

CONCERT REVIEW:

Singer Imogen Heap's three month tour stops by the Wiltern Theatre in Los Angeles. Recap- ture the event in the entertainment section.



ON THE JOB:

El Rancho's best kept secret... The Lions Den clothing store located in Chinatown. Employee Justin Chow gives Dons the "low-down."



TREE COMPETITION:

Check out how the sophmores defeated the seniors during the Christmas tree decorating competition.



EL RODEO



El Rancho High School • Volume 55 • Issue 5 • December 14, 2006

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True Blue Christmas Program: El Rancho's gym was transformed into a winter wonderland as the Choraleer Department spread holiday cheer before an audience of several hundred people. SEE MORE ON PG 6

Mrs. Espinoza Bids Adieu with True Blue Finale

BY MICHELLE GARCIA, EL RODEO STAFF WRITER

After dedicating twenty-five years to El Rancho singers, Mrs. Espinoza abdicates her throne as queen of the Chorale Department. "The pace is really demanding; I am tired. I have been doing it for a long time," said Espinoza.

Four year Choraleer member Paloma Armijo is devastated that Espinoza will no longer be her mentor. "She is an excellent director and I am truly going to miss her. I feel very lucky to have been taught by her," said Armijo.

Under the direction of Espinoza, the Choraleers have won award upon award, "too many to list" said Espinoza. She definitely has a flare for producing great performers here at the Ranch.

Aspiring singer, senior, Jessica Guzman is "bummed out that I can't come back as an alumni, but I'm glad I got to have her for four years."

Espinoza's husband, Beno, has also been a great asset to the Choraleer department. "We have dedicated ourselves to the school and we need more balance in our lives," she said.

El Rancho does not know who will replace Espinoza, but "I am trying to get the word out there to colleagues that we need someone with [teaching] credentials."

The future success of the El Rancho Choraleers "depends on their new director and the direction he wants to go. It'll be a new experience [for the students]" said Espinoza.

Espinoza leaves the Choral Department with a bang; "I wanted to do a big Christmas show because it is my last year."

Although Espinoza downplayed the event saying "It went fine," the students were completely amazed at the creativity and talent the Chorale Department exuded this holiday season.

"The kids are way better than what they showed because they have not had very much time to be able to practice in the gym. It is no one's fault; the school is just very large and lots of sports and activities need to use the gym too."

The Choraleers only had a few days to spend setting up the gym. They were unable to spend time practicing in there because they had to spend all their time working on the decorations.

Other groups including the Jazz Club, Drill Team, and Drama students also took part in the production. "I was really happy that all the other groups were really willing to help and they were very supportive," said Espinoza.

The revival of the traditional Christmas show was a great way for Espinoza to say farewell to the Ranch as the Choraleer Director.

Roller Coasters Roll onto the Ranch

BY ROBERT PRIETO
EL RODEO STAFF WRITER

Walking into the El Rancho Library one can not help but notice the large construction paper roller coasters on display.

Last trimester Physics teacher Jennifer Vargas had her third and fourth period Physics classes build the roller coasters for their final project. "The final project that they had for my class was to build a roller coaster only using construction paper and tape," said Vargas. The students worked in groups and had two weeks to develop a theme and design, and build their roller coasters. The students' grades were based on the performance, tricks of the roller coaster and creativity.

The project was a summary of all the concepts the students had learned in the class. They had to know about kinetic and potential energy, momentum, velocity, and distance, which were all covered in Vargas' first trimester Physics classes.

Senior Stephanie Gonzales said her group's roller coaster, titled Rolla Coasta, took about two days to build. Gonzales' group member, and fellow senior, Jessica Alvarez said, "the hardest part [of building the roller coaster] was trying to make the turns and corkscrews, because we had to cut the paper a certain way."

Morning Glory is the name of the roller coaster which seniors Armando Montes and Abner Morales helped build. "My group's coaster was priceless, because we already had the sparklers [for the finale]," said Montes. Morales said he learned about momen-



FUN WITH PHYSICS: Seniors Armando Montes and Abner Morales proudly present their "Morning Glory" roller coaster for Ms. Vargas' physics class.

tum, and potential and kinetic energy.

"I tried to include all [the roller coasters in the library] but some were too big to fit. So I chose the ones that were actually small enough to fit in the display cases," said Vargas. Vargas enjoyed the Ghetto Coaster, and thought the Finding Nemo theme was cute. She thought both the Dr. Seuss and Morning Glory coasters were really unique, especially Morning Glory because the finale involved sparklers. "I'd like to say that my students did an amazing job and they

were very creative," exclaimed Vargas.

Chodos described the roller coasters as "imaginative, eye-catching and really large." According to Chodos the roller coaster projects will be on display for several months.

Also on display in are illustrated children's books based on The Odyssey done by Charlene Brown's ninth grade English class. Chodos hopes "that teachers continue to display student work because there is a lot of traffic in and out of [the library] and the displays get a lot of attention."

Choose Chinatown, Choose Lions Den

By RONNIE MONTES
EL RODEO STAFF WRITER

Many teenagers now a days applying for jobs try to find work doing something they enjoy but usually have a hard time getting hired. That is not the case for seventeen-year old senior Justin Chow. While most teenagers are sleeping in on weekends and hanging out on Saturday and Sunday nights, Justin is on the bus in the early bird hours of the morning trying to get to his part-time job in Downtown Los Angeles.

Justin currently works and has been working at one of the newest sneaker boutiques to open in Los Angeles-Lions Den. Justin has been working at Lions Den since November of last year and works from 12-7pm every Saturday-Sunday and earns an \$8.00 an hour pay.

Lions Den is located in Los Angeles's Chinatown and is credited for being one of the most unique stores in the area. Chinatown's urban style compliments the boutique's fresh, limited edition sneakers from New Balance, Alife, Pharrell/Ice Cream, Gwen Stefani's L.A.M.B., Reebok, and Puma [and their recent collaborative sneaker featuring Ludacris (rapper) (which retails at \$100 and is limited to 300 pairs in North America only.)] If you move deeper down Lions Den's dark colored interior, you'll find a neat collection of clothes for men and women including the brands: Stussy, Freshjive, WESC, Boxfresh, Spiewak, Umbro by Kim Jones, and Hysteria Glamour. The store also carries limited edition toys and furniture inspired by the widely recognized Japanese toy company Medicom.

"Lions Den is very different than the main sneaker boutiques in Los Angeles," says Justin. "Many of LA's street wear stores are located in pretty high end areas (i.e. Undefeated and Supreme in Melrose). Lions Den just brings it more to the people on a level they can relate to."

"I'm really feeling the vibe over here," says Justin when asked about why he enjoys working at Lions Den. "I love the hip hop



atmosphere of LD. I've never seen any other store in LA just like it. I also like the genuinely nice people that live in the area, the cute girls that drop by and most of all the Lions Den staff. You know, we're just like one big family now. Lions Den is pretty much my second home."

Although he doesn't get to rest on weekends, like most teenagers, Justin enjoys working at Lions Den

and is always excited about going to work. He has kept his GPA well over a 2.5 ever since he's been working, and also hopes to attend a University in the Philippines after he graduates.

Lions Den sneaker boutique in LA's Chinatown is home to one of a kind gear for people with a style and soul all their own. If you've got style, substance and soul, choose Chinatown. Choose Lions Den.

Leos Club Lends Helping Hands

KARISSA GUILLEN
EL RODEO STAFF WRITER

The Leo's Club, located in B104 is one of the more active clubs on campus. The Leo's Club is a community service club in which students get a chance to help out their community during their spare time.

There are several fun activities that the Leo's Club attends. The first event this year was the Trick or Treat for Hunger which was held at Smith Park. The Trick or Treat for Hunger is an organization where people get together and are divided into many groups. These groups were assigned to walk door to door to collect non-perishable canned foods. These canned foods that were collected go to those who are less fortunate. Junior, Kyra Mills says, "Being my first year in the Leo's Club has been very exciting. The Trick or Treat for Hunger was really fun. I got to hang out with my friends and I also met a lot of new people, but at the same time, I knew that I was making a difference in the Pico Rivera community."

On December sixteenth, the Leo's members will be making Christmas baskets with all the canned foods that had been collected at the Trick or Treat for Hunger. Making the Christmas baskets has been a tradition for several years. Students enjoy contributing their work into these baskets. Senior, Gustavo Cordova states, "Well, being in the Leo's Club is a very humbling experience. The one activity that I always participate in is making the Christmas baskets because you actually get to see the fruit of your labor. You also get to see a smile on people's faces when they get their food."

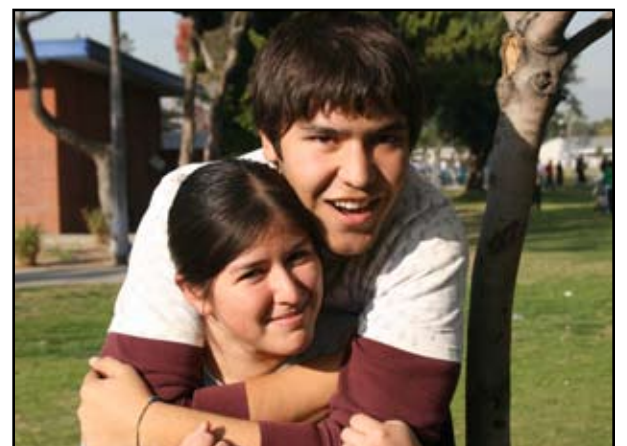
The Leo's members will also be helping out with the Lyon's Club float for the Rose Parade. The Rose Parade will take place in the city of Pasadena on

December twenty-eighth. The Lyon's Club is an organization that helps the people that have vision problems in the Whittier area.

Club advisors Ms. Metaxas and Mrs. Turk enjoy being a part of this wonderful club. Metaxas states, "It's been a great experience being a part of the Leo's Club. It's so impressive to interact with students who want to serve their community." "It's a great opportunity for students to give back to the community and spend their free time helping people," says Turk.

There are various activities that the Leo's Club contributes to,

if you are concerned in knowing all the events or if you are interested in joining the club, you should join in every Wednesday at lunch in B104; everyone is welcome.



Seniors Gustavo Cordova and Eileen-- have been active members of the Leos Club since sophomore year

M.E.Ch.A Toy Drive

El Rancho's M.E.Ch.A is hosting a toy drive that will be donating all of its donations to San Gabriel Childrens Community. Please Help a young child who is less fortunate. If you have any questions please call (562) 801 5355 ex. 133. You may drop your donations off at Smith park or El Rancho High School, in rooms A-209, H-3, B-105. the toy drive starts December 10-23. Used Toys are accepted, preferably toys in good condition. Thank you for your support.

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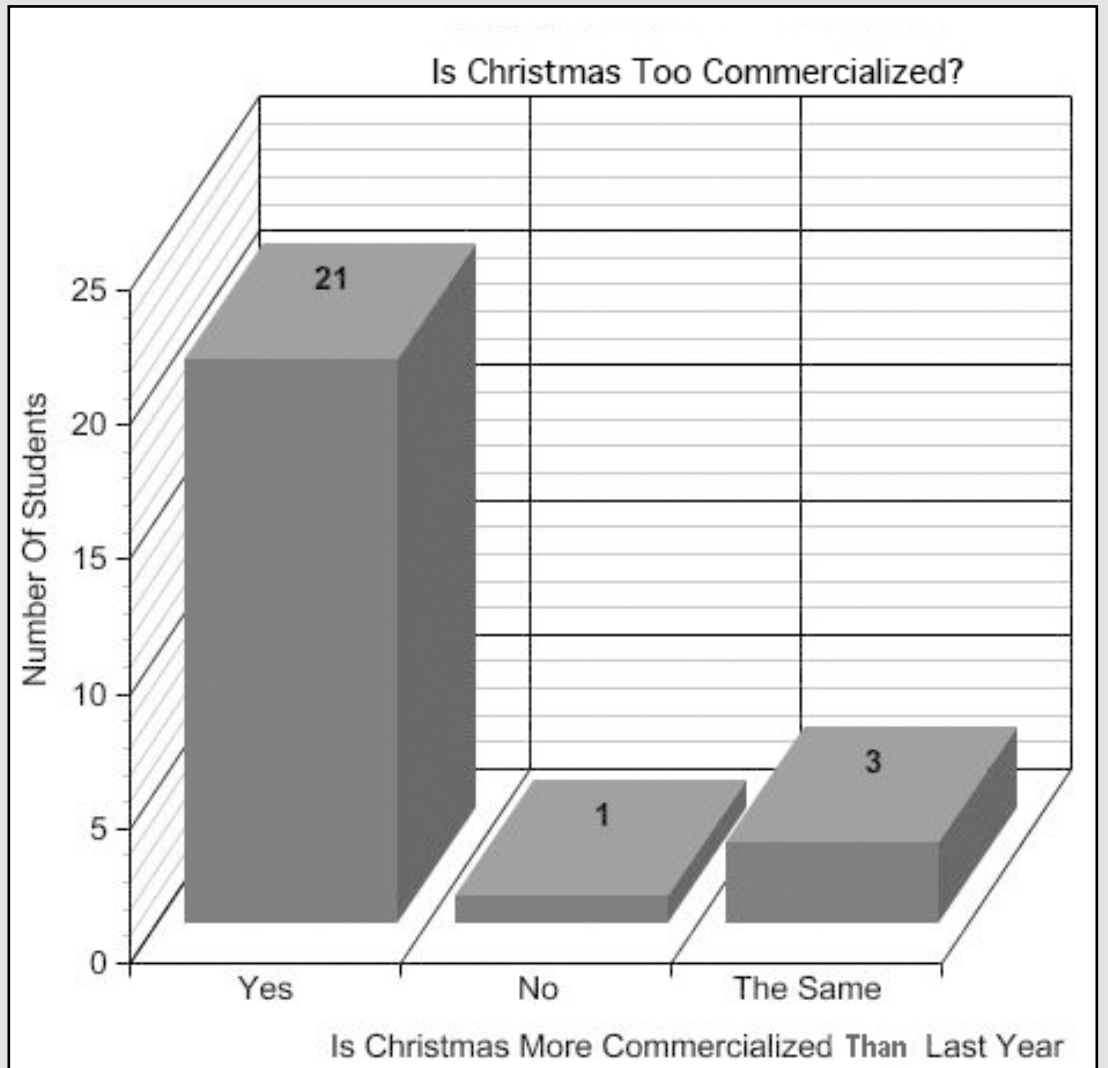
Dons Weigh In: Has Christmas Lost its Value?



"Christmas is a time to spend with family members. It is not about gifts." -Senior Stephanie Mendez



"It's a time for spending money. I'm scared to be a parent because of all the money I am going to have to spend." -Senior Anthony Tamayo



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In Stores Now... An All American Rip-Off

By CHRIS GALLIZZI
EL RODEO STAFF WRITER

As the days diminish till the burning of the Yule Log, society starts to say their prayers and get their credit cards blessed for the most profitable day in America. So do you actually know the meaning of Thanksgiving and Christmas?

Let's start off with America's very own turkey day. It is actually quite a shock to find out that Thanksgiving wasn't even a holiday.

This day of over indulgent feasting was actually celebrated throughout the year during 1777 with the original Thanksgiving in April. It wasn't until Abraham Lincoln made a day of thanks (November 18) to celebrate a month of non-violence. The day was also made to help ease the minds of soldiers who were going into battle over Gettysburg.

Now the idea of Thanksgiving was originally traced back to the Pilgrims and Native Americans. Yes, there is some truth about that event, but the actual truth of the event has lost its luster.

The original Feast of Pilgrims settling in Plymouth Rock is not exactly about Pilgrims and Native American unified, but as conflicted. In 1637, Governor John Winthrop, of what is now Massachusetts, wanted to give thanks for a successful attack on the Pequot tribe and for conquering of more land for English settlers. The attack caused a genocide of 95 percent of Pequot's population. So in



short, America has been celebrating genocide... pretty sad.

Now for Christmas! The one holiday were stores can make 75 percent of all their profit for the entire year. Every year Christmas comes earlier than the year before. I myself recall hearing Christmas music two weeks before Thanksgiving.

It's also sad how the actual reason for Christmas has been lost. To prove my point about the abandonment of holiday values, remember that there was rioting and an individual was shot for a Playstation 3. The average person has

lost contact with what Christmas really means. The majority of people who put up a Christmas tree don't know that the tree symbolizes the Forbidden Tree in the Garden of Eden.

All across the nation more and more advertisement on Christmas is being piled upon and the holiday itself is suffocating. Even though Christmas is suppose to be the holiday when 'you show how much you care about the individual' and in so many ways I concur, but there is a limit.

It's amazing how children are made to believe that 'good behavior is awarded' just because.

In my opinion the United States in general is extremely successful on 'screwing up' tradition and culture. Children are constricted by a social norm that a jolly fat guy will bring little Joey a toy if he doesn't curse for a year. It sounds like Christmas has become a boot camp to brainwash kids into society's way of life, rather than allowing the kid to learn from his mistake; instead, America threatens a child with a materialistic need for a piece of plastic made by some poor kid in China.

America you should be ashamed. You have ruined yet another wonderful holiday.

Can Wrestling Captains Conquer CIF?

By JAZMIN DIAZ
EL RODEO STAFF WRITER

When boys stop indulging in their favorite foods, some people might think something is wrong; however the boys in X-2 think differently. They see it as a new beginning, a chance of redemption for last year's failures or to embark onto on going success. What ever be the case they realize it will take dedication, time and patience if they want to maintain the glory the varsity team has been able to make and keep over the past four years.

Over the past four years, Coach Alvarado has led individual wrestlers towards Masters Tournaments and State. Past varsity captains; Frank Rodriguez, George Coutz, Bryan and Billy Cochran have all placed in either masters or state, leaving this year's team captains with big shoes to fill. That is why Coach Alvarado said he needed people with experience to lead the team.

"We have several good guys on the team, but several of them lack experience, we needed someone who can reassure them, so we can have a good and successful season," declared Alvarado.

Seniors and Captains Cy Vasquez and Billie Rivera seem to have a pretty good track record when it came to experience. Vasquez has wrestled on the varsity squad throughout his whole high school career and



This year's El Rancho team hopes to be able to send more wrestlers to CIF finals and to State.

Rivera has wrestled his three years on team on the varsity squad as well. Last year, Vasquez took 1st in League. Although he was a top CIF contender he was not able to compete in CIF duals due to injury. Rivera on the other hand, finished 2nd in League and placed top ten in CIF duals.

"I feel a lot of pressure this time around," admitted Vasquez, "I have another opportunity to show everyone what I can do, so hopefully I can do better than last year and advance to CIF without getting hurt."

"I feel like I have to perform better too, I have to cut weight and place top ten in CIF, and go beyond because I did it last year," confessed Rivera when asked about the pressures he felt as being team captain.

It's probable the boys will do well this season, if they can overcome injuries and meet their weight requirements. This past weekend the team traveled to Fontana and wrestled in the A.B. Miller Tournament. The team found their hard work over the past two trimesters had paid

off well. Senior wrestlers Matt Valdepeña, Adonis Brache and Billie Rivera all took 3rd place in the tournament. Juniors Joe Salas took 1st and Josh Bello took 3rd as well. Vasquez however did not wrestle in the A.B. Miller tournament due to a wrist injury.

In all, Captains Vasquez and Rivera think they will have a good season, not only because of the hard work and improvement the team has showed so far, but because of their Coaches Alvarado, Hartman, May and Wynn's dedication to the boys.

Sports Schedule

Wrestling

Rosemead Tournament
12/15-16

John Glenn Tournament
12/15-16

Mann Individuals
12/22-23

Upland Individuals
12/28-29

Warren Duals
1/2

Boy's Soccer

Downey
12/14

Schurr
12/19

Lynwood
12/20

La Serna
1/9

AP's and Athletics: How One Student Deals with the Burden of This Balancing Act

By ROBERT GARAY
EL RODEO STAFF WRITER

Imagine yourself trying to manage AP classes, varsity sports, and a relationship all of which in a single trimester. The thought alone is quite overwhelming, but as for Armando Montes, a senior at El Rancho High School, it is almost a breeze. Having been introduced to basketball by his dad, Montes continues to excel at the varsity level. Although it is Montes's first full year of varsity basketball, he is comfortably fitting into his role as guard. "My goal for the season is to help my team play strong and take league aggressively," Montes states, "With Whittier being the toughest team in the league, it'll take a lot of effort on our part to overcome the odds against us." Practicing more than three hours a day, Montes sometimes finds it difficult to balance his workload. In the classroom Montes is currently involved in senior TEAM, the highest level English and Government class on campus. "The homework can pile up, and the expectations in class couldn't be more demanding, but in the long run it is all worth doing" says Montes.



Armando Montes has a bright future balancing both school and sports.

Balancing a current GPA of 3.3, Montes will surely graduate with honors and go on to college preferably a UC. "After high school I plan to attend UC Santa Barbra and start pursuing a major of which I haven't yet decided" says Montes. When Montes is not at practice or knee deep in homework, he can be found spending time with his girlfriend or simply hanging out with friends. "School can get stressful at times but what relaxes me the most is just being around my girlfriend and friends." In the future we can expect great things from Armando Montes whether it is on the court, in a classroom or just on the street.

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Speedy Sophomore Receives MVP

BY BIANCA ORTIZ, EL RODEO STAFF WRITER

This November, Ray Elliot, the girl's cross country coach, awarded Sandra Flores MVP for this year's Fall Sports Awards. Flores is a sophomore and has already made varsity for girls cross country. When Flores was presented this award she was very ecstatic because "all [her] hard work paid off." This award meant so much to Flores because she proved that she has persevered through this rigorous time with a positive attitude. Flores wanted to thank Elliott and Miguel, assistant coach, because "they showed me how to love running and how to become a better runner." She also wanted to thank her family "for being so supportive."

One person who inspired Flores to strive for the best is her sister, Sonia Flores, a senior and fellow team member. Flores said her sister "taught [her] to work hard and never give up." This year, Flores's expectations were achieved because the team made it to finals and to Flores it was an amazing experience. The only downfall was that the team did not make it to State, but this just makes her want to work harder and show that the team belongs at state. In the future Flores wants to continue running for the next two years and hopefully run at college.



When Sonia Flores found out that her little sister won MVP she was so delighted and proud. "I admire her for being hard working like when she is hurting, during workouts, she pushes it to the limit." Sonia also considers Flores to be a great motivator to the entire team. "When she sees a team mate down she tries to cheer them up by telling them to work harder and in the end it will pay off." Sonia not only sees her sister as a great runner, but also as a great person.

Another fellow team mate that gives 100% support to Flores is junior Tania Mendoza. Mendoza describes Flores as "hardworking and dedicated." Mendoza also said that Flores "is a really cool girl to talk to." Along with Flores, Mendoza also gives credit to the coaches for this year's success. Mendoza describes the team as "a second family" and it is all due to the coaches' hard work. Elliot awarded Flores because "she finished as the number one girl." Flores won six out of her nine races. "She stood above everyone else." In the beginning of the year Elliot knew it was going to be a three way race between the girls, but "at the end of this season, Sandra separated herself from the rest of the team." Overall Elliot and the rest of the team agree that Flores is "a tremendous young lady, who is very talented and a truly amazing person."



Mario Baez not only excels in sports, but also in the classroom.

Bend it Like Baez

DAVID TORRES
EL RODEO STAFF WRITER

On and off the field, senior Mario Baez tries to balance his schedule between sports and academics. Baez is currently playing soccer at El Rancho but he also plays for the school's tennis team and on a basketball club team. His soccer coach, Coach Picon commented on Baez by saying, "He has room for improvement but he is a good person that works hard."

Baez says, "I got interested in soccer by watching the television and by watching my dad play. I got interested in tennis because one day I started hitting the tennis ball and I learned there that I had the talent to play."

Baez has been playing soccer since he was fourteen, tennis since he was fourteen and basketball since he was thirteen. His favorite teams are Barcelona and Chivas for soccer, Roger Federer for tennis and the Lakers and Cavaliers for basketball.

Baez currently has a 3.62 GPA and has taken and passed the AP Biology and AP Calculus exams. Baez is currently

enrolled in AP Statistics and AP Spanish Language with the mindset of attending UCLA and becoming a doctor or engineer. In the future, he sees himself with a family and three kids.

Baez says, "Calculus is a great accomplishment because I struggled hard and it showed me that I have great math skills." He also said, "Well since I want to become a doctor, I think that it (AP Biology) will help me on my career." With Calculus and Biology in mind, other accomplishments he is proud of are "making it passed high school and pretty soon off to college."

On the personal side, Baez does not have a girlfriend and to respond to the question he said, "I like the single life better and I like to keep my options open." He does drive though because he owns a 92 grey Camry which he brings to school every day.

In his spare time, Baez likes to play all kinds of sports and also watch them. He would like everybody to know that his nickname are "Redone and Royce" because his favorite color is red and all he wears is red.

Lopez Leaves with Coach's Award

BY SELISA D. PONCE, EL RODEO STAFF WRITER

This fall's water polo season ended in success for senior and team captain, Juan Lopez, when he received the Coach's Award. Lopez was chosen for the award by Varsity Coach Pringle because Lopez has "no regrets about how he plays" and is "someone [he] wants the younger players to look up to." Lopez constantly proved to be a dependable person to his coach and teammates by always showing respect and never missing practice. Lopez felt "honored and excited to be acknowledged" when he received the award and had a smile on his face when talking about it. As captain, Lopez felt he "needed to set an example [for his teammates] by not slacking off." Even during times of complete exhaustion, Lopez pushed himself past his limits to achieve the success that he envisioned for himself and his team. Fellow teammate and center forward, senior Jose Navarro, was sincerely happy that Lopez won the award. "He's the most dedicated guy on the team. He deserves it." Lopez always treated all the members of the team as though they were another part of his family and proved he was most worthy of the award.

Lopez is not only outstanding in the water, but out of it as well. He always puts family and school first and even makes time for his favorite hobby, cooking. Previous water polo coach, Mr. Francisco says Lopez is "a great kid and has shown it for four years." Obviously Coach Pringle agrees since choosing Lopez for the award. Upon entering the season, Pringle expected a "tough transition for the players with a new coach, but everyone stayed positive" including Lopez. At the beginning of the season Lopez set a goal to "end the season on a high note" and indeed he did. Lopez was not the only one who ended on a high note, the team did as well. Pringle had set a goal of winning fifteen games and the team ended pretty close with a total of twelve wins. Although this was Lopez's final season in high school water polo, Coach Pringle would like Lopez to know he will "still [be] a part of the team."



Far from being a fish out of water, Lopez is gifted outside of water polo. He is a talented artist and does well in his advanced courses.

Sports Schedule (cont.)

Girl's Soccer

Downey
12/14

South Torrence
12/16

Bell Gardens
12/20

North Orange County
12/27-29

La Serna
1/10

Girl's Waterpolo

Burbank
12/18

La Canada
12/21

Temple City
1/9

La Serna
1/10

Arlington/Murrieta
1/11-13

Boy's Basketball

Salesian Tournament
12/12-16

Montebello
1/3

Pioneer
1/10

La Serna
1/12

Girl's Basketball

Arroyo Tournament
12/11-16

Azusa
12/21

Rowland Tournament
12/26-29

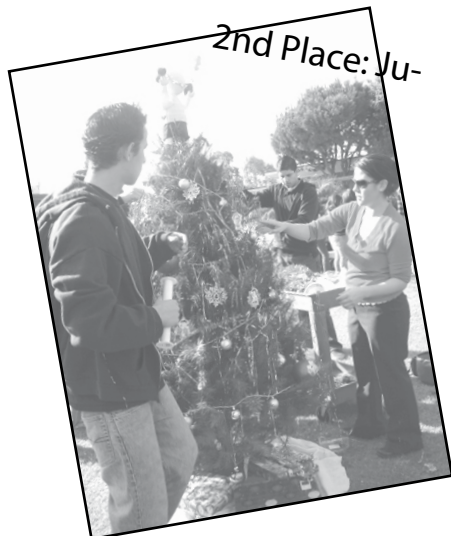
Gabrielino
1/5

Pioneer
1/10

A TRUE BLUE CHRISTMAS



Over the Top Tree Decorating Class Competition



This year's Tree Decorating contest took place during lunch in the quad this past Tuesday. Sophomores were off to a head start and were almost halfway done before any of the other classes had begun. They went for a traditional look and used big red bows, big red ornaments, and big red poinsettias. Charlie Brown ornaments and blue tinsel covered the juniors' tree. The junior advisor, Ms. Katsamura, opted for a stuffed Charlie Brown instead of a star. Seniors chose blue and silver as their decorating colors. Sadly, no freshmen showed up to decorate their tree. The tree was left bare until a few upperclassmen started helping the freshmen advisor. The sophomores had the most people decorating the tree, followed by juniors and then seniors.

What's in Your Library?

1. The ERHS Library has a small but growing collection of:

- A
- B horse
- C gardening
- D camping



2. The Library receives the following

- A Revolver & Guitar
- B Slam & Sports Illustrated
- C Skateboarding & Hot Rod
- D Teen Vogue & Cosmogirl
- E Anime & NC Gamer
- F All of the above



3. Can magazines be checked out?

- A
- B
- C yes, except the most recent



Answers: 1. (A) 2. (F) 3. (C)

Caring Community Caters to the Needy

Two Ways Anyone Can Help This Season

By ALFRED ARMENDARIZ
EL RODEO STAFF WRITER



The annual Christmas Basket Distribution Day is scheduled to be held on Saturday, December 16. The annual event has been organized by the Pico Rivera Christmas Basket Committee, which in the past has collected food donated during the Trick or Treat for Hunger drive and other community donation events. Food has also been purchased with money made from the Pico Rivera Thrift Store.

Every year a line forms along Shade Lane, filled with needy or impoverished families hoping to get a Christmas Basket to make their holiday season a little brighter.

Canned goods, toys, and in past years chicken and hams, have

been distributed in the baskets.

In the past, El Rancho students have been encouraged to volunteer for this event, and this year is no different.

The event will last from 9:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. and will take place at Rivera Park. The Committee warns that volunteer shift time may vary.

Every year around 1,000 baskets are handed out to the families. As a community, Pico Rivera always manages to donate just enough food

By AMBER SCHMIDT & NADIA DOMINGUEZ
EL RODEO STAFF WRITERS



El Rancho's very own M.E.Ch.A club is doing its part to help those in need during this holiday season. The members of M.E.Ch.A are hosting a toy drive held at El Rancho and Rivera Park.

The club first organized this event during summer vacation. It hopes that students and their families will donate all they can in order to give the children an unforgettable Christmas experience.

The collection began on December 11 and will end on December 23. The toys will be collected in the office connected to the gym at Rivera Park. The toys brought to El Rancho will be collected in rooms H-3, B-105,

and A-209. The toys will benefit homeless and needy children from the San Gabriel Children's Community. Club members prefer that students and residents bring new toys, but any toy is acceptable as long as it is in playable condition. School supplies are also accepted and appreciated.

Club member Yahaira Gonzalez hopes that, "people will bring whatever they can in order to help out the less fortunate." She also hopes that people "realize that these kids don't have parents and that they will greatly appreciate all that they receive."

The M.E.Ch.A club hopes that this toy drive will bring out the best in El Rancho students and hope they appreciate all they have, and not just during the holidays, but all year round. For more information, contact Mr. Correa in B-105.

Loupe's Style All About the Bling & Big Bucks

By NADIA DOMINGUEZ
EL RODEO STAFF WRITER

Coogi Jacket-
\$155

Pro Club Shirt-
\$7

Sean John Jeans-
\$50

Jordans-
\$135



Stylish senior Mathew Loupe has a wardrobe that without doubt, stands out in a crowd. His style can be best described as "expensive, colorful, and always put together," according to him. He can most often be spotted shopping at Demo, Urban X, Footlocker, and sometimes Nike.com. His favorite piece of clothing is his bright green patterned Coogi Jacket. He especially likes his mid-top white, blue, and grey Jordan 5's.

Not only is his style flashy, but also extremely pricey. Luckily, he does not need a job to be able to afford his clothes because his mom buys them for him. The most he has ever spent on one item is two-hundred dollars, on his mid-top white and black Jordan 18's.

Loupe says his style is usually influenced by music artists Jay-Z and Pharell Williams because they "dress classy and have their own style." With that said, he would most like to own Jay-Z's closet because he "always looks professional and has a lot of shoes." Overall, Mathew would like the clothing that he wears to exude "confidence, good taste, and the ability to match." Although he is already taken, his "ideal girl" would be "styl-

ish, put together and definitely not afraid to wear Jordans

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Imogen Tours with Heaps of Beats from a Kid and a Weaver of Levi's

BY SANDY ARIAS
EL RODEO STAFF WRITER

Singer Imogen Heap is almost halfway done with a three-month long tour, which began in Montreal on November 7 and is scheduled to end in Milan on January 31. Heap was in town for only two nights on November 30 and December 31 at the Wiltern Theatre in Los Angeles. Opening acts, Levi Weaver and Kid Beyond, joined Heap for her much awaited *Speak for Yourself* tour.

The entire show had a "hands on" attitude. Surprisingly, Heap introduced her two opening acts herself and gave a detailed account on how she had stumbled on to their music. Up first was Levi Weaver, a Texan native that was living in Birmingham, England when Heap saw him perform in a small pub. Weaver is a one-man band equipped with only a guitar, a violin bow, and his steel toe boots. He was his own drums, background vocals, and base in one. He also used a synthesizer to record the different layers of his songs on the spot and play them on loop. The result was something that sounded like Bright Eyes but more quiet and acoustic.

Then the beat-boxer Kid Beyond came onstage. Although his music is strictly for those who like techno club music, his live performance is an amazing spectacle. Kid goes beyond beat boxing; he is able to recreate



any electronic sound with his mouth. He started with indistinct rave-like songs and covered "Closer to God" by the Nine Inch Nails. He went into a short, soulful rap before diving into his own songs. Kid's songs are slower and contain much deeper lyrics about personal experiences. Like Weaver, Kid had a synthesizer that recorded the beats he would spit out so that he could create a whole song with only his mouth and a microphone.

No one introduced Heap. Instead, she appeared out of the crowd and hoped onstage. She sang most of *Speak for Yourself*. She gave an a cappella rendition of "Just For Now" and sang singles like "Goodnight and Go" and "Speeding Cars." Heap made sure to sing "Come Here Boy," the song that got her signed to a label in the first place. Joined by a French horn player, she also performed "Let Go" by Frou Frou, the now split up electronic duo made up of Heap and Guy Sigsworth. For most of her songs, she had Kid, Weaver, a cello/horn/bass player, and a drummer help her out, but she managed to play all the other songs on her glass piano by herself. Heap did not sing "Hide and Seek," which is one of her most popular and highly acclaimed songs, until the encore; in the meantime, she had to calm the crowd many times by saying, "Hold on, it's coming on later." Adding to the pretty quality of her music was the stage's decoration. The glass piano, which held her keyboard and Mac, was covered in big plastic roses and was resting on a white shaggy rug. Heap's music cannot be easily categorized; however, all of her songs have a distinctly electronic sound. Even "Hide and Seek," which has nothing but vocals, sounds like a robot singing underwater. Once the encore ended, Heap announced that as soon as the tour is over she will begin recording a new album.

Both Kid Beyond and Levi Weaver can be found on iTunes as well as on Myspace. Music clips of Imogen Heap are available at <http://www.imogenheap.co.uk/>.

Cat Power, Truly The Greatest

BY ALEJANDRA MOTA
EL RODEO STAFF WRITER

If you were to see Chan Marshall walking down a street, you would never think that this 34 year old folk singer would be such an icon today. You would probably even hear her talk and wouldn't think her voice freezes hectic moments and that all lights dim, ears raise and eyes narrow towards her. You would never imagine her name, since she is genuinely known as Cat Power, or her face seen on a billboard, but you probably have seen her album cover on almost every magazine your mother reads, because ladies and gentlemen, Chan Marshall is indeed, *The Greatest*.

With her effortless guitar playing and most favorable piano duos, and her chilling

voice, Chan sweeps you off your feet and takes you through a stream of smooth lyrical voyages and assures

you that once you leave that voyage, the memory and feeling will follow you through to other dimensions. It is Cat Power's newest debut album, titled *The Greatest*, the one her label, Matador Records, believes will make her a legitimate star. "I think she's going



to have a much wider appeal now," says Matador cofounder Chris Lombard in an in-

A New Iñárritu Production

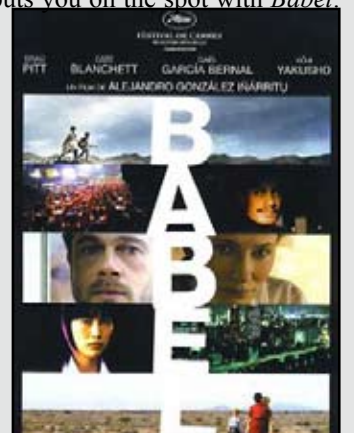
...just what you have been missing.

BY ALEX MOTA
EL RODEO STAFF WRITER

Filmmaker Alejandro González Iñárritu really captured modern frenzy with the opening of his movie, *Babel*, on November 10, 2006. In only three weeks since its premiere, the movie has made a total of \$15,194,482 in the box office. *Babel* projects how a small decision made by anybody can affect the rest of the world in a dramatic way. The movie bases itself on four families, each living in four different parts of the world: Japan, Tunisia, Morocco and Mexico.

Iñárritu breaks prejudice and yet another barrier after his last two astonishments, *21 Grams* and *Amores Perros*, and I must say, Iñárritu really puts you on the spot with *Babel*.

Every second your eyes are on the screen, it is as if the movie is watching you. You feel everything; your senses become your guide throughout the movie. Your senses grow thick and walk through your instinct. The film goes beyond reaching the mind and the eyes. You get to experience Brad Pitt in a kind of movie in which he has never been. There is a more personal feel to him. "I like him, and I thought, it could be a great challenge to make the audience forget that they are watching a pop star in a film about prejudice. Then not only will Brad succeed, but also the film will succeed," said Iñárritu in an interview with Film Maker Magazine.



The first character introduced, and if we may call *main character*, being only a gun, is what heightens the whole situation and gives the film more intensity. "A gun has energy, and it's uncomfortable even if nobody touches it. The moment it goes on the screen, there is tension," says Iñárritu.

Two young, African boys are left in charge of the gun by their father while he leaves town. They are to take care of their goats, but instead decide to shoot rocks and cars carelessly, which eventually leads to hitting an American woman in a tour bus. From there, the story takes its toll.

In one country lives a deaf-mute girl, whose father gives the rifle to a dark Tunisian man. The loss of her mother has her living in devastation, despair, and solitude and in spite of her condition, she has to face society alone. Feeling that lack of love, she seeks comfort, in bizarre ways, to random men. Unfortunately, that does not fill the gap.

Soon, there is this caretaker taking care of two American children while their parents are vacationing in Africa. Since the mother of the children suffered an accident while away, the caretaker is left no other choice, but having to take the children with her to her sons wedding in Mexico since the mother of the children suffered an accident while away.

From the gun to the worldwide media attention, the story tells itself, but you must find the objective.

"I came [to America] five days before 9/11, I moved from my country to L.A. I risked a lot of things and left behind a lot of things, and suddenly, this country changed. *Babel* came out of that exile I felt," states Iñárritu. "I believe that when a man doesn't have humility to recognize his limitations, then God will punish him- metaphorically. There's a line in *Amores Perros*: "If you want to make God laugh, tell him your plans."

interview with Harp takes a troll through it seems, leaving the fragile symphony she preserved in previous albums, behind. "It's the first album that breaks my heart," says Chan in an interview with Harp. She almost gives you all she has, all she is, like she owes it to you, but she really owes it to herself.

Chan's intimate ways of reaching into truth, squeezing originality out of it and making her own work has certainly worked out well for her. Beginning with a secret revealing melodic tune, the album bursts and clarity as it

intimate ways of reaching into truth, squeezing originality out of it and making her own work has certainly worked out well for her. Beginning with a secret revealing melodic tune, the album bursts and clarity as it

So ER students who have followed the traces of Bob Dylan, here is a new addition to your ears collection of soft, story telling, melodic rhymes. Feel her sound. Her voice that never lets go of you, because Chan is more now than a music artist. She is the *new queen* of indie rock. She is *The Greatest*. She is Cat Power.