The movie is based on a true story, which brings even more sorrow when we recognize how unfair life really is. Although this movie will undoubtedly bring tears to your eyes, *Clouds* is a cinematic masterpiece that must be watched to gain a deeper understanding of unseen diversities within society. -Georgia Kaufman, *Humor Editor*

Miloe: Based in Minneapolis, rising indie star Miloe seamlessly blends the genres of rumba folk and indie pop with his uniquely earthy sound. The 19-year-old artist originally hails from the Democratic Republic of Congo and has had a knack for music all his life, having learned to play the piano at just six years old. Miloe officially launched his music career in 2017 and quickly formed a local fan base through his energetic basement shows. Serving up youthful and breezy vibes on his new *Greenhouse EP*, Miloe's music provides the perfect way to relax in 2020. -Ethan Sanders, *People Editor*

Juno star Elliot Page comes out as transgender

by **Michaela Thimot**
National/World Editor

Oscar-nominated actor Elliot Page, known for his starring roles in *Juno* and *The Umbrella Academy*, came out as transgender in a heartfelt social media post on Dec. 1. His announcement quickly received supportive words from millions of fans, as well as encouraging tweets from Netflix and *The Umbrella Academy's* Twitter account.

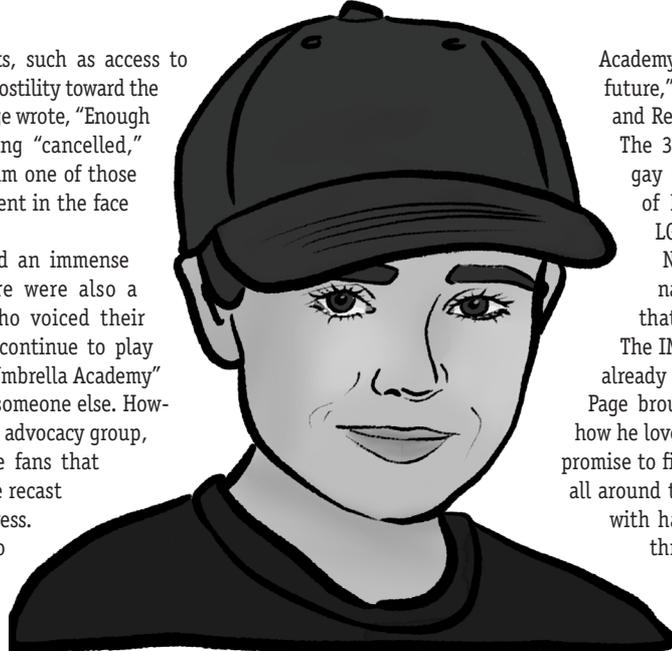
"I feel overwhelming gratitude for the incredible people who have supported me along this journey. I can't begin to express how remarkable it feels to finally love who I am enough to pursue my authentic self," Page, who shared he uses he/they pronouns, wrote in his post. "I love that I am trans. And I love that I am queer. And the more I hold myself close and fully embrace who I am, the more I dream, the more my heart grows and the more I thrive."

Despite his profound happiness, Page shared his fears, expressing that he is scared of "the invasiveness, the hate, the 'jokes' and of violence" that he may receive as a result of his announcement. Page also used his post to address the massive discrimination that transgender people face. He shared a statistic reporting that at least 40 transgender people, the majority of whom were Black and Latinx trans women, were murdered in just the past year. Additionally, Page called out the political leaders who have their minds set on denying

a multitude of trans rights, such as access to healthcare, and spreading hostility toward the entire trans community. Page wrote, "Enough is enough. You aren't being 'cancelled,' you are hurting people. I am one of those people and we won't be silent in the face of your attacks."

Although he received an immense amount of support, there were also a handful of Page's fans who voiced their opinions on if he should continue to play Vanya Hargreeves in "The Umbrella Academy" or if the role should go to someone else. However, GLAAD, the LGBTQIA+ advocacy group, does not agree with those fans that the role of Vanya should be recast with a cisgender female actress.

"Trans actors can and do play both trans and cisgender characters. I'm sure Elliot will continue to be brilliant in *Umbrella*



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Academy and many different types of roles in the future," GLAAD Director of Transgender Media and Representation Nick Adams stated.

The 33-year-old Canadian actor came out as gay in 2014, and since then has been one of Hollywood's most vocal advocates for LGBTQIA+ rights. An insider revealed that Netflix is in the process of updating Page's name in all productions he is involved with that are available to stream on the platform. The IMDB page for *The Umbrella Academy* has already updated his name.

Page brought his post to a close by expressing how he loves being transgender and readressing his promise to fight for the rights of transgender people all around the world. "To all trans people who deal with harassment, self-loathing, abuse and the threat of violence every day: I see you, I love you and I will do everything I can to change this world for the better."

(Sources: Variety, Washington Post, Good Morning America)