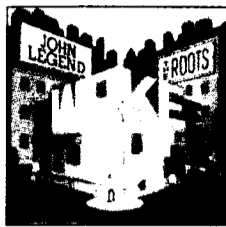


ALBUM REVIEW

'Wake Up!'

Reviewed by Josh Bollinger
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

In the first Official Album collaboration by John Legend and The Roots, their album "Wake Up!" wonderfully fuses together Legend's soul with The Roots' laid back hip-hop.



Courtesy of amazon.com

"Wake Up!" which was released on Sept. 21, is mostly comprised of covers of 60s and 70s R&B, funk tunes and one reggae song.

The opening track "Hard Times" sets the tone for the album's old school vibe. The only real differences between the original song by 70s soul artist Baby Huey and the Legend and Roots cover is the improved recording quality. The instruments still capture that vintage sound.

Roots' emcee Black Thought is featured on "Hard Times" and a Black Thought is featured on "Little Ghetto Boy." On both songs, Black Thought brings back his classic rhyme flow that Roots fans go wild for.

Other guest appearances include rapper Common on the album's third song "Wake Up Everybody."

Though Common's rhyme scheme seems forced, the song still saves itself with groovy drums and a light-hearted orchestral melody, which really shines through after the chorus.

The rhythm section is one of the best parts of this album. In fact, Ahmir "Questlove" Thompson is one of the best musicians on it.

He lays down beats from funk to jazz to easy-listening R&B back beats while perfectly intertwining with bassist Owen Biddle.

Biddle's playing is confident and really shines when he throws in quick improved filler into the song, showcasing his artistic creativity.

The collaboration doesn't just cover the songs note-for-note — it makes the songs its own.

One of the gems on the album "Humanity (Love The Way It Should Be)" is the only reggae cover and stands out as one of the most vintage sounding songs on the record.

The song features a lazy sounding brass section as Legend's velvet voice goes back and forth from timid to firm and clear.

The album is largely a political and social commentary. The songs often talk about the struggles of everyday life and calls for public awareness of the current rut that the United States is in.

Though the songs on "Wake Up!" were originally written about what was going on more than 40 years ago, the songs' meanings still ring true these days.

The most powerful on the album is a Bill Withers' cover, "I Can't Write on Left Handed."

During the intro, The Roots back Legend with a chilled R&B track as he tells the listeners that Withers originally wrote the song about the Vietnam War. Withers intended the song to sound like a first-hand account of a soldier that got shot in the hand and is now fearful of death.

Legend starts with a daring sentence, "War is hell, it always has been, it always will be."

Grade: B

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'\$#! My Dad Says'

Reviewed by Karlna Yücel
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

Where the #!\$@ are the laughs? In the pilot episode of "\$#! My Dad Says," we are introduced to Henry — played by Jonathan Sadowski — his dad and their non-existent relationship.



Courtesy of imdb.com

The show, produced and inspired by Justin Halpern and his Twitter, had a huge buildup surrounding it, especially because of the popularity of Halpern's Twitter and book.

With a 1.7 million person (and growing) following, Halpern's tweets have become legendary and are what make his anonymous dad hilarious.

In the book, Halpern's dad is able to speak his mind, no matter what words come out. Having been moved to prime-time television and having to follow the Federal Communications Commission's regulations, Halpern's original quotes sound watered down.

Halpern should've taken the show to a cable company that would've been able to keep his dad's quotes intact. This might not have gotten Halpern's show as many viewers, but it would've kept its original integrity.

William Shatner, who plays Halpern's dad, is the only reason to watch this show. He is always ready with a witty remark, but they are predictable, especially if you haven't read any of Halpern's tweets or his book.

The three other plain, D-list characters of the show don't add any extra laughs. Jon Sadowski, the main character, has played other roles in major movies, such as "Live Free or Die Hard" and "She's The Man." This is Sadowski's first big role, and he is doing terribly.

The funniest part of the pilot is Shatner's interaction with a DMV worker. It's sad that an extra on the show produced more laughs than three of the characters.

This premiere was a huge letdown. Read the book or Halpern's tweets and imagine Shatner saying everything.

It would have the same effect.

Grade: D+

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Alumnus book impresses

Reviewed by Hannah Rishel
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

I'm a bit of a cynic when it comes to the paranormal, mostly because I've never had an experience with it myself. I don't like to let my mind wander to things of that nature because I don't like scaring myself. And if there are spirits all around us, I think it would be best to leave them alone, not go seeking them out.

But despite my personal stance, I found myself enjoying reading "Paranormal State" by Ryan Buell more than I thought I would.

Buell, who has encountered the paranormal numerous times from a young age, founded the Paranormal Research Society (PRS) at the beginning of his college career at Penn State. After training new members, the group would go out and investigate paranormal cases across the state.

Over time the club developed and was noticed by A&E, who decided to center a show, also titled "Paranormal State," around these investigations.

Buell's book focuses on the forming of PRS and gives behind the scenes details of each of the cases the group explored.

I've never watched an episode of "Paranormal State," so the details of each case PRS tackles didn't bother me. But I can imagine if I were a fan of the show this might be slightly annoying and I would want him to skip to the stuff going on behind the scenes. I would assume fans of "Paranormal State" are the target audience for this book, but I like that Buell made things accessible for people who haven't watched it.

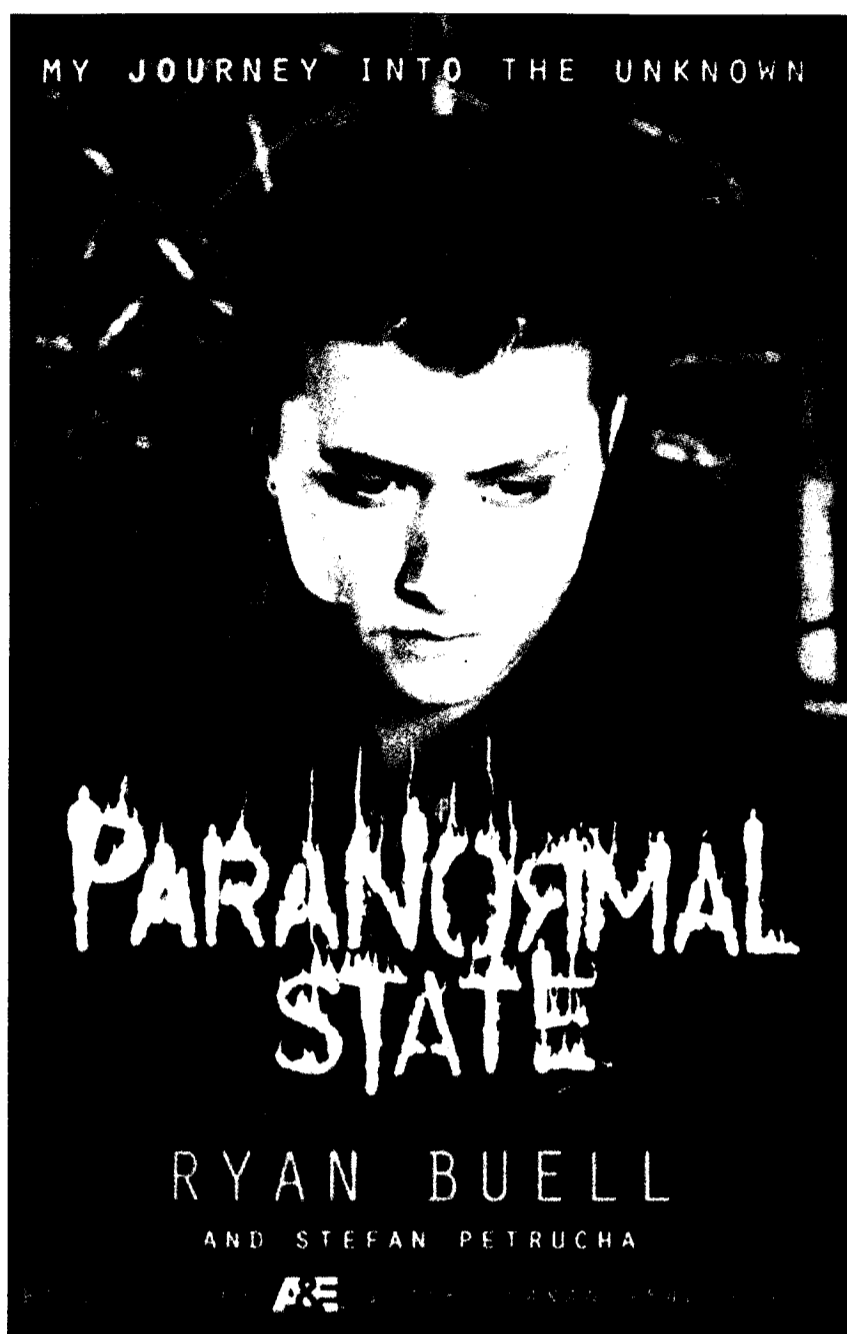
I really enjoyed the mentions of Penn State and State College in the book.

I like reading nonfiction books that are set in places I've lived in because I can visualize things so easily and I feel like I have a connection with the story right off the bat.

The first thing the club investigates after its creation is the stacks of the Pattee Library, where Betsy Aardsma was murdered more than 40 years ago. An episode of the first season of "Paranormal State" is set just outside the Schwab Auditorium, where former Penn State President George Atherton is buried.

Rumor has it that Atherton's botany bones are in the attic of the Old Botany Building across the street, and if you stand outside his grave at midnight you'll see her in the window of the building looking down at him.

As a Penn State student who walks by President Atherton's grave almost every day and has wandered the stacks of Pattee Library in search of books for a research paper, I found



Courtesy of amazon.com

these stories to be the most interesting in the book.

Another aspect of the book I enjoyed was Buell's candidness about his Catholicism. He says in the book that he wants people to know that they can have a strong faith in God, while believing in the paranormal. Though I don't fall into the category of believing in the paranormal, I do admire Buell's effort to help people come to terms with their beliefs.

But Buell took this almost a step too far when he started talking about his bisexuality.

I commend him for being open about it, but I wasn't quite sure why he included it into a book that's supposed to be about the paranormal.

I was slightly confused why Buell focuses solely on the first season of the show.

Surely more things have happened to him, since the show is going into its fifth season in a few weeks. I found myself wondering if Buell is going to be writing a book for each season, but no mention of that is made in the book.

Since I had no knowledge of paranormal investigating before picking up "Paranormal State," I learned a lot from the book about the equipment they use.

But it didn't change my views on the paranormal.

Grade: B

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New phone 'torches' competition

Reviewed by Karlna Yücel
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

In the two weeks I've been testing the new BlackBerry Torch 9800, I have referred to my friends always referred to these phones as "crackberries."

I am simply addicted. The touch screen and slide out keyboard is new for BlackBerry, and I think it works. Now I'm not saying that other phones don't have both a touch screen and a full keyboard, but BlackBerry does it better.

Unlike other phones where the buttons on a touch screen are hard to press because your finger has to be just so, the Torch makes it easy. The buttons make this phone a delight to use.

But using the touch screen constantly makes the screen gross, and it's

hard to wipe clean without smudges.

And then there is the full QWERTY keyboard that slides out from the touch screen. This feature is a must for me because I hate always having to use the touch screen. With the combination of the two features, this phone is unbelievable.

All the features this phone comes with are amazing.

There is one application, SocialFeeds, which links every social network into one place that you can check without having to pop from Facebook to Twitter to Gmail. It's all there.

You can also include news into the SocialFeed so that when a breaking story happens, it's right there for you to read.

For anyone who already has a BlackBerry, this isn't news to you, but for someone who has always had an

ordinary phone, it was like heaven.

Until you are trying to BlackBerry Message (BBM) your friend and the screen starts to lag because someone is updating their Facebook status at the same time. Then your friend gets mad because you haven't responded to their BBM, but they can see that you have received and read the message.

Another thing that is annoying is the fact that the scroll button on the bottom of the screen doesn't work how I would've liked it too. I would move my finger to scroll up, and nothing would happen, or it would skip what I was trying to select and go to the next item.

My last complaint is the alarm clock. On my old phone I was spoiled. I was able to set up the alarm to go off at 7:30 a.m. Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday, and 9:30 a.m. for Thursday. I could also set the sleep button to go off at any interval I pleased.

On the Torch, if I used the clock alarm, I was only able to set it for one day or all the days. I wasn't able to pick and choose.

Finally, I figured out how to set the alarm off different times every day by setting it through the calendar option. But I still can't pick specific days, so it's a nuisance to have to go around and cancel the weekend and Thursday alarms.

As my two weeks with this phone are coming to an end, I will be sad to see it go, especially since it saved my life, arriving in the mail a day after my old phone had completely died.

If I still had AT&T, I would purchase the Torch immediately, so I recommend it to anyone who will soon be in need of a new phone.

Grade: B+

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Courtesy of BlackBerry.com