

# THE STONY BROOK **PRESS**

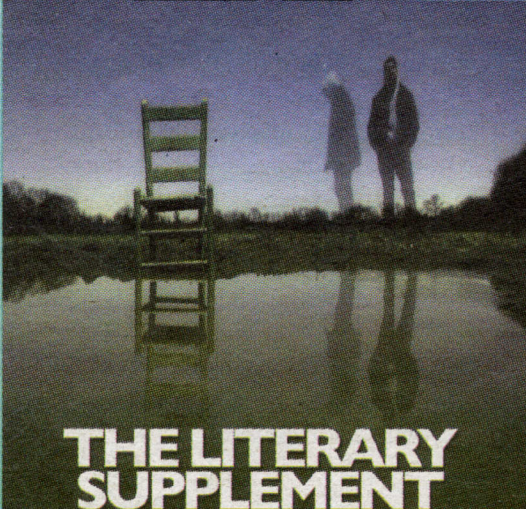
VOL XXX ISSUE 7

"I KNOW HOW YOU KIDS LIKE TO  
WATCH YOUR NINJA TURTLES SHOW"

DECEMBER 17, 2008



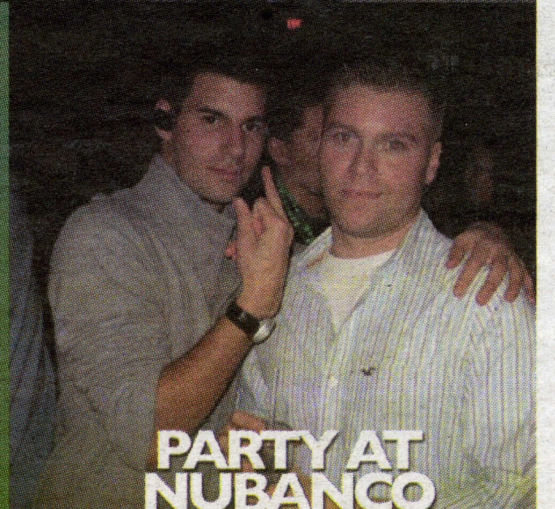
**STOP SHOPPING THIS  
HOLIDAY SEASON WITH  
REVEREND BILLY**



**THE LITERARY  
SUPPLEMENT**



**WHERE ARE OUR  
MEAL POINTS?**



**PARTY AT  
NUBANCO**

# Where Have All the Meal Points Gone?

By Matt Braunstein

As the end of the semester grows near, some residential students at Stony Brook University find themselves in a bothersome and familiar predicament. While others deal primarily with the stress of grades and finals, these students must also concern themselves with how they will manage to eat.

For the past five years at SBU, the university has implemented a campus-wide declining balance meal plan rather than a buffet-style meal plan used at other SUNY universities. According to Angela Agnello, the Faculty Student Association Director of Marketing and Communications, 25% of residents, or approximately 2,250 students, add more money to their meal plans each semester. Different available meal plans initially range from \$1500 to over \$2400 per semester, so there are numerous students who deal with a shortage of meal points by turning to cheap off-campus food or by simply going hungry.

Agnello said the meal plan provides a la carte dining style, which she sees as more flexible and varied than a buffet-style or board plan. "One of the largest benefits is that students can eat at their own pace," Agnello said. "For example, if they would like a cup of coffee and a bagel for breakfast they can have that and not have to pay one set price to enter a dining location for something that would cost only a couple of dollars." She also said that students can currently take food out of campus dining locations, which is not allowed under a board plan.

While many students appreciate the advantages of the current plan, some have become frustrated with the way the plan is implemented. Avanish Reddy, a sophomore, said, "I like all the different foods available on campus, and I like being able to take food back to my room, but the silver meal plan doesn't give you enough points for the whole semester."

The Stony Brook campus dining website, [Campusdining.org](http://Campusdining.org), offers a meal plan budgeting chart that suggests how a student should ration out his or her

points across a semester. On the silver meal plan, the default for a majority of students, the chart suggests a student would spend approximately \$10 dollars a day, or \$70 per week on food. However, this is almost impossible, however; the actual prices for food across campus translate into about \$10 per meal.

"The food is just too expensive," Reddy said. "I spend about 25 to 30 points a day, and on most days, that's only for two meals." David Steiber, also a sophomore, said, "It's not hard to spend more than 20 points per day when sushi costs \$10, plus a drink." The cheapest and smallest sushi platters,

current chaotic state, the prices for all kinds of consumer goods, including food, are rising. Stephanie Brumsey, a senior, has seen the prices for food rise steadily over the past four years, at dining locations all over campus.

Agnello said the Faculty Student Association must approve any increase in food prices in April of each year. The university's dining contractor, Chartwells, first has to justify those changes, she said. The FSA normally does not approve increases larger than the Consumer Price Index for the region, she added.

That gives Brumsey no comfort.

versity website, [albany.edu](http://albany.edu), explains that students can select different plans with different "Weekly Blocks." A block is simply a single buffet-style meal in which the students swipe their card once upon entering a campus dining hall. The plan allots each student 15 meals per week, or roughly two per day.

However, UAlbany also offers an additional optional plan called "Munch Money." Students who enroll get \$200 dollars of meal plan money towards different dining locations on campus. "I love the plan here," said Zack Pumerantz, a UAlbany sophomore. "Most kids only eat twice a day anyway, and we get

to eat as much as we want in one sitting. Then, if we get the munchies later, we can use our munch money. People here don't use up their all their meals before the end of the semester, because we can only use 15 meals per week, and that makes you pace yourself."

Nothing indicates that Stony Brook will change its current meal plan anytime soon. A new food court was recently opened on the campus' Roth quad, which includes a Wendy's fast food outlet. "One of the main benefits of having a declining balance meal plan is brands," Agnello said. "With a declining balance meal plan, Campus Dining Services is able to offer

brands like Starbucks, Dunkin Donuts, Taco Bell and Wendy's. We can also offer much more variety like made-to-order sushi, Wolfie's sit-down restaurant, and Blue Agave."

There was noticeable buzz and positive conversation amid the student body concerning the new fast food joint on campus. However, according to Brumsey, Reddy, and Steiber, the buzz among the student body over new food selections does not equal the widespread concerns of dwindling meal points. With the end of the semester creeping closer and closer, these three students and many others will continue to find new ways to battle hunger at Stony Brook University.



which serve as little more than a snack, do start at \$4.95, but a full sushi meal costs \$9.95. Other meal-sized selections at most of the campus dining locations are similarly priced.

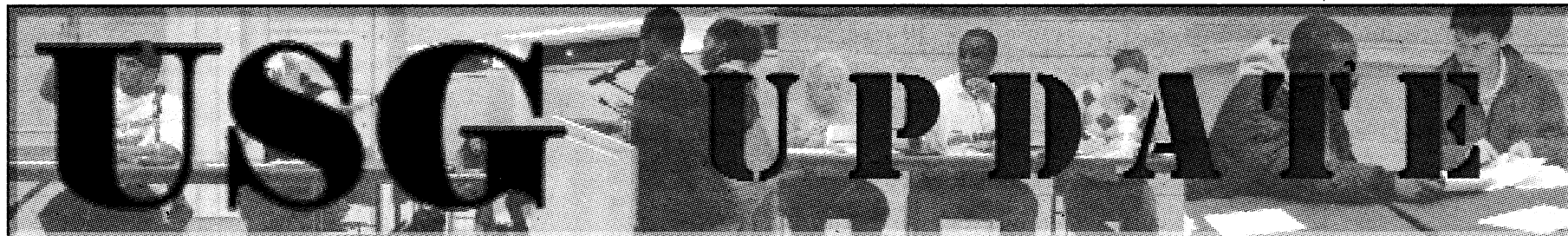
At the end of every semester, as students begin to run low on meal points, many cannot afford to add large amounts of money to their meal plans by credit card or through their student financial accounts. Students like Steiber and Reddy instead buy canned and microwavable food in bulk to substitute their shrinking meal plans. According to the two sophomores, foods like instant noodle cups and soup cans are not as filling, appetizing or nutritious as campus dining selections.

With the national economy in its

"All I know is that when I first came to Stony, it cost three bucks and some change for a small plastic container of fruit," she said. "Now it costs five bucks and change and that's just for some damn fruit."

Students at SUNY Geneseo, which uses a plan similar to Stony Brook's, have had complaints as well. Francis Melendez, a sophomore at Geneseo, said, "It's kind of funny that Stony Brook students run out of meal points too, because that happens here almost every semester. A lot of us wonder if we are the only university that has to put up with this crap."

At SUNY Albany, whose student population is similar to SBU's 22,527, primarily uses a board plan. The uni-



## Senate Votes on Student Employment Regulations

By Natalie Crnosija

The Undergraduate Student Government, in a vote of 14 to 2, amended the USG Constitution on December 4 to allow USG student employees to hold more than one paying position within USG.

This amendment to subsection two of the Constitution was approved with the additional amendment that those students, who currently earn less than \$70 dollars a week will be able to retain their job if their pay scale increases.

Subsection two of the Constitution states that USG employees cannot be paid for more than one position from the Student Activities fund but, according to Senator Adam Kent, this rule will prove detrimental to the student body.

"Some senators feel the need to employ more PASS tutors," Kent said.

PASS tutors, or student tutors employed by the University to help students in academic need, are employed

by the school and are on the lower end of the pay scale compared to USG senators, according to Senator Kevin Brady.

"With budget cuts coming and class sizes getting even bigger, there will be an even greater demand for PASS tutors," said Brady.

According to Kent, he and the other senators drafted the amendment so present USG employees would have an interest in becoming PASS tutors. Previously, they were prohibited from holding more than one paying position through USG section two, or the Clarification of Employment Act.

USG President Jeffrey Akita supported the Senate's effort to safeguard the longevity of the bill by freezing the eligibility of USG employees based on their current pay scale.

The pay scale freeze prevents PASS tutors, who have another USG position, from losing their tutor position in the PASS program if the pay scale is augmented, said Brady.

According to Brady, this measure helps both the students, who need aca-

ademic help, and the tutors, whose salary is not under their control.

"The original rule was to prevent students from taking on too many responsibilities," Brady said.

"If all positions experience a pay increase, why shouldn't all benefit if they do the job?" said Kent.

Apart from USG employee regulations, the Senate passed Akita's proposed amendment to eliminate the necessity of building manager signatures as part of the contractual contingencies required for the payment of student Audio-Visual technicians, who work at a campus event.

AV techs, by contract, had to have the building manager of an event sign their timesheet in order to be paid. Akita moved to strike the necessity of the building manager's signature due to the logistical difficulties of finding a building manager after hours.

According to Akita, as a former student AV technician, the only signature that should be required by contract is that of the events coordinator.

"It's unfeasible for the techs to get the signatures they need if they are cleaning up late and need something to be signed by the building managers, when the building managers leave at 10 p.m.," said Senator Matthew Anderson of the School of Engineering and Applied Science. "Realistically, they would not have verification for the amount of time they put in and they would not get paid for their work."

According to Anderson, the establishment of the amendment to subsection two similarly helps the University's student employees help the student body.

A PASS tutor has no political power and, therefore, no USG employee, including senators, should be prevented from becoming a tutor, said Anderson.

"PASS tutors are a complete necessity," said Anderson. "There was a substantial lack of centralized tutoring at Stony Brook before the PASS program was established. There will never be a time when tutors are not needed."

## USG President Killed the Radio Star

By Jonathan Singer

USG President Jeffrey Akita has a vision, a vision that involves televisions. Describing the project as a safety feature and paper saver, among other things, a series of closed circuit televisions could be installed in key locations across campus, set up to narrowcast whatever is worthy of narrowcasting.

Currently the SAC has a similar TV system, which is run by Student Activities and runs using Symon's TargetVision. Akita says he is looking at a number of possible companies to supply his idea, including the well known Cisco Systems and a not so well known company called Visix.

Akita says the system will create an efficient place to advertise, while providing an avenue for students "to see what else is going on the world." By having clubs advertise on this network instead of posting flyers, paper could potentially be saved.



USG senators say they need more information before they can make a decision whether or not to invest in a system like the one proposed by Akita. Some senators say the idea sounds like a great idea in theory, but reiterate that they need much more information.

To make money off of the venture, Akita suggested selling advertising time to local businesses that serve the immediate community around Stony Brook University. Akita also said he does not want the system to be run by professionals. "I want it to be a student run program," he says, describing a production that would provide relevant field experience for students interested in television production.

The system could also possibly televise live events (like football games), and could also possibly be used for academics, all with an emphasis on "possibly." USG senators say that Akita was vague when he first presented the idea to them at the last senator meeting of the semester. "We can't really look into it unless we have numbers," said one senator.

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## editorials

# HSC's Silence Has Become Deafening

Dr. Timothy J. Kinsella was granted his license by the New York State Department of Education on December 2. However, oddly enough, the administration of our Health Science Center won't even take the time to comment on that, even after the publication of an article detailing Dr. Kinsella's checkered past.

It has now been over a month since we formally motioned to speak with the administrators of HSC, most notably Dean Richard Fine and Dr. Steven Strongwater, who serves as Director and CEO of the hospital. Stony Brook University's Media Relations Department has not been able to secure a mere few minutes for us to hear HSC's response. We've been told that the administrators in HSC are very busy. And, as a matter

of fact, yes, we're sure they are. However, we find it hard to believe that they couldn't find, at most, ten minutes to respond to the allegations leveled against Dr. Kinsella.

We find it even harder to believe that they actually don't want to respond, at all. However, it has started to seem that way. It's almost like they are dodging all of our attempts to speak. Do we have to reiterate once again that it is in the HSC's best interest to formulate a concrete response? If the allegations do not concern them, they should tell us. If they don't believe the allegations, they definitely should tell us. If they do care, then they really should give us the signal that they are taking these serious allegations to heart.

It is important to note that they

have not come out in defense of Dr. Kinsella, either. They have said, quite literally, absolutely nothing since the publication of the article. Due to this silence, we all can only wonder as to what they plan on saying or doing regarding these allegations. Do they really plan on saying or doing nothing at all? We hope not, but we haven't been presented any evidence so far to suggest otherwise.

The semester is over, HSC. We don't imagine you'll be returning our calls over the break. That gives you a whole additional month, on top of the one you've already had, to formulate a response. We eagerly await one when we return in the spring.

## Happy Holidays From SSK!

Shirley's taking an early vacation and hiding from the SSK Countdown for this issue. We'll make sure to get her to come back for the first issue next semester, though. Don't you worry.



Dear Editor and Staff,

I would like to commend you and your staff on the in-depth research and reporting of Dr Timothy Kinsella and the often-preventable gaffes that take place within our healthcare facilities.

It is deplorable that restaurants are obligatory to adhere to more stringent standards and have greater oversight than doctors, as their patrons are at least forewarned that a cockroach may be in the establishment. Displayed at the front entrance of every restaurant is its earned "Grade", allowing the consumer to make an informed decision before stepping foot in the door. In contrast, we have witnessed that deplorable physicians are not only given refuge in medical facilities, but those same facilities act as billboards promoting those physicians by granting them prominent titles and positions, over-the-top press releases, and accolades all around.

When the facilities that employ problematic doctors choose to shield them, though it is widely known within the facility that they are protecting someone who has endangered the well being of others, are they not the principal culprit? The problems and issues are so rampant that governmental and enforcement agencies appear to only want to address extremely gross improprieties. Most patients are left powerless after being harmed by a doctor or hospital, as few victims have the financial means or energy to forge their way through the civil judicial system fighting a large well-funded entity. Of those that do, most reach confidential settlements before going to court, thus allowing the physicians to move along, unfettered, remaining menaces to the unwary community.

Had any of Dr Kinsella's patients been informed upfront of his unethical behavior, allowing them to make an informed decision of the doctor *they* would trust with *their* lives, do you believe any would have made the first appointment? Furthermore, when a medical facility knowingly retains such a physician, it is indicative of an institution whose primary vested interest is not patient care. Would the leaders of these institutions knowingly take their vehicles to be serviced at a repair shop that overcharges customers and falsifies the repair slip? Yet, the horrific behavior of some physicians is hidden from the most vulnerable of our society—the sick and dying that are easily preyed upon by the unconscionable.

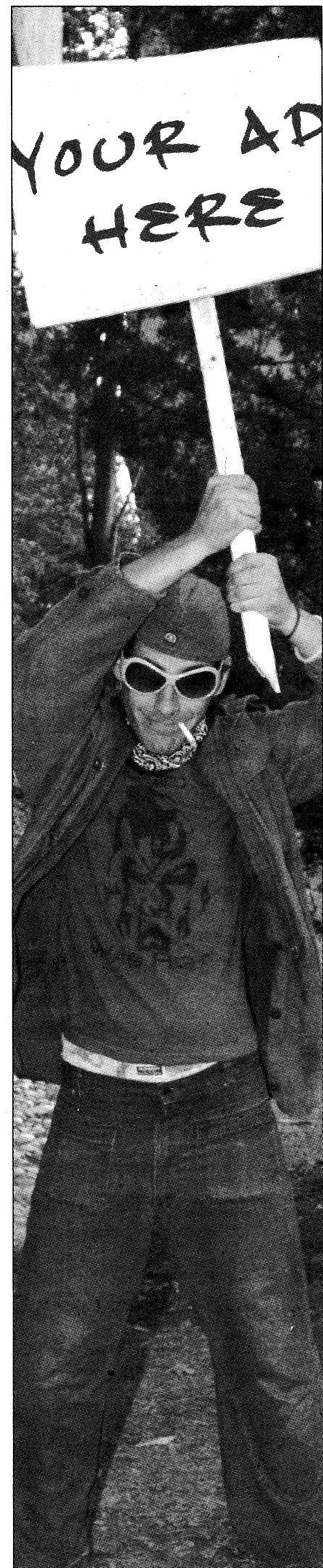
The bright spot in this issue is the principled individuals of *The Stony Brook Press* who were willing to take a stand, not for their own self-gain but, because they recognize that they must take action to bring a change to the community in which they live and receive an education, for the benefit of all.

Dr Kinsella may believe that his clinical expertise in cancer treatment stands alone, but I beg to differ. The lack of good moral character may be the difference between life and death. As explained to me by presumably a past colleague of his, in 2001 Dr Kinsella was faced with the decision that he must admit that he had made a mistake in order to save the life of his three-year-old patient. Dr Kinsella not only chose selfish motives over the life of the child, but after the child died he then falsified the child's patient record to try to cover that mistake, resulting in a lawsuit that encompassed his wife, Dr Susan Wiersma, numerous colleagues, and the facility in which he was employed. An action such as this is beyond a mere mistake, but rather the intent to deceive, at the expense of others.

What value does extensive clinical expertise and self-promotion hold at the end of the day when one's moral compass is so askew that he/she can't recognize the difference between right and wrong and empathy and self-gratification?

Thank you for the informative reporting. You may save the life of another, or many.

Amy Weber



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# Death and Destruction at Over 4000

By Jonathan Singer

At the peak of a demonstration, their crew can run as many as 17 deep, and that's only on a vacation day. "The election was encouraging of course," says peacenik Mac Bica, standing outside of the Smith Haven mall on Black Friday. "But it doesn't mean our issues have been resolved."

Bica, who served as a marine officer in Vietnam, is the coordinator for the Long Island chapter of Veterans for Peace. He is an active member in Long Island's anti-war scene, a sort of subculture that this past summer completed the "2008 Summer Mall Tour for Peace." Infiltrating popular consumer hangouts like Roosevelt Field and Walt Whitman, the shopping center visits involved peaceniks walking the vast corridors of the malls with shirts reading, "4,000 troops, 1 million Iraqis dead."

"We walked boldly and brazenly with our shirts on," says Charlotte Koons, who is a member of CODE-PINK, a women's anti-war group.

Those t-shirts may be outdated, but it hasn't quelled the movement. Involved organizations include the aforementioned two as well as local groups such as North County Peace Group,

whose members are used to standing on sidewalks with signs, encouraging passing cars to honk.

Some of the signs say, "Would you trade your children for oil?" Some of the drivers say, "Fuck you." Karen Sackett comes to these demonstrations "to alert the happy shoppers that, as they shop, there is a war going on," she says. "As far as the election and how we're concerned, it hasn't changed a thing."

November's election results pleased some Long Island peaceniks, but even those who voted Obama have their reservations. Diane Atkinson attended a Black Friday demonstration wearing two Obama buttons on her coat. "I think his heart is in the right place," she

says. "I think he has integrity, unlike the people at the top now... [but] keep on telling him what we need. He can very easily get caught up in the stream of things."

This can be because, while Obama has campaigned to remove troops from Iraq, peaceniks are concerned about the president elect's plan for Afghanistan. "If he ramps up Afghanistan, we will be just as vocal as we are against Bush," says Jim Lynch.

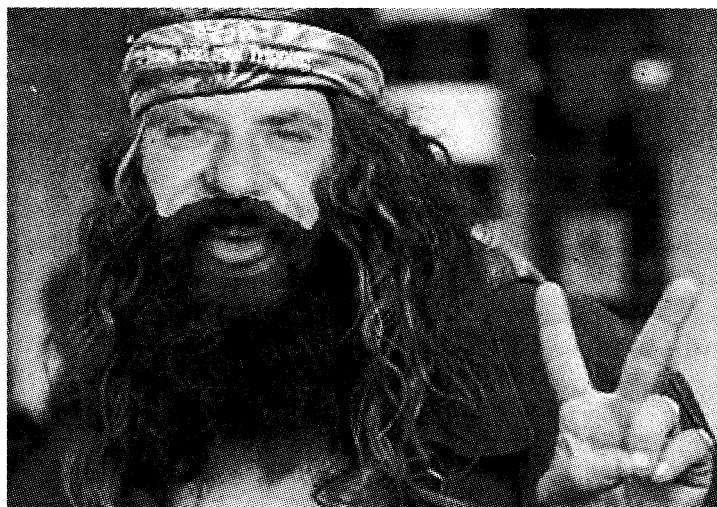
Sometimes the peaceniks are met by what they call "eagles," counter protestors who show up to support the nation's war efforts in Iraq and Afghanistan. Sometimes there are also police officers, but on Black Friday in

Smith Haven, only mall security watched from a safe distance. "We've been here every Black Friday," says Sackett, while her peers begin to call the protest a yearly tradition. And with the troubled economy, those who came to protest, as well as those who came to shop, had no problem finding parking spaces.

Parking wasn't a problem for Jim Nevarre, who rode his bicycle to the busy Route 25 entrance to the Smith Haven Mall. "Our lifestyle is too expensive, and the war is not a way to solve our problems," he says, while possessing a sign that says, "stop war on Iran."

By the end of a two-hour demonstration/protest, Bruce Barry is one of two who remain to wait out the fully scheduled (2pm - 4pm) event. "We're staying here until the war is over, until all the troops are home," he says. Like other events organized by these peaceniks, the average age hovers around 40, with few or no college students present. There is the occasional high school student, who is usually a child of older (and cooler) parents who attend the demonstration.

There is also the occasional youngster who drives by, choosing to either honk or yell phrases, including "you're all fucking idiots."



# RAs Join Union Amidst Controversy

By Matthew J. Hegedus

Research Assistants (RAs) at SUNY Stony Brook, recently voted in an election to join CWA 1104, the union that represents Verizon employees in Nassau County and 5,000 Teaching Assistants (TAs) and Graduate Assistants (GAs) in the SUNY system. The RAs, who are employed by the SUNY Research Foundation, won with a vote of 214 to 135 in an election supervised by the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB).

CWA 1104 has been a hotbed of controversy and internal debate. Recent incidents include: union leaders accused of fiscal irresponsibility by the membership, investigations by the Department of Labor for voter disenfranchisement, illegal use of employee property and union resources during union officer elections, and charges in the New York Public Employment Relations Board (PERB) by members for

secretly settling an improper practice charge that doubled the workload of Binghamton University English Department Teaching Assistants (TAs).

By their successful vote, RAs have agreed to some of the highest dues in the nation for graduate student workers according to the union's own research. Stony Brook RAs will be paying 2% of their salary to CWA 1104, drastically higher than University of California, Berkeley's dues of 1.15%, or Rutgers dues of .6%.

CWA 1104 has also come under fire for the handling of their finances. The unreported relationship between CWA 1104 and Crimson Technologies, an internet technologies company based out of New Hyde Park, New York, has come to the forefront of a debate among the membership concerning the allocation of union dues. It has recently come to light that a principal executive of Crimson Technologies is Maria Connelly, the wife of Secretary-Treasurer, Edward Connelly. According to CWA 1104's

LM-2 forms the union has paid \$465,495 in the last six years for "computer system maintenance," yet Connelly has never filed the federally required LM-30 form that discloses business deals between a union officer and his/her spouse or minor child.

Election Accusations & Appeals

There was a firestorm of debate and controversy over the allegations of corruption during the general elections of CWA 1104 held this semester. In a recent email addressed to Research Assistants, the RA Organizing Committee responded to the corruption charges by arguing, "Members of CWA 1104 got a chance to look at the facts, and the majority who voted, voted for the incumbents."

Dan Woulfin, current GSEU/CWA 1104 Business Agent at Stony Brook, who represents TAs and GAs, said, "The idea that you can investigate and solve cases of widespread and well known union corruption through an election is preposterous. The Interna-

tional has accepted my charges against the entire 1104 Executive Board, and President [Larry] Cohen is currently in the process of appointing a prosecutor." Woulfin also mentioned that every member of the Telecommunication Division received a \$500 rebate from the strike fund at the beginning of the election from the incumbents, a decision that cost the union approximately \$1.5 million.

Woulfin's predecessor, Victor Rosado, agreed with him regarding the internal charges, and said, "I am confident that President Larry Cohen will take immediate action and appoint a temporary administrator to oversee the administration and finances of the union." Rosado also said that an estimated 750 first year TAs could not vote due to an August 22 eligibility date set by CWA 1104. Now members are appealing to the Department of Labor for an investigation into two out of the three competitive elections in the Education Division for accusations of voter

disenfranchisement and illegal election tactics.

These controversies have not gone unnoticed by RAs. Many refused to give their names when speaking for fear of union retribution. Former Graduate Student Organization President, and Stony Brook Council member, Andrei Antonenko, an RA in the Linguistics Department, was one of the few who did freely. "Graduate students at Stony Brook have had longstanding problems with CWA 1104," Antonenko said,

"Many students have privately spoken to me about concerns of the union's structure, finances, and actions across the state over the years." Antonenko would not state how he voted in the election.

TAs and GAs are nearing two years without a contract, the longest they have ever gone without a collective bargaining agreement since GSEU was formed in 1992. Chief Negotiator and Executive Vice President of the CWA 1104 Education Division, Kathleen

Sims, is currently embroiled in an Improper Practice Charge in New York's PERB for violating her Duty of Fair Representation. According to 42 English Department TAs at SUNY Binghamton, Sims secretly settled a case with the State of New York, which approved a policy doubling their workloads.

#### Looking Forward

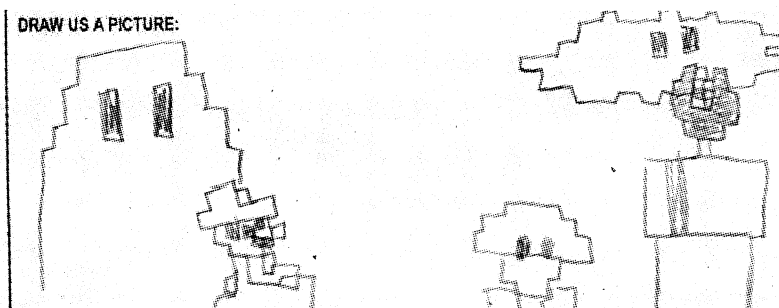
Rosado is concerned that TAs and GAs will not be getting a good contract due to all of the controversies sur-

rounding CWA 1104 officers. "Vital resources necessary to mobilize for a new contract with New York State are squandered by the union fat cats in Farmingdale and Albany," Rosado said, "I am confident that President Cohen, an advocate of strong rank-and-file movements and union democracy legislation such as the Employee Free Choice Act, will assist GSEU in this most crucial period of massive budget cuts, layoffs of TAs and GAs, and increases of TA workloads."

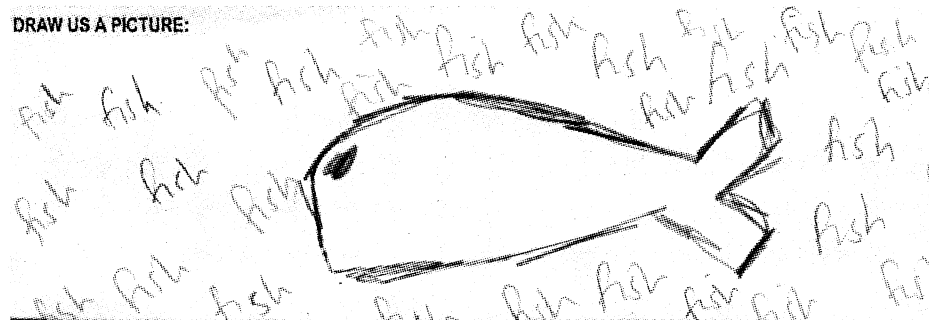
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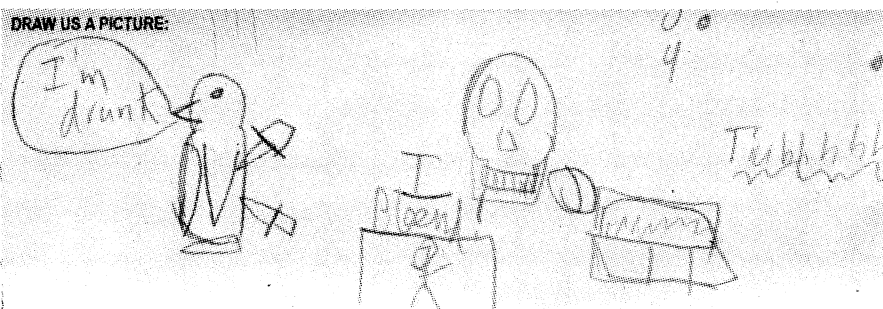
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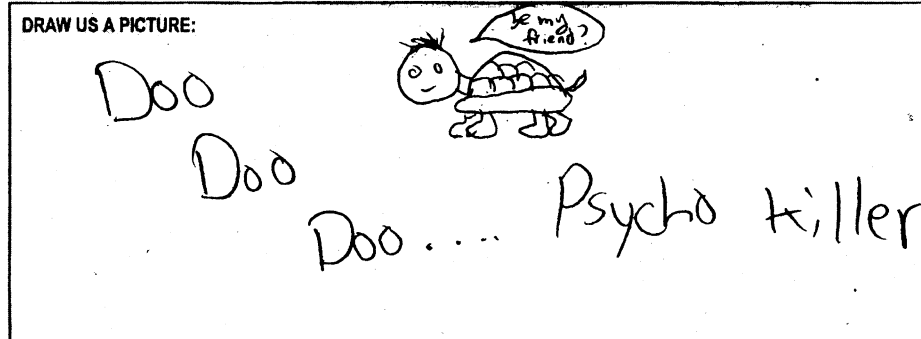
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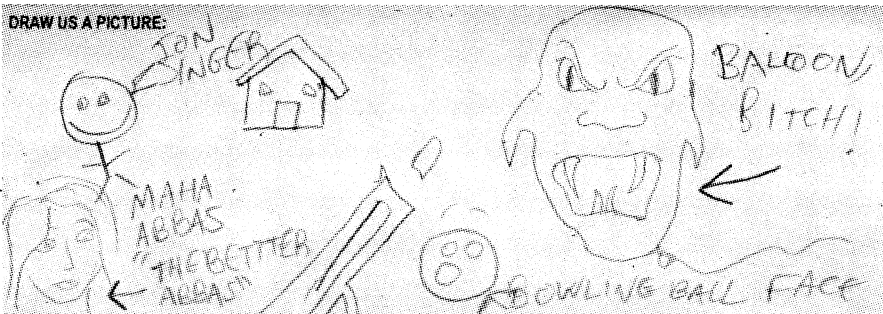
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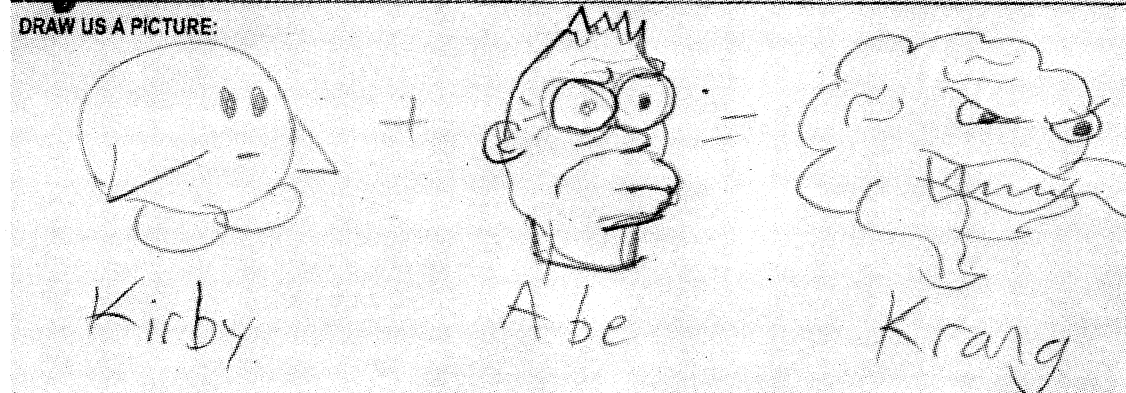
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BIZARRE-ASS PICTURES  
FROM THE FALL 2008  
BEERFEST TASTE-TESTING  
EVALUATION FORMS!**

# Can I Get A Reverend Billy-elujah?

By Najib Aminy

The most expensive item the Reverend of the Church of Stop Shopping has is an espresso machine imported from Italy, which was given as gift. "It's taking over our life," jokes Savitri Durkee, director of the Church of Stop Shopping and wife of the Reverend. "It's the fanciest thing we have. It's fancier than our car."

Entering their second-floor Brooklyn apartment blocks away from Prospect Park, books upon books covered the walls with no television or Christmas tree in sight, only a laptop with a sticker of California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger covering the Apple logo. "I don't get him too much, is he a Democrat or is he a Republican? He is confusing," said Durkee.

His voicemail recording leaves callers with a "cellphonelujah," and his message urges listeners to "stop shopping." Emulating what he calls an iconic, toxic figure in American history, Bill Talen puts on a white dinner jacket, slacks, a black-tee, and a \$5 priest's collar and becomes Reverend Billy.

Hard to miss, the six foot, three inch reverend from Minnesota, who is usually accompanied by his not-for-profit gospel choir, treads Wall Street to Main Street, preaching economic justice, environmental protection and protesting sweatshops, among other topics. "It is really hard to generalize about what is going on," said Talen. "Our role from day-to-day is changing so much. Our role is changing, but the world is changing."

Reverend Billy and the Church of Stop Shopping has waged crusades against multinational corporations in-

cluding Wal-Mart Stores Inc., Starbucks Co., Victoria's Secret and the Walt Disney Company. Armed with a 35-member choir, a large cardboard megaphone and a message, Talen goes into these stores to perform "exorcisms" on cash registers in what he calls "retail interventions."

Protesting without the picket signs and angry mob, Talen and his church practice an integration of comedic performance protesting. Talen began going into "big box" stores such as Disney in 1997 where he and his followers would pose as customers chatting on their phones, becoming increasingly louder as they addressed the corporate abuses by Disney. "It was very unusual, it was not the same thing as protestors chaining themselves to Mickey Mouse," said Durkee. "You mean that person over there can be doing a political action?" It captures the imagination in a certain way.

Though most preachers flocked to Times Square for its notoriety of sin, Talen spoke out against the gentrification and removal of locally owned businesses. "Back then Times Square was not where you would take your 10-year-old niece from Omaha, but a place like that getting cleansed is very unsettling," said Durkee. Talen witnessed his friends and their businesses being removed by corporations, ultimately creating an outside shopping mall. "I was losing friends, my friends in the neighborhood were getting swept up into jails, shelters and God knows where by Giuliani's police working with the Disney company," said Talen. "Diner shops, barber shops, small independent proprietors, many who have been there for decades."

Personally affected, Talen said he became informed that behind the Disney Store and other facets of corpora-

tions were sweatshops and various other injustices occurring. "I was preaching about the efforts to privatize Times Square," said Talen. "And quickly I was taught by activists that everything in the Disney store was a sweatshop product."

Raised as a Calvinist, Talen's act progressed over time from a few people who would follow and clap with him into what it is now today, a group of followers who sing alongside and support him. "Billy was expressing something a lot of people were thinking and feeling," said Durkee, sipping from her freshly brewed espresso. "Whenever someone starts shouting and it's fairly true, people will stop and listen."

While cooking an egg omelet at two in the afternoon, Talen described himself as neither a Christian or an Agnostic, but "searching." Durkee, who comes from an Islamic background said that they both were raised in fundamentalist beliefs. "We have an objection to fundamentalism," said Durkee. Walking from the kitchen back to living room wooden picnic-styled table, Talen said, "The biggest, most powerful church in the world is the church of consumerism." The figure both Durkee and Talen look to is Jesus, and, as a result, have gained popularity amongst American Christians.

Talen has appeared on numerous television interviews, published two books and recorded two albums, as well as starred in *What Would Jesus Buy*, a documentary produced by Morgan Spurlock about the Church of Stop Shopping and the effects of consumerism. Certainly eye-catching, Talen walks a fine line between getting one's attention and having them listen to his message. "That is our device, not the only device but it has been fairly effective," said a much relaxed Talen. "Some people accept it and some reject but at this point it is reasonable to say that our popularity is allowing us to have some impact."

Exercising his first amendment rights, Talen has been arrested over fifty times across the country, and is banned from every Starbucks coffee shop. "Union Square? I get arrested there every month," joked Talen. Durkee worries about Talen at times, but is comforted by what she said is "a fostered community of fifty people who are together every week and take risks with the police every week."

Durkee describes the Church as a group of people with the same ideas expressing their views artistically and comically. Jumping right into the Stop Shopping choir, bass singer Ben Cerf, of Manhattan, said he was attracted by the comedic approach of Reverend Billy



and the message that followed it. "It was protesting without a chain, and funny at the same time," said Cerf. "And it wasn't too religious either, more along the lines of non-denomination."

Adhering to Talen's message, soprano singer Stefani Peika, of Brooklyn, has turned from shopping to baking. "I've definitely curbed my shopping immensely. I bake more and that's what I give out as gifts," said Peika. "I go all out." With her choir members chatting it up outside Dixon Place, Manhattan, Peika affirmed that Talen is serious about his job. "He is a very passionate activist and practices what he preaches."

As choir director and Administrative director of St. Mark's Church of Bowery New York, James Solomon Benn has commended Talen's work ethic. "He is a work-a-holic," said Benn, laughing. "He has to be, it's his day job."

As the result of a weakening economy and an increase in unemployment, Talen's advice for this holiday is to stop shopping. Talen's definition of shopping is simply buying what is unnecessary. "Buying what you don't need is not a neutral act," said Talen. "It has been defined by consumer culture as the thing that raises world culture—but it is the opposite. Buying what you don't need



Photo Credit: Andrew Fraley

deprives people of what they do need.”

Advising Americans to become consciously aware of the true value of an item, Durkee said the Valley Stream incident, in which a store employee was trampled to death by crazed shoppers, served as a window into America's own ignorance. “We don't know there is violence among the range of consumerism,” said Durkee. “Violence and death comes from far away where consumer goods are made—American shoppers are protected from this violence.”

Talen blames this notion of price value to the marketing campaigns and contribution of commercial journalists

who protect Americans from the truth of consumerism. “We see as far as the product, we don't think the product has any history, any natural resources, any labor.” That is why Talen and Durkee urge Americans to buy locally, even if that means spending a little more, and to support horizontal investments that benefit local communities.

This holiday season, Talen and Durkee said they hope Americans will realize the true meaning of the holidays, specifically Christmas. “The original notion of Christmas was to shake us up,” said a more serious Talen. “It is an incitement to give gifts, have shared experiences with loved ones, and teach us

peace. This is all completely lost with Santa Claus.”

Talen's neighborhood was decorated with multiple lawn ornaments of Mickey Mouse dressed as Santa Claus. Pointing this to be one of many examples of how Christmas has been exploited by corporations, Durkee asked jokingly, “You think we should get a BB gun?” To which Talen responded, “We pioneered that concept. The conflation of Santa and Mickey as Mickey Claus,” mockingly adding, “I want to take credit for it, the image of Mickey Claus comes from Savi and Billy.”

Working to get the message out, Talen and his choir stood outside of

Macy's on Black Friday, a day he calls, “Buy Nothing Day.” Given the economic state of the nation, both Durkee and Talen agree that Americans can learn from the situation and ultimately have a better Christmas. “When a smoker gets caught in a snow storm, he or she may take that opportunity to stop forever,” Durkee said. “Americans can choose to change their habits, or just go back.”

Walking out of his apartment, Talen said, “Now you've come to our home and seen at least we're a little bit not hypocrites—though we have a thousand dollar espresso machine.”

## The Church of Stop Shopping Gospel Choir Shakes Things Up In NYC

By Andrew Fraley

When he's not busy protesting the Disneyfication of Times Square, saving the Poe House from destruction or working to prevent the private development of Union Square and Coney Island, Reverend Billy likes to celebrate the holidays with friends and family in a more traditional way. The Christmas revival series are the Sunday sermons of the Church of Stop Shopping.

In addition to activism in the New York Area and around the world, Reverend Billy has been performing these shows throughout the city for nearly a decade. These “sermons,” as they are called, are one of the many ways in which Billy spreads his anti-consumerism message. Focusing many of his efforts on the period of time between Thanksgiving and Christmas, which he calls, “an orgy of consumerism,” Billy started the Christmas revival series. Accompanied by a seven-piece band and a 35-member gospel choir, the revival series run on the three Sundays after Thanksgiving, the last being on December 21.

The sermons themselves have humble origins. Started in 1999 in St. Clement's Playhouse, the theatre of St. Clement's Church in Hell's Kitchen, the group has since moved on to bigger venues. In late 2001, the group began performing at the Bleecker Street Theatre, a venue that houses over 200 audience members. “That was a step up,” described Billy. “Before that, we were performing in a church basement.” The show on December 14 was at the newly \$5.2 million renovated Dixon Place Theatre. Dixon Place, which houses and supports performing artists in the heart of the city, was still finishing renovations. The 60 or so people that filled the theatre (the show sold out) were asked

to donate money for amenities, and a construction hat was passed around.

“The songs and service are shaped around the subject,” said Billy, describing each sermon's development. What starts as discussion between the choir evolves into that week's sermon. Thematic and current, the sermons always preach the same message, but in an ever changing way. The communal development of the show is what drew Stefani Peikin, a former solo performer, to join

years. “I love these shows because it contains laughter and deeper meaning...It shows that protesting can be fun,” said the East Village resident.

The show also features organizations or events around the city that Billy and the Church feel ought to be spotlighted. At the December 14 show, a choir member detailed the organization of Street Memorial Project, a movement to create memorials and awareness of pedestrian and bicycle deaths through-

from 14 to 67, according to The Reverend, and their backgrounds are just as diverse. One choir member, a grandmother and New York City teacher, was with the group everywhere they went, even to this year's Burning Man. She abruptly left earlier this year after four years of service. “Some people just jump into the performance,” said The Reverend. “They just leap into the choir, and then they never leave.” Ben Cerf, a French-American and Bowery resident, did just that. “I joined about five years ago...it was right after the first show I saw,” he explained. Cerf also moonlights as a Billionaire For Bush, another activist performance group.

A mixture of professionals and volunteers, the not-for-profit theatre company maintains its equilibrium this way. “It's a funny checks and balances system,” described Durkee. The professionals are usually activist performers and artists who can work full time on the shows, while the volunteers are often equally talented but maintain outside jobs and can only commit their free time to the show. The show features solos from volunteers and professionals alike.

The choir is also involved in activism around the world. Whether protesting Victoria's Secret's forest clear cutting practices to produce their catalogs, helping Ethiopian farmers gain a fair share of profits from Starbucks Corporation or singing in a parodical gospel choir in the heart of New York City, Reverend Billy and the Church of Stop Shopping have consistently spread the message of conscious, informed and sustainable consumption.

“We talk a lot. And we rehearse a lot. Well, maybe we don't rehearse that much,” said Durkee about preparation for each show. The show on December 14 was performed brilliantly, so perhaps she's just being modest.



the choir. Miz Stefani (her stage name) lived in the same building as Billy before a friend recommended she audition for the choir. “Billy usually has an idea of where the sermon's going to start and end,” described Stefani. “The middle of the show is very organic...you'll never see the same show twice.” As an improv actor by trade, Billy will improvise each sermon and let it flow naturally, but the topics themselves usually stem from this organic process. Because of this, the show will see many recurring audience members. “I look out and see the same people a lot,” said Stefani. One audience member, Tom Wallace, has been attending the shows for eight

years. Rasha Shamoon, the choir member's late friend, had a ghost bike placed in her honor after her death at the intersection of Bowery and Delancey. After the show, the audience and church all walked a block to visit the painted white bicycle memorial. A moment of silence was followed by a boisterous cheer for Rasha's memory.

The show over the years has also evolved. The choir is in constant flux, but also has many devotees to the cause. “Some people audition. Some people come up and say, ‘Oh, I'm in your choir now,’” explained Savitri Durkee, the show's director and wife of Reverend Billy. Ages of the choir members range

# Finals Week: Now Actually Final

By Ross Barkan

Finals week is now the final week in the lives of all undergraduate students, Stony Brook University administrators announced yesterday.

The announcement on the Staller Center lawn confirmed rumors that outgoing President Shirley Strum Kenny was planning to implement a radical new policy for the student body. All 16,000 undergraduates enrolled at Stony Brook will be executed exactly 24 hours after the last final concludes on December 23.

"We are happy to announce that change has come," said Kenny in a press conference. "No longer will students be burdened with uncertainty during finals week. Now, once your finals have ended, you will be greeted by SUNY certified executioners who will escort you to your comfortable death."

Traditionally, finals week has marked the end of a long semester. Students cram months of material into their memory and apply their knowledge toward two hour tests. The week is a time of anxiety for many when they come to realize that their GPAs and academic futures depend on a few massive tests.

"Oh my god! Finals week is so stressful," said junior Tabatha Ginsheed. "Like, I have five finals to study for: two in orgo, one in chem, one in some bullshit history class, and one in some class about the blacks. It's nice to know that after my last final I can just sit back, relax, and feel that guillotine blade on the back of my neck."

Debates have raged in past years about the true meaning of "Finals" week. Purists have argued that the name should be amended so it no longer promotes the myth of the week actually being final. Academics and students committed to a more truthful definition of the week were pleased with the decision.

"It's definitely a step forward for the

accurate dissemination of information," said Stony Brook Bioethics professor Paddy "Irish" O'Houllahan. "I've argued for 30 years that it's absurd to falsely claim that the week when final examinations are distributed is in fact a final week. Students have always lived beyond finals week to enjoy winter break, participate in the next semester, and graduate to reap the fruits of a career, a family, and a stable paycheck. And that's just horseshit."

O'Houllahan and his ideological allies celebrated when they heard Kenny's announcement would ensure finals week adhered to its literal definition.

"I was thrilled," he said. "I just hope we don't have a hard time filling the vacated seats by February."

The controversial decision has divided the Stony Brook community into two clear camps. While some like O'Houllahan welcome the new policy, others question the logistics of such a mass murder.

"I understand what President Kenny is trying to accomplish," said Stony Brook-based genocide researcher Janina Tittsberg. "But the execution of such a plan, pun-intended, is highly difficult. There are thousands of students who will need to be either shot, poisoned, or beheaded within a short period of time. The sheer number of students combined with the shortage of SUNY executioners due to the budget cuts makes this plan seem unlikely. That doesn't even take into account the students who will undoubtedly flee the campus before December 23."

Kenny spokesman Wily Mo Cash believes student flight will not be an issue during finals week. He says Stony Brook has already pledged to station armed sentries at every exit point on the East and West campuses, making escape futile.

"I assure you that the 2008 finals week will truly be final," said Cash. "This is the final stage of Kenny's five year plan. The president never goes back on her word. Never." Cash, cloaked

in a corner of shadows, then laughed maniacally.

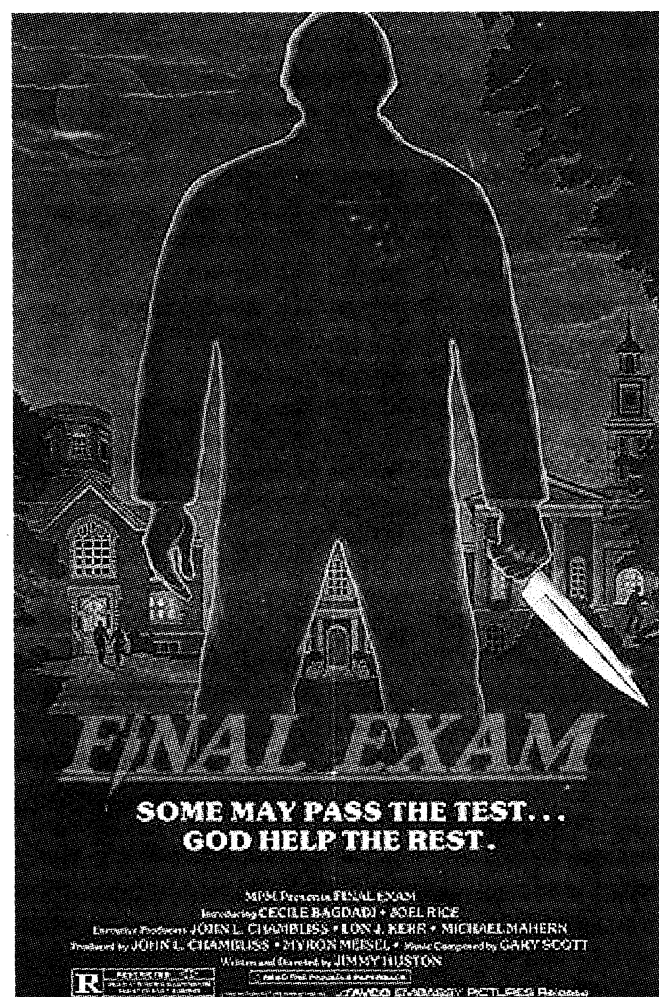
Undergraduate Student Government has protested the allocation of over \$4 million to esoteric Moroccan firearms, claiming that the money could be spent better on several sticks of dynamite. USG argues that according to their research, explosive devices can better attain the genocide Kenny seeks and would save the school close to \$3 million.

"There's simply no good reason why the administration should be importing fancy Moroccan

weapons to kill the undergraduate student body when dynamite or an I.E.D. would just work better," said USG Senator Richard "Dick" Swell. "How is the Ultimate Frisbee Club or the Young Republicans, just to name a few, supposed to function next semester on such a miniscule budget?"

Kenny has remained tight-lipped about the total expenditure of the student genocide. While the costs of the Moroccan firearms are known, few are aware of expenses including the sentries' salaries, the guillotines, the rumored biological weapons and "Happy the Study Clown," a decoy intended to lure students into a sense of false security before a hail of bullets split apart their skulls.

Students are treating finals week with less anxiety and anticipation than they used to. Some are even eschewing



studying altogether and instead are drinking alcohol and having unprotected sex. One student, stumbling weakly out of a smoldering Roosevelt Quad, articulated the situation.

"It's pretty fucking awesome," said Billy "Rat Zoo" Samuels. "I don't even gotta learn about stupid World War II anymore. Shit, that grade doesn't even matter because I'm like pretty sure heaven doesn't look at GPAs."

While Samuels urinated on a stray cat, President Kenny was spotted climbing into a silver capsule behind the Student Union. Before reporters could seek additional comments from President Kenny, the capsule rocketed off the ground and out of Earth's orbit.

"Despite President Kenny's departure finals week is still final," said Kenny spokesman Cash. "You bitches gon' die."

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**UNION 060 WEDNESDAYS DURING CAMPUS LIFETIME**





# ASIAN AMERICAN E-ZINE

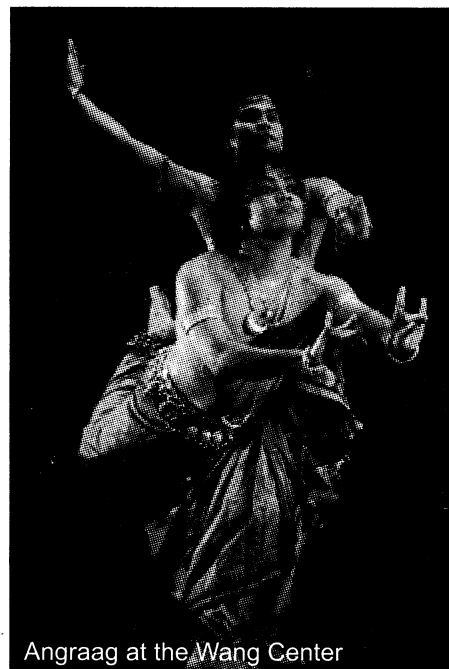
## Gallery of Fall 2008 Events at SUNY Stony Brook



CASB Cultural Carnival



Diwali at the Wang Center



Angraag at the Wang Center

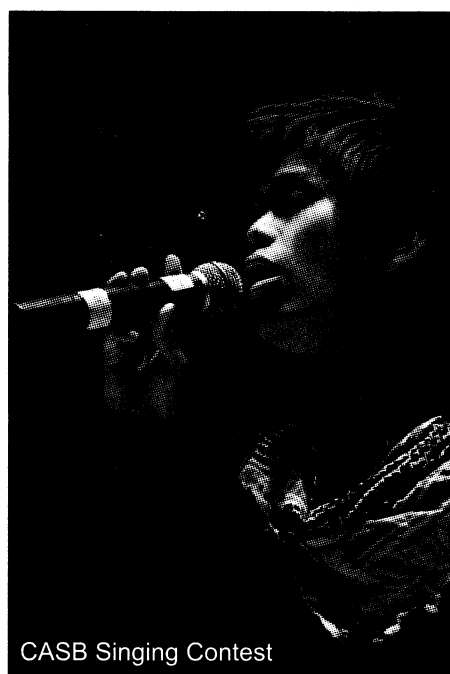


Magdalen Hsu Li Concert

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and click on photos



Music and Dance from Burma at the Wang Center



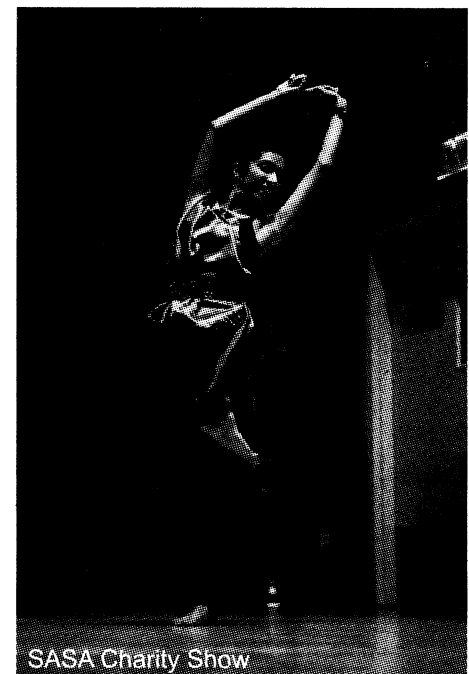
CASB Singing Contest




ASA Asian Night



China 150 at the Wang Center



SASA Charity Show



# MY LIFE AS A SEX WRITER

## W/ DICK DELICIOUS

I was in Europe on a much-needed holiday when I initially received the invitation. The rickety Internet café I was holed up in wasn't much, but the beer they served was cheap and plentiful, and their connection to the Web was decent.

While sifting through a bulging inbox one day, I noticed that I was cordially invited to attend the next staff meeting for the *Sex Herald* at some happening swingers' joint called Le Trapeze, located somewhere deep within the bowels of New York City. I instantly had something to look forward to upon my return to New York, so naturally I was excited.

My publisher informed me that I could bring a guest to the little shindig if I wanted. He specified that the extra person could be a girlfriend, fuck buddy or close personal friend. Since I wasn't seeing anyone at that time, I chose to bring a friend. My friend Jay didn't know how to react when I asked him to come along. He was a little put off by the whole thing. I told him that there would be a killer buffet, free porn, good drugs and the possibility of getting laid. He needed no further persuasion.

The two of us hopped on the train that day, and we made it out to the swingers' club. Le Trapeze was one the three largest sex clubs for couples still in operation in Manhattan. That meant that at any given moment the cops legally could bust in and arrest everyone inside. It was a high-risk situation, so we decided to have a few drinks at an Irish pub beforehand just for good measure.

When we got to the place we cautiously made our way inside. Staffers from every department of the *Sex Herald* were nestled deep within the club. Jay and I had the munchies, so we piled some lo mein high on our plates, grabbed a few beers from Sanford, who brought a full cooler with him, and then

we dug in. The whole time, hardcore pornography was playing on every television monitor in the joint. Plus, there were stripper poles located just about everywhere.

One of my fellow film reviewers named Tim stumbled up to greet us; he was high on hash and had just consumed an ungodly amount of Grey Goose Vodka. Jay and I could barely understand him, but we soon realized that

known to come in and get freaky, so Sanford had to start kicking people out. But before he did, he needed to have a talk with me. He told me that the *Herald* was going through some changes and wanted to know if I had made plans to jump ship. I told him that I was still interested in writing, but that I had a few demands. When he asked what they were, I told him that I wanted to see more of my reviews go live, as most of

swinger's lifestyle. The man was high on something, and he babbled on and on. Then he started talking about the rooms and the hanky panky that goes on in them. "Look guys," said Sanford, "You don't even have to fuck inside at first. All you need to do is lie on your back and wait. The energy from all of the wriggling bodies inside comes off in tethers and strikes you at your core. That's when you find inner peace."

Wow. I soon noticed that Sanford was fucked three ways from Sunday. Before long, he told the three of us to "get the fuck out!" So, we did.

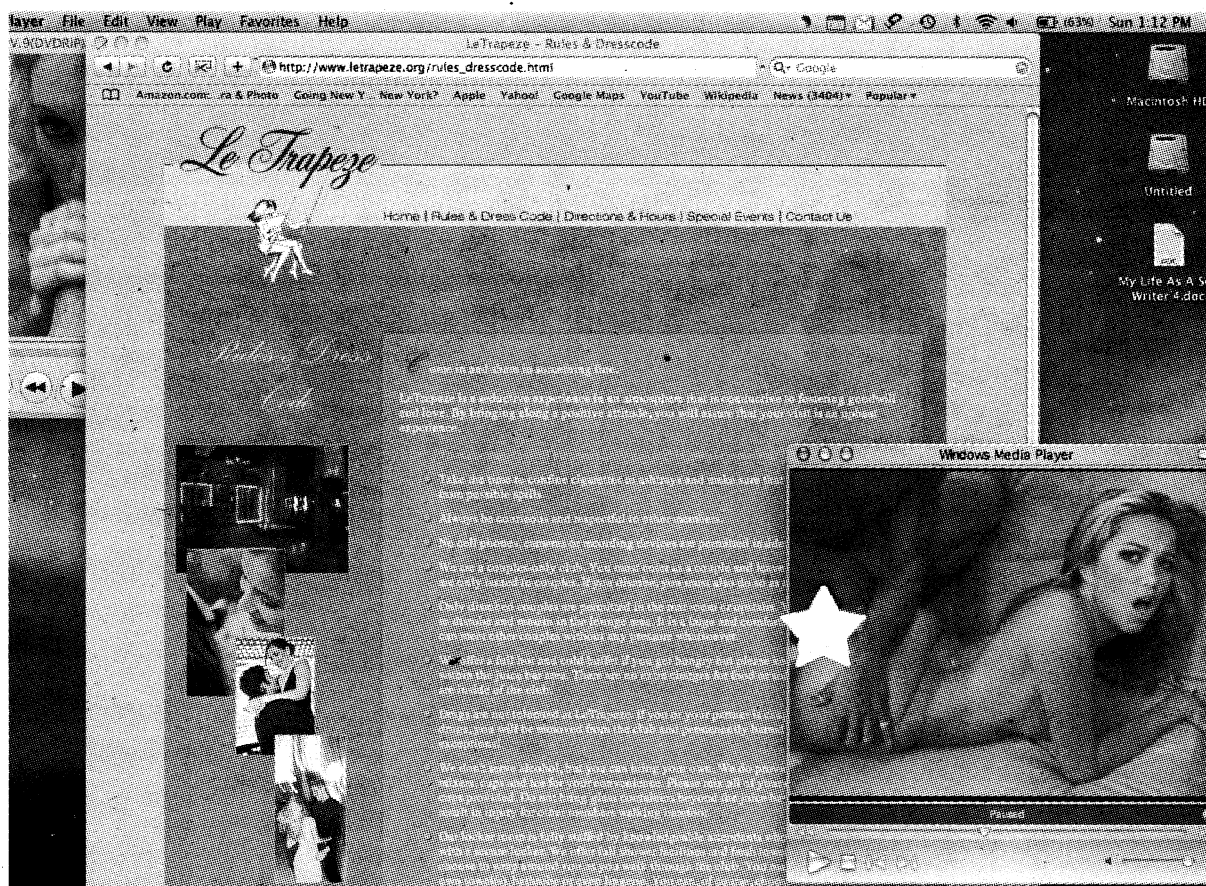
We went to yet another bar after we left the Le Trapeze and we ordered up a few pints of Samuel Adams Summer Ale, which was absolutely delicious. I told Tim that I didn't like where the publication was heading. My editor-in-chief and Sanford moved in together. They were fucking on the regular and I thought that it was bad for business.

"Look Tim," I began, "As soon as Jessica started banging you know who, our submissions were neglected and there were fewer updates made to the website. 'What's your point?' he asked. 'Well, shit man.

How is our publisher supposed to keep our editor in check and delegate his responsibilities when they're swapping spits and fucking one another willy nilly?" Tim told me that I probably had a point.

We polished off our final rounds, said our goodbyes and left.

Months later, Jessica stepped down as editor-in-chief and became an editorial advisor to the publication. A woman named Hunter, who was a former sex worker, filled the open position. She had real vision and big plans for the *Herald*. Sadly, Hunter lasted a week, and Jessica took up the reins again. I was bummed, but that's the nature of the business...no matter how sleazy it is.



he had an itch for clove cigarettes. So we hit the streets in search for some. The whole time, Tim struggled to stay upright and we had to direct him away from the curb so that his head wouldn't accidentally kiss the pavement.

So we got the cloves and went back to the sex club. At this point, Jay had to leak his lizard. He made his way to the back and came back all wide-eyed and whatnot. "I can't fucking believe it," he said. "Dude, there are nothing but beds in the back rooms, and there are signs that prohibit clothing!" I smiled and took a sip on my beer. "Naturally," I said. "We ARE at a swingers' joint. What the hell did you expect?"

It was nearing 5 P.M. and that was around the time that the regulars were

them hadn't, and that I wanted additional freebie pornos at every meeting. "Done," said Sanford. "Is there anything else, Dick?" Before I could answer him, he cut me off and told me to follow him to the back room so that we could finish our discussion.

As I made my way to the back, I noticed that my sleazy publisher had dragged me into a locker room. As he began talking, he opened a locker containing red satin robes that came up to about crotch level. One was inside a plastic dry cleaning bag. Sanford carefully tore through it and sprayed it down with disinfectant. Lovely.

Afterwards, he rounded up Jay, Tim and me and started talking about evolutionary biology and the history of the

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# Nubanco Partying, Brah!

By Jim Hall

"Brah! Life is meant to be lived! You wanna study...or.get.laid?!" My buddy had a point. We decided to go. But when? We've seen the flyers, we've walked upon the chalkings all over campus. We knew the deal: penny beers for the ladies, free admission with flyer before 11, half price admission after 11 but before 12 for the gents, full price after that, half price for the ladies until 1, but 1:37 A.M. for ladies over 21, under 21 ladies and over 21 guys reduced drinks without flyer from 10:31 P.M. to 2:15 A.M. We knew it was a great deal.

We'd even seen the lascivious but profound poetry on the board in Javits 100: "18 to tease, 21 to please." We knew about the benefits: \$2000 falling from the ceiling at 2 A.M., cash prizes for sexiest person there, fake money that the ladies must "earn." We remember those bluster autumn mornings when Nubar and Club Bianco flyers, strewn in a seemingly haphazard fashion across our campus, rode the wind like dead leaves, images of enticing girls forming a blur around us. These palaces of libidinous overindulgence had been beckoning us into the epicenter of suburban Long Island ever since the beginning of the semester. The thought of nights lived fully was welling up in our hearts, minds and pants. The ad campaigns were working: word was spreading. It was high time we answered the call. Finally, my buddy and I were on the proverbial road to Nubanco!

But when? We decided to wait for the right flyer – the one that spoke to us, the one we would instinctively feel to be our calling. I'll never forget that morning. My buddy texted me. "I think you should see this," he said. So I came over to his place. His daily flyer-underneath-the door, left in the middle of the night

like a gift from a mysterious modern-day douchebag Santa Claus, seemed this time to be intended just for us. "Look at those tits," my buddy said. "She's exactly my type. I love blondes. Fuck!" I corroborated his sentiment about the model on that little slip of aqueous-coated paper. She was gorgeous – air-brushed, but gorgeous. Aside her torso read "18 to party, 21 to Bacardi." Our favorite!!!

The flyer continued: "Love-the-Ladies Night." Like music to our ears! We were ecstatic. But the icing on the

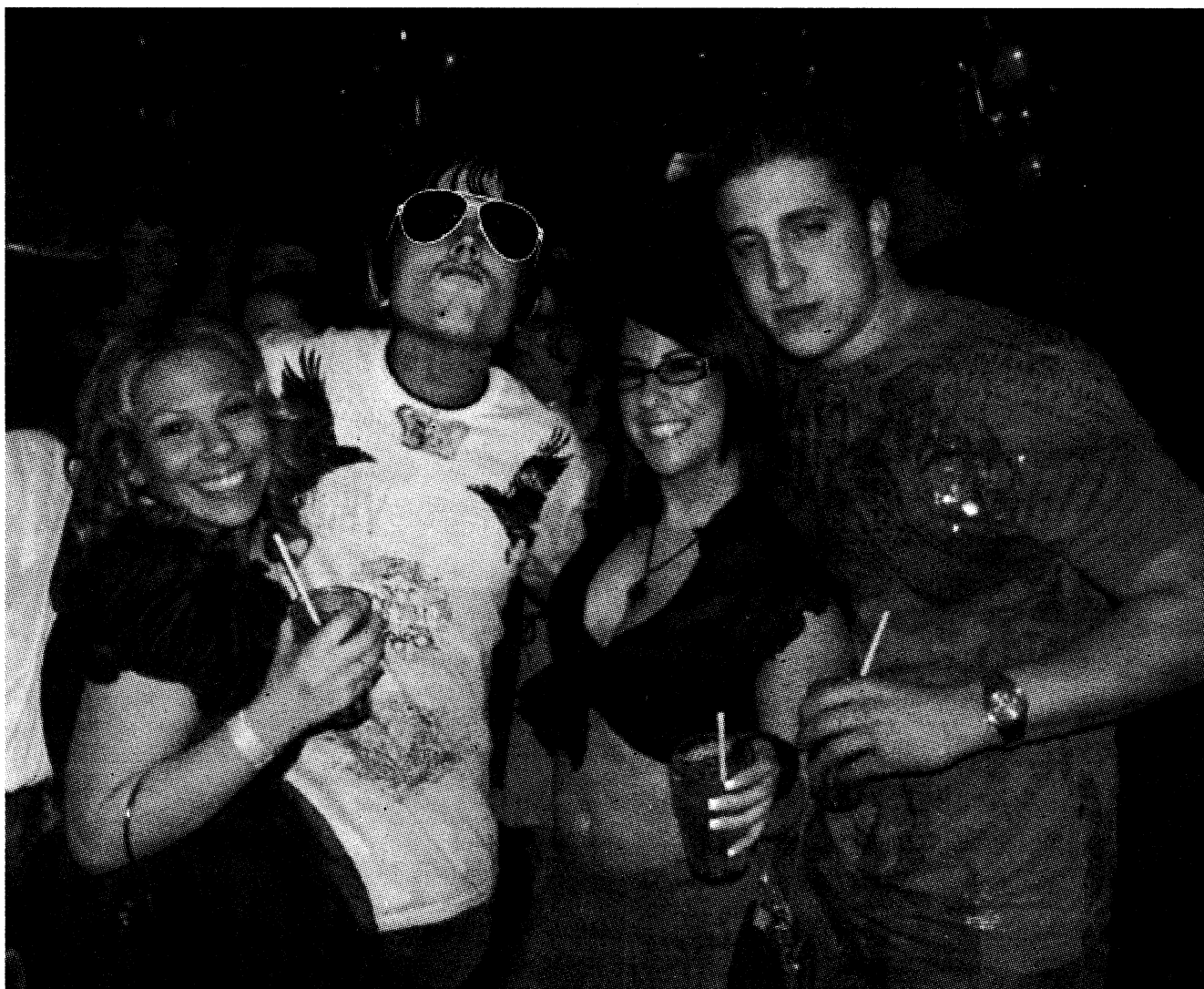
proached the entrance, we saw a large, muscular man at the door. "Look at his pecs! He must be the bouncer," my buddy whispered. Holding the \$20 for admission I walked up to the man. "Excuse me, sir. I know this is Love-The-Ladies Night...are we still allowed in?"

"What the fuck? This ain't no fuckin lesbian bar," he said. I barely had time to comprehend his hostility. We were in! The crowd was 90% dudes, despite the generous discount price for the ladies. But oh well, there were still some girls who seemed to be looking for a

fret over a few lost dollars. I had work to do. I saw a group of ladies dancing to one of the sickest beats I'd ever heard, so I went up and starting grinding up against one of them. The look of disgust on their faces was very hurtful to me in hindsight, but at the time I couldn't care less. I was living it up. I would just have to dance harder, better, faster, stronger...the ladies would come to me! In a matter of minutes, the music took over my body. I ripped my shirt off and threw it in a fit of unbridled passion. I called out, and gave thanks for this opportunity.

Long live LI Nights!!

I was hoping my Axe-drenched garbs would land in the arms of a girl like the one I saw on the flyer. Instead, when I came out of my daze and stopped to look, I realized my pants had landed in the face of the bartender. The drink he had been making spilled everywhere as he fell backwards onto the bottles lining the wall. At once, the bouncer came inside. He was coming right towards me. That's it. My night was over! The music came to a screeching halt as everyone started to point at me. Visions of what was about to happen filled my frantic



cake was on the back. "DJ This-Lifestyle-is-Swallowing-Me-Faster-Than-A-Hooker spinning the hottest and the best." 'Nuf said. It was settled. By the time the cash fell from the ceiling (with the help of two days of Whey-binging), we would be men.

I was so nervous the entire ride there. But I knew, as soon as I stepped foot in Club Nubanco I couldn't show it. I had the flyer in my pocket. I could glance at it in case I choked. Just remember: "18 to tease, 21 to please." We chanted it a few times before getting enough courage to step out of the car. "18 TO TEASE, 21 TO PLEASE! 18 TO TEASE, 21 TO PLEASE!!" As we ap-

proached the bar with my flyer. "One free drink with flyer, please," I requested with a confidence I never knew I had. I proudly revealed my flyer, the little piece of paper that started it all, to the bartender as I ordered a pint of their finest ale. The courage I mustered was in vain. He laughed, ripped it up and demanded \$5. I responded, "According to this flyer, sir, I am entitled to one free beverage, courtesy of your establishment."

The bartender grabbed me by the collar. "That'll be five dollars, you fucking four-eyed toothpick!" Confound their false advertising! I managed \$5 from pocket change, but had no time to

mind. The bouncer would charge at me like a raging bull, casting my supple frame into the wall. He would pick up my limp body and crush it like a soda can between his massive pecs, depositing my frail person into a nearby trash-can to be mocked for the rest of the night. Instinct took over. I bolted into the back of the club, out an emergency door and into the parking lot. I ran like the wind, never looking back.

That night, my buddy had two threesomes and gave pearl necklaces to five ladies. As for me, there's always next semester

## arts&amp;entertainment

# The Faust and the Furious

By Alex Nagler

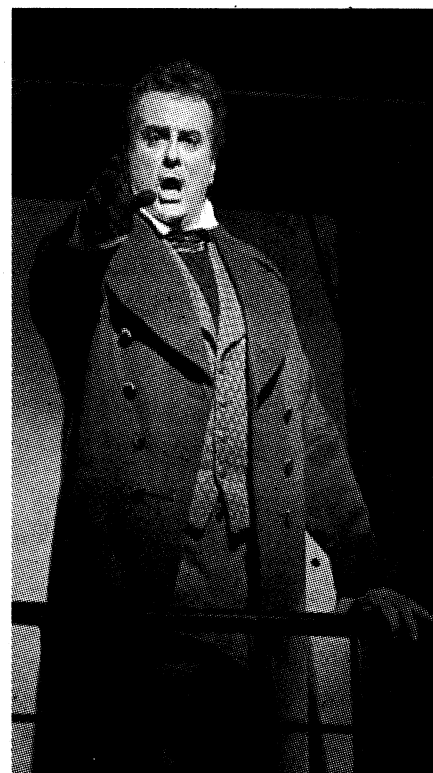
Normally, a review of an opera focuses on the musical qualities of the show. They tend to deal with the conductor, here James Levine, and how well he conducted the orchestra, or with the titular character, Faust, and who sung him, here Marcello Giordani. Opera reviews aren't supposed to read like a features manual for a new Wii-Ware application, but that's exactly what any review of Robert Lepage's staging of Berlioz's "La Damnation de Faust" will sound like. Musically, it was wonderful, but visually, it was awesome.

Berlioz's "Faust" tells the story of the Dr. Faust who eventually relinquishes his soul to Satan (Méphistophélès) to save the fair maiden Marguerite from what Faust believes to be certain doom. In reality,

Méphistophélès tricks Faust to gain his soul, and drags Faust to hell to be tormented forever. The story has been told and retold since the late 1500s and has inspired a plethora of adaptations; Faust is everything from Tenacious D's "Pick of Destiny", the musical "Damn Yankees", and the horrible Spiderman arc "One More Day." The story itself is eternal, but what the Metropolitan Opera Company did to it is brand new.

One of the most prominent features of the Metropolitan Opera House is its turntable, which brings in sets and allows for the Met's repertoire to be as diverse as it is.

"Faust" didn't focus on multiple sets. It focused on what could be projected onto those sets. One aria found Susan Graham's Marguerite singing of the flames of her love as a giant image of her face in close-up is projected behind her in real time. As she sings, her



face is engulfed in smoke and flames, that are controlled by the way she sings. Mr. Lepage has found a completely practical application for an otherwise tacky program.

Any MacBook with an iSight and PhotoBooth can engulf a person's head in flames or create a reflection as if they were on a lake. It takes skill, creativity, and a good idea to make it artistic. That is exactly what Mr. Lepage has done, and that is why the music was not the primary focus of his "Faust."

As I wrote when reviewing Doctor Atomic, projection was a key. Penny Woolcock used the Met's projectors sparsely, but efficiently. Robert Lepage used them to define the show. The Internet informs me that Mr. Lepage has been tasked with restaging Wagner's ring cycle in 2010. If anyone deserves a new, awesome staging, Siegfried and Brunnhilde are at the top of the list.

## The PeaceSmith Coffee House. Oh my God, Koooooooooooooooool.

By Rob Gillheany

Last Friday was a special coffeehouse for the PeaceSmith organization. It was a make up for last summer's fundraiser that was rained out. For over 30 years PeaceSmith has been running a monthly coffeehouse the first Friday of the month from October through June. It features mainly folk music and poetry. The music has a tradition of protest and anti-war songs. The late coordinator of the group, Susan Blake, reffered to it as a "Topical Atypical" coffeehouse.

The coffeehouse season starts off with a fundraising Folk Dance in Freeport at the home of a prominent PeaceSmith member. This summer the event was rained out, and the December coffeehouse was organized as a fundraising dinner party followed by the concert with the same line up that was to play at the summer event, featuring Long Island Song writers and performers Walter Sargent, Suzanne Ernst, Sonny Meadows and his band, Blacklisted and The Banned, David Bailey and Andy Greenhouse.

Kimberley Wilder took the stage. Kimberley Wilder served as the intern PeaceSmith coordinator for a year after

the death of Susan Blake. She did a fantastic job, but declined to continue in that function to work on building the Green Party. She dedicated the coffeehouse to the memory of Susan Blake and turned the microphone over to David Hacker. David Hacker was the PeaceSmith librarian and board member back in the 1980s. PeaceSmith is more than just the coffeehouse and the form," David Hacker said. In the past several years the organization has carried on the monthly coffee houses and topical forums that take place the third Friday of the month. David Hacker talked about the organization back in the 1980s when its home was 90 Pennsylvania Avenue in Massapequa, the home of lifelong peace and justice activist Katherine Smith, the namesake of the organization. It was called PeaceSmith House. "PeaceSmith House was the disablement committee, it was he peacesmith energy project," David Hacker said. At 90 Pennsylvania Avenue, meetings of the PeaceSmith activities sustained the operation. David Hacker said that Shorehan is closed because people met and organized out of PeaceSmith House, and then opposed it to push for clean alternative energy. PeaceSmith House was part of the SHAD Alliance, Sound & Hudson

Against Atomic Development. They had an old school bus that was painted many colors, like yellows, blues, greens, sunsets and tree; and people of all races working on solar energy, a radical Partridge Family bus. One day the bus was taking a full bus load of people to an anti-war demo in Washington DC. in 1981. Riding and humming down the Long Island Expressway the transmission exploded, and scattered all over the road. That was it for the bus.

For the past several years, the PeaceSmith coffeehouses and the forums have been taking place at the First United Methodist Church on Rout 110 in Amnityville, just north of Montauk Highway.

PeaceSmith House was front and center in getting people to the massive peace and disarmament rally that took place in Central Park on June 12 1982, where over 750,000 covered the great lawn to hear speakers such as Carl Sagen and Bella Abzug; union leaders such as Victor Gotbaum; and music by Jackson Brown Bruce Spingsten, Linda Ronsttt and Sweet Honey in the Rock.

The SHAD Alliance people got to the rally by walking there from Shoreham. PeaceSmith was part of a lager collision of groups called 'Mobilization for Survival,' that organized the rally, that

coexisted with the UN special session on disarmament.

Neighborhood Network executive Vincent Cioci once said "Susan Blake can still fill a bus for a rally in DC."

The fundraising event was put together by Sonny Meadows. Walter Sargent did a nice set that included a song that expressed his revulsion to torture. The lyrics said that you are not your ideas, your job or where you're from. You are a child of man. Suzanne Ernst played beautiful guitar and sang nice original songs and some songs from the 1960s Sonny and his bad did a set. They did Sonny's song about the coffeehouse at the church called "The Last Church On The Left" and did his song about tolerance called "Assholes Are People Too." The only disappointment of the event was at the end when Andy Greenhouse only did three songs. Andy is a long-time PeaceSmith coffeehouse performer. Andy is a fantastic singer, guitarist and songwriter. He is the Bob Dylan of the coffeehouse. Andy will be back for a future coffeehouse.

The next coffee house will be at the church on Friday, January 2. It will feature George Mann, of George and Julius fame, and Ryan Mack.

# THE STONY BROOK PRESS

## LIBRARY SUPPLEMENT

short stories  
art  
&  
photos poetry

FALL 2008

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## editor's note

*Photo by Brian Wasser*

You've just turned to the Stony Brook Press' Fall 2008 Literary Supplement. We're proud to present poetry, short stories, illustrations, photos, and anything to come our way that reflect the breadth of creativity seen in our readers. Their efforts and contributions are not to be taken lightly, especially as this issue comes out during finals week when many students are hard-pressed for time. Enjoy their efforts, thank you for reading, and as our very own superhero the Scarlet Seawolf would say: "Go! Fight! Win!"

-Tia Mansouri



**to the boy  
who sits next to me  
in my English class**

A L A N A S C W A R T Z

**limericks**

D A V I D K. G I N N

I used to have a home in St. Paul  
Where I'd wrestle the big and the small  
Now, my home is my castle  
But a home where I 'rassle  
Is not really a home at all

Back in the days of Minnesota  
I'd hang out with my pal Ray Liota  
We'd kick back some beers  
Get high watching Cheers  
Yet never quite fill our quota

Joe – I've never spoken to you  
I sit next to you every day  
(I know this is kind of stalkerish)  
But I want you to know  
That I LOVE your voice – your character –  
It's so very deep, and soothing, and I feel  
The anticipation when you raise your hand –  
Your intelligence spreading upward into your finger-  
tips  
But the form of words breaking through  
The smoky, dopey, unrealistic air  
Filled with metaphors and imagery  
Brings comfort into my classroom –  
Thank you, Joe –  
Thank you for your voice

**yearly haiku**

A N D R E W J A C O B

Rock Band in Office  
James wails on the guitar  
Roman is okay

Najib writes so much  
I think he is a robot  
Also an Arab

Food for Christmas time?  
The return of Rammelkamp  
What a psychopath

Physics sucks huge balls  
Thermodynamics kills me  
Grades are going down

Where is Gilhaney?  
Where the Hell is Gilhaney??  
Need more Gilhaney

Grew a beard this year  
It doesn't get you chicks, man  
But it's still awesome

Winter has come now  
Must write Haiku for Press  
If I want to live

Nagler rocks so hard  
At RockYoFaceCase, yeah man  
My head exploded

Got a peacoat dude  
It doesn't get you chicks, man  
But it's still awesome

Jonathan Singer  
Stop being responsible  
Just smoke with me, dude

A normal Sunday  
I woke up with a boner  
Not funny this year



# this time

## JENS DUNCANSON

the framework of a house falls around me like a time-lapse shadow  
 cast by the deep, crisp, late-day glow of a northern sun.  
 And the tragedy,  
 as the parade goes past behind me...  
 the tragedy,  
 as these changes only rewind me...  
 the tragedy,  
 as the creative spirit collects the overflow from a longing for more than this landscape where I can go anywhere but there is nowhere to  
 go,  
 as we make it through another night where the electricity goes on and off in a way that can't be random chance...  
 the tragedy,  
 as the art of experience falls prey to its own recollection,  
 as the smoke settles to reveal the most brilliant post-storm vividness,  
 as they whisper, over my sleeping head, of their secret plan to leave,  
 to make their way over bridges, through alleys, complexes and mazes,  
 towards the big Unattainable,  
 past the end of the roads that they know,  
 towards the innocence of the Moment,  
 to a field where we all sit in the mud and plant seeds, just waiting for this all to be doomed by the approaching tidal wave...  
 the tragedy, as I drive to the end, to a faraway corner of the world, to a mind ringing with the echo of everyone it has ever known,  
 everything it has ever seen, every intimation it could ever hope to convey...  
 the tragedy,  
 as the absolute paramount experience is peering at you from around the corner, just waiting for you to drop your pen, smash your camera, reject your voice, give away everything you own, and abandon the routine you have established to ease yourself into an acceptance  
 of the let-down (forgive me for living intensely).

nomatter how the framework falls  
 the tragedy  
 is that I still  
 always  
 somehow  
 end up inside.



# electricity elves

## KAT KNOWLTON

The electric signal passes  
 through a series of unknown  
 entities  
 and finally reaches air,  
 acting as a wave  
 enveloping all those within range.  
 It's a simplistic beauty that boggles  
 if thought about for too long.  
 How *does* electricity make sound?



# Supreme Excellent Fun Haiku Attack Extravaganza Go!

## COMMODORE LAUDANO

So it's 3 a.m.  
Best time to make some haiku?  
I guess we shall see.

This Lit Sup thing has  
the tradition of having  
haiku within it

Therefore, I figure  
I'll make some. And fuck all y'all  
who are hatin' this.

Doctor Kinsella  
Man, that story is crazy  
What a whackadoo

All quiet on the  
HSC Front. Open up your  
fucking mouths, you guys!

Call of Duty 4  
has provided distraction  
for the editors

But, hey, we really  
can't turn away from throwing  
insults over Live

Those stupid morons  
can't play or trash talk on our  
level. So screw 'em

Najib will go hoarse  
yelling non-stop on the mic.  
My ears are bleeding!

Oh, and then there is  
Rock Band 2. What a time sink.  
I should be working!

I hate the prices  
that Chartwell's crams on down our  
collective throats. Shit!

That "Shit!" in the last  
one wasn't needed. I was  
short one syllable

Perhaps I should go  
to sleep. It's nearly half-past  
three. Nah. Keep going!

SB Freethinkers  
Wow! Talk about igniting  
debate down here. Shit!

(Mental note: I did  
it again. Stop padding them  
with the word "Shit".....Shit!)

ShamWow commercial  
on the tube. What a worthless  
piece of shit. Come on!

Who is fooled by these  
cheesy "proofs" regarding the  
thing's effectiveness?

And that goofy dick.  
Why does he wear a headset?  
There's a boom-mic, fool!

New York Giants, dude!  
Why does the NFC try?  
Repeat? We'll soon see.

Thank God we don't have  
Rex Grossman as our backup  
We'd be ruined. Shit!

That "Shit" really was  
not padding. It was to show  
how bad Grossman is.

And the New York Mets.  
Why do you cause so much pain  
in my heart each year?

I guess the better  
question is why do I let  
myself hurt each year?

Wow. My haiku got  
reflective only with the  
New York Mets. Oh, well.

Anyway, do you  
think K-Rod and Putz can heal  
the wounds of the past?

I guess we'll soon see.  
After all, what is one more  
September collapse?

Now I guess its time  
For self-indulgence in these  
haiku to kick in

Kobolakis. Wow!  
That name takes up nearly an  
entire line here!

\*\*sigh\*\* Najib, Najib.  
You make us tear our hair out  
But you're great. Really.

Cash-money Knowlton  
I'm bad with money and math.  
So thank God for you.

Tia! Wait... What the?  
Your name aint economic  
Only three letters

For two syllables  
I suppose that's why you get  
Two whole haiku! Yay!

We need a brand new  
News Editor since Laura  
Is now U.K bound

And good luck, Laura  
Now we've three great nominees.  
I hate elections.

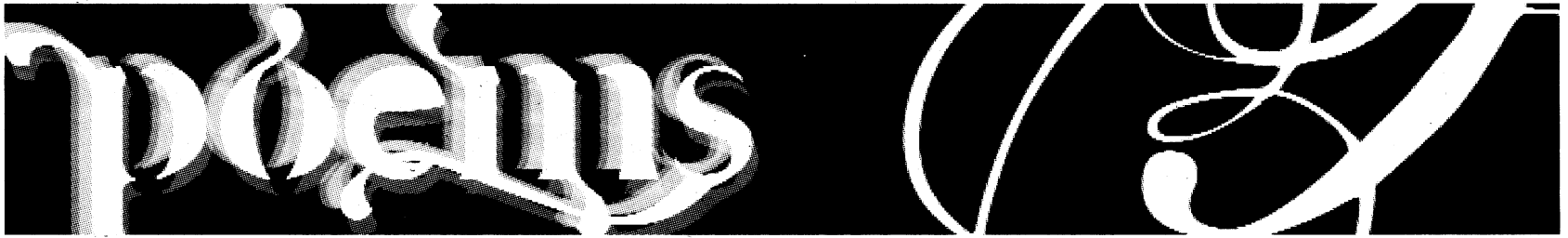
Features Editor.  
You love the 'H' in your name.  
It's not Hamilton.

Hey, Big Cat! We need  
to play more softball this Spring.  
Too much fun not to.

Roman, you silly  
Russian, you. But you take some  
damn good photos, man.

Cant forget Jon, though.  
Senator Dude-Face. Wacky  
times call for you, man.

Copy-editors!  
Kelly, Chris and now Erin!  
We're lost without you!



# . ' \ --- white static

SAMANTHA MONTELEONE

STOP THIS NOISE!  
THIS CONSTANT STRING OF COMMERCIALS  
THIS ENTANGLED TWINE OF STEYROFOAM  
IT SINKS INTO MY VERY BONES  
AND I SIMPLY CANNOT STAND IT ANY MORE  
THE HOPELESS DROAN OF HEARTMOAN  
FROM EVERYONE BUT LOVE  
STOP TALKING TO ME  
WHEN YOU MEAN SOMETHING ELSE  
BRIGHT LIGHTS FLICKERING  
TAUNTING CHILDREN FIGHT AND PECK  
SENSELESS, TEDIOUS CACKING  
CRACKLING CRACKING STATIC  
when it's the static I long for  
the static I cling to  
the tears that mean something  
the voice that sings  
the pulse that beats  
and the home that thrives  
within.

## *Extravaganza Continued*

And my Explorer.  
I guess no one else will get  
that. I don't care, though.

Then there's me. Writing  
haiku close to 4 a.m.  
What an idiot.

But, seriously.  
Consider this a tribute  
To all of you here.

Without you I would  
Be less content here at this  
University.

You are all really  
Wonderful. Wow, this wound up  
really quite sappy.

So, I guess to make  
this silly and stupid once  
more, I'll do this. Watch!

Fuck! Ass! Balls! Ha-ha!  
(I can't believe I wrote that)  
Thanks for reading! Shit!

## I am the Spider-Woman ALANA SCHWARTZ

When you stopped talking to me,  
I knew my blistered face against the windy world  
Withstood enough and I  
Was over you. But  
Every time your favorite show came on or  
Someone with the same jacket walked by or  
I thought about how you once were human I  
unfortunately just wanted to lie to myself - I still  
was NOT over you.  
And once my lie was embraced  
I understood my need, my want, my fragilityabilitysnappedcracked  
Stretched and popped my blistered heart, I  
Was over you. But  
Even though you escape my thoughts now  
And I don't miss who you were because that would mean  
We'd all miss our listless old selves and  
The derangedchange we've all gone through to reach  
This point, today, now, would mean an empty lake  
An empty promise, or hand, or heart, or  
Every cliché I could think of,  
(because the only things worth thinking  
have been affirmed thousands of times again)  
So declaring it to myself keeps my memories still warm and over fresh  
So I could pull them out,  
Steaming sweetly,  
And savor them one by one,  
And miss you,  
Declaring it to the world made me realize my  
Insistence of lying to myself  
Bu the painful prying process portraying my poor heart  
Show that I  
Am over you  
And if another "but..." comes I will push it away  
With a new adventure  
You were my Sand-Man stopping me from opening my memory oven  
I am the Spider-Woman that just whipped your ass,  
Webbed up your old self  
So you will miss my changing eyes  
Now you  
Get over *that*.



# poetry by

## LUKAS TIERNEY

2007

the windchill crafts my hair as the  
lines crash skullfirst into the cement,  
and we pack our choked cars  
with uncertain travelsóperhaps the  
road to a funeral home, or the last  
green light of our lives, or in an oval,  
home come and gone, in the days where  
the sun scuffles around its wintry cabin,  
and then goes to sleep in the early afternoonó  
and

if the radio cannot warn me  
loud enough, then my friends will have  
to settle for reciting their new injuries  
to the blacklight bouncing off the pot haze,  
or in the cafeteria to a sweaty, lonely soda can,  
until the myth of a year when a generation  
did nothing but look, mystified at their shoes,  
jumps across the country borders.

The world will probably never buy  
Us a prozac-infused drink (but imagine it:  
blender-grinded forgetfulness on the rocks)  
but iím sure theyíll be nice enough to let us  
slowly pick the tiny bits of tobacco from their cigarettes,  
now that we are equalized by misery.

Everyone

O You! You're so kissably stupid.  
You really believed that we loved you,  
the person who flushed Fridays,  
not watching movies, or babysitting,  
at parties with that stupid ironic dance  
—that jizzy Steve Martin tango—cursing  
because while you lived in middle school,  
the other kids learned they could douse  
the f-word's spice with the water fountain?  
You lived off those flames, didn't you?

Every day, we are chagrined  
especially when there's company  
to see you shove through the swinging doors of the living room,  
armpits odoring of your worlds and art projects  
and watch everything you've made become molten

and then fall off your unfitted,  
booger-cocooned sleeves.

You're going to be in your bedroom,  
punch-drunk, perplexed by that one problem,

the night after the rockets and missiles  
destroy America, and the terrorist boots squeak clean  
through the capital and invited  
the entire nation to wait on the grocery line  
and pick out their favorite brand of death.  
Not even Genocide will be your alarm clock.



# poetry by

## LUKAS TIERNEY

The question remains:

how could we ever love you,

the person whose parents placed peanut-butter sandwiches

in your lunchbox and took you on cartrips,

while you carried a baby tendril to

a homeland where it is okay

to cry because your problems never end?

Forbidden Dog Love

the strange alienation in everyone's

blue-eyed stare says this: that our

love should not be nourished

over the cracks of the sidewalk, nor on

the openings on our old porch—that we're

have to suffocate it when we're under the sun.

yes. when we travel your neighborhood,

i am the woman, and he

is the cybernetically intellegent dog,

with his world caught in the

radius of his leash: we move lightly,

with the quotations of the dead and the leaves

under our toes, and when we're sandwiched under

the rainclouds, i twirl our umbrella and smile

as his paws look in the puddles for mirrors.

the birds, engineered with centuries of opera

under their tweeters, sing from the Butterfly Effect:

the musical. we hold in

our breaths, and the forests, waiting until he poops.

then we retreat back to our lovepit.

humans are pathetic.

it's the 23rd and a half century

and we still have to feed off the

private, olive-colored lights

that hangs over our dinner table, and when

the cybernetically intellectual dog pulls down

the blinds, and the lamps become as dead

as the cheap wallpaper, it's in his brown

marbles, surrounded by sleeping gooks and tears

that says: touch me, the right way.

and i'm getting

ready as i unscrew the cap of peanut butter,

and squirt in the edible oils.

no lights are needed for the next part.

the cybernically intellegent dog moves his tongue through

a moist darkness; and my fingers, filled with

electricity, unfurls his fibers and red blood cell count.

everything is growing.

we keep our love aflame under the shades.



# poetry by

## LUKAS TIERNEY

Postman  
I come to you.

Night. One word.

Grandfather's AK-47. Two words.

The firing begins. Three.

Ballistics hit your knee. Four.

Imagery strikes faster

behind periods. Five.

Sheet lightning.

Infinite ammo.

Goes on for four.

Spurting cogitations on the noir sidewalk. Six.

Pale caped man wants to play chess.

Killing you's the only way the poem reads.

No. Cannot picnic with pronouns. Bullets cannot be taken back.

Stop it with the puppy face. Never worked.

Final requests?

You want the pictures to live with

their families, and roam in large territories,

without the paranoia of being cattled by full stops?

Are you serious?

The Mythos of Toucan Sam  
This is the story you will tell your kids:

a bird discovered that his nose revealed

the compassionate truth

where the seven seas of fruit flavors foamed.

Orange, red, blue, green, yellow, purple

and pure venomsugar.

The evil aliens zapped him to powder

while you were zoned from the television.

You wanted to pluck Spongebob's escapades

off the living room sky

like God pulled Da Vinci from the Renaissance

and squeezed him between the Scholastic books

and the game boy with the taped battery case.

You never cared who died during the commercials

but I was among those who mourned.

For a limited time, I raced to the grocery lines

and marched every single box of fruit loops

off the shelves back to my home. I cried and aped

for my breakfast-time ally. Young things should never die.

I ate every ring. I felt its colored wax in my fillings.

I even ate the charred, promotional feathers they packaged

as my spoon dug to the bottom of all

of the milk and tears that hid

absolute truth in the form of seven flavors.

# poems

11

## Funtunfunefu Denkyemfunefu

STEVEN T. LICARDI

In a hole we sit and knell the dread,  
And lob the knowledge from the head.  
Upon a rune we brandish, for naught  
Of porous want and necrotic thought.  
Dread of hunger, dread of fuel,  
Engendering the primal fool,  
Who under little finger squeals  
And, at the helm, persuades the keel  
That helms the briny lotus twain,  
And leaves our binding uterine spayed,  
And whom, among us, spurn the gift  
That teetered off the fractured lip  
When it em braced the callus cheek  
With kiss, that we of would no longer speak!

## the smoot-hawley tariff effect

KAT KNOWLTON

There's no reasonable explanation  
for these oddities  
that compose my ever-evolving mental  
state.  
Perhaps I've spent too much time  
listening to old Brand New,  
walking around the same seven blocks,  
talking to myself over the cacophony  
about the far-reaching effects  
of obscure historical events.



*Illustration by Sarah Ferrick*



# spoon in a graveyard

STEVEN T. LICARDI

The threshold of death is but a clasp we must grip with sleek fingers

With wet fingers

The threshold of death is the tippy-top of an iceberg

Or perhaps a peeking mountain beneath a sea

The thresholds of death are the wisps that bark in the fires

The hissing woods and the croaking murk

The threshold of death wears a face we all remember after we're done forgetting

A familiar face that has held our hand through it all

Persuading us and protecting us with the trappings of our own demise

The thresholds of death are the walls of our cradles

And the panels of our graves

The threshold of death is in the dark corners of our shoes

In the creases of our hats

The threshold of death is in our shape shifting skin

In every fold and freckle

It is the vigor in the thorns of the rose and the gasp in the shedding petals

In the shifting stones and the grinding wheels

In every curl and coil of hair and nail

The threshold of death is not something that is to be surmounted

Not a wrought iron wave to be swooned

Not the scrapping gorgon that picks at our bones and grinds them into clay and boils them in stews

The threshold of death is not a shroud or a package

It is not a means of transmigration

It is not a hall where we must hang our pictures or fit our keys

Or adorn with our metabolic failures

It is not a loquacious and cacophonous vacuum that thrashes with an internal bleeding of snapped tongues

The threshold of death is confined within the pangs of a swansong

Within the perils of a brick

Within the hammers of our downtrodden fatigue

The threshold of death may be the cozy seat in a tollbooth

Bouquet within the enigmas of our holds

Pegged to our pardons and parties

Our cool clutched cadavers

The threshold of death could be the whistles upon the ripples of a pool

The threshold of death might entangle our thumbs within our noses

The threshold of death perhaps isn't a threshold at all  
Maybe it is the idol atoll in a vast sea

With a lighthouse at its heart

That turns and twirls and tangles

Reaching out across its salty brine

Its pupil always focused

Fused, fastened

Cauterizing its scepters with a fearsome glint

Suturing its Fresnel lens onto our souls

Coveting our nectar like a honeybee

Constructing the combs that leave us hollow

Centered within the liquor that sweats from our awry eyes in times of doubt

In times of rage

In times of heartache

And in times of fear

The threshold of death is but a doorsill we mustn't maim or mis-carriage

Neither malnourish nor malpractice

It isn't a malformation of our crumbly desires

It is a story which we masquerade

That we bathe and we clothe

That we conduct with pen we are handed at birth

That faultless pen

Scribbling out the plot with satin sealed eyes

Forecasting the deed that will fold the cover over and slip away the morsel of our twinges

That spot and dot

The threshold of death is the taste on the lips of a starving man

The threshold of death is the particulates on the wall of a suicide scene

The threshold of death is the undignified sediments of our world

The threshold of death is a step off the precipice

And a dip into the pool of needlepoint quietude performed by the digits of war

The war that is,

Self-defined and self-evident,

Self-sustained and self-manipulated,

Between man and his own mortality

# the morning carcass

SAMANTHA MONTELEONE

the wind plays me like a flute

not sure of the recapitulation

my very teeth are chilled

as the ice begs to crush.

but we roll along.

and we shed ourselves

to find ourselves

but it gets cold this time of year

and colder still it grows

to the breaking ache where snow sets in

till then we clutch our sweaters

scrounging the forest for firs

desperate for another layer

to build and build

to make a home

to make a fire

to insulate these bones.

and not be alone.



# the Soon Song

SAMANTHA MONTELEONE

## the last leaf in autumn

STEVEN T. LICARDI

I had found myself amid the rubble of a pallid forest  
That had been shaved of its motley plumage.  
Their proud and glorious manes lie as runners upon the muddy floor;  
Their frail and coiled appendages did little to warm the mood  
As the winter gasp slithered unimpeded through them.  
The Cervidae had all but forgotten this frozen hall,  
That I had worked the will to bird dog,  
And to this, I came upon a particular gosling of gloom:  
Ruggedly profuse, with tumor and twist,  
The belly bent and the shoulders collapsed;  
There upon a scanty digit hung a tattered leaf.  
It battered and fidgeted in the winter whisk.  
For dear life it hung,  
Its tiny will deterrent,  
Of a cogent mustard with freckles and holes.  
I winced in curious compassion  
At this scarred and lifeless faction  
Flung out into the bittering cold.  
I reached out my rosy red finger tip toward it,  
As it swayed and danced in torturous relapse,  
Until its nurtured and magnanimous roots whittled into sawdust  
And sent its lucid inertness lolloping down against the lee.  
My crestfallen claw fell with her,  
Tracing her roiling cascade,  
Until she too met her siblings atop the blanket grave,  
To decay;  
Always to decay!  
We, too, shall meet again.  
As a panegyric seemed to do the trick,  
But would not follow.

my dear, my dearest darling  
I'm leaving tonight.  
after the candles wear and the sheets no longer  
tight.  
my thoughts racing like a madman's schoolsprint  
my life hatching, twitching, shimmering and dis-  
tant.  
I was not there for my birth, not at all  
and I doubt I shall be there for the fall  
my end is soon, sweet dream of mine  
don't fret, keep well these tears for due time.  
I keep this all inside as you turn of the light  
and it's click. click. another switches on.  
my back arching slightly in anticipation  
my heart frantically holding onto itself and every  
function  
one more blink, one more confession, one more  
blessed kiss!  
one more glance upon the love sleeping soundly,  
o! wretched bliss!  
I cannot think, for I am not there  
I cannot think to be scared.  
there's succulent sights stretched in the sea  
everything always is waiting for me  
floating and dreaming and light and free  
finally, my ticket. my sacred life's key.

*Photo by Brian Wasser*



# Short stories

## the

*in which lessons about oral hygiene are learned*

# CAVITY

By Josh Ginsberg

I've got a goddamn cavity. Eighteen years of good oral hygiene and then this happens. Leave it to the dentist to bring my whole world crashing down. To be entirely truthful, I don't actually remember the day I learned there was a reason I brushed my teeth. But I can imagine it, very vividly.

It starts out with me lying on my bed, having just protested to the fact that I have to brush my teeth, not once, but twice a day. My mother is present, and I try to reason with her, because she just doesn't see my point.

"Mom," I say, three years old, with one of my not-yet-bushy eyebrows cocked confidently, "I know you think you know how to run things most effectively around here..." I've sat up in bed and put my arm around her neck, urging her to empathize with me via my large, blue eyes, my face wearing the same expression a slick lawyer wears to smoothly sweet-talk a jury. "But brushing my teeth twice a day, c'mon, purposeless practices can only carry on for so long." I look smug and professional, clad in my fuzzy, red, one-piece pajamas, cozy beneath the comfort of my *101 Dalmatians* comforter. And the hordes of stuffed animals that live atop my bed are impressed.

I had just lain down the law. There is nothing my mother could say. I feel good. And then...

"Josh, I was hoping I wouldn't have to tell you about this at so young of an age," my mother would say, with a sympathetic and somber look on her eyes. She pauses, lamenting the blow that is to come. She clicks her tongue sternly and continues: "About, the Cavity Monster."

I'm hooked. Now, I liked Elmo, Telly and Grover as much as the next kid, but there was something chilling, sinister, piercing, nauseating even, about the name Cavity Monster. Cavity wasn't a soft word. It was all hard Ks (my spelling was lacking in 1992), Vs and Ts. There was something unwaveringly threatening about it.

I don't reply. I look at my mother, trying to maintain a façade of intelligent disbelief, unwavering skepticism, but feeling very worried and curious indeed. She goes on, "The Cavity Monster is a furry, leather-skinned beast with demented, bloodshot, yellow eyes that can see in the dark and big, sickle-like, demonic horns. The exact place of his origin is unknown to this day, but it has been theorized that he was born in Candyland."

I glance over to my shelf, where Mr. Mint, Plumpy and Grandma Nutt look at me with big smiles. I scoff. At the tender age of three I knew Candyland, pretty well. It seemed unfeasible that such a beast would hail from as benign of a town as Candyland, one of the cleanest cities on the Eastern Seaboard. Suddenly, as I visualize the board, I remember Gloppy the Molasses Monster from the Molasses Swamp. Ah! Molasses Swamp! Gloppy! I should've known.

My mother sits back and watches me absorb this. She knows she has perked my interest. I try my best to play it off like she has not.

"Continue," I say, looking at my nails in an affected manner, feigning boredom, reminding her that her hokum poses threat to me.

"Well," she says leaning in closer, "The Cavity Monster first emerged in the late nineteen-forties, just after the Second World War. He was sighted first in Eastern Europe and later in various different parts of the United States. Wherever he was seen, an epidemic would break out in the mouths of the region's inhabitants. Statistics from the mid-seventies have

confirmed beyond a shadow of a doubt that there is some sort of correlation between the Cavity Monster and small pock marks that lead to aching in people's teeth."

I'm terrified.

"These little holes, which are replete with rancorous bacteria, known as plaque, are now known in modern vernacular, named after their creator, as 'cavities.' It has been speculated that the Cavity Monster has recruited an army of microscopic bacteria. With their help, the Cavity Monster has finally been able to make the leap to global," She continues, still nonchalant. "He pretty much runs a monopoly on the whole thing."

I glance over to the shelf of board games, as a reflex. Rich Uncle Pennybags looks back at me with his dead, black eyes. My mother opens her mouth to speak again, but I raise my hand and say, "That's enough for tonight." She tucks me in, doubtlessly bemused that her ruse was taken to heart, and turns out the light.

My eyes narrow, and my little fists clench tight. I glower over at the Candyland box, which is illuminated by my Kermit the Frog nightlight. It seems so wrong that a place so magical can produce a sick, sadistic criminal who maliciously ruins so many lives. I feel my throbbing heartbeat in my temple and whisper, defeated, before I close my eyes:

"That son-of-a-bitch..."

Thirty minutes ago I was splayed out, damn-near in stirrups, as if in labor, with my dentist standing over me. Her eyes are small and dark and they rotate in her sockets like giant bugs. They're all locked up in these sideways-tear-drop frames, and they're looking intently and intensely downward into my mouth. The lower half of my dentist's face is covered by that sterile, blue veil that people in the medical profession wear, and although I've known her for a long time, I can't help but see a twisted grin beneath it.

"Oh, Josh," she says with a faked sense of disappointment, "You've got yourself a cavity."

So the whole story, that I just relayed, it flashes in front of my eyes. I think about my braces. Having what I was told, for years, was a mouth of impeccable, immaculate teeth. Out of all the things I was invariably insecure over in my adolescence, my teeth were never one. I always brushed my teeth. In fact, I hate more or less any aftertaste so much that I obsessively mouthwash and chew ADA approved gum. It says in bold print on the back of the packet, "HELPS FIGHTS CAVITIES BY STRENGTHENING TEETH." My eyes narrow. Lies.

Going to the dentist used to be great. I was always complimented. I swear, I've heard them all: beautiful teeth, strong teeth, white teeth, straight teeth, and most of all, clean teeth. The dentist cheerfully tells me that we're all done, although, I'll need to come back for a filling some time soon. Whore. She takes off her mask to reveal a smiling face. She's actually happy that the Cavity Monster, who for years I kept at bay, has gotten her another one hundred and ninety-three dollar check.

My mind races. I think back at the thousands of times I've brushed my teeth. I think back to last Tuesday night. I know I didn't brush that night. I was out late with friends. I forgot. Is that it? Is that when that bastard Cavity Monster dug his satanic, bloody pickaxe into my molar? Maybe it's flossing. I don't floss nearly enough. Have I done this to myself? Is this karma? Who's the last person I've wronged?

As I walk out of the dentist's office, the hallway from the operation

# short stories

## Cuckoo's Nest Revisited

*in which some  
friends go  
exploring*



BY ANDY POLIAMUS

Justin decided he wouldn't tell his parents where he got the cut on his forehead. There was no way he'd ever be allowed in Tooch's car again if he did. It had been Ant's fault, really; it was his idea to go see what was behind the water tower in the first place, and that was where Justin had scraped his face, tripping over the brush. They had stood in the field behind the county almshouse, where they used to keep the local bums locked up with albies and schizos and epileptics and whatever other people they didn't know how to deal with back then. And at some point, Ant had decided that it was necessary to see what was in the woods.

They had gotten there by way of an early nineties Toyota that had been given to Tooch by his grandma (now deceased). The place was empty now. They wanted to see what the hell the place was all about. Was it haunted? Could you get shanked by some crazy hobo? Did a cult perform dark rites in the morgue? "That sort of thing," or at least that's what Ant decided they wanted to see. One thing Tooch had no way of knowing, since it was a well kept family secret on his mother's side, was that his great grandfather had spent the end of his life there in his early forties while dying of alcoholism, hallucinating that his mother was at his side until his ruined liver gave out once and for all. Since he had a family to give him a funeral, unlike most of the other patients, he hadn't been buried in the field where Justin (formally Justin Dennis Statt), Tooch (whose full name was James Tooch, Jr.), and Ant (really Anthony Joseph Finelli) now stood.

With the stories from school in mind and nothing to do on a Friday night, they took their time on the six-mile drive. Tooch kept an eye out for the correct unmarked road and Ant yelled at the girls downtown while Justin huddled in the back seat in silence. They were a few years too late

for the vast majority of what had once been a major fixture in the way of public works around the county. The main hospital building was gone, as were two dormitories and a recreation center. All that remained besides the water tower was a sad, crumbling playground with swings much too big for children, an overgrown baseball field, and a one-ward, two story building, the purpose of which was unknown, that contained living quarters, offices, and a morgue. When Ant tried a light switch in the morgue, they discovered that the electricity was still on.

There had been no ghosts, no hobos and no goat heads inscribed with pentagrams. Just gloom, peeling paint, and smashed furniture. Ant had rummaged through piles of garbage, and looked for some kind of souvenir. Justin had hung as far back as he could without being alone, ready to take flight. And Tooch, who had a weird feeling there was something he was supposed to know, had walked politely through, a guest in a dead museum.

Ant pressed on and told Tooch to quit dragging his feet and encouraging Justin not to be such a pussy. Hell bent on adventure, he'd marched them through the unmarked cemetery and into the barbed wire enclosure that held the water tower. But the fucking thing was too rusty, he had decreed, and so they made their way another hundred yards to the woods with Ant running ahead. When he arrived at the edge of the trees, Ant decided he'd heard a howling noise before the Tooch and Justin had even caught up to them. He'd turned and ran, as had Tooch, who'd figured he might as well. Justin had followed without looking, and ran straight into a broken section of the fence around the water tower. Wiping some blood from his face, he'd rushed to follow them, and ran away from all that nothing.



## *The Cavity (cont'd)*

room to the lobby is long and dark. I pass the pictures of happy teeth, in black plastic frames. I pass a little kid, howling in fear. And worst of all, I see the wall, covered with Polaroids. The No-Cavity-Club. I catch a glimpse of a plumper faced, eight year old version of myself. That picture has hung on that wall for ten years now. A tear nags at the corner of my eye; I knew my picture would be gone by my appointment next week.

I spent last night at a friend's place. I woke up this morning, brushed my teeth, showered. I went to the SAC to study statistics, went to a class, grabbed some chicken fingers and a seltzer and walked over to catch my train. Usually, on Wednesdays, I take the 1:25 PM train from the Mineola station to my home town of Roslyn Heights, but due to my dentist appointment I miss the train and have to walk.

My dentist's office is close to the train station, near the hospital, which is nestled in the grimy, heart of "urban" Mineola. On my walk home, I pass restaurants and bars, an army-navy store. The streets have a terrible stink about them, like sweat, trash and urine. I glare the whole walk, my furrowed brow inseparable from my face. All the people on the sidewalks seem dissatisfied and they're all morosely nursing cigarettes. Storefronts and sidewalks are stained, the telephone poles splintering and everything else was chipping concrete. There was a massive construction site, the tan sand sticking out against the backdrop of snow and pale grey sky. The construction site is a huge crater in the ground, about the size of a gymnasium, blocked off from the general public with nothing more than a shitty, orange, makeshift fence. I've ventured past it before, and I've always found it both revolting and engaging. It is hideous, an eroding, rotten cavity, in the center of town. And now I've got one in my fucking mouth.

# Short Stories

## SAMMY

*in which consumerism and contemplation take place*

## WORLD

BY ROSS BARKAN



**B**lack 'n blue Friday arrives in the same way it always does: with a crash. Crash is the simplified and blunt term. *Maybe* the realest. Very Hemingwayish. DeLillo would describe it as "a landscape of visionary havoc and ruin." Kesey might make a joke.

O.C. Leroux's gang The Crying Lot loves Black 'n Blue Friday because the chaos masks their own chaos. It's just one big gift wrap hiding the ticking time bomb inside. Specs Silverr gets his girl a new warp-watch. It makes the world seem skippy. Diamond Epstein fucks best on Black n' Blue Friday because the uproarious, hellish din of exploding glass and burning fiber and hissing gasoline helps him focus, the ebb and flow of every broiling sound wave an igniter for his libido. While random girl #4 moans under the kitchen stool O.C. Leroux throws on his Nehru jacket, buckles his jeans, and fastens his katana. Laurel loads her double-barreled revolvers. The day is young. Duke Mize guzzles Reindeer Red, liquor, and lumbago medicine, snarling corruption. Colorado Alvarez finally pins the chimera bear-a. The day is young. Major Les Mann hides the needles from O.C. Leroux's liquid gaze. "More for me," he giggles. Ken Moon doesn't want to end his trip through the aurelian nebulas so he swoops across infinity's underside and smacks his forehead on a lampshade. They all stumble out of the apartment's many orifices searching for yesterday and tomorrow. Today is young.

Black n' Blue Friday...here's a tale. A little history, a little drama, it won't be boring. You can understand why the announcement of any sort of tale would frighten away the listeners, sending 'em scurrying like rabbits in the taillights. No one likes to stop, listen, and comprehend. That's old hat. You don't want set-up, you don't want beginning, don't even want middle, maybe an end, only if it's psychotic in anyway, only if there's a twist. Just B.I.G.—bombs, insanity, guns. Well, there's a bit of all that in here. We can do it B.I.G. for this one. Black n' Blue Friday is a real American story, a nonfictional Great American Novel that no writer ever thought to pen before it actually happened. Would've been a hell of a movie.

Some time ago, eighty years perhaps, there was a thing called Thanksgiving. People pretended that the Indians and Pilgrims ate turkey in the woods to celebrate their companionship. While the Indian nibbled his corn the Pilgrim drew his musket. A lot of time passed. Indians died. Pilgrims died too, naturally, but their white descendants lived on to tie their railways around the land's contour like a well-engineered noose. Cities rose. Machine and man were like old buddies always linking up just to screw around with each other. Machine—the bane of man, man—the bane of machine yet...they needed each other. During this time of neediness people practiced the tradition of calorie inhalation then known as Thanksgiving, a day in which all seated at the proto-intellectual smorgasbord of gluttony—glazed to look like familial unity—gave thanks to the gravy loitering in their lower intestines. This all happened for many years. Oh, also, people drank alcohol and watched a sport named football. The day after Thanksgiving people would do what they still do today: Shop. Back then though, in the epoch of Poe's democratic nightmare, people shopped rather tamely. They barged into stores in the wee hours of dawn, jostled a bit, cursed, and left with their furry talking bears and LCD screens. Very boring. One year—who really remembers?—Zero Inc. purchased the naming rights to Thanksgiving. The Fed had been in the red for a while and needed an infusion of fresh credit. The multinational Zero Inc., produc-

ers of such varied items as baby vitamins, condoms, and crankshafts, laid down an offer Uncle Sam couldn't refuse. Thanksgiving was Thanksgiving for another year until CEO Mathias Glassock devised the brilliant idea to phase out the name Thanksgiving. Why? "Because, dear citizens, in the spirit of Zero's commitment to the concept of zero," Glassock ejaculated at a press conference, "we believe it is in the interests of corporate spiritualism and the resplendent values of the free market, as well as the ethos of the United States, to remove the name Thanksgiving from the holiday ledger and replace it with "nothing" i.e. zero to better promote our brand and the American way..." Glassock's bloviating was the de facto dawning of the Post-Post-Post Modern Age. Thanksgiving is now named nothing but this is a name. You see? If you don't, captain third person omniscient here suggests you improve on your Post and Post-Post Modern sensibilities first.

Hold on, the eyelids are getting heavy. Too many words. We'll pause, refocus the lenses on action, and get back to our story of the holiday once enough momentum is gathered and once our energy is close enough to perpetual. The ultimate dream, truly. Now back to Rudy Yorke.


Rudy is glad to be home Friday morning. His eyelids sleep on the eyeball's arc, head stills, and baseball great Devlin DuNair gallops across the mind's outfield grass. Dream aromas imbue the Rudy globe slowly splitting from reality. His body is ensconced on a pneumatic purple sofa in the living room, gray and silent. He exhales. The breath is long and sweet, a great gale rushing out of his lungs and into the new day. Sammy World employees don't get Fridays off. Thanks to a luscious left hook that might've ended Virgil's career as a solid food masticator, Rudy is home from work, "punished" by his supervisor Velocity Clock for his transgressions. To most, it would indeed be a punishment. Rudy can't return to his station in Sammy World until four thirty, a loss of at least 950 Kurstobergers. If you have less Kurstobergers it means less to buy on such a top-notch day for consumption. 98% of everyone in Felinewarehouse.com's New York City would probably slash their brain stems with their cell phone antennae if they couldn't participate in America's greatest holiday ritual. Christmas is in less than two months. *Gotta buy! Buy! Buy! Buy!*

As he cracks open a can of Reindeer-free soda, Rudy ponders his relationship with his supervisor Velocity Clock. *She ain't a bad girl, murmurs his brain, and his neck swivels in agreement. Not a bad one, at all...* Velocity is a few years older than Cecilia but more appealing in Rudy's eyes. Cecilia is nearly his height, a slender but imposing woman, an entity he once would give his life for. Now, he's not sure he'd take that bullet or that plank for her from the 86<sup>th</sup> street thug. She's changed. It isn't a physical change: Cecilia's as leggy as ever, a brilliant piece in bed—still the best Rudy has ever had. It isn't her temperament, either. She was always a demanding person, controlling, and at times self-righteous. He still remembers how she sent back her vegetable barley soup twice at *Nino's* because she thought it hadn't been heated enough. She always wanted to be right. Rudy had admired her for this. Before Cecilia, the girls he had dated were all like jellyfish. Supple, sure, but with souls that seemed amorphous to him. There was no shape, no definition, only the same insecure, pusillanimous paranoia about the various hobgoblins that whispered in the ears of everyone Rudy abhorred. They were always rushing. Rudy, when he was more of a caresser, would reach out to touch a pre-Cecilia woman and he'd be massaging a blur. Manicures, pedicures, and the plastic surgery on a

# Short Stories

## SAMMY WORLD

BY ROSS BARKAN



whim...Rudy remembers one girl he dated in his mid twenties, Oedipa, who had a doctor maul half her face with a laser. She called it necessary plastic surgery to mend a "nagging sagging cheek." Rudy had himself a completely foreign face to stare into at night. When Oedipa laughed she sounded a little like a freight train exploding so when her old face went, so did the relationship. Dozing in front of a blank television screen, Rudy shuffles through the women he's dated like a deck of cards and realizes, quite obviously, that Cecilia is the ace of spades. Yet he can't take much more of her. In the midst of this mental thicket about Cecilia and plastic surgeries gone awry, Velocity's peachy hue seizes his mind's eye. Rudy knows it is becoming more common these days to sell your name to a corporation in exchange for an ample supply of Kurstobergers like Velocity had...yet it troubled him that *she* had done so. Last year she was Nora Lee Clock, assistant to the regional supervisor of park maintenance with a Ph.D in pharmaceutical psychology (only she knows what exactly that is), infinitely overqualified to work amongst the Sammy World dregs. Park profits slipped, Nora Lee's pay was cut, and a Velocity Dental Insurance advertisement sung out to her across the variegated billboard wasteland hugging the BQE. Voila—Velocity Clock is born. Rudy, she is a *sellout*.

*The stores are sold out.* The hordes keep coming. If you fly above the island of Manhattan you'll see the great horseshoe arc of the Sammy World amusement park, rimming out wide in lower Manhattan and shooting up near midtown. Around the arc, near the many chromatic entrances, are the department stores. Sirens and horns jest across the bleeding landscape—"please do not break the windows" "We have no more clothing"—realizing their canned ineffectiveness by following the voices with guitar riffs and synthesizers. It's all a parody of police work. Oh yes, while the many thousands stream through the shattered portals, gift sacks and guns in tow, the officers wave their batons beaming bright blue. They understand implicitly, though, that they're just fulfilling their roles in the game. Outside a Walden-Mart the dozen cops ride the wave of shoppers like seashells, content to drown in their brine, if only to not stem the tide of consumption. Never—and this is rule numero uno for the coppers—interfere with a shopper picking out his item. A fat hairy man in an elastic evergreen vest crushes the fire exit door, rapping bloody staccato with his light-weight steel pike while reaping a handful of aerotrycles. Nine feet away a cop snorts in the alleyway. Chaos masking chaos. The cop worships the white powder, its snowy innocence enough to bowdlerize any vulgar objections from his consciousness. Hands shoot up in the throbbing, cackling mass, pink and tan crayon tips glued to Red Reindeer aerosol cans. They unleash a pinkish haze, a Valentine's Day hue that quickly settles into a crimson fog. In an apartment's 21<sup>st</sup> floor a man envisions himself a god unable to decipher the movements of his subjects below the red rain clouds.

Organn Hammond, 32, is glad he remembered the *shocking* switch blade. Bitten and spat out of the crowd like a bread crumb, Organn is helpless against the centipedal surge of countless legs stampeding to aisle seven of Walden-Mart. Organn's son, Hamlett, pines for the all-too-popular Even Man action figure (when paired with Odd Man, already in Hamlett's possession, the figure doubles its size and shouts his famous catchphrase *tihslub!!*) that is nestled on aisle seven's plush shelves. Organn is down...but not out. He fights upward, other thighs and knees smacking his reed-thin body the whole way. On the cusp of aisle seven, erect right under a fuzzy fluorescent halo, Organ sees a woman reach for an Even Man action figure. He isn't sure if it's one of the last or *the last*. Either way, he knows the supplies are dwindling. He knows he must act. A shopping cart collision/explosion one aisle over tilts half of aisle seven's shelves. Crouched in his linoleum trench, Organn seizes his switch blade, eyes the turmoil, eyes the ghastly lip-sticked baboon curled around *his* action figure, and strikes. The blade buzzes gleefully through the small of her back, sparks jumping like overeager infants. One step over the crumpling body, one scoop under the plastic box. Organ is *really* glad he remembered the *shocking* switch blade.

On the balcony near the escalator, Penny Banker hides her booty.

One swelling canvas bag choked with lip gloss, hair spray, diaphragms, hair driers, perfume bottles, soap, scented soap, shower heads, panties, brassieres, silk, red cream, blue cream, green cream, anti-aging lotion, anti-fattening lotion, anti-depression lotion, anti-compulsion lotion, anti-pale lotion, anti-tan lotion, anti-pain lotion, anti-paranoia lotion, bracelets, halter-tops, sunglasses, moonglasses, twilightglasses, germanium seeds, an android dog, an android baby, gelatin—

"Ahhhhhhhhhhhh!"

Penny tumbles to the marble floor, earrings rattling on the balcony's barrier. A man and woman, in their thirties like Penny, reach for the bag. Her supplies skid across ground of red and blue squares, her many canisters resting in tic-tac-toe fashion. No one wins. The man, gray in the sides, brown in the tuft, grabs Penny's prized android dog Wolfie McDroop.

"Not today," Penny barks, trite words backed with fury. The bulge of a taser frames the left side of her bell-bottom jeans. It's the promise of protection. Her left hand pulls the dog's tale *arf arf arf I'm Wooolllfiiie McDroopp arf arf* and her right hand tightens around the taser. Man's female companion scurries to the lotions, hungry eyeballs falling on the anti-paranoia lotion. Penny aims at the man's skull. She doesn't see his left hand dangling a black pistol.

Penny's brain tissue smears the ground like fresh jam. Wolfie McDroop bristles under his new coat of red paint. Man and woman thrash each other for the lotions.

Waltscadillacdealership Johnson ignores the blood stream snaking around his sneakers. At age 21, he isn't concerned about details. At 21, he isn't even worried about his unwieldy name fogging up a resume because Walt at the dealership will pay him 220 Kurstobergers a week for the next nine months for the rights to his appellation. Todd Johnson, his old name, was stale anyway. He wouldn't be clutching this mini-rocket launcher, a present from the cop pillaging ice cream on the fifth floor, when he was Todd Johnson. Waltscadillacdealership Johnson is a new man, courage as abundant as the syllables in his first name. The target is clear: a neon cat face, pale green nose sprouting fulgent yellow whiskers. He narrows on the whiskers, imagining that their unnatural brightness is possible only because they were plucked from the grain fields on the sun. *He's a real imagination waster.*

"Ah, you are captivated by the vibrissae of that ersatz feline I see," says a voice behind Waltscadillacdealership. He turns around and he realizes the words, crinkled, halting, and hoarse, originate from an old man in a black dusty parka. The old man winks. Waltscadillacdealership thinks it's odd that the old man is smoking a corn cob pipe indoors. "*Who the hell even smokes a pipe anymore?*" he thinks and returns his focus to the rocket-launcher.

"I don't get what you just said," the former Todd Johnson says out loud, making no eye contact with the old man.

"Dear boy, do take care. We wouldn't want anymore wonton casualties."

"Huh?"

He's gone. Waltscadillacdealership doesn't know if the corn cob man was real or not. *Reality...it's all in the details.* The rocket-launcher is small, a rusted cylinder reaching out no more than a foot. He thrusts it into the air diagonally—proud—ready to kill neon kitty. Why kill neon kitty? Waltscadillacdealership Johnson doesn't bare any deep hatred toward anyone or anything. He drifts in the universal cloud of indifference, unburdened by any intellectual quagmires. Rainwater eyes, brown and guttural, know only delight from the moment he releases the trigger to the moment the rocket's nose penetrates the jubilant face of Feline Warehouse's mascot and New York City's seal until the deal expires in four years. Rather than run, which the burger-gorging soda-sucking fry-fucking food court inhabitants all do immediately—fire scares like it always does—Waltscadillacdealership straightens his back and impassively receives the avalanche of plaster, plastic, flame, and smoke. Someday he hopes, amid the bubbling burning riptide eroding food court and society equally, he won't be so indifferent.

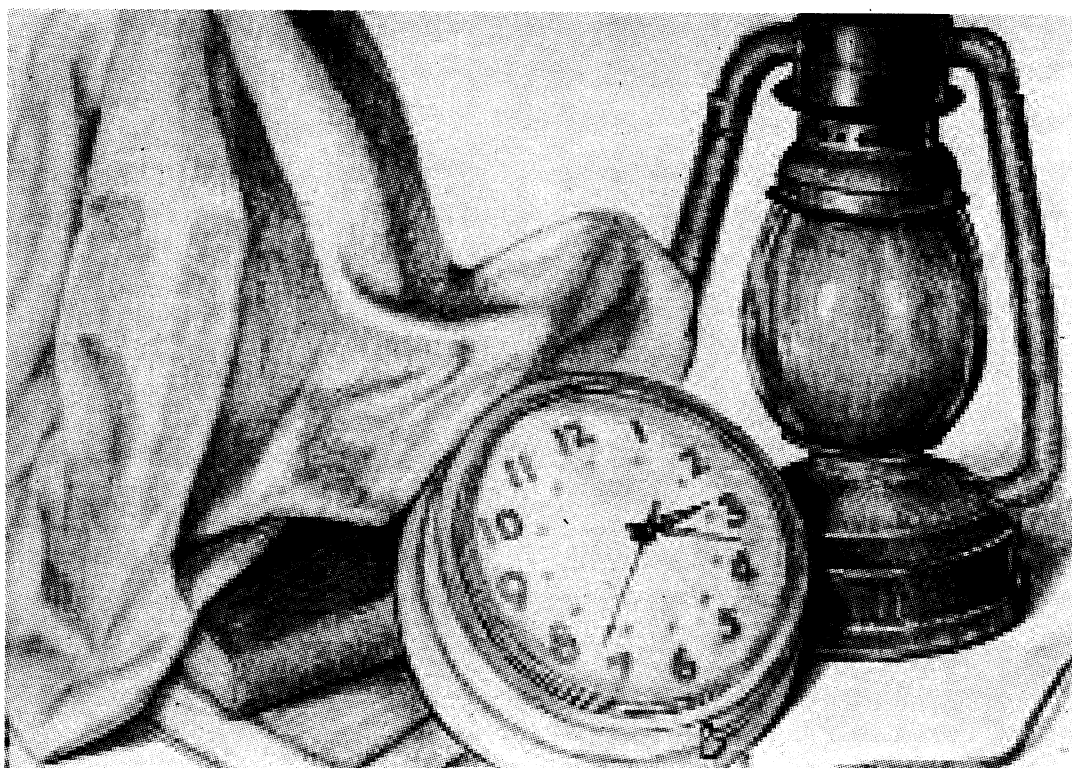
Waltscadillacdealership Johnson is a new man, courage as abundant as the syllables in his first name.





*Photo by Brian Wasser*

# Short stories

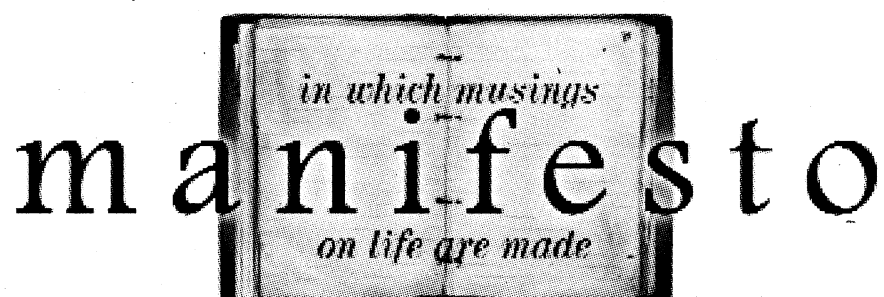


*Art by Iris Lin*



*Photo by Brian Wasser*

# Short Stories



## manifesto

BY JENS DUNCANSON

**T**hings are always much more intriguing when they are hardly known, before any kind of plot develops- like a movie or a person- when they can be known and beheld according to their aura, their essence, rather than the trivial, linear events which are so often held to epitomize them. This goes for everything- places, buildings, people, ideas, dreams, art, etc. There is too much "linear" meaning applied via dualistic contexts of thought, as history shows in its obsession with *event*.

This linear paradigm leads to the dualities which cause contrived moments and actually, in the end, serve only the systematic oppressions of the genuine experience, of the rejuvenating, chaotic, transient pockets of authenticity in a world imbued with the inescapable, un-transcendable ironies of control, limitation and unnatural order. But its obsession with linearity dictates that it be something definable, something solid, tangible...and when it becomes so, instantly, it is caught in the spiral of that to which it defines itself as "not." Its very definiteness is what makes it hollow. And it eventually falls under the direct umbrella of paradigms which it originally stood against, whether it be bureaucracy, profit (which renders it inextricably and directly linked to that from which it, now falsely, claims to escape), or anything else.

So, what is the solution? How are we to embrace a method of truly waking up and truly living, if a method loses its "key to authenticity" solely by existing in a form subject to paradigms of control (language, event, spatiality)? How are we to know, to behold and to learn from these flashes of light, revealing stunning landscapes, in a universe of obscurity, in a narrowed consciousness that is narrowing with every dollar spent, every instant spent "going somewhere," every child "educated," every inch of earth "claimed," every thought patterned, and every experience analyzed, homogenized, contextualized? How is that glimpse to exist in a world where existence nullifies the glimpse? How temporary, how minute, how mundane, how everyday must the temporary autonomy be such that it may disappear untainted?

By being its own mirage. The measured patterns which dictate conventional flavors of adventure fall short of authenticity. True experience is something as indefinite as a life lived as based around the aura of a dream. It is the little moments of personal exquisiteness, something shared, but never held onto, never solidifying, never even definitely there in "hind-sight," never up ahead, or with you at all. The real landscape is incapable of being known or detected at all, even by itself, and therefore it is not reliant on anything at all, including and especially assuredness. The genuinely adventurous life is *not* dependant in any way upon those paradigms, those clichés of modern obsession with surface. Rather, authentic living

has no need for prevailing concepts of experience, but can instead be fulfilled instantaneously, independently of location, timeframe, or outward perception. If location, event or any such association defines you, you are the emptiness which defines the age of simulation. In this age, the only rebellion, the only insurrection, the only peephole to that landscape...is the one which does not, the one which *cannot* exist...that we know of.

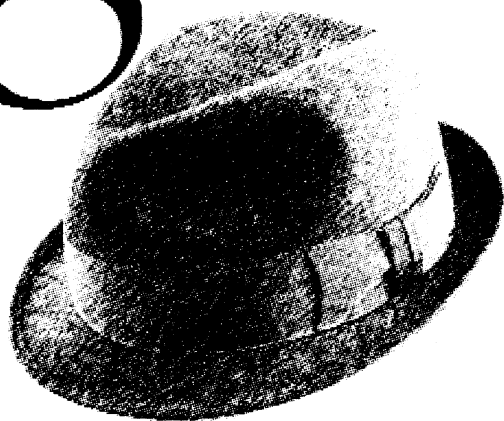
Nothing is as it appears. Definition is murder. The tragedy of dualism lies in the pattern of thinking that the most fulfilling life is one where immediacy is to be sacrificed to the god of meaning, via the avenue of predicted outcomes, in the name of clichéd ideas of adventure being only a "somewhere else," an insatiability that fails to address the simple realities of being alive. Living fully, really being in this, really touching the creative, non-thinking moment, entails a rejection of impatience, and an absorption of the essence not just of place, but of something transcendent of all of space (as we, in our greatest, happiest, most inspired moments, actually are). And furthermore, it makes the world that much larger.

But the same old picket-fence dilemma reigns us in, easing the shock of the growing up transition from hazy, illogical, fresh, moment-to-moment inspiration, topped with a sense of boundless horizons, excitement and community....all towards the patterns of the "standard, pragmatic reality" and its concurrent isolation, its cold robotic programmed official itinerary. The idealized way of life, of living hungrily, openly, with and for the world, yourself and *every* person you pass by, flashes occasionally, just long enough for you to taste it. A dream that comes back at a random time during your day, only to vanish as soon as it came, barely allowing you to remember that you remembered. A spontaneous drifting moment. A fresh, random and exciting encounter. Eye contact with a stranger that makes you feel like your entire life had been leading up to that instant. These things happen just often enough to prevent you from completely forgetting why you keep forgetting. These things form a pattern which completely eclipses the daily patterns of the old framework.

Such an eclipse, however, must be the ultimate Exception. Previous notions of subverting the "daily" have thus fallen under the umbrella of their own targets (avenues of control), simply through their tenability. Living truly entails, first and foremost, always being by the moment on the leading edge of completely new forms of thought, interaction and existence. This is the true, the constant, the everlasting test for those who can at least partially grasp the possibility of doing something truly great.

# short stories

## getting the finger *in which a detective braves afghans, aulauls, and assholes*



BY ALEX NAGLER

The sign on my door only read Relgan Xela, but to those who saw it, it was all they needed. Life wasn't easy for private eyes, especially ever since that "Hebrew Hammer" movie came out and everyone was interested to know if I was a certified circumcised dick. But dumb jokes didn't pay the bills. That was the job of clients, and those were getting harder and harder to come by. But then, she walked in. Of all the detective offices in the entire city, she had to walk into mine.

She was a tall brunette drink of water, one with extra ice cubes. Standing there in her mink parka, her tights clashed with everything else she was wearing and her shoes made her a good four inches taller. Even without being artificially taller, she was the one with the legs. She had a confused look on her face that made her the perfect candidate for private detecting. Someone like her made people like me not mind the Hammer jokes.

"What's the problem, toots?" I asked.

"It's gone missing! After twenty nine years of it being right there in front of me, day in, day out, it's disappeared!" She swooned.

"What's missing? My disposable income? That's been gone for about as long as I've had this 30 gig iPod."

"No" she replied "not that. The Gilded Finger. It's been the symbol of our organization since day one and now it's gone. Without it, we're just a bunch of Tetris-playing demi-journalists goofing off on a set of disgusting couches."

"Couches, toots? What kind of chump do you take me for? If you want this finger back, it's going to cost you. And I've read your issues. You don't do advertisers and your budget hasn't gone up in the last five years."

"We're willing to pay you in X-Box points" she responded. "That, or the bottle deposits for all the sodas we go through during the average work week."

"Sold. I'll pick up the "Nirvana" pack when it eventually comes out."

As she turned and left, I remembered that I needed some sort of lead. I yelled out to her, "Toots. Who should I speak to first?"

"The name's not Toots. It's Madame Balls. And I'd check out Com-

modore Totemo Takai first. He's normally down at the sushi bar in the evening. If anyone knows where that finger went, it'd be him."

And like that, she walked out. I had no idea what I'd just gotten myself into. What was so special about a Golden Finger that someone was willing to spend all those X-Box points on getting it back? I'd raised more questions than I had answers for, so I realized it was about time to get down to the Slippery Eel and ask Commodore Takai, if he really was a seaman, some questions.

The Slippery Eel. A dive sushi bar in a way downtown part of sleazy city. This was the sort of place that someone built, forgot, then showed up twenty years later to try to reclaim, only to discover the natives had set fire to the place and rebuilt it to their own liking. It was the kind of place you initially didn't want to be around for more than half an hour at a go, but eventually grew on you. I wasn't planning to stick around for longer than I needed. Just long enough to get whatever I needed out of the Commodore.

He was seated at the end of the bar, a plate of hot edamame to his right and a cup of hot tea to his left. As I went to sit down next to him, he spoke up.

"So, you're looking for the Finger, are you?"

His English was perfect. Better what you'd expect for someone who lived his life at a sushi bar. Then again, most Japanese naval officers weren't over six feet tall and white with curly hair.

"How'd you know I was looking for the Gilded Finger?"

"It's my paper. I'm the one who should be the most concerned about its disappearance. Strangely, it was Madame Balls that hired you. Why would one of my deputies be the one to place the order for a detective? She doesn't even have signatory powers over any of our day-to-day affairs."

The Commodore had a point, even if he did seem to be culturally confused.

"So you're saying that you don't know why Madame Balls sent me to question you? What's she paying you?"

He laughed. It was the sound of a man who had cornered his prey "Paying? You can't afford me. I could be tempted to remember a few things

# Short Stories



## { getting the finger }

by alex nagler

if, say, some dinosaur action figures found their way into my safety deposit box.”

Dinosaurs. I should have known. It’s always whimsical creatures with tall guys. I shouldn’t talk, given my aquatic arctic avian fascination. This guy was in luck. I happened to carry a plastic Ichthyosaur on me at all times for dramatic effect.

“Ichthyosaur, eh? Well played, Mister Free-man.”

Knew I’d get him.

“You’re looking for Sparkly Luchador. Half philosopher, half idiot, the man seems to think that he’s some sort of blue leotard wearing sportsman, despite the fact that he can’t wrestle to save his life. Last I heard, he’d gone mad after realizing that ‘The Aquabats’ weren’t as enjoyable as he remembered them. He stormed out of that dancehall and destroyed every ‘Yo Gabba Gabba’ doll in his wake. I don’t know if he’s gone crazy enough to steal the Gilded Finger, but he most likely knows someone who’d know something else. I’m sorry I can’t be of any more assistance.”

Damn. Another name to have to follow up on. Who were these people and why did that gilded finger manner so much to them. And “The Aquabats”? Didn’t people over twenty stop listening to them, with the sole noteworthy exception of “Pool Party?”

I hope wherever I was headed next had chips.

I had a name, but I didn’t have a place. Then it dawned on me. Where else do you seek out a renegade AEPi wrestler than a YMJA? There weren’t many left in town, but I knew a place. The sort of place that didn’t serve dairy with anything.

I was going to need a cheeseburger.

With a bag of McDonalds cheeseburgers in tow, I had to cross Delancy and head into a more orthodox territory than I was used to, the Shtetl. I didn’t get along with the Shtetl. Something about orthodoxy just rubbed me the wrong way, even if they did have good tailors. As a secular Jew, I didn’t associate much with their crowd. I didn’t believe in that afterlife rag; our current subscription to life was enough torment. God just liked fucking with us. To whatever it was, we were just some giant pornographic snuff film for it to get off on.

I must have been mumbling to myself as I entered the YMJA, as next thing I know, I’m being hoisted by some looney in tights.

“A Jew is one who others consider to be a Jew. That is a simple truth from which we must start.”

Sartre. This Sparkly Luchador knew his World War II existentialists.

“You wanna quote *No Exit* at me while you’re at it, or should I just infer that you think Hell is other people too.”

That made him put me down. And clock me to the face while he was at it. It was the sort of punch that could make a member of the Moral Majority accept the fact that the world was over 6,000 years old and work on a PhD in plate tectonics. The sort of punch that if he were wearing a class ring, my cheek would become a permanent advertiser for his alma mater. It smarted, but it was nothing a few drinks and an icepack couldn’t handle.

“Sup duuuuuuuuuude?”

This must be his other side. I must have startled him into his senses, but was now stuck sparing with Dostoevsky.

“I’m doing well, Prince Myskhin. Yourself?”

“Cool. Cool. Awesome.”

“You wouldn’t happen to know anything about any golden fingers, would you Sparkly?”

“Fingers? Haven’t seen those in a long time. Last I recall laying eyes on the fingers, I was training at my old gym.”

Hmm. He seemed to alternate between the two. I would have to temper my conversations to accommodate for this.

“So, last you saw the finger, you were still somewhat sane?”

“Who said I was insane, dude? That’s messed up. That’s messed up.”

I strongly doubted he was responsible for taking a gilded five-finger discount. My best bet was to try to coax some sort of lead out of him.

“Sparkly, do you know may have taken the fingers?”

“Someone took the fingers? Messed up, dude. Messed up. Here, take this.”

He threw a bowling ball bag at me. I opened it, looked in, closed it, and vomited. It was hand. With a remote in it. Someone didn’t take kindly to channel surfing and let whoever this poor sap was know it.

“Thanks, Sparkly. Hope you get some sense of bearing back.”

Poor kid. One too many knocks to the head. But he wasn’t my problem right now. I had a hand, and there was probably a body attached to it too. Whoever took this probably buried this guy deeper than a lead in a Cancer Center expose. And that was deep.

I had to figure out what show this guy tried to flip past, and then I’d find the man with the axe. This city had certain known entities that had their favorite shows. The East Campus Doctors would give you lupus if you went past “House,” the Green Ladies gouged your eyes out if you whizzed by “Sex and the City,” and an organization simply know as “Awesome” was slapping people silly over “How I Met Your Mother.” But none of these groups did anything with hands.

Hands and a missing finger. What the hell did they have to do with each other? And why were the cuts on this hand so damn shallow? It looked like whatever lobbed this one off made it long, painful, and tiny. Almost as if it was cut off by a thousand paper cuts.

Paper cuts.

Oh sheeeeeeeeeeeit. The Mad Afghan. One of the most agitated people in all of the underground. Recently, he’d been expanding his holdings into more legitimate ventures, but he was still the same nasty asshole that he’d always been. Whoever’s hand this was had made that fatal mistake of trying to change the channel on Thursday at 9pm. You did not come between that man and his Office. Thanks to his recent bout with legitimacy, I knew exactly where to find him. I had hoped this finger

# Short Stories



## { getting the finger }

by alex nagler

heist wasn't the work of organized crime, but the deeper I dug, the more questions I came up with.

I ventured to the downtown business district and managed to bypass security with a well-placed story and the occasional assistance from my good friend Mr. Hamilton. As I ventured my way up the stairwell in the building the Afghan had recently purchased, I couldn't help but feel I was being watched. The feeling stayed with me. I couldn't shake it. It was like a difficult cold or bad ex-girlfriend. You didn't want it, but lord knows you couldn't get rid of it. So, I took my suspicion that I the Afghan was expecting my arrival.

Finally, I made it up to the door of his penthouse office. It was one of those imposing, pure mahogany doors with a giant brass knocker in the shape of a question mark.

*Knock. Knock. Knock.*

"Come in, Mr. Xela. We've been expecting you."

We? My records didn't show that the Afghan had any associates he considered close enough to let work in his office.

"So you're looking for the Gilded Finger, are you?"

Where he was getting his intelligence from, I didn't know, but it was good.

"Yeah, I'm looking for the Gilded. What of it?"

He laughed. I hate it when men who find their bliss in anonymous smack talk laugh. It demeans everyone around them. "The Finger is worth its weight in petroleum. Of course you're looking for it. Every good PI in the city is looking for it. Do you think Madame Balls was stupid enough to only go to you? I mean, can you really be that stupid? Seriously. You dun fucked up. There, add that to your tally."

As I put my "Relgan Dun Fucked Up" notebook back into my bag, I realized I'd been played. I should have guessed. Was this entire charade a setup? And what for? That Balls, Takai, and Luchador knew each other should have set me off, but I wasn't thinking. And to be honest, I had one too many cheeseburgers while in the Shtetl. Overdosing on McDonalds always gave me a stomach ache.

"Alright, Afghan. I don't know what's going on, but I want answers. Who are you working for, how much are they paying you, and what's the real deal with that finger."

"Ah, so good of you to finally ask the real questions, rather than seek out who to talk to next. The answers you're looking for lie within my associate, Tetric System."

A machine? He'd been gabbing with a machine when I knocked?

"In the penthouse office of Afghan madman, A puzzled detective tries to figure out who has set him up and why. The Gilded Finger, an extended finger in a vulgar position made of gold. Why the hell would anyone steal that?"

Poetry. I hated literary devices.

"Allow me to introduce Tetric. Ex-KGB, an expert in covert reconnaissance, and possessing a brain malady that forces him to speak in a quat-

rain of any sort. I suspect it has to do with some still classified experiment. You'll have to excuse his answers. They're the only way he knows how to communicate."

Just my luck. My sole lead may be a brain frazzled poet.

"Alright, Mr. System. What is the Gilded Finger, really?"

"The finger that you seek, my friend  
Is hewed from ancient gold.  
An ungodly power of no end  
As in the times of old."

Ancient artifact? Ungodly power? I thought I was just going after a fuck you finger that someone had made shiny.

"There shall be unleashed live fire, hidden death,  
Horrible and frightening within the globes,  
By night, the paper reduced to ink by the budget,  
The office afire, the enemy still douchebags."

I couldn't help but think this loon was quoting someone. And that he seemed to be an amalgamation of multiple people. Whatever he was, he seemed to be either on to or on something:

"I don't know what he said with that one, but I don't like it. Listen, boss, you claim to be one of the more powerful characters in this underworld. Do you have any information that can lead to me getting to whatever the hell this finger is?"

"You're in luck, Mr. Xela" Finally, a break. "That's what I would have said three hours ago if you had gotten to me first. I had an SD card worth of surveillance pictures showing who was last seen in possession of the Finger. But unfortunately for you, I had a delicious offer made to me by someone else who seems to be working for the lovely Mme. Balls. They seemed quite interested in procuring them and didn't want to dick around with haggling. They paid in cash. A briefcase of random numbered hundred dollar bills."

Shit. Someone beat me to it. I wanted those X-Box points, even if I didn't actually own a system.

"Okay, Afghan. I'll make you a bargain. What I have here in this orange messenger bag is my laptop, codename LAPPY 5000. On its hard drive is the season finale of this season's 'The Office.' Tell me who you sold the pictures to and I'm ready to take out one of my complementary Red Hot USB sticks and give you the episode. You know it won't premiere for another two months, and you know I always get the week's episode of 'Lost' the Sunday before it airs. Tell me who you sold them to and it's yours."

I had him cornered. No one can resist pirated items, especially when they're pirated from such a lucrative source as NBC/Universal. I knew I'd lose bargaining power on this episode once he was done with it, cut it up, diluted it, and flooded the streets with cheap knockoff Jim and Pam videos, but it was worth it to get this information. I slowly took the USB stick out of my bag and placed it on his desk.

"Take it or leave it."

What seemed like an eternity passed between the two of us, Tetric in the background rhyming couplets about Dwight Schrute. Finally, the Afghan flinched. I win.

# short stories



## { getting the finger }

by alex nagler

"Dick Delicious. That's all I know. If you'll excuse me, I need to go attend to a few things that have nothing to do with television."

Sure you did, Afghan. Sure you did.

Beating the Afghan was one thing. Finding out who Dick Delicious really was would be something completely different. A legend in detective circles, Dick Delicious was either the single most obscene individual to ever live and would employ nearly pornographic techniques to get what he wanted or a sophisticated gentleman whose elocutionary skills forced the truth out of anyone who crossed him. The one thing that was constant was the jacket. His red jacket made him an icon. No one knew what he really looked like, just what that jacket looked like. There were those who thought he was only the jacket and that we detectives had invented him in our own minds to create either a superhero or an arch-villain to strive to emulate.

How in the world I was going to find this guy, I didn't know. Some people were trickier than others, but there were those that just didn't want to be found.

Turns out Dick was one of those who didn't want to be found. At least not willingly.

As I walked out of the Afghans office to catch the next train back to my office, something whizzed past my head. It implanted itself into the wall behind me with a *thunk* and I couldn't help but giggle for a moment as I looked upon it. An atlatl, the Aztec weapon of destruction that Cortez and his men feared above everything else Montezuma and his band of heart sacrificers threw at them. Who'd be chucking atlatls in an era where coercive threat was managed by gunpowder weapons thanks to the invention of the flintlock? Whoever had missed me did it intentionally. A person didn't spend the time needed to master accurate atlatl use only to miss. This was a warning.

But who in their right mind would warn me with an atlatl?

Someone obviously heard my question. As if on cue, a car that had been idling in a spot a few yards behind me revved up and stared me down. This had the potential to not be pretty. As a youth, I grew disheartened over my repeated failure on road tests for trite reasons, so I simply gave up. Right now, I instantly regretted that decision.

Fortunately, for unexplainable reasons, I knew how to hotwire a car. And I did know how to drive. Just not when some hag from the DMV was staring down my shoulder. So, I took those two skills and jimmied the closest car to my left: a 2006 Black BMW Beetle. It was a decent automobile. Top speed of 110 miles an hour, leatherette seats, built in iPod jack. And good fuel efficiency too.

I slammed my iPod in, threw on my driving mix (which in reality was just good subway music), and wired the fucker. Once it turned on, I remembered the majority of my subway music was an odd combination of Showtunes and Parliament. I'd change it at the next light.

So, these guys wanted a chase, did they?

**AUTHORS NOTE: DUE TO THE FACT THAT CAR CHASES ARE A VISUAL SPECTACLE THAT CANNOT BE ADEQUATELY VERBALIZED, SAVE FOR AN ABUNDANT USE OF ONOMATOPEIAS. WE WILL RESUME OUR STORY AFTER THE CAR CHASE HAS CONCLUDED, BUT REST ASSURED, IT WAS AWESOME.**

"Well done, Mr. Relgan. I've never seen anyone run down fifteen pedestrians while parallel parking. That takes considerable skill. And those pyrotechnics you seemed to conjure out of the ethereal void were nothing short of spectacular. That was a light show for the ages, I'd say."

A real gentleman all right. When he wasn't trying to run you off the road, or forcing you to make massive jumps, that was. Dick Delicious didn't let you find him. He found you. And made you fire a grappling hook at a light poll to make a sharp turn while two armored vehicles bearing a trove of artwork worth an untold amount closed in on you.

"So, Dick. Now that you've got me, what are you looking for? You're the one with the photos and I'm the one who needs them. Why did you make us take a detour through the zoo and have me juggle five penguins while avoiding getting trampled by an elephant?"

"I needed to make sure you were worthy of receiving my intelligence. The true way to judge a man's character is how he reacts when confronted with an atlatl and a car chase of mind-blowing proportions."

Share? This was coming from a man that had thrown a briefcase full of money at the Afghan to get his hands on these photos.

"If you're asking about why I'm giving these up, I'll merely state that the Afghan is currently a lovely shade of lavender. I merely was acting to make sure the photos did not fall in the hands of anyone who could use them to your or Miss Golucky's detriment."

Golucky? The curator for the Museum of Conceptual Design? What did she have to do with any of this?

"Yes, Miss Golucky. I wasn't sure of it either, but these are the last known photos of the Finger, and she is clearly seen in possession of it. Here she is picking it up, here she is attempting to incorporate it into her newest exhibit, and here she is putting it in her bag and walking away. I'm sorry, but the photos don't lie. Miss Golucky is in possession of the Gilded Finger."

"I had hoped I wouldn't have to visit any museums, but it looks like that's my next stop. Oh, and Dick?"

"Yes, my boy?"

"Killer jacket."

It totally was.

Teaur Golucky- Curator with an eye for placement and quirky fashion styles. A recent addition to the sprawling metropolis, she hit the ground running and didn't look back. How could someone like her steal the Gilded Finger? Only way to get an answer was to visit.

The Museum of Conceptual Design was desolate. Then again, it was Christmas Eve. No one goes museuming Christmas Eve. That crowd went home at 5pm when the Museum District shut down. But she was there. Not being catholo-denominational had its perks.

Hers was the only office lit in her spacious office. It was undergoing yet another renovation to fit some contemporary style that was on the upwards tick. The joy of heading a museum that people weren't sure of content wise meant that you could make things up as you went along. She did.

# short stories

## { getting the finger }

by alex nagler



Knock. Knock. Was I really about to finger the Finger filcher?

“Come in.”

“Miss Golucky, it’s Relgan Xela. We’ve passed each other at the opera on numerous occasions. I wish I was here on happier circumstances, but I’m afraid you’re under arrest for the theft of the Gilded Finger.”

Her face dropped. She removed her red-framed glasses and sighed a sigh of some crazy noise. Like a cat being stepped on, or an elderly politician getting his mouth filled with a lawn sprinkler.

“I didn’t mean for it to happen this way. It’s true that the Finger was last in my possession. I’m going to assume you have some sort of photographs of me putting the Finger in my bag and walking away. What the photo doesn’t show and what you’re going to have to believe me on is that I wasn’t the only one in the room when that happened.”

“What are you trying to say, you protected it and suddenly no one knows where it is?”

“Essentially, I don’t know who was following me, but someone was out to get that Finger. I had to put it in my bag to keep it out of the wrong hands, but whoever wanted it was one step ahead of me. They switched my bag on me as I was leaving. The bag I left with was identical in design and content to mine, it just lacked a Finger. Besides, the Finger has always been a representation of what your clients are, and they’re so much more than that now. Sure, they’re still crass and immature when they want to be. Sure, jokes about a blind governor are funny, but look at what they’ve done recently. The Mad Afghan brought down a crooked Doctor. Things are serious this year, and they’re only going to get more serious as the City’s economy keeps floundering. The Finger is a nice hold on from the past, but it’s time to move on. Besides, it didn’t fit with any of my new exhibits. It just clashed against my theory of compartmentalized space.”

She was right about the last stuff, but I found it tough to believe that someone created an exact duplicate of a bag and then switched it to get whatever the hell this Gilded Finger was. Sure.

“Teaur, I’m gonna need more of a story than that to move on to the next person in this cockamamie tale. How about this: I’m going to go find a bar and drink to clear my head. I haven’t done that yet, and it seems to be an unwritten rule, that as a detective, I have to. You gather your possessions and then come find me when you’re ready to tell the truth. Merry Christmas, I suppose.”

“But you’re Jewish.”

“And you’re an Absurdist Muslim. I know. I’ve laughed at your Facebook religion, just like everyone else. I’m going to go make friends with a few beers. Come find me when you’re ready.”

And like that, I left. She had done it, but I wasn’t ready to turn her in. How could someone whose life was devoted to design remove something so aesthetically pleasing?

The Drunken Penguin. Something about a penguin with a top hat, monocle, and martini glass made me feel at home. I slid onto my usual stool, grumbled at the bartended, and was passed a glass of Brooklyn Grand Cru. Something the creamy body and overpowering aroma always seemed to clear my head. That, or the fact it was 8% alcohol, strong for a

beer. A glass or two of that and I was always thinking straight.

How did I get here? Why had Madame Balls walked into my office, why had I bribed Commodore Takai, why did Sparkly Luchador give me a severed hand, why did The Mad Afghan and Tetric System lead me to Dick Delicious, why did Dick Delicious try to run me down, only to give me photos, and why was Teaur Golucky in the middle of this? Things didn’t add up.

“The Museum Security Camera”

The what?

“Relgan, the museum security cameras. I was in the main area and they’d have seen everything. I remember what day it was, and your photos have timestamps on them. We can just watch who was following me.”

She had a point. But how did-

“I find you? You’re drinking in a bar called The Drunken Penguin. I’ve seen your Facebook profile too.”

So we went back to the museum to see what we could make out of the security footage. Simply punch in the date, time and location, and the museum’s security footage did what it had to do.

There she was, picking up the Finger, removing a cobweb, and then. Something startled her. She put the Finger into her bag and went to walk out. Something on the floor caught her attention. She paused, bent over, picked it up, and.

The bag flickered out of sight and reappeared moments later. Pause, rewind, rewatch. Same thing on five consecutive viewings. Someone swapped the bag.

On the sixth watching, Teaur gasped. “The Berk! It was The Berk, man!”

The Berk?

“The Berk is a former employee, a disgruntled one at that. His work was always sloppy, and he left us after being promoted. Something about wanting to work for a classier museum that didn’t rotate its exhibits so frequently. Last I heard of him, he was organizing a salute to the Winter Olympics in the middle of July. Never a bright one.”

“But why would he steal the Finger?”

“I have no idea. I guess bad exhibits just drove him mad. And we did recently have an expo of statues that resembled him that were given to local artists to do with what they pleased. We got some really creative responses. I guess that made him snap and he stole the Finger in revenge.”

Okay, so we had the motive and the loot. Normal detective work would indicate I get a warrant, but not with this one. It was Christmas Eve and I felt like celebrating the season.

“Get your car. I’m going to call up everyone I dealt with today and we’re going to go pay this The Berk a visit. I have a feeling I know where he is.”

L’estat. A formerly vainglorious hotel that had deteriorated even more in the past years. Though its bank account swelled, there was just something bad about it that no one liked, but many people frequented due to its cheap, available rooms. I had heard The Berk had set up a little com-

# Short stories



## { getting the finger }

by alex nagler

mand center for himself here. My hope was to catch him with the Finger so we could all go home.

We pulled up to Lestat and got out. Madame Balls and Commodore Takai joined us, arriving with a pair of twins in tow that simply called YuLiu. Nothing wrong with bringing some muscle, I suppose. Sparkly Luchador was next, and he brought two of his gym buddies, Knockout and Mania. The Mad Afghan's limo pulled up and Tetric System let him out. I was surprised to see the Independence Crew dressed in full fatigues show up, but then I remembered that they had some bad blood with The Berk as well. Dick Delicious didn't show, but I could have sworn I saw a red jacket somewhere in there. Might have just been a red head. I didn't know.

"Alright everyone. Glad to see you here. On the seventh floor of this crappy hotel is The Berk. I have every reason to believe he's in possession of The Finger, and might be armed and dangerous. I'm going to turn my back and let you grab whatever you need, but once we head up there, no turning back. We're not leaving until that Finger is back... well, wherever it belongs."

While they fitted out whatever they needed, I reached into my bag and pulled out my trusty revolver. It may have said Nerf Maverick on it, but like any good denizen of the Internet, I had modded mine. This was my weapon of last resort. Hopefully, I wouldn't need it and could let my retractable steel baton do all the talking for me.

I turned around and was greeted by a heavily armed mob. They wanted their finger back.

"All right, motherfuckers! Let's go!"

We stormed into the lobby, which was manned only by a single old man in a purple sweater. We paid him no regard and clamored up the stairs, looking for the Berk. Elevator may have been quicker, but there were too many of us, and I had a bad experience a few years back with some of these people and a crowded elevator. The Seventh Floor was drawing on us quickly.

Oddly, the Seventh was just one room. The Berk must have consolidated his gains to make a single chokepoint for defense. I knocked.

"Berk! We know you're in there, and we know you have the finger. Surrender it and we'll leave. Otherwise, we're coming in."

He didn't surrender it. They never do. So, we heaved down the door.

There he was, in all his insane glory. The Berk. And to his left, The Gilded Finger. It was shiny, no denying that. I still had no idea what it was or what it meant to this armed assortment behind me, but they wanted it back and I was hired to give it back to them.

"Warriors, Come Out And Pla-ay" he screamed.

A pretty odd statement to make to an armed mob that wants nothing more than your head. Well, he was willing to dance and we wanted to polka. Lets get this going.

I don't know who fired first, or what smacked him in the head second, but the next twenty minutes are a blank. When we all came to, my Maverick's round had been expended, my baton had some blood on it, and everyone else was just as confused as I was.

Except for The Berk. He was gone. Where he went, we didn't know.

Some say he jumped out a window, others that he managed to turn the mob against itself and simply walked away as we all bruised one another. Others claim he never existed and that someone from within the mob called out that vintage movie quote, and that he was a projection of our own need to beat someone. He left the Finger. I guess that's all that really mattered.

The Finger was back to its rightful owners. I didn't know where they'd put it, but I'm sure they'd find a place. That didn't matter. What mattered now was its Christmas time and for some reason, we were all together.

Someone started singing.

"It's Christmastime,  
there's no need to be afraid  
At Christmastime,  
we let in light and we banish shade  
And in our world of plenty  
we can spread a smile of joy  
Throw your arms around the world  
at Christmastime"

Were they really doing LiveAid?  
"But say a prayer,  
pray for the other ones  
At Christmastime it's hard,  
but when you're having fun  
There's a world outside your window,  
and it's a world of dread and fear  
Where the only water flowing  
is the bitter sting of tears  
And the Christmas bells that ring there  
are the clanging chimes of doom  
Well tonight thank God it's them  
instead of you"

What the hell, why not

"And there won't be snow in Africa this Christmastime  
The greatest gift they'll get this year is life  
Where nothing ever grows  
No rain or rivers flow  
Do they know it's Christmastime at all?"

And everybody started singing.

Here's to you raise a glass for everyone  
Here's to them underneath that burning sun  
Do they know it's Christmastime at all?

And that tacky chorus that everybody knows.

Feed the world  
Feed the world  
Feed the world  
Let them know it's Christmastime again

Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays from The Stony Brook Press.

# Short stories

## *the gazelle* *in which new realizations are made*

Started by Zoonatic  
Finished by Paul Calhoun



**I**t had never crossed Marco's mind that he was a furry. Sure, he liked animals, but he had never desired to look like one. That is until he saw the costume that his sister was to wear in the theatrical production of the Lion King and I.

He had helped her rehearse her lines several times for the play and she had seemed excited about the costumes that the troupe was ordering. He figured that they would be lame, open faced, stylized suits so as "not to hide the actors features". When Marco went to a production, he was there to see the characters, not the actors. Marco liked the theatre but did not participate much with it. He had tried in the past but was overly shy and unsuccessful. Tonight was going to be different though. The first time his sister had donned the gazelle costume and had practiced her lines in it with him, he knew that he wanted an opportunity to wear it. Luckily, the chance had come as his parents had gone out and his sister was on a date.

Marco crept into his sisters room and opened up the closet. There, hanging on a rack, was the lean and gracefully feminine gazelle bodysuit. The top shelf space just above the costume was occupied by a headstand, upon which was stretched the fur covered latex mask of a beautiful anthropomorphic gazelle. He grinned as he looked around to make sure he was truly alone before he removed the bodysuit from the rack.

The body was slender and graceful, a runners body. He admired the furry suit, the white underbelly and chest, the tan fur with the black lines along the side. The hands and hooves were attached to the suit, the hands had tiny black tips on the ends of the fingers, and the feet were fully cleft hooves. They were dainty and were pretty hard to stand in, so his sister had said, but he was soon going to find out for himself.

He gently probed the black line of fur that ran from the outer thigh of the suit to the underarm. Carefully, he fished out the zipper tab and pulled it slowly down the side from under the arm to the side of the rump. He set the suit aside, realizing the need to feminize his body some more. Luckily, his sister had a corset for a role she played in a Victorian era play that was probably agonizing enough to give him the same hourglass figure she had. He slipped into the corset and zipped it up the middle, he was glad it wasn't laced. He also borrowed one of his sister's bras and padded it expertly with some of her cotton batting she used for her sewing projects. Once he was satisfied with his general shape, he once more took up the bodysuit.

Holding it down, he carefully stepped into the side of the costume and let the silky, cool interior transmit the sensual sensations through his skin as he slid his leg into the gazelle girl's leg. His right leg disappeared into the sleeve of her trim appendage, and his toes fit perfectly into the box shoe hidden within the cleft of the hoof. He stood up on his tip-toe as he then slipped the second leg in. Soon, he pulled the suit up to his waist and was situating it so that the padded hips looked just right.

He reached his right arm down and slipped it into the slick sleeve of what would become his new arm. He watched as his hand slid down her

arm and filled it in from the inside out. He wiggled his fingers into hers, missing the little finger a couple of times, the suit was so tight, but managed to get the glove to fit. He grabbed the neck hole and straightened the bodysuit up, popping his head through the neck hole and drawing his other arm into the suit and then filling out her left arm.

He grinned as he went for the mask next. She looked at him with her mouth slightly agape, her chocolate brown eyes bright and cheerful but with a sense of underlying emptiness. The black horns on her head were twisted into delicate spirals and one of her ears still had a golden hoop through it that his sister had added as part of her costume for the play. He liked the way his sister did these little extra things to bring her characters to life.

He opened up the back of the mask and ducked his head down into the interior as he straightened up and pulled it into place. He adjusted the articulated jaw to match his own mouth movements and made sure that the ear and nose tubes were fit securely. He tucked the mask flaps down under the neck and the gazelle girl admired herself in the mirror. Just one more thing to do....

With a broad toothed grin, the new gazelle took hold of the zipper tab on her side and slowly drew it up to the place under her arm that it would be hidden. The suit became tighter as it was zipped closed and Marco was aware of the scent of his sisters favorite perfume inside the mask where she had worn it before. Soon, Marco was completely encased and the gazelle girl admired herself in the mirror. He bemused sense of awe and joy suddenly turned to that of embarrassment when he caught a glimpse of his raven haired sister, Rebecca, standing behind him. The gazelle girl whirled around to face her.... "I can explain....", she began.

Rebecca smiled and held up a finger to shush the gazelle. "The first rule of any suit performer is not to ruin the illusion...."

With Rebecca's guidance, voice coaching, and even some female training, Marco was soon able to pull a convincing role while costumed as the gazelle. Rebecca even arranged it so that he would be performing in her stead at least two performances per week, of course the troupe just thought it was Rebecca inside the costume. After all, Rebecca liked acting, but she really wanted to direct....

Marco lay back on the wood chips, his eyes closed and mind wandering. Rebecca dangled with her legs bent at the knees from a hanging bar. The playground wasn't exactly an appropriate place for them to hang out, but over the years they'd never found a better one. Rebecca swung slightly and finally said, "you're still thinking about it."

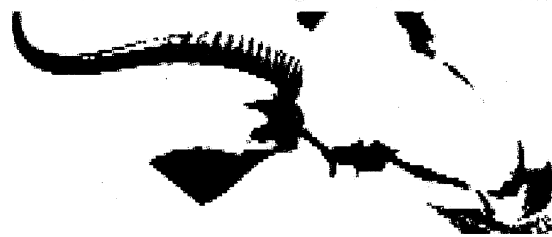
Marco opened his eyes, "to my lasting annoyance and regret, yes." He'd long since stopped trying to figure out how his sister could hang from the bar like that. They'd both been through gymnastics class as kids, but he'd never been able to duplicate such a feat.

Rebecca righted herself and sat with the bar running between her legs. "I hope you're not mad at me for returning it."

Marco smiled, "of course not. It was worth more than we made com-

# short stories

## the gazelle continued



bined on that play to 'lose' it. I'm glad they paid you."

Rebecca laughed, "any play that can budget for a skintight fursuit can afford to pay the actors. Can you imagine the quality that must have been required for it to fit so close?"

Marco closed his eyes again and Rebecca could see him trying to control his breathing. "Don't remind me."

Rebecca looked down at her brother. She sighed and said, "couldn't you get a job? With what you made on the nights you replaced me, you must be—"

Marco shook his head, "I'm not old enough to get a job, remember? I'd have to at least get papers from school, and that would mean questions. I'm not that great a liar."

Rebecca grinned, "what about when you wore the gazelle?"

Marco snorted, "I never said anything. One word would have given me away, then as now. It's only because I'm fifteen that I could fit into that costume. Give me a couple more years and that'll be the end. I can't get a job discreetly until it's too late."

Rebecca shrugged, almost letting go of the bar, "maybe you won't grow anymore. It happens." When her brother didn't say anymore, she decided to give him the choice. "How much would you do for another suit?"

Marco opened his eyes, "I hate it when conversations go this way. My response: what do you want me to do?"

Rebecca grinned, "well, if you pooled your play money with mine, and I added some of my own savings, I might be able to work something out. You'll have to sign a contract with me for a return service."

Marco looked dubious, "what return service?"

Rebecca grinned, "can't I have a bit of fun?"

Marco gave her a hard look, "not if it entails me enfemme and fur taking one of your pathetic geek friends on a date."

Rebecca snorted, "please. That wouldn't be nearly enough. No, I have a friend who wants to write her own 'private moments' play. Like the Vagina Monologues but with a different topic. If you'd be willing to be interviewed by her and act as the star, I think we could come to an arrangement about keeping the suit afterwards. She told me I could direct if I could find her a leading mammal."

Marco considered. That wasn't as bad as he'd expected, and since he'd already done one play, why not another? He said, "would I have to remove the mask or be listed by name?"

Rebecca shrugged, "it would add verisimilitude. A greater reality to the play. Why not?"

Marco laughed, "and be known far and wide as a transgendered furry? Pass."

Rebecca was starting to get into the idea and tried to be convincing. "Where else will you get such a good deal? Mom and dad don't have to know. We hid your involvement in the last play, didn't we? This is an off-off-off-off Broadway back alley piece. No one you know will be there. Heck, I'll even pay you, minus the cost of the suit. If we make more in profit than that suit cost, you'll get ten percent for being the main character."

Marco took a deep breath, "fine. I'll do it. Wait. What kind of creature is this?"

Rebecca leapt down, "I'll ask April what she thinks. For the realism, she may go with what you want, so think about it now. I'll be back later to tell you when she wants to see you."

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"So, Marco, you're a real furry?"

Marco shifted uncomfortably, "I didn't used to think I was, but one day I just had to wear that gazelle outfit Rebecca had from the Lion King and I. I even took her place on stage several times."

April wrote something down in her notebook. "Interesting. Have you ever been interested in some way before? Going to see *Cats* or staring at

mascots?"

"No!" Marco exclaimed. "It just happened one day. I can't explain why then, it just happened."

April nodded. "So you haven't been suiting long. The unexpectedness makes you an interesting subject. I'm going to be probing you deeply, please don't be embarrassed. Most of what you say will not be repeated, and any specific incidences will be fictionalized. Only the idea will remain."

Marco nodded and took a deep breath. "I'm ready."

April smiled. "Tell me about the first time you wore the suit. How did it feel as you slipped on the first leg? How did you prepare before you began?"

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April looked at her notes, "OK, so I've written up a lot of the play already. What I haven't decided is what kind of fur you want to be. From what I understand, you like mammals, preferably something digitigrade. Have you thought about it? Be as complete as you want be in that answer."

Marco replied, "I thought. I've been looking around at the various people. Lupine and vulpine are common, and I admit tempting. Especially vulpine. I'm dead set against any breed of dog, but a gray striped or pure black cat might be nice. I actually did consider an equine of some sort, just so I can have something that works well on all fours. In the end, I think I'll stay traditional and go with a vixen. They can be cute and sexy."

April smiled at the comment, "I'll tell our costume designer. I don't think I ever told you what kind of play it was."

Marco shrugged, "something like the vagina monologues, she told me."

April nodded, "similar. Since you'll be the only subject, there will be more interaction with the other characters and less of you just talking to the audience. I tried to tailor it to your story, and I think it worked. With your choice of animal, I think I have enough to finish. Thank you, I'll be in touch about rehearsal, though I'm sure your sister will be more than happy to do that herself."

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Marco went through rehearsals at first with enthusiasm. Everyone seemed happy to work with him, and interested in his furriness. He'd started out shy, but quickly grew comfortable with talking about it. With time, he stopped being so gung-ho. That turned around when Rebecca announced that costumes were in. He took one look at his, ran to the costume rack and started feeling it.

The fur was a bright orange, with a deeper red and brown highlight. It darkened further as it reached the chest and belly, which were white. The colors also deepened near and on the paws. A dark red wig sat framing the expressive brown eyes and muzzle which seemed to smile at him invitingly. Even without looking inside or feeling it, he could tell there was something padding the chest, hips and buttocks. Rebecca gently pulled him away, "practice now. I'll put it in the car so you can get used to it tonight. Just you and the suit this afternoon and evening. You can even sleep in it."

Marco could hardly wait and rushed through his lines. Rebecca forgave him that, knowing that his performance would improve drastically by tomorrow. She quietly loaded the suit into the trunk of her car, careful not to damage it or get it dirty. She wished she had a suitcase, but figured she'd find one at home to bring it back in. That is, if Marco didn't just put the thing on and never take it off. She didn't like how he'd gone for it so quickly.

Marco was quiet on the way back, and took the fursuit into his room without talking to anyone. He laid it out on his bed and examined it, seeing that the mask was attached on this one and the zipper was in front, the track hidden by a flap of fur that velcroed over it. He started at the feet, finding that for true digitigrade appearance, there were clear plastic heels.

# Short Stories

## the gazelle continued



Going up, he found the genitalia and anus had been worked to inert and cover his own.

He began to wonder how much this had actually set Rebecca back. She'd quoted him a number that was way too low for this kind of workmanship. He reminded himself to work extra hard on the play. He spent a long time on the tail, feeling it and trying to see how it was stuffed. Wiggling it, he felt something odd which he eventually decided must be a servo. Only putting the suit on would answer his questions there. The buttocks and breasts seemed padded with something that felt and moved just right, probably some sort of silicone.

This led him finally to the head, which had straps that looked like they would let him move the mouth and maybe even blink the fur covered eyelids. His hand explored the inside, finding the slick latex inside, as well as some odd bits in various places. In addition to the bits in the nether regions meant to house his current parts, he found two small cups opposite the breasts, and other rubber things like suction cups just above the buttocks, and several in the head. There was also an odd band about the neck, perhaps to hide his nonexistent adam's apple. He also found a much harder section of latex around the belly, so he figured a corset underneath wasn't required.

After all this, he was more than ready to try it on, but was still very careful as he sat and pulled his feet into the back paws. He stood up and got his balance on the heels, bending down to get a grip on the rest. Pulling the arms on, he noticed how the claws could be extended with a small motion of his fingers and how the arms themselves contracted to make his seem smaller. He sucked in his gut as best he could and hooked the zipper with a claw. Hoping it wouldn't pull out, he yanked and got the zipper up to his neck, pulling the breasts into place. He smoothed the velcro down and looked in the mirror. So far so good. He had an hourglass figure, slender arms and legs, which were better shown by the invisible heels. His breasts were proportional to his slim body, accentuated by the coloring. He reached back to get a hold of the head and pulled it over his own, making sure to get the scalp hair away from the seam. It overlapped some of the fur around it, something inside gripping his shoulders so it wouldn't fall off. He pried the muzzle open and fiddled with the straps until they were as tight as his clumsy fingers could make them. Closing the mouth again, he found he could open it a little with his own. He twitched his eyebrows and the ears flicked, an inspired guess as to what those suction cups were meant for. He posed in front of the mirror, a purely feminine image, and finally turned around. By flexing his buttocks, he could move his tail with remarkable precision, and he spent the next hour posing and practicing, finally being able to flick his ears on command, and move the tail to wrap around him and touch his nose.

He bounced with excitement, noting the corresponding bounce on his chest. He had to show Rebecca. Turning, he made for his door and realized before he turned the knob that their parents might be home. Opening it a crack, he tried to call her, "Re-" he choked on the first syllable. That band around his throat had vibrated when he talked and his voice came out higher pitched and feminine. He remembered one day April had asked if she could tape his voice. She must have sent it with the order to get a voice changer installed. Marco was really impressed now, but wasn't sure what to do. If his parents were home, they'd catch a strange girl in a vixen costume, if not- wait. He was not totally disguised. Why bother worrying, Rebecca would cover for him. He could say he was a friend of hers working on the new play. That was true enough. He strode brazenly to the living room, reveling in the swing of his hips and the swish of his tail. He found Rebecca alone reading, and when she looked up it was with true astonishment. "You look amazing."

Marco spun around and said, "more than just look. Did you know about this?"

Rebecca smiled, "yeah. April said it would make the audience the more surprised. 'Sure,' they'd say, 'it's just a girl in a fursuit pretending to be a guy.' Then you pull off the mask halfway through and show your face. I even worked out a movement to show the audience how the voice changer worked. I was saving it for when you got the suit so it'd be a surprise. Happy?"

Marco laughed and spun again, "amazed, enchanted, enraptured, excited! This is going to be amazing! I realized I don't even have to hide from mom and dad when we work on it here. If I wear the suit during our sessions, they won't even question that I'm someone else."

Rebecca smiled, "if that's what floats your boat."

Marco received plenty of envious looks among the actors. As well, there were those who were really happy for him, and those that wanted to stroke his fur the entire time. Someone actually went as far as to pinch his tail, which is when he discovered that the servos went both ways. The tail delivered a very pleasant sensation whenever it was touched.

His performance improved drastically now that he had the object of his labor. The weeks flew past and the day of the first actual performance arrived. As he was about to pull the mask on once more, he looked at Rebecca, "here we are finally. I hope you enjoyed these sessions as much as I have."

Rebecca punched his arm and gave his tail a quick brush, "have fun and break a leg."

Marco took a final bow to a standing ovation, any doubts about this play evaporating with the applause. He waved, blew kisses through the mask and made thanking gestures as he received a bouquet of roses. Making his way offstage, he loosened the straps and pulled his mask off, beaming. Rebecca shook his hand and clapped him on the back, "congrats, little bro. Your first starring role and you brought the house down." She saw the sweat coming off him and handed him a large water canteen with a long straw which he took gratefully. "I'll pick up a personal cooling unit at Sharper Image this weekend. Don't worry about the cost. If we get an audience like this every night, you'll be in the black within two weeks."

Even that news couldn't elate Marco any further. He had his suit, getting paid to wear it would only be a bonus to an already amazing situation. He was going back to the dressing room to put on something cooler, but Rebecca steered him to another door. "Remember the play? You promised the audience you'd be out in the lobby to talk to them when the curtain fell. Now scoot." Marco now understood the straw. Rebecca was being thoughtful in her slave driving. At least he'd be able to drink with the mask on.

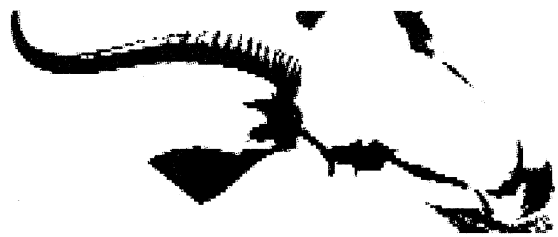
There were people from the audience already waiting, some talking to other cast members. When he walked in, his tail swaying, and that cute face smiling from under one arm, he was mobbed. Rebecca held the crowd at bay and guided him to a table so he'd have something between him and his adoring public. "You can have pictures with him soon enough, there's plenty of room for everyone if you just form up in an orderly way."

Marco was glad to be able to sit down, and carefully arranged his tail to poke out between the seat and the back as he did so. Without the microphone, it was easier to talk to people without the mask on, so he put it in his lap. Questions ranged from interest in how he got the part to whether he'd ever had intercourse in the suit. Rebecca helped him with the harder or more embarrassing questions and even fended off one irate bible thumper with several choice quotes from Leviticus. Marco made a note to check his copy of the Old Testament to see how many of those were on the level.

Finally the questions petered out, and he had to stand and have his

# short stories

## the gazelle continued



pictures taken with paying audience members. Some asked him to put the mask on, others not. One boy even slipped him a card with his phone number. Rebecca laughed when she saw that. "You've got groupies, bro!" Marco laughed at her comment and thought that maybe he'd just call that number. Why not? The boy looked nice, and maybe he'd make a good friend. Marco wasn't so far into his role that a lifetime of seminormality could be erased so easily.

The last fan was shooed away and the theater doors were locked. Marco finally had a chance to change into a T-shirt and quickly clean out the inside of the suit. He packed it into its carrying case and joined Rebecca in her car. "Wow," he said, "that was fun."

Rebecca pulled into traffic, "get ready to have even more fun. Every night and twice Saturday until school starts again, then three times on the weekend."

Marco smiled, "I like the summer, but something tells me that the coming of a cooler climate will be welcome." He gestured to the case.

Rebecca smiled, "thinking of walking around outside in it?"

Marco shrugged, "that old playground is always abandoned anyway."

Rebecca looked at Marco for a moment, quickly returning her gaze to traffic. "Promise me something, bro."

Marco looked at her, "what?"

"Promise me you won't get too carried away with this. I'd hate to see you obsess until that suit took over your life."

Marco smiled, "don't worry. I'm sure that doing nightly shows in it will quickly give me my fill. I won't stop going to school or hanging out with my friends or you just because I have a new facet of my personality."

Rebecca nodded, that would have to be enough for now.

The last month and a half had gone by like a dream for Marco. Every evening and four times on weekends he was allowed to dress up as a vixen and go on stage. On top of all that, he was being paid now. The audience had changed as well. Over the course of the last six weeks, more and more obvious furies were in the crowd. They'd started out just coming in with tails, then ears were added, then paws. Soon enough the audience averaged one person a night fully suited, though most removed their masks to hear the performance.

Rebecca had gotten instructions from their provider on how to modify the muzzle of his suit so that a microphone could be permanently added to the mask, and a speaker placed in the nose so he could speak normally while suited. The permanent microphone also interfaced with the system in the theater, so he only had to flick a switch inside to go from normal to actor mode. Rebecca had been pushing him to tell their parents, but he was adamant. "It would mean too many questions," he said, "I just can't stand the idea." He'd gone to see April once a week at her urging. She'd said she wanted him to see her as a patient instead of a partner, but the questions didn't seem to differ much. He didn't mind, and when Rebecca asked about April's opinion, he could easily tell her the truth.

"April says that there's nothing inherently wrong with me. Being a furry isn't a big deal in terms of psychological problems."

"What about a female furry?" Rebecca had asked.

Marco laughed, "that was your fault, big sister. Yours was the first suit I saw. I'd point out that I've never had the chance to wear a male suit."

Rebecca had gone off after that with an expression of concern, but determination. Marco shrugged and left her at that. He wore the suit around the house on rare occasions, and his parents had never commented after the first time on the eccentricity of "Rebecca's friend." The arousal he'd once had when putting it on had left him for the most part. Now he just felt as if his problems were remote. The vixen was a star; popular, beautiful and graceful. Why shouldn't he enjoy being her. And he was still turned on when he saw himself in the mirror. It was on one of these occasions when he was in front of the mirror - practicing swishing his tail

more for his own pleasure than for any need - that Rebecca knocked on the door. "Come in," he said in that amazing voice of hers.

Rebecca entered, smiling. She had a large box in her hands and as she placed it on the bed, she stopped to pet Marco's tail. Despite any protestations of his continued use of it, she couldn't help but admire the feel of that appendage which Marco now seemed capable of controlling without thought. He smiled, guessing his sister's thoughts and luxuriating in the feel the tail's sensors relayed to his skin of her touch. Rebecca looked at him, "could I see your face?"

Marco pulled the mask off, "sure sis. Just let me put this on its stand." He carefully placed the mask on its foam head and sat. Crossing his legs, he started brushing the hair absently. "What's up?"

Rebecca sat as well and said, "you know that big convention you're supposed to appear at? Well, it's a little early for your birthday, but it's such a long gig that I figured you'd be glad to slip into something that won't get you mobbed by fans and autograph seekers wherever you go."

Marco laughed, "I doubt anyone will recognize me when I'm not her." Rebecca shook her head, "don't be so sure. You take her off in front of an audience often enough. Your human face is almost as well known."

Marco looked at the box and grinned. Jumping up he said, "you bought me another?" He pulled her up and hugged her tightly, "I love you! I love you! I can't believe you actually did this for me! You have to let me pay you back at least half!"

Rebecca pushed him away, laughing. "Just get me something as big and amazing for my birthday."

Marco laughed, "you got it, sis!"

Rebecca said, "I'll leave you to try it on."

Marco was already unzipping the vixen, "I'll come out as soon as I've had a good look myself. Is it just as advanced?"

"Look for yourself!" Rebecca replied, pulling the door shut behind her.

Marco cut the box open with as much care as he could, but didn't have to worry. The suit itself was packed under several layers of insulation and inside a suit bag. He unzipped it and a mass of black greeted him. Intrigued, he pulled the bag away and found a large box underneath. He opened it and a black cat face looked up at him, its emerald eyes glinting in the light. He picked it up and found that there was a masculine cut to the white scalp hair, which came down by Marco's estimation to mid back. It had its own stand, which he placed next to the vixen's. Picking up the suit again, he examined it more closely. This one had almost no padding. He'd figured Rebecca's gift would be male, but this total lack in padding meant his own physique would do all the work. Reaching inside through the back, he found the same suction cup near the buttocks and a sheath for his genitals. Examining the outside, he saw that it was black except for the paws and tailtip which were white. The belly fur had a dusting of white hairs as well. It was all velvet soft, domesticated as opposed to the feral soft with a hint of coarse of the vixen. The face's nose stuck out, marking it as one of the shorthair breeds that still could work for a living. No lazing about on a pillow and eating fancy feast for this boy. He ate Friskies and got his fun by chasing anything that was smaller than him and moved. He could see that in the playful glint in its eye. There was something on the back, a white plastic thing with something multicolored inside. It looked like it was meant to only be used while the suit was being worn, and Marco was eager to oblige.

# short stories

## THE DAY THE SKY DISAPPEARED

*in which the sky is a reflection of life*

BY ALANA SCHWARTZ

I looked up yesterday and I saw the sky was completely white, as if the campus was a detached piece of a movie set, waiting for the digital effects to kick in. Terrified and paranoid, I set my head at a deliberate downward angle, and began walking rapidly back to my dorm. The bitter wind protested, ripping at me until my breath caught in my chest. The howling was telling me not to move and I stood stock-still, freezing to the ground. My eyes fought the pull of the bright-white sky, tree-tops piercing it as if the lack of sky was an enclosing ceiling with no doors or windows for even the feathered birds to fly through. Trapped, I try to break my feet free of the gluey, uncertain ground, and my eyes will not look away from the unusually still, bleached sky. My eyes stray and I notice there is no movement anywhere. Colors are dulled, contrasted with the empty sky, getting no sunlight but shadow, drinking in the browns and yellows of winter, until everything is a shade of grey. My hair, my skin, my face pales and my legs automatically surge forward: suddenly people are back and walking in a blurry machine-like unison. I join the crowd and I miss the sky...

This moment of instantaneous stop-and-rush was never a change from fake to real; it is from fake to fake, from illusion, piercing pretend, to mechanical swiftness of an EASY button. The Stop, Drop, and Roll sequence played over and again, like sleeping brains responding automatically to inside pleasures and reassuring closeness of touch. I phase out and let muscles take over, following the boring echo of people's constant chatter – yelling has never said so much, after all. My footsteps are a constant unreachable itch of underscoring rhythm, containing as much unexpected, pent-up excitement as one who is heading down a page of an already memorized book, plot and all. Consuming, consuming, I cannot breathe the icy whiteness of the air, I am stopping and going along with the crowd, and I miss the sky.

I am awakened from my stupor by babbling, misconstrued voices. I

walk through conversations blindly, my eyes still clouded from sleep's warm blanket of deception of consciousness. I see words crawling over everything, seeping definition and black description of color into the lifeless, catching on peoples' smiles. Things described so easily with sight now must be read to be understood, and I am witness to the terrible beauty of forced thought. Since life has ceased to barely notice emotion or harsh reality, it is morphing to speed the brain into clear signs of understanding. The sky is pure black now, and I read it, slowly, looking up into the distance, and now I comprehend, as I feel the words eat each other, night, night, night, night...

I am alone in a mechanical world and my heartbeat is a cell-phone's ringtone. It buzzes and beeps with a great desperateness to be noticed and loved. But my blood pumps dutifully, along to the world's endless twirling around a power source. Each human is a giant planet, growing, amassing, changing, perhaps becoming polluted, revolving around some kind of great source of power. Whether it is God, whether it is two gods, or seven, or not even a god, but addicting technology, fashion, work, we are all alone in a giant universe, our axis consisting of cravings. Drug of choice: I'll take oxygen, thanks, too cutting and pure today because in the wash of grey and darker ash I spot another soul, bleeding its red onto the ground as it passes. I follow the trail and meet smears on different people, but as I talk to them I find them similar in mindless approach. I walk towards the hurt, the pain, the blood, and I am disgusted by man's cruelty and harshness. I am following the history of hatred. The wound is spurting and terrible, I feel, awash with unrequited feeling. My heart joins the splashes of color, straining, at last, to become closer than just colors of the heart, and in that instant when our souls connected, I could feel wounds binding and red blossoming into the world. Yet a glance at the sky is now red-tinged grey, just as unhappy as the very planets we live on. But a little color in the sky raises my spirits, and I am joyous at the little color the sky contains because at this moment, a little's enough.



Photo by Brian Wasser

# short stories

## dithyrambic *in which a man admires his work*

By Steven T. Licardi

**I**f one had hurled himself through the wired glass pane in a diamond shape on the door with the razor knob and the fake wood grain that resembled a Victorian prison bulkhead, one would find himself amid a most glorious oddity.

In a far corner, one of the cork tiles in the ceiling had sagged with a liquorish colored stain that possessed it with a resemblance to sliced agate. Dirty water had escaped the rusty pipes above the lighting fixtures and seeped through the spongy textile, until it had become saturated, and plunged downward into the wastebasket below. There was a gentle clatter, like the tapping of a finger – a meaty finger – which was sure to induce a sense of psychosis if not evaluated. Some of the foggy translucent plastic faceplates over the fluorescent tubes were missing, leaving bulbs naked in bursting choral cranes, as well as some that were silent, while others winked with hiccups brought about by an inadequate supply of electricity. From a grated vent in the ceiling, a lame fan was bleating like a bat. The Venetian blinds seemed to have subsided in the windowsill on the wall in a crooked heap, with the hollow synthetic reed that had risen and lowered them propped up in the corner of the partition like a straw stuffed corpse where it had apparently fallen loose and bounced on the floor before coming to rest, erect in the corner. The window itself was unclear and iced with dander, which was the remnants of moths and flies, and eight month old mosquitoes.

Nailed to a plastic wall panel, one of those that made up all the parapets in the room, and that reminded one of those found in a medical office or psychiatric ward, at the farthest end, was a festering green chalkboard with scribbled jargon of mathematics and gray matter that seemed to have spilled across it like alphabet soup, with no order or design. It was sloppy and childish. Some letters even unreadable that skipped between script and scratch. There were diagrams of overlapping circles and triangles, formulas, straight lines with markers and blueprints of farcical contraptions.

Orienting these stupors was a balding man in suspenders who was sweating like a summer storm, with Lake Erie soaked into his shirt beneath one arm and the Dead Sea beneath the other. The room was alive with the sound of his tap-dancing piece of chalk – his only piece – rubbed down so low that he was starting to nub off the tips of his fingers and trail the skin raw atop the green slate. He backed away from the board very slowly, admiring his work. What was left of his hair on the back of his head had become soaked with salty, manly brine. He had these uneven blood colored glasses on, with one of the lenses shattered, that teetered atop his stubbly nose and crooked ears. His tie was nearly untied and hung like a sausage from around his neck. His shirt was decorated with gypsum stains, handprints and smears.

On the desk behind him, with no chair underneath, were piles and piles of papers, staked up like flapjacks for a king. They resembled an unfinished fortress, as if he were slowly writing himself a castle. He turned around to face his populace.

The room had rows of churchlike pews that were situated too close together. The chairs that weren't tucked underneath the benches were thrown around the room unevenly. Some were even turned over and sat facedown atop the cold, mismatched tile floor. Yes, even the tiles were

missing in places and didn't match. The chairs that somehow still remained below the stalls were unattended or bare.

Placed rather abusively, as if they had fallen from the sky into place, were wooden dummies, stick figures that were the size of men but thinner than an exposed skeleton in a medical school janitor's closet.

Their shoulders consisted of broad, glazed blocks of wood that looked like two livers sitting side by side with a pin holding them in the middle so they could pivot. They were screwed to a central shaft, a spine that was a pipe of wood about as thick as the thumb and index finger arched into two crescents and placed together. There was a hinge in the middle. The upper portions of the arms, which attached to the shoulders, were of a similar shaft as well, the forearms too were cylindrical. There was a hinge here too. The hands were these meek cuneiform fists that were sprawled on the tables and slunk down to their sides, wagging, protruding from the mock wrists. Their pelvises were a solid triangular block with an axel where it attached to the spinal column, and had hollowed out bowls where the legs were attached. The legs themselves were just as the arms. However, the femur portion was sort of an upward L-shape with the toe wired into the bowls. The feet were very similar to the fists, but elongated.

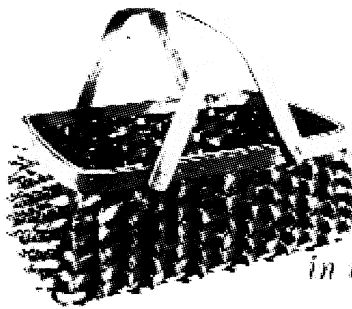
All these components were cabled up and screwed, with crux and fastening, to give lifeless movement to the wooden corpses, to give them joints that teeter and wobble but show no signs of conscious existence. The solid necks that kissed and rotated in the shoulders were thrown back or resting atop the folded arms aloft the tables. The thick, heavy heads – thoughtless craniums – were hanging off the rear of the chairs, or tossed to the armrests, or crouched between the knees. Faceless, expressionless, neither jubilant nor furious, nor woeful, nor tranquil, blank as an empty cloud, unabaptized and miserly.

The joints were pitched into chaos; the knees resting against the knees; the feet turned inward or tucked underneath the chairs; the shoulders creating a steeple as the arms jarred and swayed; the hands turned over or bent against the wrists; all inert, thrown together sadly, filling in the ambient silence with some sort of xenophobic closure.

The man in the suspenders walked to the window and with frustrated heaves, the transom stuck, he hurled open the window and threw it to the ceiling where it crashed, cracking, and poured down again before it jammed in its own jetties. The rush of air that was let in gushed across the benches, shifting some of the mannequins. It rampaged over the papers and threw them in all directions, flitting and fluttering them into the air where they roiled and buckled, folded and scratched against the dirty floor, disintegrating the fort, evaporating the belfries, and forever destroying the perfection of sheets.

The man went back to the board and again looked upon the group. The surveyor's eyes were beady and showed no signs of emotion, no wayward phrase. Instead, he merely licked his lips and seemed to think a little bit harder before opening his mouth wide and hurling a lively, "Fuck!"

# short stories



## A ROMANTIC INTERLUDE

*in which a picnic and lightheartedness ensue*

BY PAUL CALHOUN

He looked into the mirror, a rare serene smile on the face looking back. "So, me. Time has finally passed. Tomorrow is now today and perhaps it always will be."

He turned and walked to his closet. Bending over, He picked up the long box and placed it on his bed. Opening it, He caressed the contents.

He pulled one of the items out, an article of clothing that looked like a black and white furry coverall. He sat and unzipped the back, sliding his legs into the legs of the suit. Standing up, He pulled it up to his waist and then got his arms inside. Reaching back, He zipped the suit up and looked in the mirror again. He ran his hands down his sides and twisted so that He could see the long black tail with its white tip swaying behind him. Wiggling his butt, He watched the tail move. He looked at himself as He luxuriated in the feel of fur under his hands. "OK, that's enough. You don't want to be late. Not that you ever are." He winked at his reflection before turning back to the box.

White clawed feet with pink padding on the underside were next on, followed by the head. The wide ice blue eyes looked at him, the feline face managing to look both playful and wise. The white muzzle contrasted well against the black face and ears, blue eyes and white hair long enough to reach to the base of his tail once He put the head on. He leaned backwards to keep the hair out of his way as He tucked the head flaps into the neck of the body suit, and worked the jaw straps. Finally, the white clawed and pink padded gloves went on, completing the image of a tall, black and white humanoid cat.

He looked at himself once more in the mirror, the now broad smile hidden behind the almost as joyful expression of the cat. He didn't look away as He reached back to pull the final part out of the box, a pair of white angel wings that shimmered in rainbow hues as the light caught it. The straps and harness blended perfectly with his suit, making it seem as if the wings sprouted directly from his shoulders. "The perfect image of how we were back on Avia." The cat said to himself, his jaw moving.

As He left, He didn't look back at the mirror. However, because of the 3-D follow-me eyes of the suit, the mirror watched him.

\*\*\*

It was a glorious day out in the world. The sun was at its height, the June air was just cool enough to be enjoyable without needing a jacket. The clouds were arrayed artfully in the bluest sky He could remember. He emerged from the trees to the clearing and the short hill. The only sounds were the breeze and the birds as He climbed, not a sign of another person except for the picnic blanket at the very top of the hill, and its sole occupant.

As She saw him walk up, She rose, her deep green eyes sparkling in the sun, her white-tipped orange tail waving in greeting as his did the same. Her brown hair-shorter than his, blew in the breeze away from a muzzle that showed only a shy smile. She began to run as He approached, leaping into his arm and holding on tightly as He spun her gently. She laughed as He set her down. "I'm so glad we could finally do this."

He nodded, his voice both joyful and sad, "finally."

They sat, and began unpacking the food. As they pulled out the drinks, He opened one and produced a telescoping straw from a hidden pocket. She laughed and said, "not fair! I don't have one of those."

"I prepare for everything." He said smugly.

She launched herself at him, tickling him and crying, "did you prepare for that?"

He laughed, "no, but I expected it."

She pulled away and tossed her head, "well, I was getting a little warm anyway." She dug into her neck and pulled her head off. Hair very near the same shade and length of that on the suit fell out, framing a face that seemed unable to be anything but warm to any who spoke to her.

He pulled his own head off and their eyes met properly for the first time. "I feel good." He said. "It's been so long since I felt like the world wanted nothing from me. Like everything bad in my life was far away, and that a moment could last forever and I wouldn't mind."

She nodded, "I know how you feel." She giggled and buried her face in the fur of her shoulder, snuggling into herself. "Thanks for getting me this. I feel so cute."

He smiled, "all that you are now is what you have made yourself. I only ponied up the dough to make it visible to everyone else."

She sighed and her arms dropped from her sides. She looked up at the sky and said, "but isn't it wrong to do this? To--"

He leaned forward, putting a gloved finger to her lips. The hand then moved to caress her bare cheek, and She leaned into it. He said, "it may be, but don't we deserve it? There may be repercussions, but we will face them after we've enjoyed this one day. Drink it in, dear vixen. Fix every detail in your mind and memory. Even if I cannot be there in person to help all the time, you can return here and I will always be waiting to make it better for a time."

She turned and leaned back, letting him caress her with both hands, "but you will be. You have to be."

He closed his eyes, "I do not foresee ever having to leave, but if I do, I want you to have this place, this time. That is why you should stay here now." He moved to look into her eyes and his hands held hers. "This is our place forever, and as long as it exists, I will be content to remain here in memory if I can never return in person."

She smiled and a sandwich, "you're right, love. Here and now it is enough. Let tomorrow bring what it will and we can stay here today."

They ate, one hand always touching, caressing. The afternoon wore on, and finally they stood. Their bodies left the hill, their blanket packed up, but in some place in both their minds, the sun never left the zenith, the basket never ran out of food and they never truly left that place upon the hill where the fleeting moment of happiness stretched out forever, content in the eternal moment.

# Short stories

## ain't it just like the night

BY LIZ KAEMPF

*in which the rain puts things into perspective*

Adam, I get that Allison said you could move in, but I never really approved it, and -"

"Are you kicking me out?" he asked, astounded. "No! No, no no. It's just like," Jaime sighed. "How do I put this into words?" Adam waited patiently, and a little snidely, for her explanation. "Well, you've kinda had this crush on me since, well for, like forever," Adam rolled his eyes, "and I just don't know if us living together would be appropriate."

"Well for one, it hasn't been *for, like forever*," he mocked. And two, I'm not some super-crazed stalker. I care about you Jaime, yeah, you know it. Doesn't mean I don't need a place to stay. I'm friends with you two, and I'm a big boy, I can handle it." He said that last bit with an air of condescension.

Jaime sighed and started readjusting the position of the bracelets on her wrist. "So be forewarned, I might be bringing other guys home, so you can't go all Patrick Bateman on them when I do."

Adam wore a look on his face that she had never seen before. It looked like misplaced aggression sprinkled with appalled outrage. "You are *such* an arrogant *bitch*!" There was a distinct emphasis on 'bitch' that caused some saliva to shoot through the grit of his teeth. Jaime gawked in disbelief.

*He's never been so rude to me before*, she thought.

"You really think that everything revolves around you. Guess what? You're not the center of my universe!" He was yelling now. The apartment next door would assume it's marital woes, and won't call the cops about the 'domestic disturbance' until the bullet pierces their wall and breaks through their reproduction of *Starry Night*. "Just because I have feelings for you does *not* mean that I'll cry myself to sleep when you date around! I've been on dates, too!"

Adam was putting on his coat and was looking like he was getting ready to leave. "Whoa, whoa, wait! You can't storm out! This is my place, I'm the one that should be storming out!"

"Jaime, you started this. You don't get to be mad when *you* insult *me*. Jaime, come -" He was cut off. She was putting on her sweatshirt now and grabbing her keys to leave. She was half way out when he called after her, "It's pouring outside, where are you gonna go?" But she was already slamming the door behind her.

Flying down a residential street, driving 70 miles per hour instead of 30, Jaime was exasperatingly deciphering the situation out loud to herself. "How fucking ridiculous is he?! I mean, it's not my fault that he's in love with me! God, I just don't want things in *my* apartment to be fucking awkward. I'm trying to save him from getting hurt, really. And I'm definitely *not* being a bitch for that. That's actually being considerate. What a fucking jerk." She gave herself a second to catch her breath. "He's so stupid," she whispered, but even she wasn't convinced of what she was saying anymore.

Just as she was deciding to turn around to go back to the apartment, there was a deep fork in the road she didn't recognize. Taken aback, she turned to the right just hard enough to send her slick tires into a frenzy. The sedan jerked back and forth as Jaime turned the wheel futilely all the way to one side and back again to regain control. Her common sense kicked in just in time to remind her to hit the brakes. She slammed her foot down on the pedal and the car did two full rotations before coming to a complete stop, facing the wrong direction on the opposite side of the road.

Her hands were gripping the steering wheel so tightly that her knuckles were turning white. Her eyes were wide as she shuddered with every unstable breath that escaped from her lips. She kept repeating to herself, *oh my God, oh my God, oh my God*.

She shifted the gear into park and slowly stepped out of the car into the torrential downpour outside. With her hands out and palms up, like she was presenting an offering to God himself, she stared up into the sky, her face illuminated by the orange glow of the street lamps. She stood in the street like that until she was completely drenched. Until she could feel the rain creating puddles inside her shoes. Until her long hair, now black from the wetness, laid flat against her face. Until the rain had sufficiently washed away her emotional shortcomings. No one would be able to tell by looking at her if she was crying or not, but her eyes were red by the time she

settled herself back in the car.

She blinked sporadically in some inane attempt to regain her composure. She shifted gears, and gingerly, she took her foot off the brake pedal and pressed lightly on the gas and repositioned herself on the proper side of the street. Going no more than 25 miles per hour the whole way, it took her almost an hour to return home driving this way.

When she opened the door to number 6E, she was still soaked, and her eyes still bloodshot. Adam jumped up looking more than disconcerted. "Jay, what the -?"

"I'm like really stupid, aren't I?" she asked him.

"What? No, of course not. Are you okay?"

"Adam, I'm really stupid. And pathetic. Don't forget pathetic." The look in her eyes was almost that of mania, but she was speaking too softly and sincerely to be deemed manic. "I can't believe I said those things to you."

"Jaime, come on. It's not a big deal. We both said things and -"

Jaime raised a hand to quiet him. She inhaled deeply with her eyes closed, and when she released it she continued. "I'm one of those people, ya know? Those dumb girls that don't know a great thing when it's standing right of them." She was laughing out of nervousness. "I'll complain for weeks about not having anything good happen to me. About why it's not fair that everyone else gets the silver platter, and I get the cracked, dirty dog bowl, and all the while the best thing that could ever happen to me is slipping away because I'm so stupid and so pathetic."

She met his eyes while she waited, searching for some hidden clues within his expression that would hint to her what she needed to say next. "I know you wanna tell me that I'm not crazy. But I know you also wanna tell me that I'm a total idiot. I just -" This was so much harder than she ever could have dreamed. She'd never been so honest with someone before, and even right now she wasn't doing a very good job of it. "Maybe it's time that I stop being so scared of being vulnerable, because maybe it's just the thing that I need."

Jaime stared down at her dripping sneakers. Adam noticed that she had been twisting her fingers around themselves since she had reentered the room. It was a twitch she employed when she was feeling uncomfortable.

He smiled, "Are you okay, though? You don't look so good." He had the sweet face of a good-natured person, and that he was.

"No, not really. Look at this." She held her hands up at her eye level to show him how much they were trembling. Steady hands were a trademark of hers, and these hands that she currently possessed were far from that.

"I think I can help with that," Adam replied as he encompassed both of her hands with his own and stepped forward until he was so close that she could feel the exhalation from his nose. "You're not crazy, or stupid, or pathetic. Right now, all you are is completely soaked. And only slightly cuter than usual."

Jaime adored the warmth that Adam's hands were sending into hers, and she managed to choke out a laugh to his compliment. "So you don't think I'm stupid or pathetic? You're sure?" she asked quietly and incredulously. "Because I feel stupid and pathetic."

Adam laughed. "Yeah, I'm pretty damn sure. And don't think that repeating the same two adjectives over and over is going to change my mind."

Jaime smiled. There was nothing else to say. There was nothing else she could have said. Any other words would have just lessened the moment.

"Come on now you," Adam told her, squeezing her hands a little tighter, "Let's make you some tea and dry you off. I'll even let you use my coffee pot to boil the water."

"You mean *our* coffee pot," Jaime corrected. "We both live here now, so we get to share."

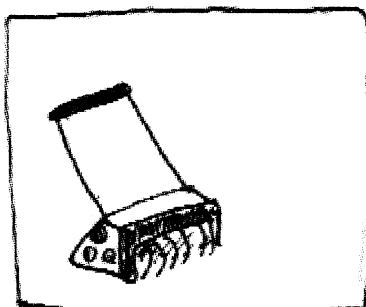
"Yeah, about that. I don't know how I feel about this 'sharing' thing," he joked.

Jaime punched him teasingly in the shoulder, "Asshole."

Adam kissed the top of her head lightly, "I know you only mean that as a term of endearment."



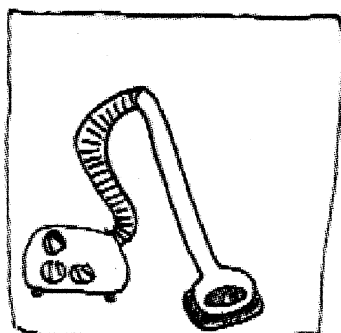
The  
By: Frank Nyles  
**SCARLET**  
**SEAWOLF** in:  
The Literary Supplement  
or  
Holiday Headache



"It blows... hard"

### The Scarlet Seawolf Snowblower

It's winter, it's bound to snow eventually, and when it does, citizens, you won't want to be without this snow-battling apparatus!



"It sucks... hard"

### The Scarlet Seawolf Vacuum

When you tear through your presents like a 1950's CIA agent through the people's mail looking for evidence of Communism... you'll need help cleaning up the wrapping paper... or evidence



"It softens... hard"

### The Scarlet Seawolf Fabric Softener

It happens to everyone: Granny gives you a sweater and you never wear it. Why is it never worn? Obviously not because of its stylish looks, it's just itchy—soften them up with this!

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Thanks for reading.

Love, The Press



# Harry Potter and the Chamber of Music

By Alex H. Nagler

"I've been told I look like a bumblebee in this outfit, which is only fitting." With that Dumbledore related comment, Vi Hart opened her piece, "Harry Potter Septet" to a crowd of enthused listeners on December 5 and garnered significant university attention, namely due to the fact it was a URECA (Undergraduate Research and Creative Activities) project that had nothing to do with the words molecular, physics, or flagella.

The seven piece, seven movement work is the result of 14 months of compositional labor on Ms. Hart's part, stemming from a near decade long love of the Harry Potter series that culminated in the piece and an eventual grant from the University to bring the work to life. URECA tends to fund science related projects, noted Ms. Hart, so for them to fund an orchestral work is a step outside their usual element. Ms. Hart was grateful for their support, noting that URECA was more than happy not only to fund the performance, but to make her the November "Researcher of the Month." They also linked to the premiere of the piece on the front page of the University's website.

The piece itself was enjoyable, though it had its rough patches. There were times the five piece orchestra overpowered the two female singers. Ms. Hart noted, "Mistakes were made, but there are always mistakes," and that

times Day poem written for Harry by Ginny Weasley. Ms. Gutierrez sang the intentionally treacly lyrics and their matching melody with all the embarrassing gusto felt surely by Harry, that is, if literary characters can actually feel

ter. When asked to compare the score that gave birth to the now famous "Hedwig's Theme" to her own, Ms. Hart noted that movie music cannot distract from the film being displayed. "Movie music is something for someone else's story. Chamber music has to stand alone, it has to be what you want people to hear." Ms. Hart's work admirably stands out on its own.

What's next for the Septet is unsure. At the reception after the premiere, Ms. Hart spoke to her ensemble about possibly doing a professional recording of the piece. A date has not yet been set for this.

Vi Hart's piece isn't just important for herself, it's important for any other student at Stony Brook whose idea of research has nothing to do with a laboratory. By showing that URECA is willing to fund worthwhile projects that aren't only science based, Ms. Hart may have opened the door for others to follow her lead and be creative on the University's dime. She makes for an unlikely

Rubeus Hagrid, but her baton could be the umbrella that magically opens the world of school-financed projects to others.



everything else went according to plan. One of the more enjoyable numbers occurred during the suite for the second book *Chamber of Secrets*, in which the Alto Darla Gutierrez sang the Valen-

the emotions their authors prescribe to them.

Ms Hart's work sounds absolutely nothing like John William's score for the movie series, and that couldn't be bet-

# Storytelling: TellabrAsian Style!

By Natalie Crnosija

Under the subdued lighting and bamboo of the Charles B. Wang Center's Interdenominational Chapel on December 4, TellabrAsian: Tellabration 2008—Tales from Asia transported the audience on a carpet ride to fair lands full of stories, according to Nastereen Khandaker, an intern of the Office of Asian and Asian American Programming.

The "Tellabration," or storytelling celebration, featured a number of different amateur and professional storytellers, who presented tales from across Asia. These ranged from traditional stories to personal anecdotes, told through dance, pantomime, traditional oration and comedic standup.

"Stories put ideas in context," said

Regina Ress, an award-winning storyteller, writer and educator. "We all live in communities with specific cultures, but we share essential values and stories help communicate those values and open our minds."

Ress told stories from Borneo's Dayak and Kelabit tribes, which she had picked up from a friend who had lived with the island's natives and recorded their oral epics.

"My friend had gone to Borneo to find herself and found the Dayaks instead," Ress said.

According to Ress, the longevity of these stories within the tribes illustrated the enduring power of storytelling and how people understand morality tales.

Professor Sunita S. Mukhi of the Department of Asian and Asian American Studies at Stony Brook told an Indian story about a half-girl, who becomes whole through the help of a

fire-breathing beast. She believes the variety of stories presented from India, Korea, Turkey, Japan, Malaysia and Indonesia communicated the diversity of Asian storytelling culture.

"Here, we were successful in bringing together a variety of very different storytelling methods," said Mukhi. "Some were better than others, but all were a little different and that is what made the program so rich."

Khandaker, who emceed the program, said she hoped the program would help different cultures understand each other and learn from each other by using storytelling as a gateway to mutual understanding.

"All great teachers are storytellers," said Ress. "All stories carry truth, not facts, like Ken Corsbie said."

Corsbie, a Caribbean storyteller, said his cocktail-like, colonialism-fostered background of Chinese, Scottish,

African and Amerindian makes him a full-blooded West-Indian stereotype.

Corsbie narrated his family's diverse history and presented a story, which passed to him through his genes rather than from teller to teller.

"I like to tell stories with a personal twist," Corsbie said.

Similarly, SBU junior Kadhambari Sridhar told a personal story of how she learned Indian classical dance from a mysterious neighbor. She later performed a dance celebrating the Hindu god Krishna.

TellabrAsian was the Wang Center's final program for the semester, said Khandaker. However, the spring semester will bring a new crop of cultural performances, workshops and film festivals, including Chinese New Year Celebrations, various film series and Stony Brook's Asian Heritage Month.

# This Week's Dose of Indie Cred

By Kat Knowlton

## Heroes of the Dancefloor-Torch

*Torch* is the sophomore album from Heroes of the Dancefloor, a New York City band comprised of extremely talented musicians more known for their studio and touring work than for this band. Hopefully this album will change that, because these boys, and lady, deserve recognition for the music they're producing.

Heroes of the Dancefloor combine a number of diverse musical genres to make a sound that is unique, but with enough familiar elements that it doesn't alienate the listener. Many of the tracks are mash-ups of jazz, R&B, and pop, with soulful vocals laid over top. Some of the songs also have a distinctively Latin feel, while others are more like a club/house track. Normally, having so many different styles one album makes it feel like a disjointed series of singles, rather than a cohesive work, but *Torch* manages to avoid this.

The instrumentation of *Torch* is probably its strongest point, especially the horns and the guitar. The trumpet and saxophone have parts that, while not incredibly complex, fit the music perfectly. They do not seem to be part of the "everything but the kitchen sink" approach to making an album, which is refreshing. Guitarist Alex Hutchings is probably the star of *Torch*. He is an incredibly talented jazz guitarist, whose

musical ability is most readily showcased on my favorite track, "Sugar." He has solos all throughout the song, but it doesn't feel like he is showing off; he is merely contributing to the overall feel of the track.

Vocalist Mamazu is a singer in the vein of old school jazz and R&B performers. Her voice adds a note of sadness to most of the songs, which fits the lyrical matter. A homeless woman in New York begging for change inspired the album. Thus, a number of the songs are about life's hardships, homelessness in particular. Mamazu is an undiscovered talent, but hopefully that will not be true for much longer.

In addition to being an amazing album, it's helping others. All proceeds from the sale of the album, including royalties and publishing mechanicals, are going to New York City charities that help the homeless.

## The Organ-Thieves EP

This EP by Canadian indie rockers The Organ somehow managed to slip by my radar in October, which was surprising, as I was a huge fan before they broke up at the end of 2006. Despite the fact that it has been out for almost two months, I'm going to throw in my opinion, because I think this EP is one of the gems of 2008.

*Thieves* came about when The Organ's frontwoman, Katie Sketch, heard that their old record label was going to release demos never officially

recorded by the band. Instead of allowing that to happen, the band reunited one last time to lay down masters of six tracks that would have been on The Organ's second album had they not broken up.

The best way to describe the way The Organ sounds is to imagine The Smiths being fronted by Debbie Harry of Blondie. Its simple, clean guitar riffs, basic drums beats, and melancholy vocals with lyrics about the sadder aspects of life. The Organ is known for their short, to the point songs, but *Thieves* changes that up a bit. The songs are allowed to build up and meander, which isn't a bad thing for this band. *Thieves* clocks in at about seventeen minutes, more than half the length of their debut LP *Grab That Gun*. Two of the tracks, "Even In The Night" and "Don't Be Angry" are the longest on the EP, both over three minutes, and while it is a departure for The Organ, I think they were moving in a good direction. Even though most of the instrumentation is not complex by any stretch of the imagination, it's still interesting and infectious to listen to, and it's great that they are able to stick to an idea for more than two minutes. That being said, my favorite song on *Thieves* is probably "Fire In The Ocean," the shortest on the EP. It is a fast drum driven song that is probably as close to a rock or punk song that The Organ would ever get to. It is urgent and angry, powered by Katie Sketch's beautifully haunting voice.

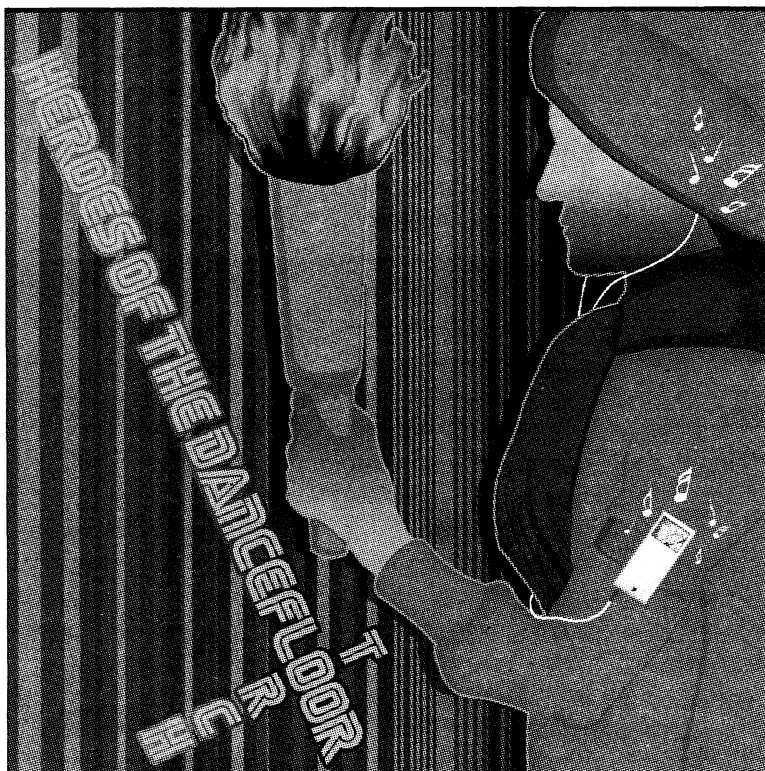
The strongest part of The Organ was always Sketch, and this EP is yet more proof of that. Like Morrissey, she embodies a sad desperation with her

voice that is sometimes almost hard to listen to, but is hard to turn away from. She sings of heartbreak and loss, and the lyrics are enhanced by the despair in her voice.

*Thieves* is likely the last release from The Organ. It's a shame, because they were one of the best indie bands around. But putting out this EP shows the love they had for their fans and the music they made.



The Organ



Heroes of the Dance Floor, yo.

Play America's Greatest Pastime

"Dead or Sleeping"

Every Wednesday at 1pm  
060 Student Union



The Stony Brook Press:

Where dead things and sleeping  
things can peacefully co-exist...  
and then we guess which is which

# sound is worth money.

(music news and reviews)

## by Steve McLinden

When I say this is the wrap-up 2008, I don't mean that I'm going to drop rhymes making social commentary about Wii Fit, like Detroit rapper Skillz probably will in the next few weeks. No, this is because I'm too indecisive to come up with a "top 20 albums" or anything like that, and I hate to exclude. This column is dedicated to all those people who say that current music sucks, because there's great new stuff coming out all the time, and there's something new for everyone, or everything for someone. Then again, this year saw new Guns N' Roses, new Metallica, new AC/DC, two new Nine Inch Nails albums, and a rehashed Bob Dylan release, so then again, maybe I'm wrong.

**New York Gets Festive:** The first annual All Points West was this summer! We got our own Lollapalooza of the East! And by we, I mean that, like the Jets and Giants, it's technically in Jersey, and if you're in New York City, you have to take PATH train and a streetcar and then walk there. And there's no camping, and no ecstasy vendors like Tennessee's Bonnaroo Festival. But New York got two nights of Radiohead, and maybe next year it'll be more like Coachella out in California, so it's cool to have something.

**Still Kicking:** AC/DC put out their Wal\*Mart-only album, and every song sounds exactly like every song they've done in the past, you know, the one with the rock and roll and the sexual euphemisms and the devil, so I guess that means they've still got it. Shattering pop-culture references fifteen years in the making, *Chinese Democracy* finally came out. But to me it seems cheap that they kept the name Guns N Roses even though they kicked out that one Axl Rose guy and got the vocalist from The Offspring to sing on the album, it doesn't sound very good.

**Death Magnetic:** If I could travel back in time, the first place I would go is outside of a Metallica show in 1988. I would tell all of those denim-clad teenagers that in twenty years, James will be wearing plaid shorts with flip-flops, Lars will hate you for "downloading" their music, the band will be like fifty years old and still be writing

songs about rebellion, their album will sound like shit, and the only way to hear the album in full sonic quality is in a video game where you hit brightly-colored buttons on plastic guitars.

**Some WTF of the Year Nominees:** Rivers Cuomo of Weezer has a moustache and really believes that he's a cowboy. Alt-country jam-rockers, My Morning Jacket's new album *Evil Urges* shakes off some of that Levon Helm influence and sounds more like Prince at times, but it actually works. Canadian indie rockers Tokyo Police Club, favorites of 15-year-old dancing scene kids in America, appear on ABC's *Desperate Housewives*, under the pseudonym Coldsplash.

**Truth in Advertising:** Dead Confederate's *Wrecking Ball* needs no explanation. I just think it's great when you can tell exactly what a band will sound like by their name. The grungy Georgia band, which has found a hit with "Heavy Petting", is pretty obviously influenced by '90s Southern alternative rock like The Afghan Whigs... and then again, so is another grungy Georgia band to debut this year calling themselves The Whigs.



**Beef:** Kanye may have made himself out to be a diva for whining about his time slot at the Bonnaroo Festival this spring, but he showed that he, too, can play the game of tongue-in-cheek humor as well as Stephen Colbert, re-

plying to the Comedy Central character's auto-tune diss with a simple Twitter update, "who the fuck is Stephen Colbert?" My favorite beef of the year was that between New York's own rappers Uncle Murda and Papoose. Early in the year, Murda claims he was shot in the head by the police while sitting in his car, so Pap dropped a seven-minute response to Biggie's "Who Shot Ya?" New York rappers still know how to keep the hate flowing.

**The Next M.I.A. Award:** Everyone told me a year ago that Santogold was going to be the M.I.A. of 2008. Turns out that M.I.A. was once again the M.I.A. of 2008, but Santogold did alright for herself, too. For the upcoming Biggie Smalls biopic, *Notorious*, Jay-Z has recently released the first single of the soundtrack, "Brooklyn Go Hard", featuring a sample of Santogold repeating that line over and over again from one of the songs on her debut album. Sound like a familiar concept to anything he's done lately?

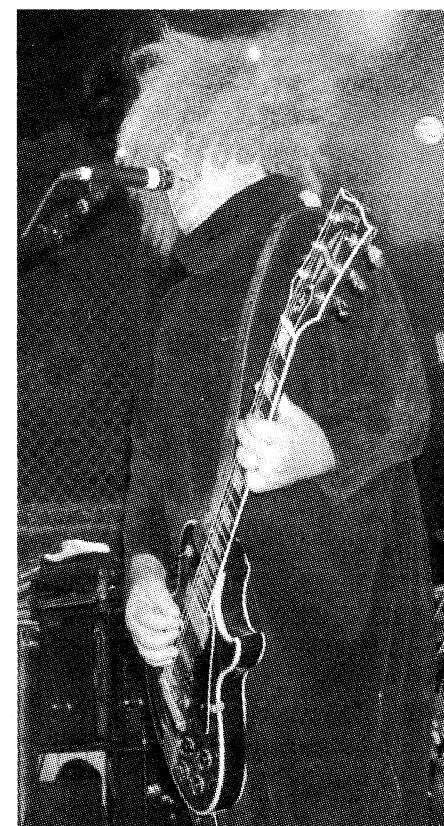
**Most Overused Word in Hip-Hop:** You'd think after we survived Jim Jones ballin' every day and college students picking up on Juelz Santana calling *no homo* on any ambiguous phrase stated, that we could tolerate anything. And then Jay-Z picked up on M.I.A.'s song from last year after it was featured in Pineapple Express, and we quickly turned swagger into the tired phrase of '08. Get like me and stop saying this word.

**Most Overused Word Outside of Hip-Hop:** Some day soon, people will realize that *hipster* is just a veil for, "obviously I care about being cool, but that guy over there cares more than I do about being cool."

**Auto-Tune:** Setting back hip-hop more than 58 years with the use of this shitty software this year. I blame Cher. I thought Kanye was just trolling us again when he said he was doing an album of all heavily-autotuned, like that time he made white people wear silly sunglasses out of which they could not actually see, or when he called out Dubya, that was a successful troll. But the descriptive title *808s & Heartbreak* really did get released, and somehow

people actually tolerate this sound for more than 30 seconds. Then again, I guess it's acceptable to auto-tune when you're going for a blatant and obnoxious effect; rather than just masking that your vocal chords are old and tired, like Billy Joel did at the Super Bowl.

**What's Really New In Metal:** I mean, besides Metallica, there were a number of great releases, and hundreds more to which I'll never get around to listening. Swedish prog metal favorites Opeth gave up that clean and comfortable feel for a more raw sound. Nortt, who describes his music as "Pure Depressive Black Funeral Doom Metal" put out Galginfriest early this year, and I think it slowly tortured my soul for forty-seven minutes of it, and I mean that in the best, most brutal way possible, and by brutal, I mean brutally ambient. Melvins, who are probably most associated with the Seattle grunge scene, have perfected their sludge sound lately on *Nude With Boots*, creating an insurgence amongst some Melvins fans who want them to go back to the old sound, but if you can appreciate sludge, you should greatly enjoy *Nude With Boots*. And for those who think stoner metal can't rock out with wicked speed at the same time, check out Oakland-based Saviours *Into Abaddon*.



SOUND continued on next page

SOUND continued from previous page

**A Christian Moment:** Awash in this sea of secular music, I thought I'd devote a paragraph to holy music. Larry Norman, who is basically the Bob Dylan of the Christian music world, died earlier this year. I know that *King Of The Hill* quote about Christian rock not making God any better and only making rock worse, but there are some worthwhile scenes purely for their musical enjoyment, and not just because they can only get booked in Church basements. Underoath got more whiny "post-hardcore" over the past several years, but *Lost In The Sound Of Separation* sees a return to the screaming metalcore vocals. A contemporary in the southern Christian metalcore scene, Norma Jean's *The Anti Mother* gets even more free-form than their previous releases, and I think it's an album that will be overlooked by many because of its perceived niche market.

**A For Effort Awards:** Trent Reznor's a totally cool guy, even in his old age. With no hype and no forewarned NIN releases, he just posted it on his website one day in March, with some versions of the album free for download. Then the following month, the band recorded *The Slip*, with a more typical NIN sound, and posted it online the next weekend. While *Ghosts* is a little boring and kind of better serves as background music if you're playing an RPG or something, *The Slip* is as good as anything Trent was doing 15-20 years ago. Another band to crank out more than one album is Sonic Youth, who advanced the Sonic Youth Recording Series this year with the vinyl-only SYR7: J'Accuse Ted Hughes and SYR8: Andre Sider Af Sonic Youth, which includes some collaboration with Japanese computer-based noise artist Merzbow. Merzbow himself probably put out ten albums this year, and I really enjoyed *Dolphin Sonar*. Expect a new canonical album from Sonic Youth on Matador Records sometime in 2009.

**She & Him:** As one of those attractive Hollywood girls, Zooey Deschanel is one of those famous people who gets afforded the opportunity to play dress-up and do whatever she wants. When she decided she wanted to make an indie-pop album, pairing up with M. Ward was probably a good choice, though, as the indie folk singer-songwriter allegedly just plays along on guitar, while Deschanel writes most of the material, sings, and plays piano and banjo. So *She & Him Volume One* is a little boring, but worth checking out. However, I still object to

her winning awards like "Indie Rock Hottie"; you can't just come in from the outside as an already-established hottie and expect everyone to surrender to you.



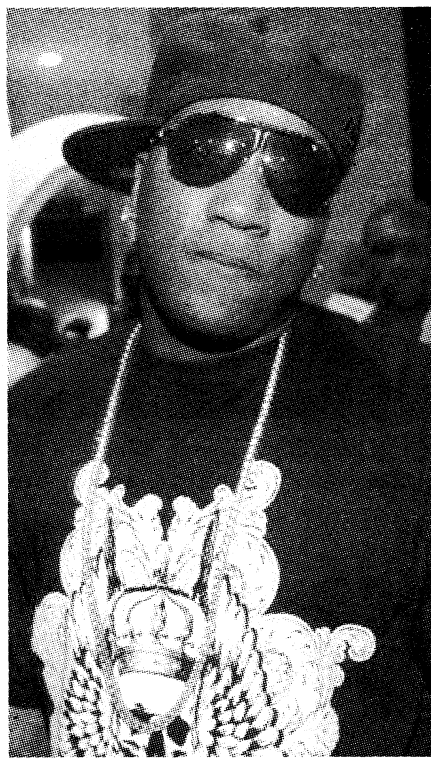
**Garage Punk blows up:** Yeah, the revival started in Memphis in the mid-'90s, but Jay Reatard signed to Matador this year and released all of those singles in the same seven-inch fashion he's been doing since he was like fifteen years old. Hailing from Texas, Harlem release *Free Drugs*, a really fun album, and one of Jay's hometown contemporaries, Jeffrey Novak put out an excellent and extremely lo-fi self-titled LP with his new band, Cheap Time.

**Laughing All The Way To The Bank:** In this crazy Internet world we live in, there are a number of albums that were digitally released in late 2007 that fans still want to kick up as technically-2008. Radiohead, Vampire Weekend, and MGMT. That's a coincidental trio, because all of these to me are a little easier to appreciate if you stop, take a step back, and realize that they're now really just parodies of themselves. Please, New York especially, stop taking Vampire Weekend and MGMT seriously! Go outside! Laugh at them and laugh at yourself a little more!

...And then there's of Montreal, a band so named just to make it difficult to say in conversation and confuse the copyeditors of music articles, with Kevin Barnes taking his theatrical shenanigans to greater heights year after year. of Montreal released *Skeletal Lamping* in September, and the electro-psychedelic pop-rock album is 15 tracks that really contains something more like fifty or sixty songs that jump back and forth and reprise at later points. Barnes,

a skinny white guy with the most tacky glam fashion sense since the '80s, says that the album details his transformation into black transsexual Georgie Fruit. On tour for the album, antics have been stepped up from breaking out of a coffin into this year hanging himself on stage, riding naked on a white horse, and all sorts of interspersed short plays.

**More Rap:** I was driving home blasting Young Jeezy's "My President (Is Black)" on Election Day, and I thought to myself, "if you told me a few years ago that Jeezy would have an album that was listenable from start-to-finish with no skipping, and that the likes of GZA would be boring the hell out of me, I would've laughed harder than DMX when he found out that a black guy named Barack was running for President." But seriously, Jeezy's *The Recession* is almost good enough to call a classic, with highlights like "Don't Know You" and other moments which kinda make you roll your eyes, like when he thinks he's the first person to rap about both politics and his materialist desires.



**Best Album By Someone You Or I Had Never Heard Of Before:** Don't write me off as a snob for calling Have A Nice Life's *Deathconsciousness* one of the best albums of the year. Most of the shoegazey philosophical album was done by two guys from Connecticut, in their basement or bedrooms or something, and the physical CD that was once available from mail-order on their label, Enemies List, is long sold out. If you love My Bloody Valentine but would enjoy more comprehensible vocals, *Deathconsciousness*

has had me questioning all year if *Loveless* is actually the perfect shoegaze album or not. With a little less of the dream-pop than MBV and listening a lot more like philosophical dissertation, it's not an album to listen to in the background, at least not the first ten times or so.

**Best Album By Someone I Know Personally:** I wouldn't plug this for the profit of my friends, but someone I've known for a while has become a notable mash-up artist out in Portland, Oregon. Easter Egg, as his stage name goes, has been compared to a more musically-knowledgeable, less-corny Girl Talk by blog Hipster Runoff, and as his mission is to make people dance at parties, it's got a little more of a liveset feel to it. So what if *Feed The Animals* used a ton of samples that many kids with Macbooks had also been preparing in Ableton Live, Easter Egg created *Jackin' For Beats*, seventy-plus minutes of more than two-hundred samples, most of which have already been used by bigger names like Girl Talk and Diplo, and re-recycles them, while also including his personal favorites heavy on verses by the likes of 2 Live Crew and Bone Thugs. It's free for download on his page at [www.myspace.com/eastereggmusic](http://www.myspace.com/eastereggmusic)

**Best New Country:** the sovereign state that was formed on the title track of Born Ruffians *Red Yellow & Blue*, detailing the reasons for their flag's color. Yeah, it's Canadian indie rock, but you will probably want to stomp around to a song like "Badonka Donkey". Singer/guitarist Luke LaLonge's voice is without comparison, and you'll probably love or hate it.

**Break-ups:** A sad year for noise rock, with the prolific Los Angeles duo of D. Yellow Swans calling it quits, and Raccoo-ooo-on breaking up, too. The Long Blondes put out *Couples* broke up after guitarist Dorian Cox's stroke rendered him unable to play the guitar for now. Touring revivals The Police and Spice Girls apparently grabbed enough of their concert going fans' cash for a while, and are both broken up again. And Hootie & The Blowfish were still together after all these years (who knew?), so presumably, Darius Rucker will hate it when you call him "Hootie" even more than he ever has

Some More Albums That I Enjoyed, in as few words as possible while retaining some grammatical style: Algernon Cadwallader's *Some Kind of Cadwallader* - '90s emo revival; if there

were a Cap'n Jazz tribute band, this would be it.

Why?'s *Alopecia* – I wish that I wrote a term paper about *Alopecia*, the most solid alternative hip-hop release by Yoni Wolf yet. And it's got real instruments and quirky intellectual lyrics, so that even you rock kids can like it.

The Hold Steady's *Stay Positive*: what kind of indie rock kid can't love The Hold Steady?

Wolf Parade's *At Mount Zoomer*: look what shrooms and coke can do to indie rock!

M83's *Saturdays = Youth*. French electronic shoegaze-pop can never sound bad.

Los Campesinos' *We Are Beautiful, We Are Doomed*: Scottish indie-pop and the

better of their two albums this year, the title track features the line "you said he got his teeth fixed, I'm gonna break them" and it's totally twee-core.

Dan Friel's *Ghost Town*: keyboard-based party-noise, with "fun moments in it." Okkervil River's *The Stand Ins* and The Mountain Goats' *Heretic Pride*: Will Sheff and John Darnielle, respectively, two of the greatest modern lyricists, on their respective indie rock/folk albums of the year.

Jaguar Love's *Take Me To The Sea*: ex-Blood Brothers and ex-Pretty Girls Make Graves, art-punk indie rock with ridiculous falsetto (but not overly-falsetto) vocals.

Thee Oh Sees' *The Masters Bedroom Is Worth Spending A Night In*: It's like I'm

really trippin' out in 1968, man.

Rise Against's *Appeal To Reason*: best major-label "punk" debut since Rancid. Polished and more focused, but as gritty and angry as ever.

Portishead – *Third*: they could've come back with the same '90s trip-hop, but this is no repeat of *Dummy*.

Marnie Stern's *This Is It...*: the most accessible math/noise rock album, with Marnie's sweet vocals set over her guitar tapping. Compare to Deerhoof, who disappointed me this year with *Offend Maggie*

Gang Gang Dance's *Saint Dymphna*: electro-tribal noise-pop experimental rock, with some '80s girl-group R&B vocals.

Prurient's *And Still, Wanting*: the harsh-

est of harsh noise. Not for the melodic-minded.

2009: What to look for... apparently, Juelz Santana and Lil Wayne are back together working on the *I Can't Feel My Face* collaboration. Animal Collective will be releasing *Merriweather Post Pavillion* in early 2009, but don't stare at the cover too long. The new Alice in Chains are doing their first album since singer and songwriter's Layne Staley's death in 2002, be nervous. Dr. Dre's *Detox* is the new Chinese Democracy. Spend money on some music this holiday season, and a happy new year to you.

## Vampire Weekend's Still Got Bite

By Kelly! Yu!

After sitting on their self-titled debut album for almost a year, Vampire Weekend played their last New York City show at Terminal 5 on December 6. They sold out their last two New York dates and added the third date to accommodate all of their New York fans. The crowd ranged from eight-year olds attending the concert with their parents to middle-aged couples spending the weekend in New York to attend the show. Twenty-somethings littered the second floor that housed the bar and lounged on the various couches as they waited for the concert to start. Although Terminal 5 wasn't the most desirable venue, Vampire Weekend still rocked as hard as they ever have.

The two opening acts consisted of two local New York bands. The first band, Air Bombay, seemed to fit right in with the anticipated sound of the night. Their poppy melodies and beats had the audience dancing on the floor. While most of the songs were instrumental, no one complained about their Urban Outfitters changing room style music. However, the most unfortunate part of their performance was when the lead singer, Andrew Kalaidjian was completely blocking the drummer, Casey Amspacher, who looked and played like Animal from the Muppets.

The more confusing of the two was the second band, Fiasco. They showed their sense of humor by introducing themselves as Vampire Weekend and played the first few notes to "Cape Cod Kwassa Kwassa." While Air Bombay had an indie feel similar to that of Vampire Weekend, Fiasco was just a mess.

The entire time, most people were trying to figure out if they were some kind of neo metal hybrid or just punk confused pop indie band. Whatever they were, it seemed like they were just jamming out on stage and didn't seem to have an end in sight. Like Air Bombay, many of the songs did not have vocals and were riddled with syncopated rhythms. By the end of their set, Fiasco

eleven songs from their debut album in addition to their new song, "Ottoman," from *Nick and Norah's Infinite Playlist*. Every song they sang sounded just as amazing as it does on the album, if not better. Their organic and down to earth sound kept the energy in the crowd alive throughout the entire night.

They also played two new songs they hoped to add on their new up-

ate that." Even before playing their popular single, "A-Punk," Koenig acknowledged that it was a Saturday and that on most weekends, people go out to dance. He said the next song required some dancing and hoped that the audience would oblige him. After the first few licks of the song, the crowd exploded in screams and the entire floor started swaying to the beat.

What made the show that much more special was that the band had hired a string quartet to perform alongside them. Situated behind a plastic-walled barrier, the musicians played on their electric instruments to "M79," (which is surprisingly about the M79 bus that runs from the east to west side through Central Park), "The Kids Don't Stand A Chance" and other string accompanied songs.

For the encore, the band returned with a cover of Fleetwood Mac's "Everywhere," which had everyone in the crowd singing along, regardless of whether they knew the song or not. "The chorus goes 'ahhhhh,' and if we all sing along, it's going to give this really ethereal feel," commented Koenig. They ended their set with the final song on their album, "Walcott," which had the entire venue dancing and going crazy as a group of young hipsters joined the band onstage to dance. Koenig ended the concert by thanking the audience for attending "the festival of young New York men," and for their high energy. After finishing up their tour, Vampire Weekend is anticipated to go back to the studio to record their second album. These Columbia grads have caught the attention of a lot of fans and will continue to rock the indie genre with their unique Afro-pop indie rock.



Photo Credit: Aakash Abbi

left the crowd confused, impatient, and anxious to finally hear some Afro-beats.

Finally, after enduring two somewhat disappointing opening acts, Vampire Weekend appeared in their preppy sweaters ready to perform their last show in New York. They opened with the first track of their album, "Mansford Roof," and ended with the last track, "Walcott." "We want to play you all the songs that we know," announced lead singer, Ezra Koenig, and that is exactly what they did. They performed all

coming album, "The White Sky" and "Little Giant." The crowd roared with approval of these new songs, and if the entire new album is anything like the two new songs they performed, Vampire Weekend will definitely not disappoint.

However, not only did Koenig thank the audience every time they finished a song, he kept the energy high by addressing the crowd and telling them, "You guys have a lot more energy than the past two nights. We really appreci-

# "The Playboy of the Western World" Rides into Stony Brook

By Ilyssa Fuchs

On Thursday, December 4 I had the pleasure to attend the opening night of J.M. Synge's *The Playboy of the Western World*. Deborah Mayo, the Director of Undergraduate Studies in the Department of Theater Arts, directed the play. The play is based in Ireland along the coast of Mayo in the 1800s. The main characters Christopher Mahon, played by Dan O'Reilly, and Margaret Flaherty, known as Pageen, played by Natalie Allen, are two young adults searching for love. The play is set in Pageen's father Michael James' (Doug Harrington) pub. The first act is at night, Pageen is seen pouring her father and his mates drinks when they return from an outing. Pageen's cousin, Shawn Keogh (Eli Clark-Kramer), is there. He is a very timid and meek young man who scares easily and is always talking nonsense about seeing crazy things and running to tell the town priest. There are a lot of Irish jokes and humor, which are hard for the average American audience member to understand, but if you listen closely enough, you can catch some of the nonsensical humor portrayed by the characters. Michael James is the drunken father who is concerned with her daughters being safe at night. The stage was set extremely well, so it did a excellent job of portraying the drinking culture of the Irish. I particularly liked how it you felt like you were inside the house, especially when people came to the front door and to the windows.

About mid way through the first act, a young man, Christopher Mahon, shows up at the pub in fear of losing his freedom and tells a tale about how he killed his father. Pageen, Shawn, Michael James and his mates are amused by this wild tale and are immediately fascinated with Chris. Michael James asks Chris to stay as a pot boy

and watch over the pub and his daughter Pageen. Throughout the course of the act, word spreads of Chris' crazy tale of murder. This attracts Widow Quinn (Jennifer Crawford) to the pub to seek out young Chris and try and court him. We find out that she, too, has murdered someone – her husband.

The second act opens with a visit from four young girls, who come to the

who is supposedly dead. Chris hides and Widow Quinn tells the man a few lies about not seeing Chris and sends him on his way. Chris gets concerned that everyone is going to find out that he is not really a murderer, but Widow Quinn promises to keep his secret.

In the third act, Chris is racing a mule in the town races and is winning when his father returns to the pub and

find out that Chris is not in fact the murder he has portrayed himself to be, but a fake, a liar and the laughingstock that his father makes him out to be. Pageen breaks off the engagement and calls Chris a liar and a cheat. In order to prove himself, Chris chases his father down and hits him with a shovel. By now the entire town thinks he is a crazy murderer. They come to the bar, rope him and try to drag him to be hanged. Pageen is just as mad and she too wants him to be hanged. All of a sudden Old Mahon shows up again, still not dead and decides to take his no good son with him. The play ends with Pageen crying about losing the one and only playboy of the western world.

Overall, I thought the play was excellent. The actors and actresses have amazing stage presence especially with their Irish accents. If I didn't know any better I would have thought that they were all actually from Ireland. More than the accents, I particularly enjoyed the way the set was designed and how the audience felt as if they were looking in on the pub. The props were well placed, and the actors and actresses used the entire stage as they fell further into their characters' roles. The funny nuances and Irish slang made the play a bit hard to understand at times, but some of the jokes were quite obvious and funny. The slang really made the audience feel as if they were transported back into that time period. The costumes gave the play even more of an authentic feel as well as the furniture and the table made of a barrel and the fireplace. The way the actors and actresses carried themselves on stage, including Michael James' being very drunk, Chris' being cold and tired, and Pageen's constantly cleaning up after all the men. The entire experience seemed so realistic, it was almost as though you had been transported to Ireland without ever leaving New York. Bravo!

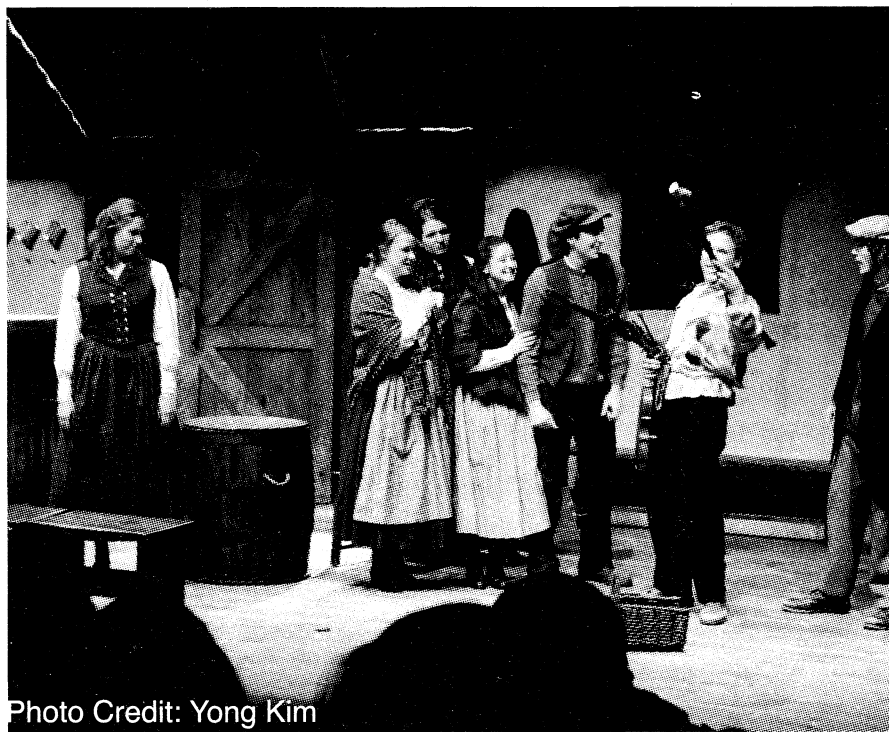


Photo Credit: Yong Kim

pub bearing gifts for Chris and wanting to hear more about his murderous tale. He over-exaggerates the entire story to make himself out to look like even more of a hero. Doing so entices the young girls even more, until Pageen comes home and throws everyone out. Pageen secretly has a thing for the young Chris even though she is supposed to marry Shawn Keogh. This makes Shawn jealous and causes him to come to the pub with Widow Quinn and try to bribe Chris to leave for good. After Shawn leaves, a man comes knocking on the pub door, and he turns out to be Chris' father, Old Mahon (Kevin Villaran)

finds Widow Quinn there with Michael James' mates. As they are watching the races, Father Mahon realizes that the boy on the mule is in fact his son and that he has been tricked all along by Widow Quinn. Widow Quinn tries to convince Old Mahon that the boy is not Chris and again sends him on his way. When Chris returns he receives his winnings and proposes marriage to Pageen. When Pageen's father arrives home Chris asks him for his blessing in marriage. Before Michael James can finish the blessing, Old Mahon shows back up and begins to chase Chris around the pub. At that point, the townspeople

**"I fucking hax0red your mom's ASS last night."**

-Shirley Strum Kenny, on her impressions of the Press' new website

**TheStonyBrookPress.com**



# Muslim Cultural Influences in Sicily

By Robert Venosa

While the relations of Muslim nations with the rest of the West are at an historical nadir, it does the West good to remember and recognize the proper, and quite substantial, level of indebtedness which it owes to Islamic civilization. In Europe's own overall societal nadir of the Dark Ages dating from roughly the decline and fall of the Roman Empire to right before the High Middle Ages, Muslim societies, having conquered the fringes of Europe, preserved and propagated the West's own cultural heritage. Not only had they accomplished this prodigious feat, but the Muslim rulers of Sicily and Spain created what was essentially a pair of multicultural societies in these European areas that flourished for hundreds of years. Granted, the Islamic conception of multiculturalism in these areas would not be true to the definition of the term as defined by today's liberal multiculturalists. But it remains that during their tenure of authority, the Muslim civilizations in Europe had crafted societies in which Muslims, Christians, and Jews, all being People of the Book, could peaceably cohabitate – an achievement that was unquestionably rare and significant in that era. Even after the Islamic tenure of authority had ended, considerably numerous elements of their culture had become integrated into Sicilian culture at large, with those influences persisting to the present.

Gioacchino Balducci, a Stony Brook Professor of Italian language and studies gave a detailed presentation on the Islamic cultural infusion into Sicily in the Dark Ages, in an event hosted by the Center for Italian studies. Balducci, having spent several years studying the Arabic language and Muslim culture in Cairo, and in the years since expanding his knowledge, is eminently qualified to have presented such a topic. Throughout the presentation he reiterated the pivotal role Islamic culture played in bringing peace and prosperity to Sicily during the period of Muslim rule.

For over four centuries, Islamic culture was a major and active force in Sicilian society, even during much of the subsequent period when the Normans displaced the Muslim rulers in the political sphere. As Balducci noted, every culture has its own roots. But it has been historically demonstrated that most cultures do not come into full bloom until they come into contact with other cultures; so was the case with Middle Ages Sicily. Having roots in Sicily, Balducci noted that his lifelong interest in Sicilian culture helped de-

velop his studies in Islamic cultural influences upon the island.

The Sicani, the original inhabitants of Sicily, had experienced numerous and successive waves of conquest and colonization by Mediterranean peoples. By Roman times, they had lost much of their original culture to their Greek, and later, Roman colonizers. One of the main reasons Sicily seems to have a penchant for being conquered by such a diverse set of peoples as the Greeks, Romans, Muslims, Normans and others was the island's rich soil and year round growing season. "Everything grows" was the phrase given to exemplify Sicily's agricultural desirability.

Separated from Tunisia by a mere one hundred miles of water of the Strait of Sicily, the island had come under the desirous glare of the Muslim emir of Tunisia, and thus had come under complete Muslim rule over the course of several decades in the tenth century. In addition to the previously mentioned agricultural abundance of Sicily as a motivating factor for conquering it, the island's central location in the Mediter-

rated a prodigious era of construction and architecture in the city, with beautiful and intricate waterworks and gardens proliferating. (The Islamic fascination for and love of waterworks and gardens derived from the Arab reverence towards such things, which were rarities in Arabia, Islam's homeland.)

A period of prosperity not seen in centuries had come to Muslim-ruled Sicily, largely due to Islamic policies. Such affluence had been attendant to the period of internal peace and stability enforced by the Muslim emirs, along with economic reforms. The introduction of new crops, especially citrus fruits such as lemons and oranges, which grew, and continue to grow, quite well in Sicily, spurred economic growth. The massive land reform instituted by the Muslim rulers also played a major role in the economic prosperity of the island. Much of the farmland of Sicily had formerly been in the hands of a small group of wealthy landowners, who owned these *latifundia*, or large farming estates, which were themselves relics of Greek and Roman rule of Sicily.



anean was a major reason why so many peoples vied for control of Sicily. Those who controlled Sicily controlled not only its agricultural potential, but also the access to crucial trade and sailing routes in the Mediterranean. These two main reasons taken into account help explain why the Byzantines who had formerly ruled Sicily fought tenaciously against the Muslims for 70 years before finally relinquishing all claims to the island.

The Muslim rulers converted churches into mosques, and Palermo alone at the peak of Muslim rule had between two hundred and three hundred mosques. Muslim scholars soon came to busy themselves with preserving and translating whatever Greek literature they could find, thus propagating classical Western knowledge that had largely been forgotten, or, at best, relegated just to some select monasteries in Christian Europe. Palermo, as the center of political life in Sicily, also became its flourishing cultural heart. The Muslim emirs inaugu-

The *latifundia* were broken up, and distributed to individual farming families, which brought about an increase in the wealth of smaller farmers. Partly due to the new era of prosperity and peace, the population of Sicily doubled under Muslim rule.

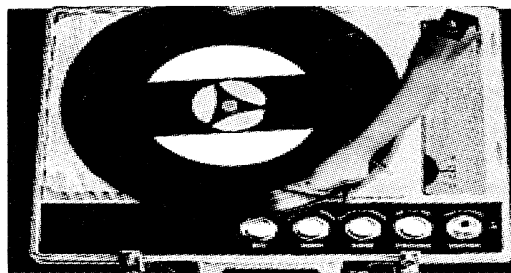
While Islam was, the official religion of the government, and Muslims were accorded certain rights and privileges denied to non-Muslims, while Islamic rule was fairly beneficial towards Christians and Jews. As monotheists and predecessor faiths to Islam, Judaism and Christianity were accorded a status superior to any avowed polytheists or atheists who had come under Muslim dominion, yet inferior to Muslims. To guarantee Muslim protection and government services, Christians and Jews were made to pay a special tax, in addition to any existing regular taxation. However, as conversion to Islam proved an expeditious way around such abridgement of rights and superfluous taxation, many Christians and Jews nominally converted to Islam, while still

clandestinely retaining their old faiths. Indeed, many a Muslim traveler from outside Sicily had noted that many of the island's Muslims were particularly irreligious, due largely to the veritable flood of nominal conversions.

While contemporary Sicily is a bastion of Roman Catholicism, traces of Muslim cultural influences are readily apparent to those with a discerning eye. Thousands of place names and personal names in Sicily are derived from Arabic sources even to this very day. Much of traditional Sicilian food has North African origins, vestiges of Tunisian Muslim rule. The most clearly visible remnants of Muslim cultural diffusion are the numerous architectural structures that have survived from the Muslim period and some of the Norman period that followed. *La Cuba*, the personal palace of William II, the Norman King of Sicily, was designed in large part by Arab architects now under Norman rule. The *Ponte dei Saraceni*, one of the last remaining bridges from the Muslim period, is another remarkable example of Islamic architecture. A most striking instance of the harmonization of different architectural influences is embodied in *Il Duomo di Monreale*, which, seemingly effortlessly, unifies the Arabic, Norman and Byzantine architectural traditions.

In turbulent times, our enemies have their cultural achievements relegated to obscurity, in order to marginalize them in contemporary circumstances. Such a fate has befallen Islam, which today has, with a great deal of justification, found itself on the cultural defensive. The avowedly Islamic nations of today, in response to the increased pressures of globalization and marginalization by the Western and Asian First World powers, have tended towards radicalization.

The process of fostering cultural understanding is a two-way street. If today's Muslims, and the leaders of the Muslim world, were to acknowledge, mimic and adapt to contemporary circumstances and societal standards the policies of multiculturalism that their forebears had so masterfully practiced, cultural tensions between the West and the Islamic world would improve markedly. If the West, namely the United States and to a lesser extent Britain, were to make plans to stop supporting policies that result in "collateral damage," that is, civilian lives lost and villages destroyed, Muslims would have less reason to bear intense enmity for the West. Today's barbarians, both Western and Islamic, would do well to remember and implement the wisdom of the Islamic culture of Sicily of the millennium past.



# TUNES FOR TWITS!

"A GLANCE AT THE PAST 30 YEARS OF MUSIC"

## More Songs About Buildings and Food by Talking Heads

By Alex Moreno

David Byrne's got a track on every home computer unfortunate enough to have Windows XP clawing at its innards since 2001. "Like Humans Do (radio edit)" introduced myself and legions of other hapless children to Windows Media Player, a piece of software we had rather forgotten, nailed up into a box full of smallpox rats and dumped into a heavy water reserve tank hoping it would never come back to disorganize our music collections as it did. Nevertheless it at least made "David Byrne" a name that would float in our minds until maybe someday at a better more enlightened age, we'd discover Talking Heads and be able to dance and party *Less than Zero*-style to the good, the bad and the funky Talking Heads, minus the coke binges of course.

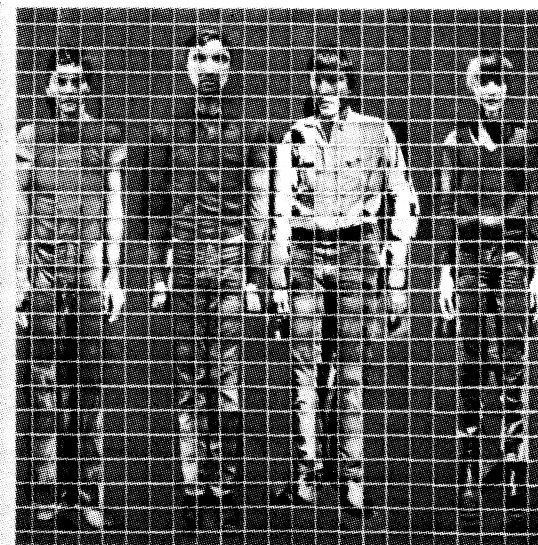
Before any major breakthrough success, Talking Heads released three first albums, all produced by legendary producer and ambient music composer Brian Eno. *More Songs About Buildings*

and *Food* proved the band's worth as a prolific genre blending curiosity, well capable of topping *Talking Heads: 77*, the first, but extremely amateur and less than perfect debut album for the band. The production is far superior to the band's previous endeavor, but still has ways to go in terms of consistency.

The album lunges out with a familiar driving bass line from Tina Weymouth, with "Thank You For Sending Me An Angel," a rock funk fusion spliced with Byrne's unusual but iconic vocals. The retro sound carries in through to "The Girls Want to be With the Girls," a mid album track that screams mid 70s pop, while still keeping with the band's almost rock but not quite rock sound. "Take Me to the River," an Al Green cover, has an unusual spot closing the album right before it goes country on us with "The Big Country," proving that inconsistency is the running motif for Byrne. It is in fact a hodgepodge, but an enjoyable one at that. It's not hard to look back at the Eno produced pieces of Byrne's past and trace his path from RISD student to the arbiter of modern music he has become,

lending his talents to the likes of Thievery Corporation, or to a lesser extent, sample song contributor to the home PC. In other words, there is a genuine appreciation for the absurd on *More Songs About Buildings and Food*. A song like the "The Good Thing" rings so lightheartedly in terms of lyrics and pop synths along shoe tappingly brilliant drum work, but has just enough of a well layered transition between major choruses and verses to a minor drop finish that makes for just the right aftertaste.

*More Songs About Buildings and Food* fits into 1978 the way a child struggles to find the right slot to stick his block toy into. They're the stubborn but successful kids with toys, as Byrne and his clan of funk injected musical misfits opt for slamming the square block into the triangle slot. Their brilliance is in how little they care about



convention, an attribute that they'll later carry with them into the 80s and beyond. Knowing Byrne will go on to compose such works of staggering genius as "And She Was" is all the justification we all need to forgive him for signing his soul to Bill Gates in 2001. We forgive you David Byrne, just please give us another "Psycho Killer" and we call it even...pinky swear.

## The Scream by Siouxsie & The Banshees

By Alex Moreno

I came across Siouxsie & The Banshees for the first time in summer, 2006, as part of a retreat into a mess of 1980s new wave atrocities. Call those the awkward years where instead of looking forward, we look back for some kind of inspiration, musical or style wise. I kick my younger self, "No! please please please, don't emulate the Reagan years when looking for the right shirt to pick out, because for every Mission of Burma, there will always be an Information Society, or worse, Erasure, for Krishna's sake!" Needless to say, I idealized the decade I only spent two years in and those of us that lived to tell the tale seldom have a good story to wave our hands in the air about. But shush! That can be said of any decade. Siouxsie thought the same of her own home in the 70s. Siouxsie was different, maybe it was that ten years before grunge, minimal power chord drone born right out of the late 70s punk craze of London, or Siouxsie's alto voice pouring out of black colored lips. I mean, they her-

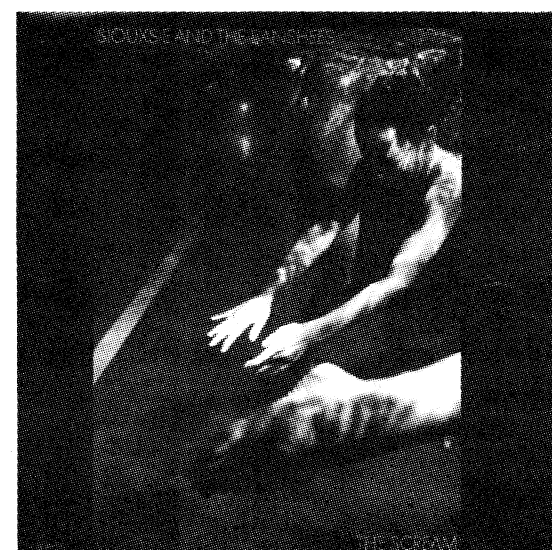
alded from a different, better time, right?

Siouxsie & The Banshees released their first album, *The Scream*, on November 13, 1978. They were fronted by Siouxsie Sioux, a former Bromley Contingent follower of the Sex Pistols. She had too fitting a past, the daughter of an alcoholic father whose daily employment consisted of extracting neurotoxin venom from snakes. Along with her horrendous medical conditions, she made her youth following punk bands and having her close friend Steven Severin perform improvised bass work behind her poetry readings.

The Banshees have a sound that garnered the label 'post-punk'. *The Scream* is reminiscent of late 70s punk rock, but could not be more different in terms of structure. Founding members Siouxsie and Steven Severin waned to veer into a direction without any of the standard appendages of rock music. "Pure" starts the album out on a new kind of foot with no spoken vocals but Siouxsie's howls in the background amidst a simple riff. There is an absence of solos, with preference to short bridges that incorporate vocals such as

in "Overground", one of the album's exemplary tracks. The emphasis is on the opening, on lyrical quality and stylish, but uncomplicated guitar work. Even the conventions of punk rock are avoided, the thrashing guitars, the belled and screeching vocals and the politically inspired lyrics are all absent here. What Siouxsie ended up creating were simple riffs and chord progressions with an almost Eastern quality as in "Mirage," a song that boasts light, tinny distortion arranged in the type of progression reminiscent of more grungy, early 90s music. This doesn't mean you won't find some of that old school punk sound between the bars. "Jigsaw Feeling," "Carcas," "Nicotine Stain" and surprisingly enough, their cover of Beatles classic and Charles Manson inspiring song, "Helter Skelter" are instant signs of Siouxsie's punk origins.

Siouxsie and Severin started their band on a fundamental disgust for the rock of their time calling it, "flacid and



perverted." Their philosophy of doing the same thing a different way inevitably led to everyone doing things the same way again, their way, the post-punk way, the new wave way. The album came from a wasteland of disco and inflated, dying classic rock. It was new, it was vibrant, it was dark. Too bad everyone else got that way, too, then everyone shouted "all hail Gary Numan" only a few years later.

# Christmas... avec sous-titres.

Par Nat(h)alie Crnosija

With the holiday season comes the warmth and merriment of familial love, chestnuts and candy canes, snide-remarks and the obligatory airborne plate of seasonal food...and Donder and Blitzen. This amalgamation of hyper-XXX-mas hodgepodge is the governing principle of Arnaud Desplechin's busy but fascinating "Un Conte de Noel," a cinematic advent import from La Belle, France.

The Vuillard family has been artfully fractured for viewing pleasure. The parents, Junon and Abel, played by l'immortelle Catherine Deneuve and Jean-Paul Roussillon, live and love peacefully in their richly ornamented, upholstered and abandoned family nest until Junon is diagnosed with the same degenerative cancer that killed their first-born son, Joseph. The Vuillard's living children are introduced first in the shadow-puppet prologue, giving a cut-and-paste quality to the film, which is rarely well executed cinematically. Each of these cutouts has its own life

and grows large before the light of time's candle, but each exists first in child form and is wax stamped by the death of young Joseph.

When the news of Junon's illness brings the far-flung Vuillards together, the fireworks are literally set off in the backyard against the night sky. The auto-tormented playwright, Élizabéth (Anne Consigny), the mercurial and self-destructive Henri, played by the ever-fascinating new Bond villain Mathieu Almaric, and the youngest, people-pleasing Ivan (le trop beau Melvil Poupaud...RAWR!!!) assemble with their attached spouses, lovers and children.

Seven years previous, Élizabéth had a court banish Henri from the family for accumulated sins against the Vuillards (what a wonder the French court is!); however, in view of Junon's need for a bone marrow transplant, Élizabéth's medieval ruling is overturned. Henri returns, and the present exchanging and fist throwing ensue.

The slow broil of Élizabéth and Henri's enmity spills across the family's dining room table at every opportunity, enmeshing all, including Élizabéth's

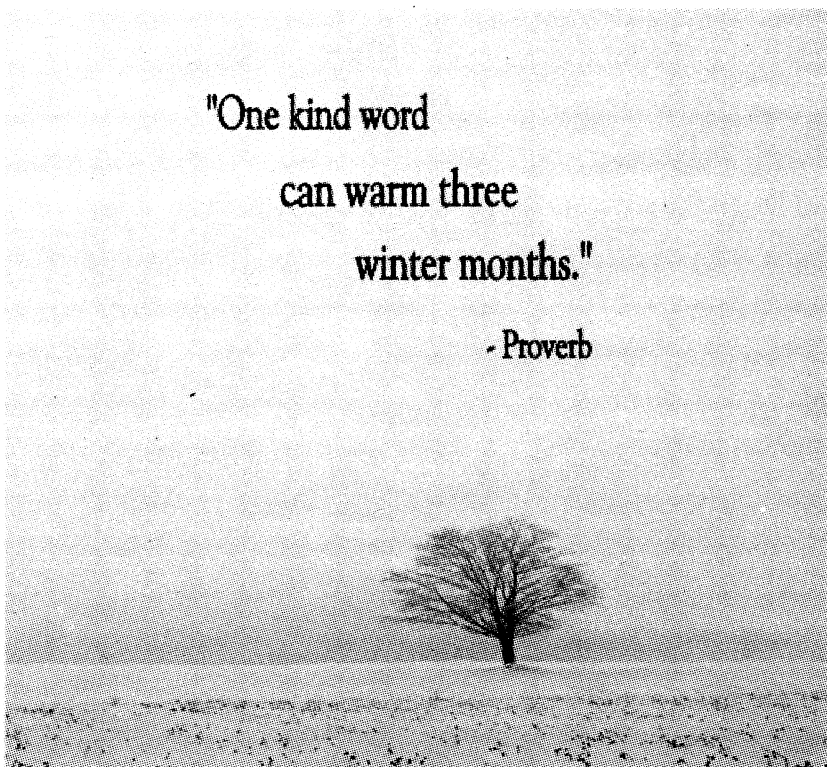


mentally deranged (read: aussi bien derange) son, Paul. Henri's accepting girlfriend, Faunia (Emmanuelle Devos) observes the raucous multi-story drama as it unfolds, smiling at the ridiculousness of the Vuillards unleashed upon one another. Like all children, Ivan's unfortunately named sons, Baptiste and Basile, play make believe under the tablecloth and their mother, Sylvia (Chiara Mastroianni), explores the sheets of Simon, a Vuillard cousin with whom it was a case of love at first rave. In the few quiet corners, Junon and her least-favorite child, Henri, reconcile in the traditional French way—cigarette in hand. All these storylines tangle like a

cord of lights and glow together as December 25 approaches.

Unlike Wes Anderson's diorama-like fables of familial discord, "Un Conte de Noël" has a richness that radiates in warm light from the screen. Each of the characterizations is detailed, but not overworked, and carries on the old, highly literate Cinema Français sensibility in modern dress. Against expectations, the little shadow puppets from the film's opening credits emerge as robust characters outside of the niches of the mother, the father, the eldest child, the black sheep, the baby and all their ghosts of Christmas past.

"One kind word  
can warm three  
winter months."  
- Proverb



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Natlaie Crnosija



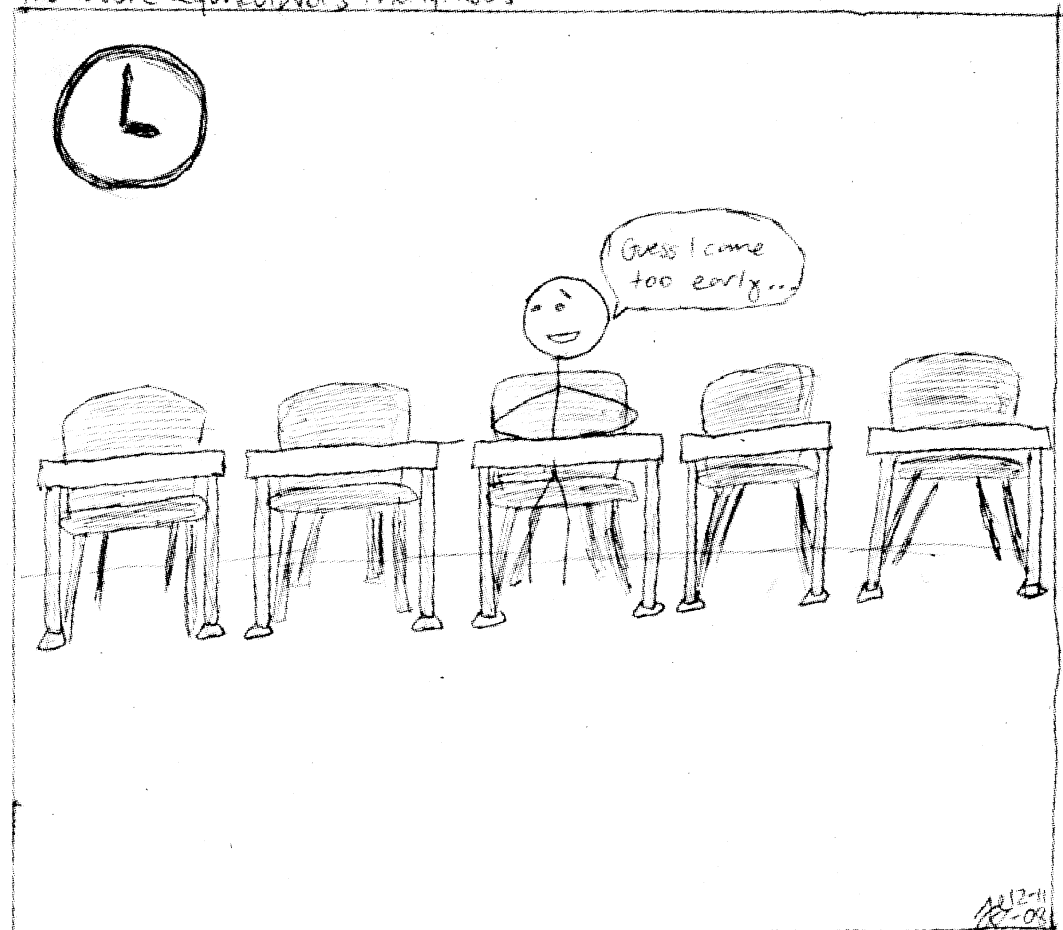
# THE COMICS SECTION



**FROM US HERE AT THE STONY BROOK PRESS TO YOU, THE READER, HAVE A WONDERFUL HOLIDAY AND VACATION. AND MAKE SURE TO START COOKING UP YOUR POETRY, COMICS AND ART FOR NEXT SEMESTER! WE WANT TO SEE JUST WHAT THIS CAMPUS IS CAPABLE OF ARTISTICALLY.**

**MUCH LOVE,  
THE SB PRESS**

"Premature Equivulators Anonymous"



“The New Yorker” by Kelly Yu

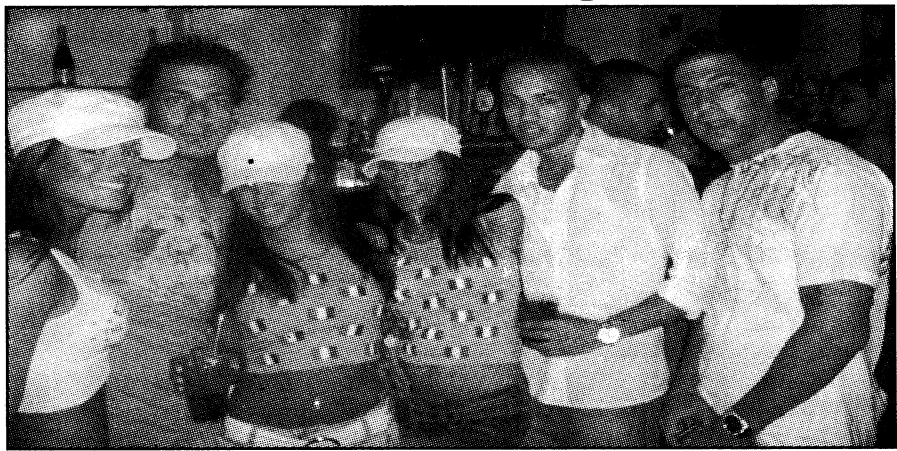


The Pizza Company  
By Jonathan Singer

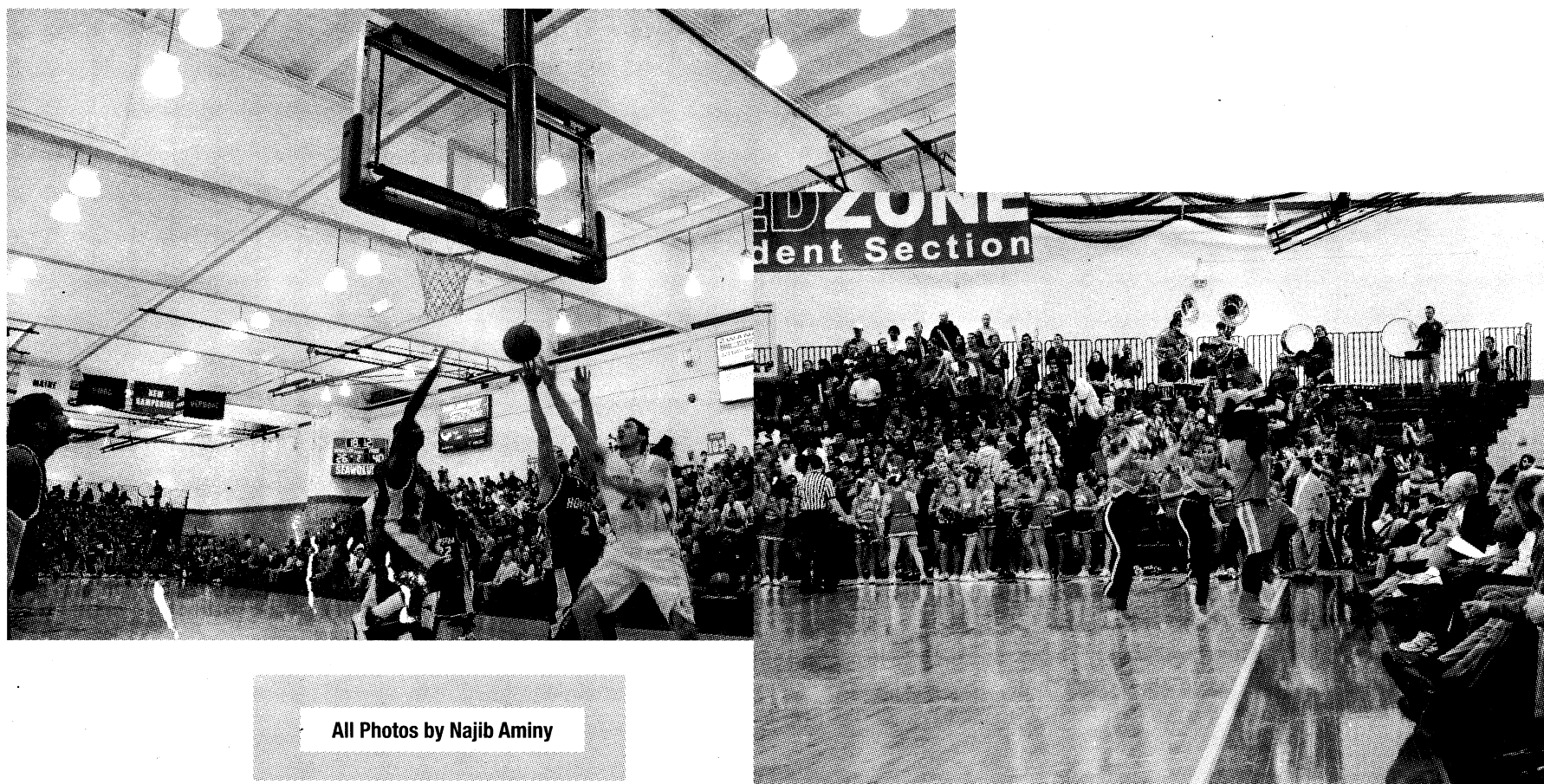


# TOP TEN

## Nubar / Club Bianco Slogans!



- |    |                                    |
|----|------------------------------------|
| 10 | 18 to tease, 21 to please          |
| 9  | 18 to play, 21 to lay              |
| 8  | 18 to strut, 21 in the butt        |
| 7  | 18 to stroke, 21 to choke          |
| 6  | 18 to mob, 21 to throb             |
| 5  | 18 if you're hot, 21 for your twat |
| 4  | 18 to lick, 21 to prick            |
| 3  | 18 to date, 21 to penetrate        |
| 2  | 18 to greet, 21 to secrete         |
| 1  | 18 to touch, 21 for BJs...and such |



**We're sure that all of you regular readers know just what it is big time basketball players do in big time situations. These photos only provide further proof.**



## HOLLIDAY BASE\*

BALL SONGS

BY \*JASON  
WIRCHIN

### Winter Meetings

Sung to the tune of *Dreidel*,  
*Dreidel*

Oh, Omar and Jeff Wilpon,  
A bullpen's what we need,  
Joe Smith can't hit the  
strike zone,  
Trade Heilman, I plead!

It's true - we now have K-  
Rod,  
No doubt he's in his prime,  
But what with his mechan-  
ics,  
Don't pull a Wags this  
time!

We also landed JJ,  
Our newest set-up man,  
He better not get injured,  
Or his job we'll have to  
can!

We also want a starter,  
A guy who doesn't suck,  
Let's sign back Tommy  
Glavine,  
For what he's worth - a  
buck!

Besides Johan and Pelfrey,  
The rotation is whack,  
To Pedro: switch to soft-  
ball,  
And Ollie: why'd you  
pack?

The Yanks signed big ol'  
CC,  
A playoff push he'll goad,  
Put him on a truck,  
To see in flashing lights,  
"WIDE LOAD!"

Both teams have made  
good progress,  
Their deals won't be for  
naught,  
Both Bombers and  
Amazins,  
Got the frontline guys they  
sought.

But don't get too excited  
Note last year game by  
game  
By the looks of things  
around here  
'09 should be as lame!

### Walking in a Corporate Baseball Land

Sung to the tune of *Winter Wonder-  
land*

Money flings from our pockets,  
Sell your house and your lockets,  
To get good tix we will fight,  
We're dead-broke tonight,  
Walking in a corporate baseball land.

Shea is gone, Citi's coming,  
In the Bronx, a new one's humming,  
With far fewer seats,  
And luxury suites,  
Walking in a corporate baseball land.

Maybe we can drive or take the sub-  
way,  
Pay for Metro Cards or for some gas,  
If we're lucky, we'll be free of traffic,  
Still, getting there's a huge pain in the  
ass.

Good luck with the parking,  
And drunk tailgaters barking,  
Then once you're inside,  
You're wallet can't hide,  
Walking in a corporate baseball  
land.

Spend your life savings on a  
kosher hot dog,  
Your monthly paycheck on a sou-  
venir,  
Think that's all you'll really end up  
losing?  
What about that sixty dollar beer?

The old parks were not that pricey,  
I guess that's why the food was  
dicey,  
Five bucks for a Coke,  
Now things are a joke,  
Walking in a corporate baseball  
land.

With our economic meltdown,  
We're low on dough and can't help  
but frown,  
Just wait until spring,  
To angrily sing,  
Walking in a corporate baseball  
land.

Happy Holidays!!!

# In Battle for L.I. Pride, SBU Falls Short

By Matt Braunstein

In a dramatic battle for bragging rights and respect on Long Island, Hofstra Pride Men's Basketball Team was able to squeeze by our Seawolves by a score of 61-56. The game, held in the sold-out Prichard Gymnasium on Wednesday night, December 10, was anything but boring despite Hofstra's gaining an early lead and keeping it throughout the course of the entire game.

Hofstra came out strong in the first half, while the Seawolves' starting squad appeared sluggish and confused on both offense and defense. The Pride built a 30-14 lead with 6:20 left in the first half. SBU Head Coach, Steve Pikiell, said after the game, "We played with no poise in the first half. I felt that our starters were too emotional. They played with too much emotion, and we played a terrible first half."

However, refusing to go away quietly, the Stony Brook bench came in and energized their team. Junior center, Desmond Adedeji, contributed 4 points and 4 rebounds, while senior forward, Demetrius Young, used his superior athleticism to score 9 points in only 7 first-half minutes. SBU fought to bring themselves within 11 points at the break.

The second period began much like the first. Hofstra scored 5 straight behind their sophomore guard, Charles Jenkins, and again built a 16 point lead. Finally gaining some composure, the Seawolves began to outplay Hofstra. Freshman guard, Brian Dougher, hit two big three-pointers and Demetrius Young continued his stellar play. Young finished with a season-high 21 points as well as 9 rebounds and was named America East player of the game.

The SBU defense stiffened up and held Hofstra to a paltry 18 field goal percentage in the second half. They sent the Pride to the line constantly, where Hofstra was able to hit only 15 of their 27 second half free throws. However, Hofstra was able to score sporadically and maintain a 10 point lead for most of the second period. They also recorded 10 blocks on Stony Brook, 6 of which coming from their senior center Dane Johnson.

This led to SBU having an embarrassing .288 field goal percentage for the game. Despite their ineptitude on offense, the Seawolves were able to rally behind sophomore Chris Martin late in the game, as the undersized, but brolic guard was able to barrel his way to the bucket and draw foul shots to make the score 55-50 with 1:14 left in the game.

Martin made an enormous three point play with only 39 seconds remaining to bring the raucous home crowd to its feet and his team to within 3 points of tying, but Hofstra was able to hit 5 of their last 6 free throws to close out the game 61-56. Dougher finished with 11 points and 2 rebounds. Adedeji added another 4 rebounds and 1 point in the second half.

Hofstra Head Coach Tom Pecora said after game, "I think [Stony Brook] played a lot harder than we did, and with a lot more heart. I think we just had more talent." Pikiell said, "Hofstra is an excellent basketball team and they just made a few more plays down the stretch than we did. I like our team and I think we'll be an inside-out scoring time soon."

The loss brings SBU's record to a respectable 5-4 on the season as they look forward to a challenging Monday night match-up at UConn. Yes, that's the same UConn that is currently ranked #2 in the nation, but as KG said after the finals, "ANYTHING'S POSSIBLEEEEE!"

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