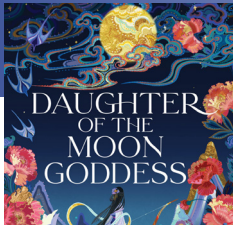


CULTURAL BUZZ



Published on Jan. 11, author Sue Lynn Tan's debut novel, "Daughter of the Moon Goddess," contains vivid imagery and a fascinating plot.

Based on the legend of the Chinese moon goddess Chang'e, the novel follows a young girl as she sets off on a journey to lift her mother's exile.

The book uses several fantasy tropes, such as the inclusion of a protagonist who at first is completely unknown, but has a secret power and becomes popular to those around them later on. Despite this cliché, Tan alters these elements in a way that makes them unique to the novel.

While the book is full of beautiful imagery and detailed descriptions of various settings, this level of detail is not given to some important plot events, which are written with an overly rapid pace.

Despite its fast pace, the engaging plot and descriptive language used throughout make "Daughter of the Moon Goddess" an excellent book for those who enjoy fantasy and mythology-based stories.

-- Maya Shrivastav, Journalism I student



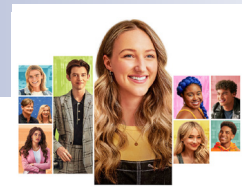
The MrBeast Bar, released online and to select grocery stores on Jan. 29 by influencer and philanthropist MrBeast's new brand Feastables, is a healthy but expensive alternative to traditional chocolate bars.

Three types of bars are available: original, almond and quinoa crunch. The added ingredients give the bars an interesting crunch and taste, although they don't add much to the bar to satisfy snackers.

The chocolate is decent, but not that different from the many other chocolate bars offered by different companies. In fact, compared to Hershey's chocolate bars, the MrBeast Bar gives snackers less of a melt-in-your-mouth sensation because of its brittle texture.

Overall, MrBeast Bars provide customers with an average chocolate for a high price of \$29.99 for a pack of 10. While it might be worth it to health-minded snackers who appreciate the chocolate's health-conscious ingredients, others should stick with Hershey's chocolate.

-- Isabella Westrich, Variety Staffer



"Tall Girl 2" was released exclusively on Netflix on Feb. 11. Picking up after the events of "Tall Girl", the melodramatic and unrelatable plot follows Jodi Kreyman (Ava Michelle) with her newfound popularity.

Directed by Emily Ting, "Tall Girl 2" takes viewers through Jodi's challenges from being cast as the main character in her school musical to navigating her complicated relationship with Jack Dunkleman (Griffin Gluck), her overly obsessive boyfriend.

While the movie briefly touches on topics such as body image, insecurities and self-doubt, setting a positive underlying message for viewers to accept who they are, the movie leaves a lot to be desired. The plot is scattered with sparse character development aside from that in Jodi's rival and the unrealistic portrayal of high school life presents a movie that is hard for viewers to connect with.

Overall, "Tall Girl 2" is an unnecessary sequel that provides a lackluster viewing experience. With a self-absorbed main character and a storyline like almost every other teen romance movie, viewers will know how the movie ends five minutes into watching it.

-- Sofia Balsamo, News Staffer

Ghost Party

BY ISAAC RAMIREZ
Variety Editor

Local indie rock band Monsoon released an 11-track album, "Ghost Party" on Feb. 18 to most major music streaming platforms. The album features a variety of creative musical features across its tracks that will immerse listeners in its distinctive sound of experimental rock.

Thirty-eight minutes long, the album combines a wide range of genres, including pop rock, punk and heavy metal. This range cements the album's identity as one full of experimental musical devices.

Lead singer Sienna Chandler provides a dynamic vocal range that enhances instrumentals to encapsulate the mood of each song. Each track features a uniquely flowing sound, from the slow melancholic chords and ethereal vocals of "Dark Colossus" to the upbeat guitar line and percussive elements of "Nightshop". Chandler's vibrant and equally somber voice perfectly implements lyrics into each track.

With uniquely poetic and cleverly rhymed lyrics written by Chandler, repeated phrases or words in some tracks establish continuity across the album. This repetition is most apparent in the lines such as, "Beetlebee, you swing the bat and swing away // Don't move don't move // Swing the bat swing away like a picture in a frame," repeated in songs such as "Dont Move" and "Beetlebee".

A stand-out track, "Dark Colossus" provides the most distinctive listening experience of any song in "Ghost Party". Accompanied by nothing more than harmonic background vocals and the pensive lone strumming of guitarist Roan O'Reilly, Chandler displays a smooth voice that adds to the musical depth of the album. Although its lyrics are repetitive, "Dark Colossus" emulates reflection.

With their many creative liberties present throughout the album, Chandler, O'Reilly and drummer Joey Kegel provide a fresh take on experimental rock, fusing elements like the easygoing attitude of pop with the dramatic heaviness of rock. The blend of emotions and genres in "Ghost Party" is sure to leave listeners anticipating upcoming works from Monsoon. **O**

