



INSTAGRAM "GOSSIP PAGES" HARASS STUDENTS IN TARGETED POSTS

Olivia Naber
Head Editor-in-Chief

The days of stuffing students in lockers and lunch-money bullies may be behind WBHS, but a more sinister mode of degradation has emerged instead.

Earlier this fall, three Instagram accounts targeting WBHS students in harassing posts circulated the internet. Each account focused on a different subset of Iowa students. The first, *wbhs.gossip*, was meant solely for WBHS students.

The second account, *rvc_gossip_page*, targeted students from River Valley Conference schools. Finally, *iowa_exposing* covered students from across the state of Iowa.

While the first couple of posts to each account seemed light-hearted, the content quickly spiraled out of control.

"I honestly didn't know what to think at first," an anonymous student commented. "I had just heard about a funny Instagram account that people were obsessing over. After I requested to follow them and got access to the posts, I started looking through them. The posts at first were kind of weird, but nothing too graphic or dark. Then the latest posts got really detailed and specific."

"At first I thought it was just going to be something stupid and funny like the Iowa Chill account," said another. "but it got taken way too far way too fast."

The accounts had been in existence already, but on September 18th, the posts got out of hand.

One student who was targeted by a post on the WBHS account brought it up to Athletic Director Jake Stenberg and Principal Sara Oswald, who told the student to be on the lookout for people boasting about their posts.

"Keep asking around, see if you hear anything," Oswald said she advised the student. "Because usually if someone's doing that, then they brag about it."

By the time lunch rolled around, the pages were at the forefront of the school's attention. Another student brought the page up to her, where several more posts had been sent out in rapid succession. The frequency and sensitivity of content had caught the student body's attention.

"New posts would go up about every

two minutes, which is why I thought it must be more than one person. How could somebody do all that that fast?" speculated one student.

It was like a bolt of gossip lightning had struck the school—striking hard before disappearing, leaving destruction in its place. The page was taken down almost immediately after the numerous incriminating posts.

"It honestly made me really mad," commented a student who was targeted by the page. "I felt somewhat attacked but I just kind of brushed it off when everyone asked me because I knew I couldn't do anything about it. I was upset and really confused why someone would actually make up big rumors that could ruin the way people looked at me."

They appealed to the account to take down the post, but the owner refused the request.

The student said about the gossip page, "I think that it's really low and pathetic. I honestly think that it hurts people so much and there really isn't a need for it."

The very next day, WBHS administration learned of a new RVC page when another RVC principal reached out to ask whether any school had been successful in figuring out who was responsible or in getting the account shut down.

One principal drafted an informational letter to the community, declaring that this RVC gossip account was disrupting schools. Several schools sent it that day, but WBHS did not.

By the end of the school day, the RVC account had also been taken down, and the administration deemed it unnecessary to send out the letter if the accounts were now gone. Oswald explained that they didn't want to sow confusion or fear that the accounts were still an ongoing trouble.

Eventually, Oswald rewrote the initial letter, intending to make it clear that the accounts were taken down and no longer a threat to students. But the cyberbullying wasn't over.

That night, the statewide page put up posts about WBHS students. While this account was short-lived, it prompted Oswald to take action. On October 2nd, Oswald rewrote the previous letter and sent it out to parents and students.

In the letter, she implored parents and students not to interact with pages like these. "No student or school deserves to be targeted in this way. We are asking for your help to end this trend. Please

talk to your student about not following these disruptive pages and to avoid associating with social media accounts that are created for similar purposes moving forward."

As of this time, WBHS administration hasn't figured out who was responsible for any of the accounts. The only account that they're certain was from a WBHS student is the *wbhs.gossip* account.

"In my heart of hearts, I do not think this (RVC account) was a West Branch student account," said Oswald. When a staff member attempted to join the account to test whether the account owners would recognize a WBHS staff member, the account owners let them in, meaning that it's unlikely it was run by WBHS students. There's even less of an idea of where to go with the statewide page and even more certainty that it's not run by WBHS students.

Many students felt frustrated that they've seen a lack of consequence for those in charge of the accounts and held hope that the school would take action.

"I hope that the people who were involved in (the account) could get a detention for targeting, bullying, and harassing countless amounts of people," commented one anonymous student.

Oswald affirmed that the students responsible will receive consequences when caught. When deciding on disciplinary actions, WBHS uses a "behavior matrix." Typically, the severity of consequences increases depending on how many offenses a student has committed. However, in the case of an event that causes school-wide disruption, the level of consequence jumps higher for a first offense.

When it comes to staying on top of potential cyberbullying, WBHS administration relies mainly on word of mouth.

"Unless it's absolutely dire, we don't want to see our students in compromising positions," said Oswald. "So I don't go hunting... We let kids tell us what they want to tell us and we get the gist."

What's special about these instances of cyberbullying is the utter anonymity of the account holders. Oswald explained that in most cases of cyberbullying brought to administration, students know who's responsible. "The stuff that we deal with the most commonly is Snapchat arguments and

name calling, but people know who they're talking to. Typically, it's not disrupting the entire school."

Oswald theorized that this was the appeal of using Instagram in particular. "You can be very brave behind your phone. And depending on how brave you are and who you talk to about it, no one may ever know."

Indeed, hiding behind a screen name emboldens students and makes it easier than ever for them to harass their peers.

Oswald wishes to impart a final message to students: everyone should feel safe and welcomed at school, and instances like this do not reflect the values of a Bear.

She said, "If people don't want to come to school, then it's gone too far. This should be a safe place."



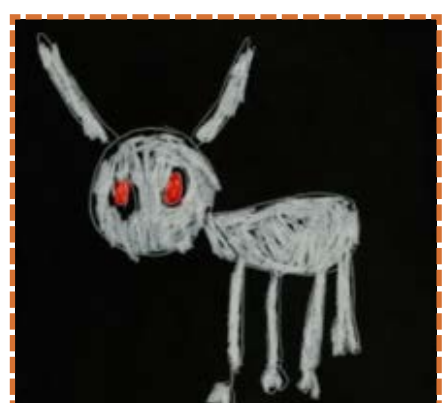
MONTGOMERY REVIEWS DRAKE'S ALBUM *FOR ALL THE DOGS*

Kya Montgomery
Staff Writer

Famous Canadian rapper and singer Drake released a new album titled *For All the Dogs* on October 6, 2023. Drake is also the first rapper to surpass 80 million monthly Spotify listeners. Clocking in at 84 minutes long, there are 23 songs on the album. After listening to the album, I would give the entire album 5/5 stars. I hardly ranked any songs below 3 stars. Overall, I believe that this album is very good. However, the album is long. My favorite songs are "Rich Baby Daddy," "First Person Shooter," "IDGAF," and "Slime You Out." I feel as if Drake did a good job with this album compared to his other recent albums.

"IDGAF" - Drake (feat. Yeat)
★★★★★ - I like how it started off slow, but when Yeat's verse began the beat started to pick up. The intro is very long but I think it is worth it. One of my favorites.

"7969 Santa" - Drake
★★★★☆ - It's more of a R&B type song compared to the rest of the songs. It is slower, the beat is nice, it is a nice set up for the next song.



"For All The Dogs" album cover

"Slime You Out" - Drake (feat. SZA)
★★★★★ - I love SZA's verse in the song. Probably one of my favorite songs on the album. Everything about this song is perfect.

"Bahamas Promises" - Drake
★★★☆☆ - This song didn't stick out to me. This song was pretty mid.

"Tried Our Best" - Drake
★★★★☆ - The tempo is slower. I liked the song but some of the lyrics are repetitive.

"Screw The World - Interlude" - Drake
★★★☆☆ - I didn't really like the beat on this song. Not very good in my opinion. The beat was pretty loud compared to the lyrics, I couldn't really tell what was being said.

"Drew A Picasso" - Drake
★★★★☆ - I like this song because the tempo is slow but sped up at the same time. The rhythm, the way the lyrics match the beat, is satisfying. The song is a little long for my liking.

"Members Only" - Drake (feat. PARTY-NEXTDOOR)
★★★★☆ - I liked this, however, it was not my favorite. I think the beat and lyrics are pretty good. The song was a little too long, I got bored towards the end.

"What Would Pluto Do" - Drake
★★★★☆ - The beginning was really good and kept me invested. The beat is very good, definite head bopper. I really like the rhythm.

"All The Parties" - Drake (feat. Chief Keef)
★★★★☆ - It just didn't really stand out to me. I thought Chief Keef's verse was nothing special. The beat was good, some of the lyrics were repetitive.

"8am In Charlotte" - Drake
★★★★☆ - The rhymes in the lyrics are good. Again I think that the song is a little long.

"BBL Love - Interlude" - Drake
★★★☆☆ - I'm not really a fan of the lyrics. The rhythm and beat was good.

"Gently" - Drake (feat. Bad Bunny)
★★★★☆ - This song is mostly sung in Spanish, which I don't listen to very much. However, I really enjoyed this song. The beat is really good. Wish I understood the lyrics better.

"Rich Baby Daddy" - Drake (feat. Sexy Red & SZA)
★★★★ - SZA is a GOAT, her verse in this song is my favorite out of everything in this song. Sexy Red's lyrics are repetitive but I think it works for this song. One of my favorite songs.

"Another Late Night" - Drake (feat. Lil Yachty)
★★★★☆ - I think Drake's part is good, but I am not really a fan of Lil Yachty. Everything except for Lil Yachty's part was good. I thought the harmony sounded nice.

"Away From Home" - Drake
★★★★☆ - It's an R&B slower type song. I like the beat and the tempo.

"Polar Opposites" - Drake
★★★★☆ - I think it was a good way to end the album. It's very similar to the song before. The rhythm is very good, so I added this song to my playlist.



Olivia Naber. Photo by Ashlynn Nash.

NABER NAMED COMMENDED STUDENT IN NATIONAL MERIT CONTEST

Ashlynn Nash
Photography Co-Editor-in-Chief

Olivia Naber, a senior at WBHS has been named a 2024 National Merit Scholarship Program Commended Student. Every year, only 34,000 students receive this title. Students who achieve this usually score within the 97 and 98th percentile.

To accomplish this, Naber took the PSAT in 2022. Her scores on this assessment placed her into this range of Commended Students.

Naber exclaimed, "I was definitely surprised at first because I took the PSAT back in the fall of last year, and I didn't really hear much about it for a while. Then just all of a sudden Mrs. Oswald pulls me into her office and says, 'We've got something really cool to tell you.' She pulls out this certificate and shows me that I was a commended student, and I was just over the moon."

Principal Sara Oswald said, "We know that it is extremely competitive because there's so many people taking it. It's not just Iowa... it's even bigger than the ACT because it's more national than the ACT is, so... having never had anyone get this level of recognition was pretty impressive. There's another level—most people who take it are aiming to become a National Merit Scholar, and we're not quite to that point."

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