

Written, directed, filmed and composed by...

This dynamic duo has many achievements across a variety of creative fields

by Carly Travis

At New Trier, we're surrounded by raw talent. There's kids inventing apps, releasing EP's, and even launching their own clothing lines, yet you would never know it; these modest students could be sitting right next to you. Among them are seniors Cookie Belknap and Regina Mandanguit, two girls who make films together. I sat down with the duo on a Saturday afternoon to discuss their past accomplishments, marvel at their work, and hear about upcoming projects.

"That's disgusting," Mandanguit sarcastically laughs when I hesitate in calling them "cinophiles," which is someone who is fond of movies. And she's right! The term sounds like pedophile, which is gross. I went on to suggest "film buff" to which Belknap joked, "I'm not buff; I'm really weak. I'm feeble."

After getting to know them some more, I realized that there really is no perfect word to describe them. Yes, they're filmmakers, but they also possess a variety of creative assets that contribute to each film they make. Everything from writing, editing, and directing is done by the two of them, an undertaking that can be challenging for most people in

any regard.

"Whenever we make films together, it's exactly 50-50," Belknap and Mandanguit explained (they literally split the sentence in half, too). "Her hand is on the keyboard and my hand is on the mouse," Mandanguit said. "And we're not even talking," Belknap finished. The two work in perfect unison with one another, a quality that is reflective in their movies. Because they've been collaborating together for so long, their process is fast and in-sync, as though they're speaking their own language.

Together the team has made seven films and have won

Mandanguit's older sister introduced the pair to Greg Harris Film Festival, a New Trier student film festival to which any NT students can submit work. With the help of Mandanguit's older sister's camera (which they still use today), Belknap and Mandanguit shot their first short film "Kill Tanner."

"Typically, freshmen don't submit; it's usually a Winnetka

commented, saying how great that must feel to be rookies and go home with a little golden statue: "Yeah! We got the 'Rookie of the Fest' award," they exclaimed.

Together Mandanguit and Belknap approach their films by taking relatable vignettes from their daily lives and glorifying them. One example that comes to mind is their film, "Wanna Bean the Photo." A family member is photographing her touristy family in front of the iconic Bean in Millennium Park. A stranger walks up to the family member shooting the picture and gestures for them to hop into the frame as well. Another stranger approaches and assumes the new photographer is a family member and performs the same gesture. The



scene plays out until a large group of strangers,

eight awards, which brings us to the start of their friendship, also known as the beginning of their filmmaking career.

campus thing," Mandanguit said of their first Film Fest. Nonetheless, the girls entered the race and won, not one, but two awards for their film. I

all clearly not related, are joined together to take one huge picture, essentially hijacking the tourists' moment.

A live collaboration from the fourth floor

Students come together to create Mac Guy and the Holy Rollers

by Michael Blickstein

New Trier has a vibrant music scene - a building full of artists and musicians that rivals some small cities. Seniors David Snower and Mandy Watson are part of this scene, and they love it.

The duo started playing together a little over a year ago.

"We met in IGSS because Mandy was quietly singing some song I knew," Snower said. "Eventually I also heard David doing the same thing with a Pearl Jam song," Watson said, "and then we became really good friends."

Being in IGSS has led them to improve their creative expression and has even led them to name their band (Mac Guy and the Holy Rollers) after their English teacher in the program.

Watson and Snower play shows around twice a month, including lots of open mics. Each of them play at least two instruments along with vocals.

Their

band uses guitars, drums, mandolins, harmonicas and many other obscure instruments to produce their unique sound. Snower is particularly enthusiastic about his musical repertoire, listing a thunder tube, a dulcimer and a one sided triangle.

"Neil Young and Pearl Jam are huge musical influences for us," Snower said. "We love old school musicians like Grateful Dead, John Lennon, Cat Stevens and Pink Floyd," Watson said.

The duo incorporates songs from all of their influences into their set.

The band plays mostly local shows, such as Band Together, No Screens Attached and a charity show at Winnetka Youth

Organization. They said that the biggest crowd to date was 70 people at a Rotary Club function.

The duo also plays with other musicians from New Trier. These include

Seniors Will Sommer, Ella Harris, Nikki Lamagno, Nicky Kacena and Carly Maisel, as well as Junior Sofie Way, Cam Schiller (class of 2015) and English teacher Jeff Markham.

"The Winnetka Youth show was actually the first show we played as Mac Guy and the Holy Rollers," said Sommer, who played with the band often. "The other artists were really talented and the gig was a lot of fun."

Sommer has taken a hiatus playing with the band to record a solo album and focus on other projects.

"The most fun we've ever had playing was when

everything was just a total trainwreck," Watson said. "We were playing during Band Together and there was a point in the show where everything just completely fell apart."

"We don't really know what even happened," Snower said. "But we just smiled and kept playing the rest of our set."

Watson and Snower participate in other extracurricular activities as well.

"I've been sailing all four years of high school," Watson said. "I'm the captain of the team this year and I even lived on a boat sophomore year." Watson spent her second semester of sophomore year sailing from Trinidad to the northeast coast of Canada and ending

in Maine.

Snower, on the other hand, considers himself to be an environmental activist. "In environmental club, we raise money for environmental charities, have river cleanups, and try to get keynote speakers to talk about environmental problems." Snower mentioned that he also ran cross country and is somewhat active in meditation club.

Snower and Watson firmly believe that live music is less about raw talent and more about a passion and enthusiasm for what you're playing. They believe that music is a right, not a luxury.

The duo invites anyone who wants to jam with them to come and play. They feel that the more people they can play with, the more people they can immerse in great music and a great time.

"I mean, look at all the greats," said Watson. "You have bands like the Clash and other amazing, popular musicians who just couldn't play at all, but just loved it."

