



## We're Just Warming Up!

By Jason Lewicki

They say that April showers bring May flowers; well, I sure hope they're correct, because I think we could all use a few flowers after this dry and dismal winter we just had. Keep that hope strong, dear readers, as with every day that passes, we get closer and closer to summer, a season of warmth, joy, and relaxation as we all take a well-deserved break!

As we near the end of the school year, I think now's a good time to look back on what we've all accomplished. We all took new classes, had new experiences, and maybe even made some new friends as we powered through the end of 2023 into the beginning (and soon to be middle) of 2024, and I think that that's always something to appreciate. When we give in to nihilism and cynicism, we don't allow the world or our perception of it to change, because we falsely believe that it can't; however, I think that no matter what, it's always worth taking some time to reflect on how much we've changed, no matter how small. Don't get caught up in all that reflection just yet, however, because we still have finals to do! Good luck, Spartans!

Whether you're new to MHS or a returning student, we're glad to have you. Here at our school, we have all sorts of avenues through which to connect with the students around you and show your Spartan spirit. Join a club! Attend a sports game! Support our theater program! Read our newspaper! These and more are just some of the ways you can have fun, meet new people, and make new memories here at Milford High School.

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# THE SHORTCOMINGS OF AI

BY: PRECIOUS SIMPSON

All around us we are exposed to the pressures of using AI technology because it's everywhere; in apps, video games, computer programs, and all over social media, people use AI to do some pretty awful things. It is important to be aware of the issues that AI can cause, though, since there are so many, we can't cover all of them in this article. Here, we are going to cover the physical drawbacks of AI. There are some things you don't know about this new innovation that's sweeping the Internet. When you ask AI to generate or write thoughtful open-answer responses or essays, those answers aren't always guaranteed to be correct. Sure, it's a computer, but it's also only a program that is specifically programmed to give generic answers; nothing thoughtful, just the icing on the cake. Since AI doesn't have a brain per se, they only write in a broad manner.

Relying on AI limits your writing capabilities, and it makes teachers believe that you don't have the ability to think deeply and analyze specific topics; this piece of information is something to remember when you are tempted to take the easy way out and ask AI to do your assignment.

Another thing to remember is that not only is using AI considered plagiarism, but it also puts you in a box. The human mind is an intricate thing. It might not beat an AI program in games like chess, but creating tangible ideas is something that is hard for a robot to do since they don't have the beautiful brain we have. This is because we aren't specifically programmed to answer different questions a certain way every time: We have the ability to think freely and in so many different abstract ways that a robot can not provide us. As humans, though, we do tend to be quite narrow-minded in our ideas and true morals because the modern world puts us in a box or masks our true capabilities, but this doesn't justify using AI to fix those normal parts of human nature and development.

Another angle to view this topic is realizing that using AI really curbs your work ethic. It warps and reprograms your brain into thinking that you don't have to try at anything because you can get any answer you desire in a split - second. Do you want that reliance on AI to cripple you? There are instances in life and in school where you don't have access to your phone or your computer and you have to use your own brain to ponder ideas. Not everything is going to be simply handed to you in the real world, so you better get used to working to get the results you desire. It may be quicker to just type your assignment into your Snapchat AI or ChatGPT, but it's a better and smarter idea to write whatever it is you need to write without AI.

The reason for deciding to take this step over the easier way out is simple: everything you have to do in school now is going to prepare you for what you have to do in your future. It's not necessarily the physical things, but "rather" the skills and traits that you learn along the way that really prepare you for life after high school. It's very important to learn those skills now so you can use them when for some reason AI becomes unavailable or you just want to sound real and not robotic. You don't want to sound generic or impersonal. However, it is still a useful tool to have around, and it can give you suggestions on grammar and spelling, as well as identify gaps in your pieces. Just know, though, that it's not always accurate; Technology does fail "every" once in a while. Be cool and write your own papers for school!



"You listening? Okay. Grass grows, sun shines, birds fly, and brother, I hurt people."

- The Scout, Team Fortress 2

## What is A Ranger?

A Ranger is a guardian of the wilds, patrolling the natural world and bringing a swift end to any who dare to harm it. A Ranger may be a noble wanderer who seeks to cleanse evil from their home, a quiet observer who drifts through their environment like a leaf on the breeze, or a ruthless hunter who stalks any who dare intrude on their territory, but no matter how they prowl the land, it is never wise to cross their path. Rangers can navigate their surroundings with ease, employ superior knowledge and tactics to hunt their foes, and seamlessly blend into the background as they set up a deadly ambush. If you want to show any threats to the ecosystem in no uncertain terms that they've just stepped into the wrong neighborhood, then perhaps the Ranger is the proper calling for you.



## How Does A Ranger Work?

Like Paladins, Rangers are a hybrid class: they combine martial prowess with magical talent, with the obvious downside being that they're not as good in either as more focused classes. Regardless, they're still no pushover when it comes to martial combat, as with their d10 hit dice and their proficiency with light and medium armor, shields, and all weapons, Rangers know how to kick some butt when the situation calls for it. Beyond their basic fighting capabilities, Rangers get two notable features at level 1, those being Favored Enemy and Natural Explorer. FE gives you intuitive knowledge of certain types of creatures that you choose (some examples include dragons, giants, and undead) and allows you to track them with ease, while NE makes navigating certain environments of your choice a breeze. While these abilities may not confer much of a combat advantage, their benefits outside of combat allow the Ranger to become an expert of survival and exploration. At level 2, though, is when things get a little spicier: not only do you gain a Fighting Style, but you also gain access to magic, allowing your Ranger to cast up to 5th-level spells to supplement their fighting capabilities. With spells like Hunter's Mark, Longstrider, and Pass Without Trace, a Ranger is going to be all about surprising their prey with blinding speed and precision before slinking back into the underbrush. Beyond this, Rangers get some more cool stuff later, from being able to attack twice in one turn, to being able to craft a disguise to blend into their environment, to even being able to use their keen senses to accurately strike foes they can't see. When played correctly, a Ranger's abilities allow them to be the apex predator of the battlefield, especially with a trusty bow in their hands.

## What Types of Rangers Are There?

While every Ranger is a deadly hunter, each tends to hunt in their own unique way. Rangers are typically sorted into different Conclaves depending on their preferred hunting style, two of which are provided in the Player's Handbook: the Beast Master and the Hunter. The Beast Master is a dedicated pet owner, and they specialize in releasing their little cuddlywhiskers on their foes and fighting ferociously by their side. Beast Masters can pick a Medium or smaller Beast to serve as their companion, with said Beast gaining some helpful benefits to help it be a good boy/girl and knock some heads together: increased health, damage, and AC, and even multiple and magical attacks at higher levels. Meanwhile, the Hunter is a lonely fella who uses superior tactics and training to take down their foes, gaining access to a smorgasbord of new features to supplement their combat capabilities: some options include dealing increased damage to wounded foes, gaining increased defense against foes who have already hit you once that turn, unleashing a flurry of melee strikes against all foes within 5 feet of you, and being able to effortlessly dodge dangerous area-of-effect attacks (such as the infamous Fireball). The Hunter makes up for what it lacks in flavor with an incredible potential for customization. If you seek to venture further past the boundaries of the safe and comfortable civilization that you once called your home and discover even more of the Conclaves that defend the natural world, additional supplements to the game should provide you with even more options for tasty nature-flavored awesomeness.

## (Exploring Ahead!)

### What Does A Ranger Represent?

If a Druid is the wise and just guardian of the wilds who seeks to establish peace and harmony throughout their home, a Ranger is that guy's bodyguard. If you can think of characters in media who are notorious for being nigh-unstoppable hunters who will go to great lengths to pursue their quarry, then yeah, that's a Ranger for you: Aragorn, Crocodile Dundee, and the Predator all come to mind as prime examples of what these guys can be. Humans have been hunters since as long as we could hold a spear, and even today, the act of hunting is seen as a very popular pastime that can help a person return to their primal roots and engage in the thrill of prowling through the underbrush, searching for their next meal. That sort of prehistoric nostalgia captivates us even today as members of the civilized world, especially when our changing political and technological climate is causing a lot of us to lose touch with what makes us human. Now, I'll be straight with you guys here and say that hunting isn't really my thing; it's just not something I would personally find enjoyable. However, even I can appreciate the beauty of the great outdoors, as well as why it's so vital that people like us stand up to defend it when our corporate overlords seem to not want to. That, ladies and germs, is why I think Rangers, as literal manifestations of our primal instincts and the desire to defend the natural world, are really cool, and why you should absolutely play one if you ever get into D&D. Happy hunting!



### Why Should You Play A Ranger?

Look, I'm gonna be honest: when compared to some of its contemporaries, a Ranger isn't exactly shattering any records. The Paladin's gonna have them beat in terms of damage, the Monk's gonna blitz right past them, and the Druid's nature magic is gonna literally move mountains. However, while the other classes may think they surpass the Ranger just because of their relative superiority in combat, the Ranger represents an age-old adage that establishes their true place in the class hierarchy: knowledge is power. You may be able to dish out some potent divine fury as a Paladin, but can you survive in the wilderness for even a day without your squires there to polish your boots? No? Best leave that one up to the Ranger, then. It's the class's ingrained knowledge of both their environment and the monsters that inhabit it that make the Ranger special: when the other classes get off their high horses and admit that they need someone to guide them through the spooky woods or across the treacherous desert, or someone to tell them in excruciating detail the weaknesses of the nearby orc tribe that's been terrorizing the area, you'll know it's your time to shine.



# A COLLEGE TOUR CRASH COURSE



*By Payton Burke*

It has been several months now since I began my college hunt, or at least reached the stage where I began planning and attending college tours. Considering the fact that I went in relatively blind, I think I've learned a lot, especially when it comes to the actual tours itself. While they all follow a fairly similar formula, it's oftentimes what they don't tell you that reveals the most about the university.

One example of this becomes apparent when comparing two colleges that I've recently visited: Worcester Polytechnic Institute (WPI) and the University of New Hampshire (UNH). UNH felt like a home away from home, with the tour highlighting their great amenities, the wide availability for travel, and other factors, such as how they are ranked 23rd nationally when it comes to food. Meanwhile, WPI was much more focused on their academic programs, the wide variety of career opportunities (both optional and built into the curriculum) they offered, and their student activities. UNH glossed over some of these, and even though they sold themselves as a research school, I saw relatively little of their academics. On the other hand, WPI felt a bit less like home. The dorms I saw were smaller and had more students in them, and I saw less of the day-to-day student life. So, when taking a tour, be sure to compare not only what you see, but also what is noticeably absent from the information sessions.

You also never quite realize how important certain things are until you've gone on your first tour. While visiting UNH, I was quiet as a mouse, asking two questions that, in the grand scheme of things, weren't too important. However, spending the day in the area, seeing the places I could hang out, and ensuring that I wasn't stuck in my dorm was an insurmountable relief. The things that are somewhat intangible are things you need in your life. Things that fulfill the arts, entertainment, or comfort. Things that I never realized would mean that much to me.

Overall, everyone is going to be different and want/prioritize different aspects of college. So while I can't definitively say what worked for me will work for you, I will say to keep your eyes open and relax when you go on your college tours; you might just notice something that can make a world of difference in your decision.

# Ehlers-Danlos Syndrome

Isabel Lamb

Ehlers-Danlos syndrome, frequently shortened to EDS, is a semi-genetic disorder with roughly thirteen different types within the disorder. General symptoms seen across most variations are hyperextensive skin, hyperflexible joints, fragile blood vessels, semi-frequent dislocations of the afflicted joints, and slow-healing skin (Mayo Clinic, Cleveland Clinic). The frequency for the total collection of variations ranges from 1 in every 2,500 people to 1 out of every 5,000 people. Hypermobility type EDS, or hEDS, is the most common type, clocking in a frequency of roughly 1 out of every 10,000 people to 1 out of every 40,000 people. The symptoms and presentation of hEDS include joint dislocation and subluxation, degenerative joint diseases, orthostatic intolerance, chronic pain, and other musculoskeletal issues. Classical EDS, or cEDS, is the second most common type, occurring at about 1 person for every 20,000 to 1 for every 40,000 (National Organization for Rare Diseases). The symptoms include the aforementioned ailments of skin hyperextensibility, joint laxity, and fragile blood vessels. Lastly, vascular type EDS, or vEDS, presents the symptoms of arterial rupture, clubfoot deformities, deoxygenated blood pooling in sinuses within the skull behind the eyes, thinner nose and upper lip, small earlobes, prominent eyes, thin skin that bruises easily, ruptured blood vessels, and inguinal hernias in children. There are no groups of notably higher risk, including sex and ethnicity.

The disorder is semi-genetic, as some variations are fully genetic, and some are genetic needing outside factors. It is both dominant and autosomal (nhs.uk), so if one parent has it there is a 50/50 chance of the child getting it, while if both parents have it then there is a 75% chance that their child will get it if they are both heterozygous for the gene. If one parent is homozygous then the child is guaranteed to inherit the disorder. One of the genes that code for EDS is the COL3A1 gene, which tags for vEDS.

Treatments for EDS range from physical therapy to medications for pain and blood pressure, to braces for joints that frequently dislocate or subluxate, as well as surgeries for joint and blood vessel repair. With the surgeries, however, the incisions may not heal properly and have higher scarring rates than normal due to the condition.

Testing for some of the variations is done through sequence capture and targeted next-generation sequencing "With targeted NGS, researchers can target specific genes, coding regions, or even chromosomal segments at deeper coverage than alternative sequencing methods, obtaining fast, accurate, and precise genomic insights." (Integrated DNA Technologies), followed by Polymerase Chain Reaction methods. "Polymerase chain reaction (abbreviated PCR) is a laboratory technique for rapidly producing (amplifying) millions to billions of copies of a specific segment of DNA, which can then be studied in greater detail. PCR involves using short synthetic DNA fragments called primers to select a segment of the genome to be amplified, and then multiple rounds of DNA synthesis to amplify that segment." (National Human Genome Research Institute). There is no technology currently in the works with the aim to ease the frequency of cases or the afflictions that come with it, aside from generalized things like stronger pain meds or more accurate surgical techniques that are being developed for other ailments as well.



# Donut of Life

By Music Man



TTP (Thrombotic Thrombocytopenic Purpura) is a rare, life-threatening blood disorder. In TTP, blood clots form in small blood vessels throughout your body; these clots can limit or block blood flow to your organs, such as your brain, kidneys, and heart, leading to damage and potential failure. Meanwhile, lupus is a disease that occurs when your body's immune system attacks your own tissues and organs, causing severe inflammation that can affect many different body systems, including your joints, skin, kidneys, blood cells, brain, heart, and lungs.

Why do I bring this up? Simple: in 2006, rap producer J Dilla (an alias used by James Yancey) was fighting both diseases simultaneously. Since TTP is incurable, Dilla knew he was going to die; yet he decided that even on death's door, he would not give up his passion for music. So, accompanying him in his room, aside from his mother and friends, was a sampler and record player.

29 of the 31 tracks (representing Dilla's age at the time) on the resulting album, *Donuts*, were recorded in these conditions. Dilla's hands and legs were swollen, and he was in constant pain. It makes it all the more impressive that he managed to end his lengthy and prolific career (he had previously worked with D'Angelo, De La Soul, and A Tribe Called Quest) with arguably one of the best hip-hop albums of all time.

*Donuts* is an absolutely astonishing achievement in instrumental hip-hop, managing to mix dense sampling and a vintage sound to create a vibe of solemn finality and melancholic longing, even without vocals. Dilla effortlessly twists samples from various sources, such as recordings of Stevie Wonder and The Jackson 5, into excellently smooth beats that just infect your mind.

The 31 tracks range in length from 30 seconds to nearly 3 minutes, so I won't go in-depth with each individual track. Overall, the vintage sound of each song makes the production stand out, despite some of the songs being somewhat forgettable. The themes of each of the individual tracks feel crafted around J Dilla's own mortality, with melancholic sounds on "Bye.", "Don't Cry", and "Last Donut of the Night" only cementing this idea.

Overall, *Donuts* is an astounding achievement in instrumental music, somehow conveying feelings of finality purely through music. The album was released on February 7th, 2006, J Dilla's 32nd birthday. Three days later, he died from complications from his diseases. With this album, he left behind a prolific career working with some founding and influential artists in rap, and an absolutely definitive swan song.

M.M.

FAV TRACKS: WAVES, DON'T CRY, LIGHT MY FIRE, WORKINONIT, THE DIFF'RENCE, STOP, TIME: THE DONUT OF THE HEART, LAST DONUT OF THE NIGHT

LEAST FAV TRACKS: STEPSON OF THE CLAPPER, THE FACTORY, THE TWISTER

#### PERSONNEL:

J Dilla – producer  
Peanut Butter Wolf – executive producer  
Dave Cooley – mastering  
Jeff Jank – design  
Andrew Gura – photography



# Fishy Replica of A Mask

By Music Man

It's April, which means that April Fools' Day is here! So in celebration of this kinda-sorta-not really holiday, I have elected to completely throw all my inhibitions aside regarding how inaccessible and outright off the walls the music I choose to review gets. What, did you want Skinny Fists, To Be Kind, or maybe even Grace?

Well, despite planning on doing reviews of those records in the future (and my newfound love for Swans), I am not one to turn down a bit; I may even give some like-minded weirdo a new hyperfixation, so I think we're set. Aller!

Trout Mask Replica is the third album by Captain Beefheart (alias of Don Van Vilet) released on June 16th, 1969 as a double LP. The album is infamous for its completely nonsensical and alienating sound (best described as the entire band drunkenly falling down the stairs for over an hour) which makes this album one of the most challenging listens of the 20th century.

The music of Trout Mask is...indescribable, to say the least. It is incredibly dissonant, polytonal, unconventional, avant-garde, multi-octave, polyrhythmic, and downright weird. Upon first listen, one may be turned off within seconds of the first track, "Frownland", by the mess of the sound and dismiss it as nothing more than improvised ersatz for perhaps something like the then-upcoming "In The Court Of The Crimson King".

But inevitably, something will draw you back: Maybe it's the fact it was produced by the legendary Frank Zappa, maybe it's the fact it's a double album so you may try to listen to it to salvage some sort of value from the higher vinyl price, or maybe you thought the studio recordings thrown onto the album were really funny.

Either way, you'll be drawn back in by the album's siren song. Then you'll listen again. Then again. Then AGAIN. Eventually, you'll find that the album is no mere imitation or senseless improv; it's a work of genius.

Not EVERY track on the album is improv, however. All of the tracks were written out by Beefheart and the drummer, and most of the songs were recorded in one massive six-hour session, with Beefheart recording out-of-sync vocals that lead to a truly disorienting experience.

The style of the music is essentially what happens if you roll blues, jazz, R&B, and garage rock into one demented burrito that fries your brain. The vocal delivery is not all that different from a cult leader or drugged-out blues singer, and it leaves you completely confused.

The lyrical content varies in what it's about, from the Holocaust to hanging out with homeless people, but the best part is the very quotable moments of the album, from the classic "Fast 'N' Bulbous!" to the deadpan and insane "Neon [sic] meate dream of a octafish!" It makes for an undeniably fun listening experience, especially with friends.

Overall, Trout Mask Replica isn't exactly a phenomenal piece of everlasting art, genius though it is, but it's still a fun and ridiculous time that is sure to leave you perplexed by the end.

FAV TRACKS: NEON MEATE DREAM OF A OCTAFISH, ELLA GURU, DACHAU BLUES, PENA, FROWNLAND  
LEAST FAV TRACKS: CHINA PIG

PERSONNEL:  
Too Many to list





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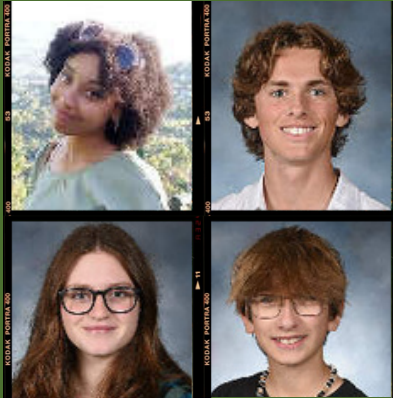
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