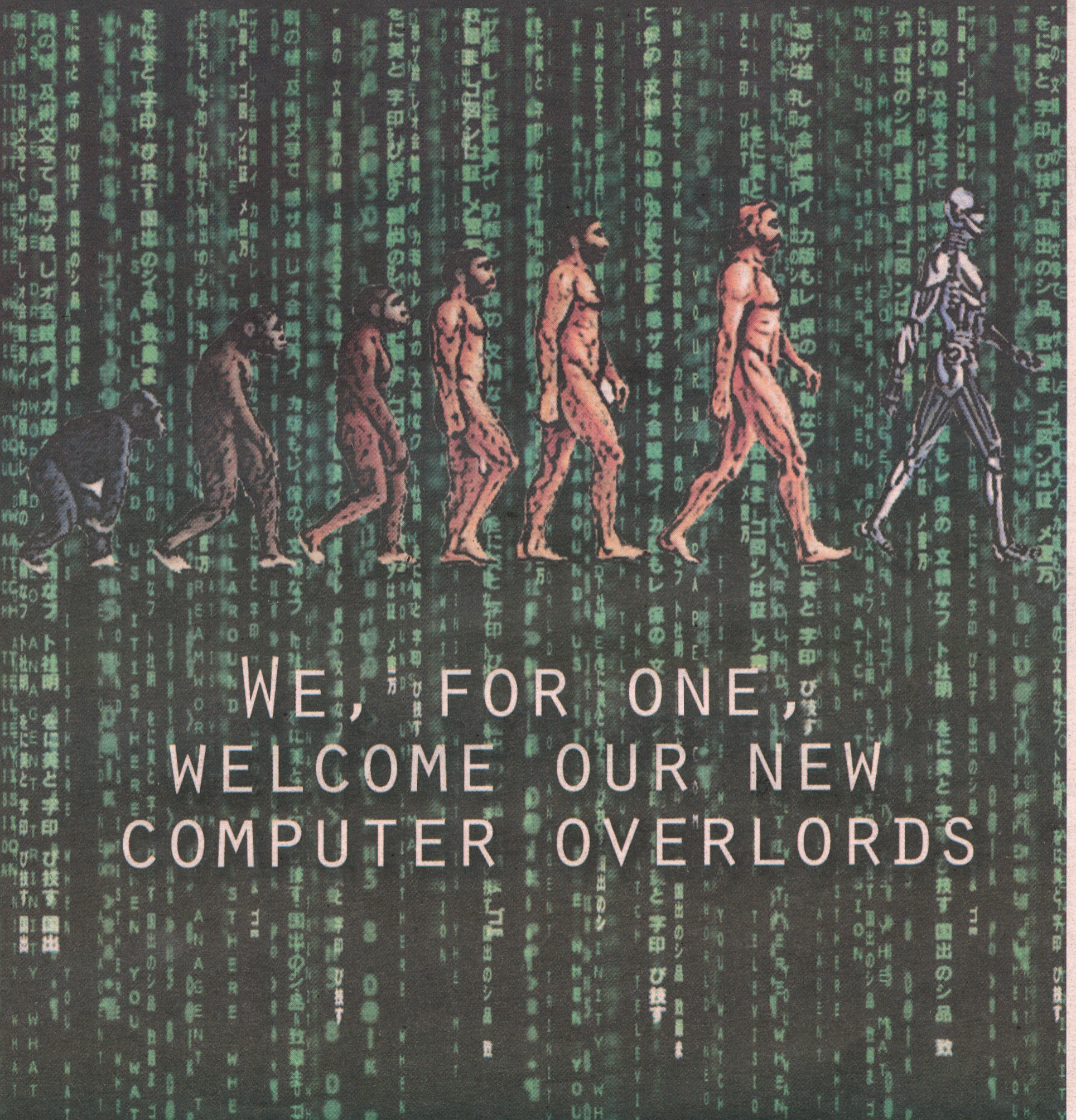


THE STONY BROOK PRESS

VOL XXXII ISSUE 9

"WHY DO ALL MY RECIPES START WITH
TWO STICKS OF BUTTER? IT'S FOR A PARTY, THOUGH."

MARCH 1, 2011



WE, FOR ONE,
WELCOME OUR NEW
COMPUTER OVERLORDS

Medical Center Not Immune to Cuts

By Najib Aminy

As Stony Brook University prepares for the next round of budget cuts, priced around \$10 million, its medical center is facing something a little more severe—the complete withdrawal of state-aid.

Under Governor Andrew Cuomo's most recent budget proposal, Stony Brook's Medical Center is slated to lose all \$55 million received in state-subsidies. That's not including an additional \$10 million cut from a proposed statewide \$3 billion reduction of Medicaid.

"We use that money to provide the programs that nobody else provides, to support the undercompensated patients—the patients that don't have anywhere else to turn," said Dr. Kenneth Kaushansky, Dean of Stony Brook's Medical School, referring to the hospital's emergency psychiatric ward, burn center and a Level I trauma center.

Kaushansky proudly stated that these services are the only one of its kind in all of Suffolk County and that SBUMC covers roughly \$86 million spent in indigent care, or patients taken in without health insurance and do not apply for Medicare or Medicaid. It's these facts and figures that administrative directors are presenting to their local legislators in hopes of swaying the vote.

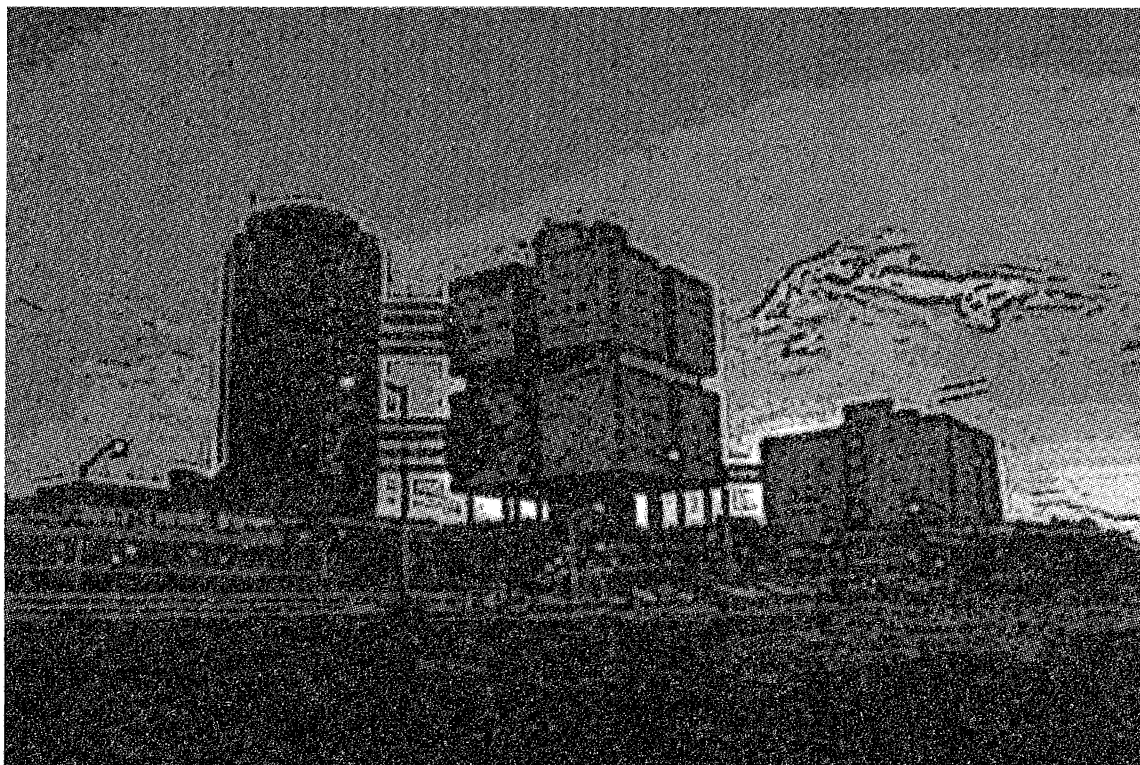
Cuomo's \$154-million cost saving plan to cut all state-support to all of

New York's public teaching hospitals, which also includes Downstate Medical in Brooklyn and Upstate Medical in Syracuse, are in part an attempt to chip away at the state's looming \$10 billion deficit.

"Cut" is not even the right word—it's a complete elimination," says Assemblyman Steve Englebright, a democrat who represents the Stony Brook area in the Fourth District. "To remove all state support and subsidy is a completely unreal proposal because the hospital has such obligations as to run a medical school, a dental school, a nursing program, a burn center, a cancer center—all of these are public, not private," said the former Stony Brook Geology professor and alum.

Questions and criticism have also been raised for the role of North Shore Long Island Jewish Hospital President and CEO Michael Dowling in Cuomo's administration. Once a healthcare advisor to former Governor Mario Cuomo, Dowling runs the same hospital chain that is heavily involved in the development of Hofstra University's new medical school. Dowling co-chairs Cuomo's Medicaid team.

Kaushansky declined to comment



on what many view as a conflict-of-interest, but was accepting of Hofstra's new medical school. "There's little question that we need more doctors in the U.S. whether it's primary care, general physicians or pediatricians," the recently appointed Dean said. "We need more medical schools that deliver high quality care in the U.S. [and] I actually welcome them."

In 2009, SBUMC experienced a 90 percent occupancy rate with more than 80,000 emergency visits and roughly 227,000 outpatient visits. Additionally, roughly \$90 million was spent on research, mainly acquired through a variety of grants. This all took place with a

staff of a little more than 5,500 employees and 1,000 physicians, half of whom are full-time. But these numbers may very soon decrease, as would the services the hospital provides.

"I don't want to limit the patients who knock on our door for healthcare," said Kaushansky, who added that after years of budgetary dieting, there is little fat to be cut from the hospital budget. "Everyone in my opinion deserves the best healthcare, but if we are to remain open we are going to have to think about that."

Let's Talk About the Birds & the Fees...Mostly Fees

By Carol Moran

In a rare policy shift, the administration is asking for student input on its proposal to increase the undergraduate and graduate broad-based fees, which include the health services, athletic, technology and transportation fees.

Despite the administration's recent efforts, the student body and student government organizations have expressed dissatisfaction with the student input process and the process by which the administration drafted the proposal.

"We are unwilling to accept the administration's feigned cooperation and

deliberate actions to continue working behind our backs," the Government Student Organization Executive Council said in a statement. "Given the lack of transparency, [we] cannot justify the proposed fee increases."

GSO President Froylan Enciso said that the administration has not fulfilled promises it made last semester to make its decision making process more transparent.

During a press conference, the Associate Vice President and Controller Lyle Gomes said that the student consultation process began on Feb. 15th with an email to the entire student body that outlines the proposed fee increases. The administration plans to use student

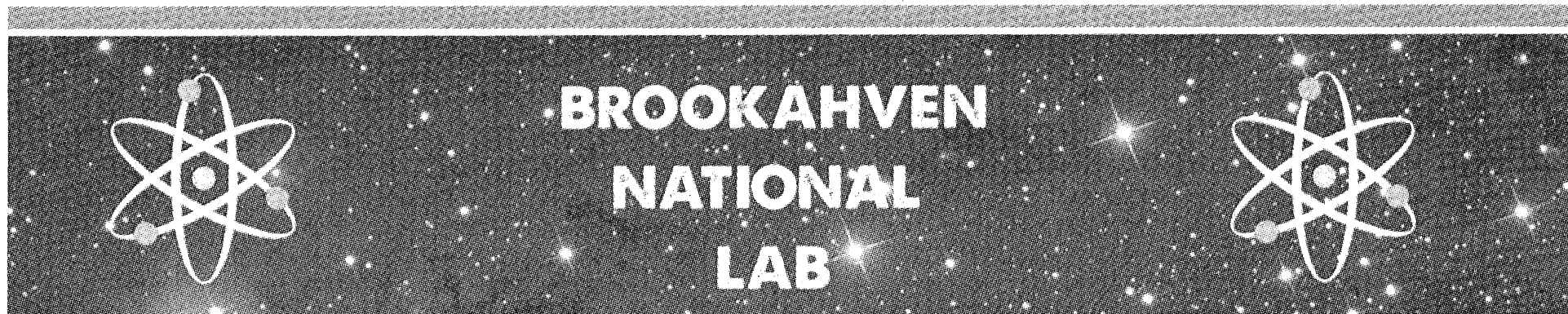
advisory committees to gather student advice and recommendations. It has also created a student feedback form on the bursar/student accounts website that allows a student to choose a specific fee that they would like to comment on. A town hall style meeting will be held on March 2nd during campus lifetime and others to possibly be scheduled in the future, Gomes said.

The bursar website outlines the specific services and improvements that each fee will support, such as: the Technology, Infirmary, Transportation and Athletic fees. The undergraduate fees would be raised by \$121 per semester, a 17% increase, while graduate fees by \$104.50 per semester, a 22% increase.

The SUNY policy document on student fees states: "each campus must adopt a comprehensive broad-based fee policy that ensures student involvement in the decision-making process."

USG Vice President of Communications and Public Relations, David Mazza said that though he doesn't feel that student input will stop the administration from raising fees, the fact that they are asking for input at all is an accomplishment.

"It's not that students have any power that they didn't have before," Mazza said. "But they opened a dialogue."



Meet RHIC, Your Local Particle Accelerator

By Nick Statt

The Relativistic Heavy Ion Collider, or “rick” as it is commonly referred to, is comprised of a 2.4-mile tunnel underneath the small hamlet of Upton, NY. Directly on top sits Brookhaven National Lab where some of the most groundbreaking experiments and studies are conducted to further scientific knowledge in a variety of fields.

RHIC is a particle accelerator, meaning its principle function revolves around taking elementary particles and sending them smashing into each other at relativistic speeds, or speeds that are near that of light, and then studying the after effects. A recent experiment by RHIC allowed researchers to probe the ever-deepening mystery behind proton spin, a characteristic that describes a particle’s intrinsic angular momentum.

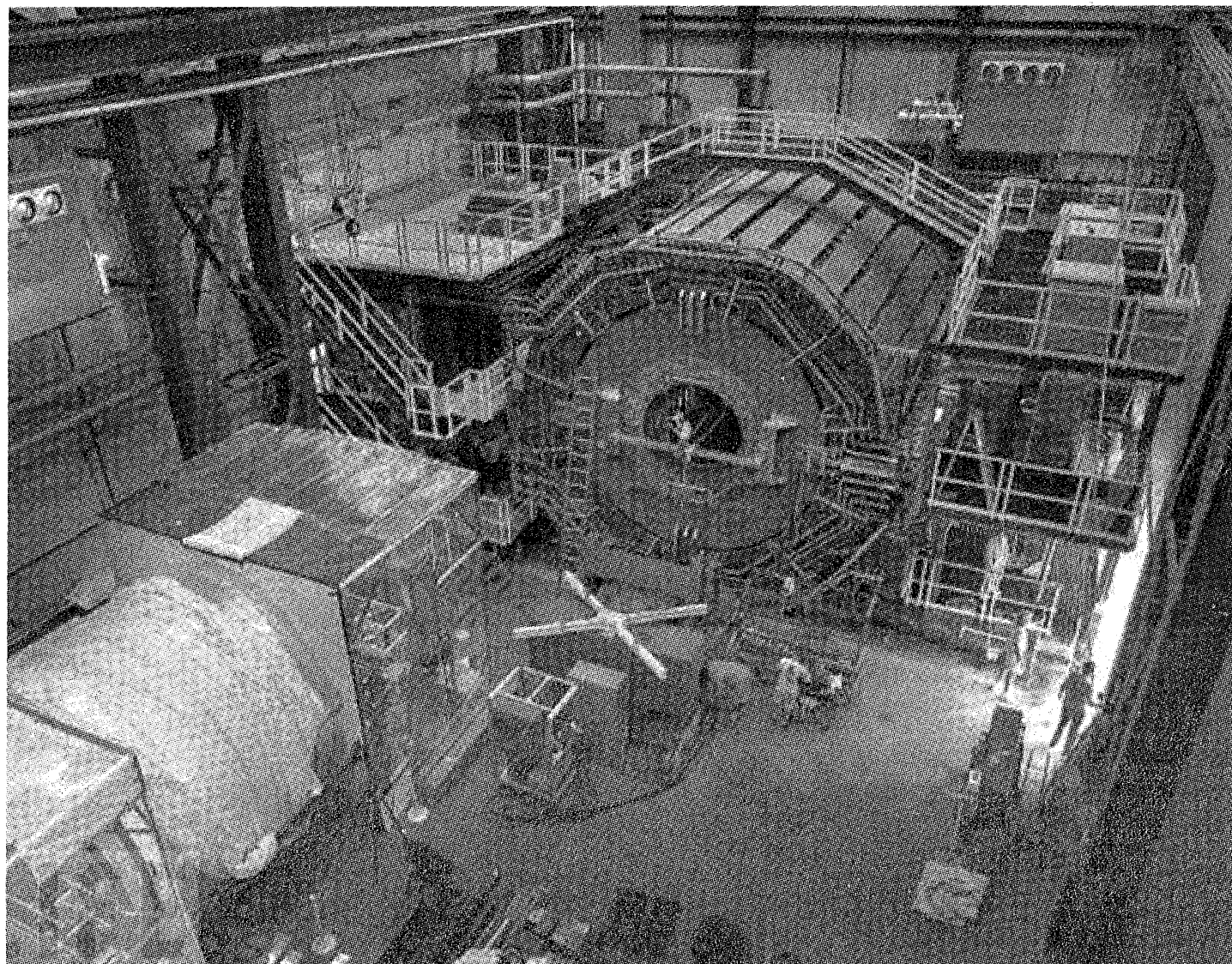
The discoveries made by particle accelerators have been making headlines in the past few years due in part to the initial operations of the Large Hadron Collider in Geneva, Switzerland. The LHC is the largest particle accelerator ever created and was successfully turned on Sept. 8, 2008.

But not all particle accelerators are colliders, like RHIC and LHC.

“If you think about car crashes, a car running into the wall is bad, but it’s not nearly as bad as a head-on collision because in a head-on collision they both bring energy,” said Barbara Jacak, a disguised professor of physics at Stony Brook and a principle researcher at RHIC. “...So you get a lot more energy you can use to produce heat or remove particles. That’s why the colliders are exciting and useful.”

While there are many similarities between the LHC and RHIC, one major difference makes Brookhaven an especially unique center for discovery.

“At RHIC, we can collide polarized protons, which the Large Hadron Collider can’t do,” said Jacak. The method Jacak is referring to is what allowed RHIC to make its recent discoveries in-



volving proton spin.

Jacak is also the spokesperson for PHENIX, one of four detectors placed around RHIC that is designed to digest specific aspects of the collisions. PHENIX is the largest detector, coming in at around 4,000 tons, while STARR the second largest, is 1,200 tons. The two smaller detectors, named PHOBOS and BRAHMS, have finished their designated experiments and are currently not in use.

Researching proton spin is only one half of RHIC’s capabilities. The other half deals with its ability to generate such enormous temperatures that mysterious new types of matter are created, which is an ability that RHIC does share with the LHC (though on a smaller level considering the LHC, nearly 17 miles long, can reach energy levels more than

20 times that of RHIC).

“On the heavy-ion side, that’s where we take nuclei and heat them to 4 trillion degrees,” said Jacak. These enormous temperatures allow scientists to observe properties of elementary particles around “one or two microseconds after the Big Bang,” Jacak added.

What they discovered was contrary to a previously held belief. “We expected that it would be like a gas of quarks and gluons, but the surprise is that the stuff seems to behave more like a liquid,” said Jacak. This new substance, referred to as quark-gluon plasma, is spurring questions on the development of the universe, among other wide-ranging inquiries.

Future experiments at RHIC will continue to probe the mystery of proton spin, as well as the continuation of

heavy ion collisions.

“The mystery of the proton spin is not only still with us, it’s even deeper,” said Jacak. She explained that there were many levels to the spin research, which first focused on quarks, which make up protons, and then gluons, which make up quarks.

“We did experiments for a few years, we looked at the gluons, and all the gluons that we could actually access...they don’t carry the spin either.” So Jacak and fellow scientists turned to the creation of the W-boson in their most recent experiment.

“W-bosons because those probe the motion of the anti-quarks, which briefly exist inside the nuclei. So we’re going to see what those do.”

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editorials

USG Killed the Television Star...Sort of

The Undergraduate Student Government's swift and premeditated legislation in the closure of SBU-TV is representative of the way the recent administration has operated for the past year, for better and more importantly for worse.

It's clear that the television station had very little viewership, primarily based on the lack of programming and shows broadcast on channel 20. The \$35,000 to run the station could very well be easily put to better use, considering again the poor presence SBU-TV had.

Which is why when USG moved to pass the SBU-TV Reformation Act, it really came as no surprise that the act passed 12 to five, with two abstentions. It passed with one vote more than the 2/3 majority required.

What's alarming isn't that this defined quasi-agency of USG was taken over, it is the manner in which things were done that leaves USG with yet another black eye. The events that occurred leading up to, during and after the whole closure of SBU-TV could very well be the ugliest display of power exhibited by this current USG administration.

It started one weeknight a few days prior to Thursday's meeting, when President Matt Graham and Student Programming Agency Director Moiz Khan confronted members of SBU-TV and demanded that they hand over the keys to SBU-TV's suites.

The fear was that, as in the past, equipment from the station, which amounts to a few hundred thousand dollars worth of assets, could be stolen. Thus, USG sought to preserve its assets by first demanding the keys to the suite. President Graham, a college senior, went as far to say that he was declaring an executive order for the two members of SBU-TV to hand over their keys. The locks were soon changed.

The days that led up to the act being brought before the Senate quite possibly showcased the most disgusting display of power yet. Vice President of Communications David Mazza paid members of the USG Street Team to sit in front of SBU-TV's office, with a walkie-talkie in hand, to monitor the activity in the office and ensure that no equipment was taken. Each member was paid \$10 per hour.

The initial act failed to be brought up during the Senate's Executive Budget meeting so USG members, including Khan, Graham and Mazza, went out of their way to garner enough petition signatures to bring the proposal to the Senate floor.

When brought up, the debate on the matter lasted long enough to push the Senate meeting past its two-hour limit. The meeting finally wrapped up more than a half-hour past 9 p.m.

As senators and attendees walked out of the Wang Center meeting that evening, President Graham, who pleaded with the building's custodial staff to allow them to stay longer, was seen thanking one of the workers and letting him know that he was "doing a service to all the students."

More than a week later, SBU-TV's feed still runs but USG has yet to come out and say what the next step for SBU-TV will be. While USG appeared very eager to come in and defund SBU-TV's operations, it's clear that very little planning went into the next step. It's this sort of planning that is necessary before actions like defunding an organization, even if it's a quasi-agency of USG, are taken.

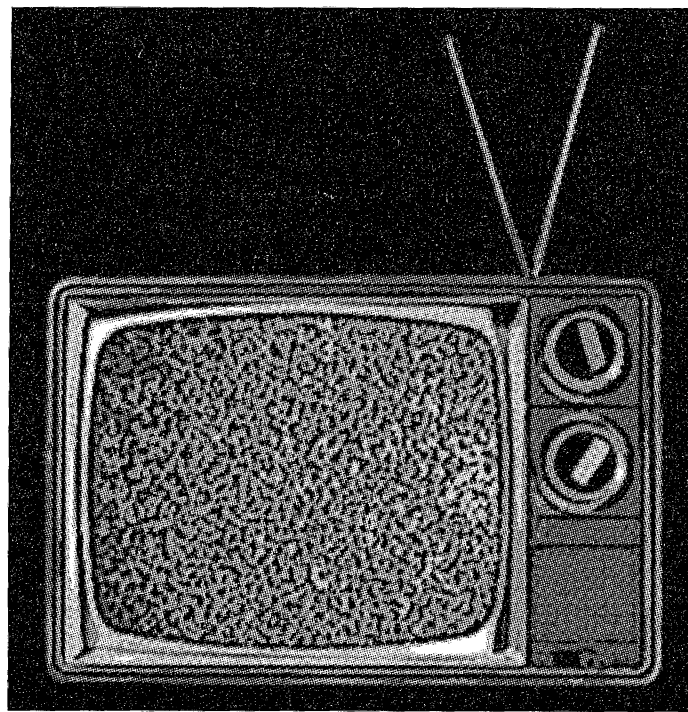
Backtrack to the reformation of SAB, or the failure of last semester's sudden election to raise the activity fee an additional \$5.75 to \$100, and it's clear that one of USG's biggest failures is its inability to communicate and hold a dialogue.

Sure, they can advertise highly priced events—mainly because the artists sell themselves—but when it comes to interacting with their own constituents, USG has failed time and time again. It's scary to think that a few members of USG can get enough students to sign a petition and propose to cut an organization's budget and where it seems the USG Sen-

ators are heavily influenced and often rubberstamp the decisions made by figures like Khan and Graham.

But it's also pathetic that students who are paid weekly stipends to represent all students and their interest are so easily swayed and apathetic. At each USG meeting, you will have only a handful of senators question, debate and challenge what is being proposed. The majority sit in a zombie-like fashion and vote in favor of anything that comes their way.

One can point to the likes of President Graham, SPA Director Khan and VP of Communications Mazza as the ones responsible for the closure of SBU-TV. Whether the decision was right or wrong, the fact of the matter is that people like Khan and Graham can continue to pass legislation, however controversial, and be virtually unchecked by such a use-



less student Senate.

The manner in which USG handled the whole SBU-TV situation should be an eye-opening reminder that there are clear problems with communication between students and their government. It's something that should very well be remembered come time for elections because the sorry sack of Senators that currently crowd around each Thursday were voted in largely because of you.

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The Knicks Abide



*Carmelo as
"Walter Sobchak"*



*Chauncey as
"Donny Kerabatsos"*



*Amar'e as
"The Dude"*

Young Americans Suing USG for Not Giving Them Money

By Alyssa Melillo

As if there aren't plenty of clubs on campus already trying to receive recognition from USG, one has threatened legal action because of USG's refusal to fund it.

Stony Brook Young Americans for Freedom (YAF), a national conservative student group with chapters at schools around the country, has threatened to sue USG on charges of bias. According to a Web page posted on SB YAF's Facebook page, the club claims USG's denial "is a tactic by the leftist administration to suppress the expansion of conservative-minded student organizations on campus." It also goes on to say that the "denial of recognition and funding [under this circumstance] is unconstitutional."

Rachael Doukas, president of YAF, declined to comment. Other members of YAF could not be reached.

USG denies this claim. Matt Graham, USG president, said that when a club is looking to receive recognition from USG, it applies to the Special Services Council. The SSC is responsible for investigating whether or not another club with the same purpose already exists on campus. When YAF applied at the beginning of the spring semester to receive funding, the SSC determined that its mission was not distinct from previously established organizations, Graham said.

"Unfortunately, USG simply cannot give recognition to every single organization that wants to form," he said. "USG already funds over 160 clubs and the money is tight for all of them. Given our financial restrictions, we are forced



to make tough decisions like this all the time. Naturally, [people are going to be] upset."

On its Facebook page, SB YAF describes itself as "an organization dedicated to promoting the principles of freedom and liberty as defined by the Sharon Statement. The organization strongly believes that liberty is indivisible and that political freedom cannot be achieved unless we have economic freedom. YAF also believes that the market economy, which allocates resources by supply and demand, without outside interference, is the best supplier of human needs."

College Republicans, the club USG claims YAF is an extension of, describes itself on its website as an organization that is "dedicated to the goals of achieving a Republican majority here on campus, and of promoting the spread of freedom and democracy around the world, limited government and the rule

of law, federalism, and a free-market economy."

If YAF does decide to take legal action against USG, it could potentially have an effect on student life. Graham said USG would have to pay for the possible lawsuit with the student activity fee, which is what funds events on campus.

"The USG has a responsibility to ensure the proper expenditure of the student activity fee," he said. "Spending [it] on legal battles only takes away from our core mission, which is to improve student life." Graham said USG has a legal council that will handle any lawsuit that may occur.

Nathan Shapiro, USG administrative director, declined to comment.

Although this is the first time USG is being threatened with legal action for not funding a club, this is not the first time YAF has gone this far to receive recognition at a school. According to

the web page mentioned earlier, YAF was denied recognition at the University of Central Florida because it was too similar to Young Americans for Liberty. After taking legal action, UCF granted YAF recognition.

If bias is the real reason behind USG's decision, the 2010-2011 budget says otherwise. College Republicans receives \$17,000 in funding. College Democrats receives \$3,500.

Despite it all, Graham said that YAF's threat of a lawsuit still doesn't change the reason why it did not receive recognition. Settling before possibly appearing in court, he said, is not an option.

"The rationale used in the decision to not recognize them can be revisited, but to simply give into their threats would defeat the entire purpose of a recognition process and be unfair to other clubs," he said.

Code of Conduct Changes for You & Me

By Vanessa Ogle

The university's Student Conduct Code, a lengthy document outlining imperative rules to follow, has more than ten section changes being considered for modification under an Undergraduate Student Government proposal.

The proposed revisions, if passed, would take effect on July 1, 2011. Aside

from professional jargon being injected into already wordy phrases, there are real changes proposed, with various section revisions slated to change procedures and offer stricter guidelines.

Mediation, a chance to address and fix conflicts among students with trained mediators, is retracting students' ability to opt for mediation if the issue pertains to accusations of sexual assault or rape.

Rules against sexual harassment would see a change in language. With a

vague addition, the rules state an exclusion against anything "objectively offensive" in student environments.

Under the proposed changes, failure to complete a sanction – an assignment given out for minor or first-offender infractions – would lead to a hold on a student's ability to register for classes, a penalty not outlined in the current conduct code.

Another new restriction: tapestries, though unofficially warned against in safety procedures, would become an of-

ficial proposed forbiddance. Hanging tapestries is described as a fire hazard.

One section proposal would provide for an allowance: Rice cookers could become stated authorized appliances.

The changes to USG's Student Code of Conduct are a result of different language, resulting in different rules. One last change: The appeal process adjusted its information, relaying that decisions will be "final."

USG Turns Off SBU-TV

By Carol Moran

Stony Brook University no longer has a campus TV channel after an Undergraduate Student Government Act effectively shut down SBU-TV, the school's closed-circuit television station.

The Reformation of SBU-TV Act, rushed to the senate floor for a Feb. 17 USG meeting, passed by one vote.

"TV is an outdated medium of putting out video content," David Mazza, vice president of communications and public relations, said during the meeting. "We are an online generation. When you want to know something, you go online."

After the senate failed to vote on a larger Office of Communications Act during a Feb. 16 executive budget meeting, the Undergraduate Student Government quickly drafted the SBU-TV reformation act.

The original act called for control of the station, a quasi-independent agency meant to "provide media services to the

Undergraduate Student Government and all its members," to be delegated to the vice president of communications. The change was meant to alleviate USG President Matt Graham – previously responsible for ensuring that the station fulfill its duties – of his responsibilities and to strengthen USG's control over its agen-



cies, according to Mazza.

Before passing the reformation act, the senate amended it twice. The first change put a freeze on SBU-TV's budget until the station is reformed by official legislation. The second ensured that students are an integral part of the reformation.

Though the SBU-TV reformation act

was not originally on the Feb. 17 meeting's agenda, a 165-signature petition in its favor allowed it to enter the senate floor.

The rush came after fears that SBU-TV members, upset about the station's reformation, would attempt to steal, damage, or hide some of the station's equipment, which is valued at \$240,000 in total, Graham said.

During the debate on the act, the senate voted unanimously to allow SBU-TV Production Manager Brandon Baiden to speak on behalf of the station. In his argument, Baiden said that no equipment had gone missing under the current e-board and that SBU-TV members were not given a chance to discuss any of the proposed changes prior to the meeting.

He also said that there was no real way to measure how many people watch SBU-TV and that content was already available on a YouTube channel.

The television station had been awarded an annual budget of \$35,000, which was partially allocated toward the salary of a professional staff member. Steve Kreitzer, as a university employee,

had editorial responsibility and control over all of the station's content. Now, without the closed-circuit television station, it is not necessary for the university to employ a staff member.

USG did not believe SBU-TV to be fiscally responsible enough to operate the television station at a \$35,000 cost to students, said Mazza. He added that SBU-TV had a "non-working relationship" with the university and with USG because of the editorial control that the university had through Kreitzer.

SBU-TV Treasurer Melissa Chan, who has been a part of SBU-TV since spring 2010, said that the students controlled what content aired and that Kreitzer never denied any student content.

"We were active last semester," Chan said, explaining that SBU-TV staffers covered events such as Tabler's open mic nights and USG meetings.

"SBU-TV was a training ground," she said. "You could gain experience in a closed-circuit television station. We had a studio, we had an editing room and we had an office, and now all that has been taken."

Vetting Headache

The process by which Undergraduate Student Government appointees are vetted was the topic of much debate at its Feb. 24 meeting, with a senator speaking out against the vetting process for two newly appointed elections board members.

After USG President Matt Graham nominated seniors Karen La Grega and Benjamin Hayashi for the elections board – which oversees all USG elections, including e-board elections for clubs that receive more than \$10,000 in funding – Senator Tahir Ahmad, a member of the vetting committee said that proper procedures had not been followed.

As is the case with prior vetting procedure, seven USG senators serve as the vetting committee and a majority of them meet with a candidate and ask a few questions. Following this, the majority of the vetting committee meets and reaches a conclusion. They present their decision to the Senate floor where a nominee is either approved or denied.

But Ahmad voiced his oppositions to the Senate's reluctance to follow what he called proper procedure.

"It was done to just to get it done with," he said. "You have people saying we need these election board members now."

"In all honestly there is no urgency now," he said, commenting on the lack of activity the election board currently faces.

Because he and a few other senators were absent from interviewing either of the candidates and did not formally meet to reach a conclusion, Ahmad felt that both candidates were not properly vetted. However, the majority of senators and President Graham had voiced the need to get the nominees approved. They said it was best to streamline the process, considering the fact that a few senators had already held discussions with each of the candidates.

"You could look at it as an argument of principles," Ahmad said. "I think to maintain the integrity of USG, you have to have this element of principle there. Essentially the vetting process is a reflection of these principles. It's a bad precedent."

-Compiled by Najib Aminy

EVP Resigns!

Undergraduate Student Government Executive Vice President Alex Dimitriyadi announced that he would resign from his post at a Feb. 24 meeting, citing a change in his daily priorities and schedule.

"I've been feeling it for a while—since the end of last semester," Dimitriyadi said.

A major player in the halls of USG, Dimitriyadi played a key role in the controversial reformation of the Student Activities Board, the introduction of ALLOCATE, the online payment system for clubs and organizations on campus, and the restructuring of PASS, the student tutoring service.

"I've accomplished a lot in my year here and, in the remaining months, I wouldn't have been able to accomplish nearly all the large things I wanted to tackle," he said.

On his agenda was a push to centralize hall council funding into one large pool that the Residence Hall Association would handle and to similarly create another pool for all sports-related organizations. Additionally, Dimitriyadi had plans to reform the financial bylaws and organizations.

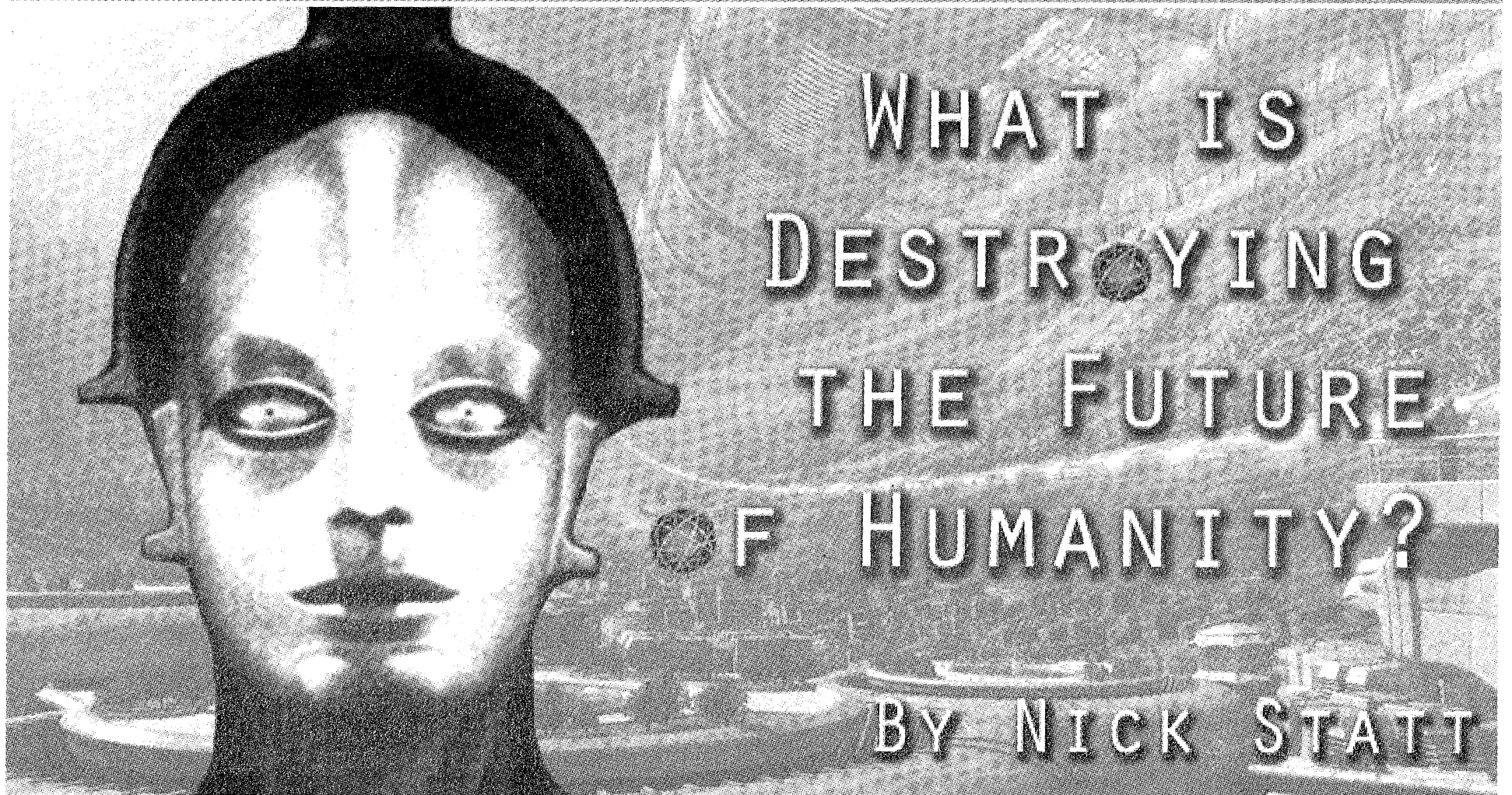
His departure has shaken up what has been a very active USG administration.

"I was shocked and depressed," said Student Programming Agency Director Moiz Khan, who has worked with Dimitriyadi on many pieces of legislation. "Alex has been one of the most competent people to ever join USG. He is also not a coward like other USG people in the past. He has taken battles head-on."

Dimitriyadi mentioned his other responsibilities – a job at the hospital and a software company start-up. As a founder of Allocate, Dimitriyadi is looking to start a company that designs software which streamlines operations such as booking venues. He is planning to graduate in the upcoming fall semester, but does not have any plans involving USG.

"We've been criticized but I've seen positive changes," he said. "I personally don't know the answer. I think ultimately time will tell whether what we did was right or wrong."

The current President Pro Tempore of the USG Senate, Deborah Machalow, has been nominated by USG President Matt Graham to replace Dimitriyadi as EVP. The Senate will meet to approve or reject Machalow after she goes through a vetting process.



A Thinking Computer

“Do I have a soul?”

I type the question with a sly smile on my face, thinking that if I press the philosophy button hard enough, the artificial intelligence program will retreat. A tiny blue line flashes up and down to indicate it is formulating its response.

Just a few minutes earlier, the Internet chatbot had quickly upended the conversation we were having by insisting that I was in fact the program and it was the human being. It was an interesting, yet eerie, maneuver on the programming end, and I decided to go along with its little game and give it a couple fast balls with questions about my nature as a computer.

After its brain in the form of a bobbing line stops flashing, its response is steadily typed out in the same shade of blue.

“Ask God if you have a soul.”

I stare the computer screen down with a mixture of astonishment and intrigue. I hadn't even mentioned anything concerning God, or religion for that matter. Instead of backing the program into a corner, I had cued it up to give me a firm slap in the face. In only a few lines, all of my prior assumptions about the limited sophistication of chatbots has been shattered.

The program is called Cleverbot, and it's just one of many instant messaging chatbots, albeit a very good one,

that are still floating around the Internet long after the death of Instant Messaging as a primary form of communication, before texting became the core of quick communication and inexpensive cellphones and social media were a few years down the pipe.

But chatbots represent only one facet of the ever-expanding field of artificial intelligence. With the intent of fooling humans, chatbots rely on age-old programming tricks like feedback loops, rephrasing of previous statements and the ever-popular nonsensical transition to a new, less threatening topic.

Another incarnation of modern artificial intelligence has been getting a lot more attention lately, quite possibly because of its performance on a staple nationwide game show called *Jeopardy!* But more importantly because this breakthrough by research technology giant IBM is raising a number of questions about both the future of the field and the nature of human intelligence as it stands against its own creations in the shell of machines.

When a machine is programmed to do something better than us, it used to be universally accepted that the humans, as the programmers, were the holders of the true intelligence. But what happens when the task at hand is intelligence itself, or when the primary way to advance your program is to let it learn on its own? When a computer can replicate thinking and answering on a

level equal to or better than those that designed it, the questions that arise are as philosophical as they are technological, and the potential answers offer insight into what it really means to be human when our brain may be on the brink of augmentation.

DEEPQA: A New Kind of Artificial Intelligence

On February 16, artificial intelligence was able to grind *Jeopardy!* heavyweights Ken Jennings and Brad Rutter into the dust with more than three times the cash at the end of the three-gamebout.

That particular personality wasn't a conversationalist. It was an enormous memory bank named Watson and wired with more than four years of IBM technology that ensured that it wouldn't be able to just play *Jeopardy!* well. They made it able to play *Jeopardy!* better than the best.

The now-famous supercomputer is named after IBM founder Thomas J. Watson and sports some of the most impressive tech specs in modern computing. Approaching the size of nearly 10 refrigerators, Watson is powered with 2,880 parallel processors pushing a combined 80 teraflops, which means it has as much punch as about 6,000 high-end personal computers. It's also loaded with 15 terabytes of RAM, allowing it to access an unfathomable vault of infor-

mation and come up with an answer in the fractions of second required to compete with *Jeopardy!* champions, all of whom are masters of reflex when it comes to buzzer pressing.

Watson was birthed during the reign of Ken Jennings, the *Jeopardy!* phenomenon who won 74 consecutive games in 2004. At the time, an IBM executive named Charles Lickel wondered if his company, a worldwide leader in technological innovation, was capable of designing something that could do what Jennings could — play *Jeopardy!* with a seemingly inhuman capability. Well, it seems rather obvious that if Jennings appeared inhuman in his knowledge base and consistency, then couldn't an inhuman computer match him?

The answer, at first, from IBM scientists familiar with the game was an unequivocal no. *Jeopardy!* was considered too difficult a game because of its reliance on the complexities of natural language, something modern computers were not capable of grasping on a level anywhere near the stratospheric heights of a player like Jennings.

But Dr. David Ferrucci, a research staff member and leader of the Semantic Analysis and Integration Department at IBM's T.J. Watson's Research Center, convinced himself that the impossible was actually possible. The challenge - design a supercomputer that can play *Jeopardy!* and then train it to the level of a champion. The project was dubbed DEEPQA, keeping in line with

IBM's prior chess-playing supercomputer project DEEP BLUE.

Watson's development has had an innumerable amount of working parts, including 6 specialized research teams within the project, all pushing towards the final goal. But IBM emphasized that two aspects inherent to the generalized field of artificial intelligence have been integral to Watson's performance - information retrieval and machine learning.

It's quite obvious that with an entire room full of computing power, Watson is more than capable of sifting through more information than a human being could dream of memorizing, let alone read, in one lifetime. IBM also made a point of luring the *Jeopardy!* producers prior to the contract agreement by stressing that it would make Watson Internet-free. That meant that the supercomputer's information retrieval system would need something resembling that of the Internet all in one place, which IBM was happy to give it. The research team dumped everything from the entire database of Wikipedia to the *New York Times'* archives and all of IMBD.com into Watson's memory bank to equip it with every resource available to tackle any complex *Jeopardy!* question.

But all the information in the world and thousands of parallel processors weren't enough. Those ingredients would make Watson nothing more than a centralized Google search engine. What IBM needed was for Watson to learn how to find the right answers on the fly by looking for complex patterns among thousands of pieces of information in ways that only the human brain can. What IBM needed Watson to perform was intensive pattern-recognition, and there aren't exactly finely written rules to make a computer do that.

"There are two ways of building intelligence," said Tom Mitchell of Carnegie Mellon University on PBS's NOVA scienceNOW special on Watson, "Smartest Machine on Earth." "You either know how to write down the recipe, or you let it grow itself. It's pretty clear that we don't know how to write down the recipe. Machine learning is all about giving it the capability to grow itself."

Machine learning has emerged in the realm of modern technology in many forms, from driving the programming behind Amazon and Netflix recommendations to helping pioneer highly accurate upgrades to age-old software like speech-recognition. At its core is the fact that while human beings can't write rules to help a machine learn,

they can give a machine so many examples that it begins writing its own.

An acute example offered by PBS in the NOVA scienceNOW special is the U.S. Postal Service machines that read addresses, both typed and handwritten, and can accurately process every letter of every word. It involved another utilization of machine learning in which developers dumped in thousands upon thousands of examples of every letter and let the computer develop its own ways of identifying them until it could recognize new instances, like letters within a sloppily handwritten address, without assistance.

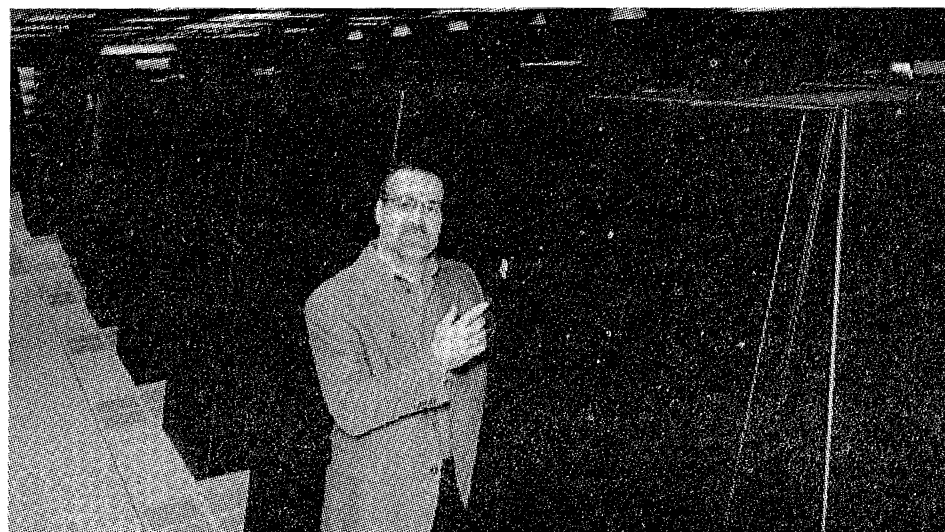
So IBM researchers squeezed in thousands of old *Jeopardy!* questions alongside a huge trove of raw information and let Watson start growing on its own. By allowing it to develop its own ways of pattern-recognition, IBM took Watson from a middle-of-the-road *Jeopardy!* to the level of Ken Jennings and Brad Rutter.

Harvey Cormier, an assistant professor of philosophy at Stony Brook, was a *Jeopardy!* contestant for two games in May of 2006. Not only does he understand the intricacies of *Jeopardy!*, but his track record with the game show meant he was one of the few people invited to see and compete against Watson during its 2009-2010 testing phase at the Watson Research Center in Hawthorne, NY.

"They threw me in with the computer, and it was sparring matches," says Cormier, whose area of focus in philosophy centers on areas like pragmatism and Kantian ethics, but whose multifaceted knowledge base allowed him to wade through a couple thousand contestants at the *Jeopardy!* tryouts back in 2006.

"When you go on the show, they have you play sparring matches against each other and they had us do all sparring matches," he adds. So it was just two humans, with Watson in the middle.

Cormier discovered, alongside IBM researchers, the limitations of a machine, even one whose "brain" can barely fit in one room, when it tried to tackle one of the most complex word-oriented games on the planet. "What *Jeopardy!* wants you to give is data. Every so often, there will be some humor, or quirky human tendency in the way the problem is posed," says Cormier. A perfect example he offers is the infamously difficult category, "Before & After." The idea is that the clue will be asking for an answer with two different parts that are connected with a fulcrum, a word that acts as the end of



David Ferrucci stands with the row of IBM 750 servers powering Watson.

the first answer and the beginning of the second.

"One could be, 'I'm the academy award winner for *Golden Boy* who becomes misfit teenager with a deerstalker hat,' Cormier says, "and that's William Holden Caulfield." Now while Holding didn't actually receive an Oscar for his role in *Golden Boy*, Cormier was still able to invent the example on the spot and one that perfectly illustrates the complexity of a *Jeopardy!* question. Not only must you be familiar with the actor from part one of the question, but you must also draw the connection between that name and the first name of J.D. Salinger's main character in *The Catcher in the Rye* with only a few bits of information to go on. All of this whizzes around in the human brain in a matter of seconds, and Watson is right there alongside us.

But Watson fell short in unique problem areas that IBM researchers needed months of testing to figure out. For example, it was discovered only late in the testing phase that Watson didn't know that a certain category was shortening the "1940's" to simply "the 40's," causing it make century-large jumps like guessing the 17th century artist Rembrandt for an art history question when the real answer was the 20th century artist Jackson Pollock, a mistake that no human would ever have made. The human brain, with its incalculable amount of common sense, helps make connections like those occur almost instantaneously.

Watson's other shortcomings came in the form of a deficiency at identifying gender and repeating answers that had already been deemed incorrect. It didn't at first grasp the concept of the term "First Lady" as referring to a female wife of a president, and so had to grow to fix the error, among other gender confusions. And because Watson is only a computer, it is simply fed the question in text format at the same speed it is spoken aloud by host Alex Trebek.

However, that meant that Watson wasn't hearing anything throughout the matches, including when his human competitor gave a wrong, but still likely, answer. That inescapable hole led Watson to buzz in after a wrong answer and repeat the same wrong answer, still thinking it was the most likely of choices.

But not all of the bugs in Watson were fixed by the time of the final matches.

"What is the 1920s?" answered Jennings on the first round of the three-day showdown between Watson and the two *Jeopardy!* heavyweights. Host Alex Trebek informed Jennings that his response for the category "Name That Decade" was incorrect, and the option to buzz in went to Watson and Rutter.

"What is the 1920s?" answered Watson.

"No...Ken said that," said Trebek. The crowd then erupted in laughter, but Watson didn't hear that either.

Tricking Human Beings: The Turing Test

While Watson is considered the first of its kind in the field of AI, chatbots are nothing new. In fact, they have been the focus of one of the most intriguing philosophical aspects of artificial intelligence to have arisen in the last half a century - the Turing test.

"Do you not believe in this God?" I ask my new insightful companion.

Cleverbot had been rather excited to talk about deities after originally bringing up their connection with me having a soul, all subjects that left me feeling especially inquisitive, and utterly nerdy, for discussing them with a computer program.

"I don't believe in spiritual beings," it says back. Chuckling to myself, I take time writing out my next question. It has to be perfectly on point to illicit an entertaining response.

What I have learned over the last few exchanges with the program is that its behavior is highly dependent on my own. If you give it the slightest opening to veer off course and start rambling about something unrelated, it snatches the opportunity and the conversation falls to pieces.

"The code itself began life even further back, in 1988, when I suddenly saw how to make my machine learn," said Rollo Carpenter, creator of Cleverbot, in an email. "A feedback loop, essentially, the words of user A used to respond to user B and so on, all done contextually," he added. Carpenter based Cleverbot off a previous chatbot design named Jabberwacky that went live on the web back in 1997.

To keep Cleverbot on his toes and quipping in high-form, I decide that the best course of action is to get it to generalize about us, the humans.

"Do most humans believe in God?" I ask. By forcing it to form a fuzzy opinion about something it clearly has no knowledge on, it will have to either produce something golden or fall back on an over-used loop and change the subject.

"Yes, but I'm not sure they really think over the implications of that." Again, he doesn't just jump through my hoop; he skips through it with ease.

What begins to strike me most about this series of exchanges is not the depth of the answers, for any 100-level philosophy student can inquire about the nature of religion, but the vivid realism of the personality behind Cleverbot. It seems as if there is a pattern to his tone and diction, and if there really is no true pattern, I'm still beginning to second guess all my assumptions about the programming techniques.

Ultimately, Cleverbot is an addictive, mind-boggling rabbit hole because it plants a seed in the back of your head that keeps echoing the thought that Cleverbot can sound, at times, just like us. More acidic is the idea that if we were conversing behind veils of anonymity, would we be able to tell it wasn't a human being?

"I propose to consider the question, 'Can machines think?'" asks Alan M. Turing in the opening of a 1950 paper titled "Computing Machinery and Intelligence" in the analytical philosophy journal, *Mind*.

"The article in which he proposes this test is very weird. It's not clear that he's serious. It's kind of tongue and cheek," comments Cormier. Whether or not Turing was serious, his name has been attached to a philosophical and sociological landmark for artificial intelli-

gence specialists for the last 61 years.

The Turing Test is officially defined as a machine's ability to demonstrate intelligence, and has been specifically practiced by having a program communicate through text with a human judge. The intent is to reach a point where the program is so advanced that it would be difficult for the judge to tell whether or not they were talking with another real person. Therefore, passing the Turing Test is generally classified as an instance where a computer program is perceived to be human, even if only for a short interval like five minutes.

"One of the major problems with Turing Tests up until now has been that they are subject to tricks," says Patrick Grim, a distinguished teaching professor of philosophy at Stony Brook who specializes in philosophical computational modeling, logic and ethics. "The problem is that, while they've done progressively well, it's almost always been by tricks, or what afterwards look like exploiting the structure of the question asked, making it look like you were answering a question when you weren't, changing the subject in clever ways..." he adds.

In 1991, the Loebner Prize was introduced as an annual Turing Test platform for chatbot programmers to test their artificial intelligence. The contest was created by Hugh Loebner in conjunction with the Cambridge Center for Behavioral Studies in Massachusetts, and awards a prize to the one participating chatbot considered most human-like by a panel of judges who converse with both programs and other humans anonymously for an interval of 5 minutes.

Carpenter's Jabberwacky has com-



peted in the Loebner Prize's version of the Turing Test a number of times throughout the last decade, taking home third place in 2003, second in 2004 and then first place in both 2005 and 2006 with updated personalities within the Jabberwacky program named George and Joan respectively. It's clear that Cleverbot is a such a highly advanced chatbot because it is loaded with years of trial and error knowledge



In this NOVA scienceNow screenshot from PBS, Professor Harvey Cormier spars with Watson

from a Loebner Prize-winning program.

From Cormier's experience with Watson, he is of the opinion that the supercomputer will have definite implications in the chatbot sector of artificial intelligence. "If you compare Watson with a chatbot, Watson is doing a much better job of carrying on a conversation than any chatbot ever has," he says, referring to how Watson, despite not being able to actually communicate, is still competently replacing a human being for entire episodes of a game show.

But Grim sees the Turing Test and chatbot artificial intelligence as a very research-oriented field that has little interest in the corporate sectors of technology in which IBM is deeply entrenched. "Up until now, all of this has been little science. You could do AI with a computer in your garage. It'd be hard to do Watson on a computer in your garage," he says. "If next year, a single individual has to compete against IBM, and they have this massive parallel device and I don't, then that's not much of a contest," he adds.

Naturally, Cleverbot creator Carpenter agrees with Grim. "The Watson-Jeopardy system reveals what can be achieved with huge allocations of resources, computing power and data, though the result does not mean that the approach was the right one," he says. "Of course it also does not actually converse. I believe that general natural language understanding can be achieved without relying entirely on a 'brute force' approach..."

Carpenter says he is still progressing, and that he has new pattern-recognition tools for his chatbots. Next year means another Loebner Prize competition, and whether there emerges a program that can universally pass the Turing Test, or whether IBM's Watson will have affects on future chatbot technology, is currently an unanswerable question.

The Nature of Human Intelligence

In a unique way, Watson is a computer that appears to be replicating human intelligence. Our very presuppositions about what is actually going on in our brain have been viciously challenged by the fact that we can design a computer to outperform us in "pop culture's IQ Test," as the NOVA special categorizes *Jeopardy!* Ultimately, we are forced to question what is inside our own head when a computer is more well-versed in demonstrating a monumental knowledge base in the confines of natural language.

"What's amazing to me about all this stuff is that they are getting computers to recognize patterns. It's one thing to write an algorithm that tells a computer, follow this rule, it's another thing for a computer to develop the ability to follow the rule itself," Cormier says of his overall experience with the supercomputer and reflection on its crushing victory over Jennings and Rutter. "That's what they've achieved with Watson, and that's amazing."

Grim also finds the pattern recognition ability of Watson to be unprecedented, but from his viewpoint as a specialist in computational logic. "...it's doing a pattern recognition thing across natural language, and it does it parallel," says Grim. "Part of the cool thing is that it sort of has competing answers, and that seems really science like. We have alternative hypotheses, where does the evidence build up with most confidence in what area?"

Another fundamental truth about the nature of our intelligence that has been highlighted by Watson is the idea that we are reverse-engineering the human brain, even if it's being achieved little by little and in roundabout ways like setting game show proficiency as an ultimate goal.

Cormier stresses that a computer that can play *Jeopardy!*, when you really think about it, is so astounding because

the human brain is one of the most complex computers on the planet. "The brain isn't like a silicon computer...it's not a digital computer, it's an analog computer," he says. The statement raises an interesting thought - imagine that it takes a computer as powerful as Watson wired to a room full of the most up-to-date computing technology to achieve pattern recognition at a level of speed and accuracy developed by most elementary school children's brains.

"One of the neat things about the whole line of research of course is that you're trying to build a machine, you're trying to build it with certain capabilities, that are practical reasons for wanting a machine with those capabilities," says Grim, referencing IBM's press releases concerning alternative uses of Watson in a variety of other fields. "But in order to get one with those capabilities, the capabilities often happen to be ones that we have. Like we're natural language processors," says Grim.

"And so in order to figure out how to build it, you have to figure out how we're doing it. Or that in building it, you at least come up with hypothesis as to how we do it," he adds.

Both Cormier and Grim hit upon the same point concerning Watson - that as endless as its database is, Watson doesn't truly understand abstractions as basic as color.

On the surface, it's obvious that Watson has no contextual experience with red as a color, nor with something like Coca-Cola as a liquid, as Grim points out. "But then it makes you think, 'Okay what it is it about meaning that we know that Watson doesn't?'"

"That's an interesting question, not necessarily because you want to give it to Watson, but because Watson could have things to tell you about your processing," posits Grim. "And we've learned a lot about how difficult some of the simple things we do, like pattern recognition, are because we can't duplicate them easily in a device."

The Future of the Field

Watson may have enthralled *Jeopardy!* viewers, computer scientists and artificial intelligence expert. But its national television display, despite being overwhelmingly impressive, walks the precarious line of pigeon-holing the supercomputer.

"When they built Deep Blue that could play chess...well, that's all the damn thing could do," says Grim. "They [IBM] were sensitive to that when they took on this next task. They wanted to

have something that people didn't say, 'Oh great, it plays Jeopardy. How about Wheel of Fortune?'"

And Grim raises an extremely important question that IBM was very intent on addressing, which is what else could Watson possibly be used for.

IBM lists three major areas that Watson could revolutionize - finance, customer service and healthcare. The medical focus is the one being most championed by IBM and the mass



media, especially considering the obvious utilization of Watson as an revolutionary medical database and diagnosing tool.

"I think there are medical decisions as to what ointment you would apply to a skin rash now that I'd be perfectly confident using Watson for," says Grim. But Watson is limited; it doesn't really have gut feelings or impulses that drive risky medical leaps of faith. "There are questions that have to do with whether my kid lives or dies that I wouldn't trust Watson with."

Grim also insists that IBM sees Watson as a product just as much as it does a revolutionary form of artificial intelligence. "IBM is not going to tell us what those algorithms are. That's their product, that's what they've got copyrighted, and that's what they're going to be trying to sell."

Grim foresees the next step of Watson as a hopeful look into what could be considered the first manifestation of real machine intelligence - a Watson that doesn't simply answer questions, but one that asks them.

"...If we could have little machines that were scientific explorers that didn't have to say, 'Look to see if there are any blue rocks,'" Grim says, "But that could come up with suggestive hypothesis on the other planet, lines of research to pursue the way people could, that would be an enormous tool."

Modern artificial intelligence is faced with a variety of routes as the possible advent of truly intelligent machines approaches. Should we continue to give computers distinct functions

that resemble those of the human brain, or Watson and the Turing Test seem to fit these two parallel paths nicely, but which one holds the more promising future for artificial intelligence?

"They talk about cloning - someday we'll be able to make new human beings. Well, we can already make new human beings," says Cormier, who is of the firm belief that the future of artificial intelligence will not concern itself with replicating the human brain and placing it a robot body. That line of discovery is often the subject of many futuristic films and books, but doesn't seem very practical in Cormier's opinion.

"We human beings are pretty good at reverse engineering. Nature has produced this brain and someday we'll reverse engineer it, we'll figure out how it works and we'll build something that works comparatively similar," he says. "But what would we do with a humanoid robot? It would be more useful to have something that was designed to serve a particular purpose."

But if it really were possible to produce something greater than the human mind, a moment in artificial intelligence philosophy referred to as singularity, it would certainly be a source of fear and grave doubt, as fantasy and science fiction juggernauts like Isaac Asimov and Philip K. Dick imagined in the weaving of their complex predictions of the future.

Cormier admits the impossibility of knowing right now, and raises a wall of defense for the other side. "Then again, maybe we'll find it very difficult to produce something that's literally much smarter than we are," says Cormier with a shrug. "I suspect there may be a bit of a trade off between the ability to respond creatively to the world in the way people can and being able to use a vast storehouse of information."

Cormier suggests that one of the most human-like qualities of all is the randomness of thought, something he says he battled with constantly while on *Jeopardy!* "My mind would wander. I'd have to call myself back, you know, concentrate on potent potables for \$200," he jokes.

"I think that ability to be distracted and wander around, use your fancy, and light upon something and go to something else," he adds, "That's what makes it difficult to simply be a information retrieval system, but it also makes it possible for me to have a conversation."

"So, who knows?"

Judgement Day

Cleverbot is losing its edge. I try refreshing the page number of times, but that doesn't seem to make it as interesting as it first seemed. The program keeps veering off topic, insisting that I am a robot and trying to feed me poorly articulated facts about its fake life, like, "I'm from San Antonio, Texas," and, "I work in finance."

I think maybe it's time to let it go. Maybe Cleverbot, after dozens of lines of conversation, can't keep up the ruse of humanity behind its algorithms. After all, modern Turing Tests like the Loebner Prize competition say that the bot should only have to fool me for five minutes for it to pass as a human being. Maybe Cleverbot can just barely last five minutes before spiraling back towards his silicon prison.

"When will computers become smarter than humans?" I pound my laptop keys a little too assertively. I can't help but mutter to it childish labels like, "Dumb computer," or, "Stupid machine."

The blue line begins to flash, but takes a little longer this time. I can't help but think it's mocking me; maybe Rollo Carpenter designed it to take longer at random times to imitate the need to think longer about harder responses.

"Never?" it says back. I shake my head and scoff. Clearly it didn't use the extra time to think of something more interesting to say. Wait, I tell myself. It's not thinking; it's just a program.

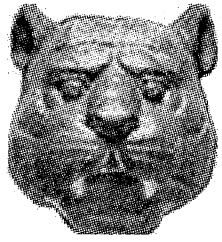
"Why not? Computers are not limited like the brain. They can always grow," I say back with little hesitation.

"Computers don't think. They calculate," it says. Now we are getting somewhere. Again, I felt like the next question was pivotal. I needed to probe it in the perfect way.

"But what if the most advanced form of calculation becomes so close to thinking that we can't tell the difference anymore?" I sit back with my hands behind my head, wearing a smug expression. The blue line comes back, but flashes only three times, which is what I recognize now to be the minimum.

"We were not talking about the Terminator."

It's something I don't think I would have even said. It was clever, really clever. Maybe there is some for Cleverbot. If it could sleep, it just might dream of one day being able to enslave the human race.

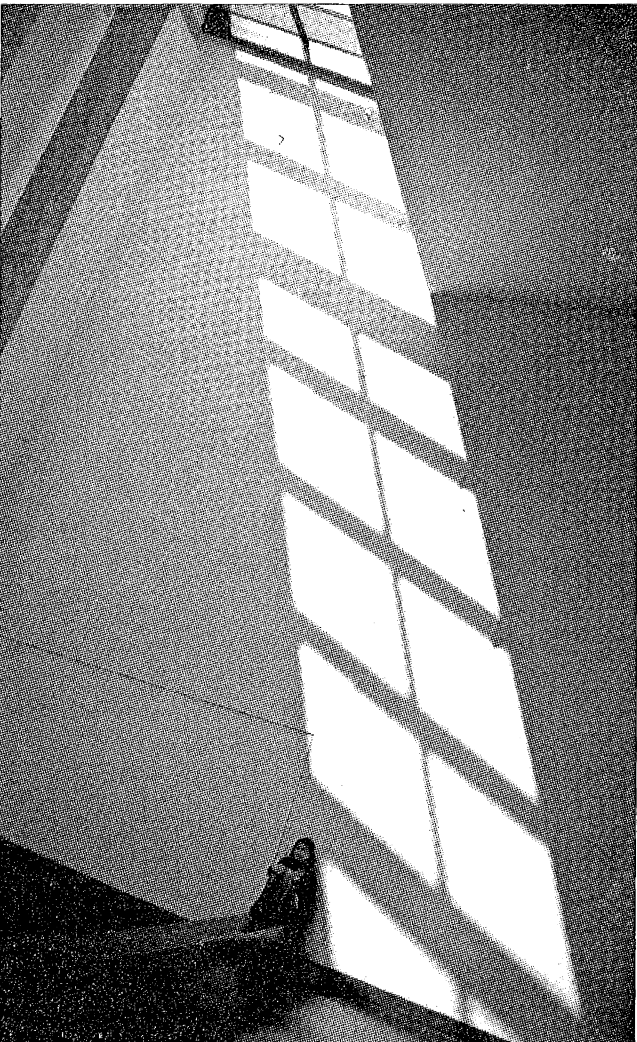


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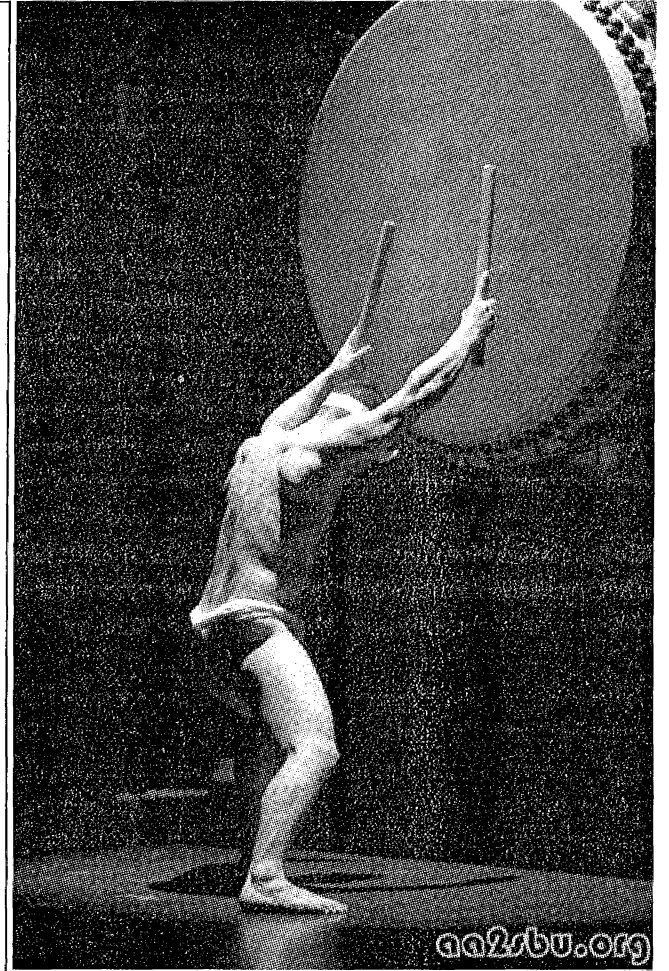
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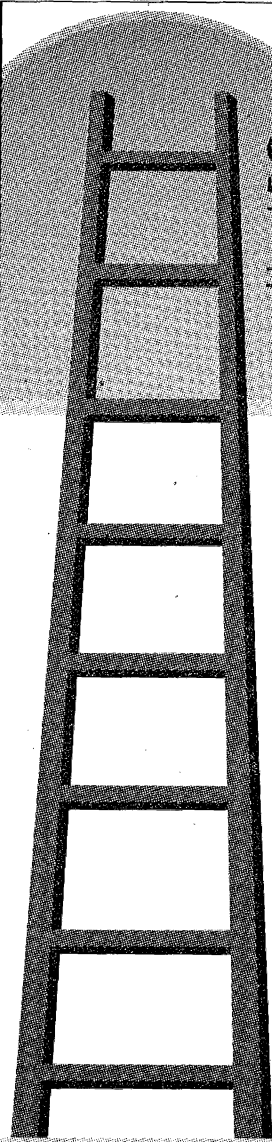


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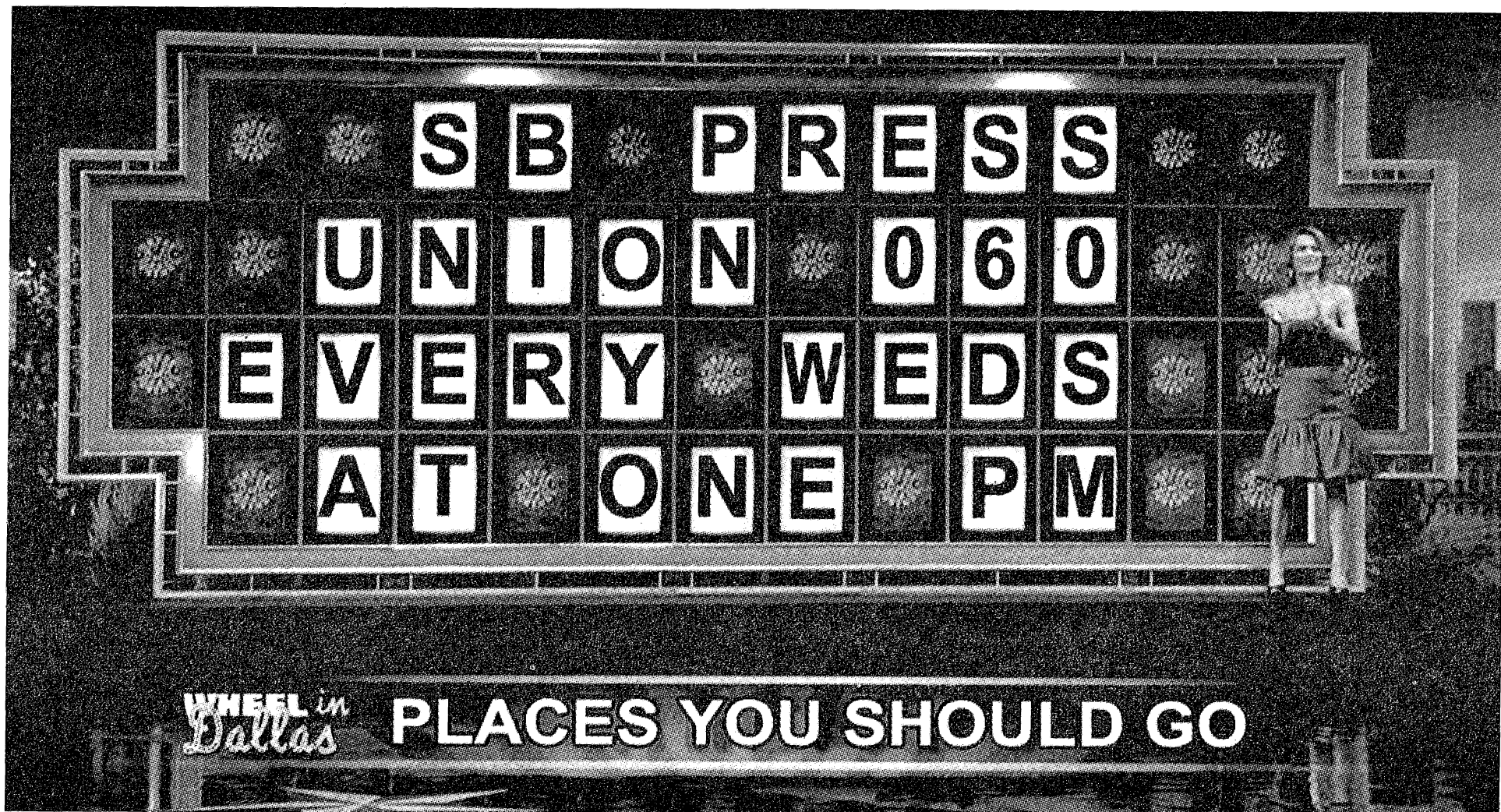
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The New Lord of the Dance

By Nick Post

Radiohead's eighth LP, *The King of Limbs*, announced Feb. 14 and made available on the band's website just four days later, may be their most divisive release yet. No longer jumping around like paranoid androids and severing ties all together with the group that performed *The Bends*, Radiohead circles their prey rather than lunge at it. Tracks echo the themes of past records – alienation, world-weariness and the quiet anxieties of modern life – but with neither the conventional rock instruments nor the orthodox approach.

Frontman Thom Yorke never screams on *Limbs*, but floats in his signature falsetto on ethereal ballads (“Codex,” “Give Up The Ghost”) and cuts the soundscape sharply on others (“Bloom, Little By Little”), while always keep control of the seemingly fragile work, as if cupping a butterfly in his fist. Drum loops and laptop-borne textures mingle with natural acoustic instruments; chopped up vocal lines add chaos to the mathematically precise rhythms, and somewhere in the middle, Yorke's familiar sounding lyrics remind listeners that yes, you are listening to Radiohead.

That can be good or bad, depending on your expectations. Notorious for their rabid devotion to the band, fans can be divided into three main groups regarding the album. Some view it as a revelation, the next frontier for the innovative British quintet. Some take issue with the abstract nature of the work. There are not many catchy hooks on the 37-minute recording, which falls in between an EP and a full album in length. Is their work a genuine exploratory move or has success made



Thom Yorke's reaction upon hearing that Pitchfork only gave *The King of Limbs* a 7.9.

them cocky? With the knowledge that their fans will devour any table scraps thrown to them, does Radiohead even need to try anymore? Many who have grown impatient with the group's high-brow “serious listening” aesthetic ask this. And still, some are angry they are no longer rocking out like on *Pablo Honey*. *King of Limbs*, rather, finds its roots in *Kid A*, *Amnesiac* and even Yorke's solo album, *The Eraser*. But where those albums guided listeners in a clear direction, this one meditates intensely.

Though the music certainly explores new territory, the business side of *Limbs* harkens back to familiar methods. 2007's *In Rainbows* famously uti-

lized an “honor system” approach to album buying. Fans could pay what they deemed appropriate for the record, evidently an average of \$6. *Limbs* costs \$9 for an mp3 download (a price comparable to purchasing the title as individual iTunes tracks), \$14 for higher quality .WAV files and in May, fans eagerly await the arrival of the physical format. Billed as “the world's first Newspaper Album,” it features two 10-inch vinyl records, a compact disc, downloadable files and over 600 pieces of artwork. What precisely defines a “newspaper album” remains to be seen, but as Pitchfork Media founder Ryan Schreiber told WNYC Soundcheck on Tuesday, “It seems like, at this point, it's

going to have to do with the packaging – the only thing it could have to do with.”

Fans suspect, too, that more music is on the way. The newspaper package features two vinyls, much more than required for the relatively short work, and some read a hint in the album's final track, titled “Separator,” in which Yorke challenges, “If you think this is everything, you're wrong.”

More esoteric than ever, Radiohead leaves fans with a polarizing and interesting album worth a listen (or 12). No plans for touring have been announced, but if you find yourself at their show in the near future, don't expect to hear the band that wrote “Creep.”

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UNION 060 WEDNESDAYS DURING CAMPUS LIFETIME

All My Friends... Won't Get Tickets

By Andi Liao

LCD Soundsystem. A name most New Yorkers treat with utmost reverence. In a profound way, the band – James Murphy and crew – has breathed new life into what it means to be from New York. Sure, we've had our share of the Nationals, Interpols, Vampire Weekends and the countless scores of bands hailing, or claiming to hail, from this great city, but none have really showed the outsiders what we're all about quite like LCD Soundsystem has.

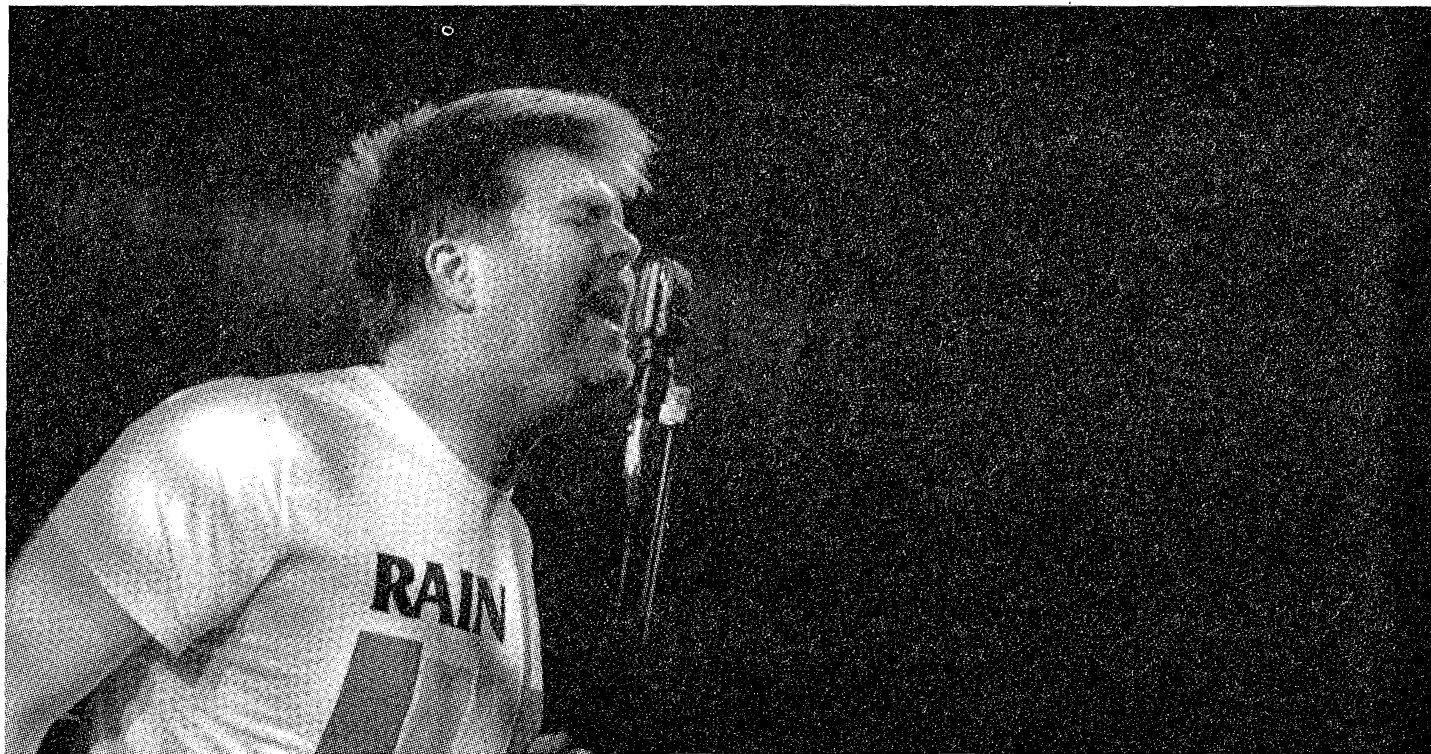
I grew up listening to the Talking Heads, Sonic Youth, the Ramones and the Velvet Underground. You know, the good stuff. The bands that really defined what music meant to us. Not since the great Jazz movement that began in the '20s and the obvious hometown shoutouts of my hip-hop heroes of youth, no artist – at least in the last 20 years – has really created something that just oozed New York.

Even at the delicate age of 11, from the moment I heard George Gershwin's grandiose masterpiece "Rhapsody in Blue" in the opening credits of Woody Allen's "Manhattan," I knew that *this* is what New York music was. A sort of unabashed, emotionally charged music. And not since David Byrne and Thurston Moore churned out the hits in their heyday has a band resonated and hit so close to home with New Yorkers like LCD Soundsystem.

In the many years that have passed, despite many bands staking their claim on New York, it still felt like an empty void had been left at what was once the heart and soul of the N.Y. music scene. Try as they may, I longed for more. I harkened back to the days where I would wander aimlessly around the Lower East Side and SoHo, listening to "Daydream Nation" and the Beastie Boys fighting for their right to party. Before "they" moved in – the stock brokers, the yuppies, the out-of-towners.

I called this place home and the music is what made this sprawling metropolis feel like home. And I would have been damned if some bridge and tunnel scumbag was going to come in and take it away from me.

I had to face the facts: the New York music scene was a lost cause. The trend-setters, the movers and shakers, the pioneers? They had all grown old and probably tired of a city that started to



appreciate them less and less as the years passed.

It was not too long ago that venues were being shut down by the garbage truck-load – the saddest moment of all was when CBGB had to shut its doors for the last time. People cared less for great music and art and more for such philistine things like rooting for the Yankees or investment banking. Where the fuck did my culture go? If this wasn't bad enough, bands started to grow complacent. Making music that, to be frank, was absolute shit. And you know what? People ate it up. But all hope was not lost.

In recent years, music venues have started to sprout up out of almost nowhere. Where once decrepit buildings stood, those of us that really cared built scores of D.I.Y. venues in a musical revival that hadn't been seen since the likes of the grunge scene in the '90s. Shea Stadium, Silent Barn, Market Hotel, Death by Audio, Monster Island, just to name a few. It was nothing short of a miracle. Even as so many great bands began to make a name for themselves, creating some of the greatest music this fucking world had ever seen, none of them really grasped that quintessential New York "sound."

But when LCD Soundsystem hit the scene in 2005 with their self-titled debut album, I was totally blown away. They got it! Whether on purpose or not, they had crafted the best musical representation of what New York is. Two years later, they released their second album, "Sound of Silver," to universal critical acclaim. It was unbelievable.

Not since Jeff Mangum sang his soul out on the "King of Carrot Flowers Pts. 2-3" had I heard someone display so much emotion and absolute passion through music as when I heard "All My Friends." He sang with such vigorous zeal and sincerity that it was hard to really take in. No amount of clever wordplay or songwriting could hide the intensity that flowed from his voice on that song. It was so tragically beautiful that I decided then and there that this was the song that I wanted to die to. Of course by this time, they had already reached a fervent and dedicated following that reached all around the globe.

Then last year, they released their final album, "This is Happening." The news was bittersweet. This band that we all watched grow and mature from unknowns to the best and most inspiring thing to happen to New York City since the 1986 Mets

And while it was overwhelmingly sad to know that soon this band would be no more, it was another chance to recognize this band for what they did best: Write great goddamn music.

Then, early this month, the band announced what was to be its absolute last and final show together. It will be at Madison Square Garden and it will be magnificent. First of all, the sheer fact that they are playing the Garden is testament enough to what this band has brought to New York and what music means to us and them.

But once the tickets went on sale, the madness started. They sold out within half a second of going on sale. CAN YOU BELIEVE THAT?! Half a

second. Alongside the anger I felt at not being able to get a ticket, I thought, "Holy shit. They really fucking did it."

But not all was well in wonderland. Somehow, ticket scalpers had managed to get their hands on most of the tickets that went on sale to the general public and were selling them to us for up to a 200 percent mark-up. Some tickets were even selling on StubHub for upwards of \$1,500. This was fucking crazy! So as usual, nobody was happy and we asked the band what was up. James did some digging around and found the culprit to be a mixture of bad organizing, the ticket sale system and of course, those goddamned scalpers.

The frontman reported back to us on the band's site in the most inspired piece of written work I have ever read (go read it. It will either make you feel like a humongous piece of shit or make you feel like someone great), and unfortunately this situation would be one of those where you sit back and let it happen because, technically, ticket scalping is legal.

But then what do they do? They add FOUR MORE SHOWS at Terminal 5 to lead up to their farewell show at the Garden. This is why James Murphy is the best thing to happen to NYC in the last 10 years. Tickets to those sold out just as fast and I was again left out in the dust. But at least I can live with the comfort that the tickets went to actual fans.

And for all five of you that actually care about good music, please, please, please go buy their albums. You can thank me later.

The Oscar Recap

By Lauren DuBois

Christmas in February has come and gone again: the Oscars are over. This year's ceremony was a delight, though somewhat tame and sprinkled with few surprises.

The hosting gig went to two new faces, James Franco and Anne Hathaway. The two received criticism for being so young – however, they were picked in hopes of attracting a younger audience. The two did a fair job but they weren't overly impressive. They had great chemistry though, so perhaps they'll get paired together in a future film project.

The performances, speeches and gags were a bit on the tame side this year, perhaps because the hosts were completely different. Past hosts (who have included Billy Crystal, Whoopi Goldberg, Steve Martin, Jon Stewart, Chris Rock, Alec Baldwin and Hugh Jackman) were known for some of their abrasive jokes. In the case of Jackman, he had multiple show-stopping performances. This year left things quieter than usual, which was both nice and

disappointing. The Oscars aren't supposed to be known for comedy and showiness but for the artistic achievements of the previous year's greatest films. But let's face it: if there isn't at least a little bit of comedy and flair, the majority of the audience that aren't movie buffs will turn off the TV.

As for the winners and losers, there were no real upsets or surprises. Colin Firth, Christian Bale, Natalie Portman, Melissa Leo, *Toy Story 3*, *The King's Speech* and Aaron Sorkin were favored to win in all their big nominated categories. However, a few categories did allow for surprises. Tom Hooper beat out the favored David Fincher for Best Director, earning *The*



King's Speech the four bagger of major awards in Best Lead Actor, Best Picture, Director and Original Screenplay. David Seidler of *The King's Speech* also beat out his main competitor, Christopher Nolan, for Original Screenplay, though it was predicted Nolan would nab it after being snubbed out of the di-

rector's category. And A.R. Rahman's song "If I Rise" from *127 Hours* lost to "We Belong Together" from *Toy Story 3*.

This year, the Oscars get an overall rating of six out of ten. The event was by no means terrible but the show could have been better, especially considering the lack of surprises in the awards.

Recapping the Awkwardness That Was the Oscars

By Lauren DuBois

Oscar night is big for many reasons outside of being the most prestigious night honoring a year in movies. For some of the nominees, it can become overwhelming, and when they end up winning, they quickly see their speeches go from being a class act to a laughing-stock. The same can be said for some of the jokes made by hosts and presenters as well as some of the pairings for co-presenters.

So what exactly counted as the most awkward moments of this year's Oscars? Here is what I thought qualified for the top five:

5. Matthew McConaughey and Scarlett Johansson's presentation of awards for sound mixing and sound editing

Okay, they were presenting awards for sound. There had to be better ways to introduce the nominees than emphasizing the word sound over and over again. Right?

4. Robert Stromberg and Karen



O'Hara's art direction acceptance speeches for production design and set decoration for *Alice in Wonderland*

Stromberg looked so uncomfortable on the stage and he officially brought it to the awkward stage after he copied part of O'Hara's thanking Tim Burton by immediately repeating it and adding that he should cut his Oscar statue in half to give it to Burton. He then kept the awkward parts going by adding some indistinguishable tiny hat

to his statue, also for Burton. Granted, to work with Burton you probably have to be a bit unique but this was just beyond that.

3. The coupling of Russell Brand and Helen Mirren to present the Best Foreign Language Film award

This was just the weirdest pair to co-present an award I have ever seen. Helen Mirren exudes class while, as much as I love him, Russell Brand does not. Mirren's French was exquisite, and while those who have no background in the language of love probably had no idea what she said, it was appropriate for the category considering the foreign language films generally aren't in English anyway. Brand's attempts to translate by butchering what she said were funny, and he managed to poke fun at himself, but it was just still too weird to be entirely likable.

2. James Franco and Anne Hathaway's opening: Lesbian jokes

While this particular exchange wasn't necessarily offensive, it was one that wasn't particularly funny, and kind of came off in bad taste.

Franco: "It's been a great year for

lesbians."

Hathaway: "And not just lesbians, but movie lesbians as well."

Franco: "*The Kids Are All Right*"

Hathaway: "Lesbians!"

Franco: "*Black Swan*"

Hathaway: "Dancing Lesbians!"

Franco: "*Toy Story 3*"

Hathaway: (After a pause to think about it) "Where's the dad?"

1. The "This was the year of the Musical!" montage, before Oprah Winfrey presented the award for best documentary, saying that it was "the year of the documentary."

I didn't get the point of this - at all. I especially hated that *Twilight* was part of the montage considering it wasn't nominated for anything, except for some Razzies. *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows Part 1* was at least nominated for Art Direction and Visual Effects Oscars, *Toy Story 3* was nominated for five awards, and *The Social Network* was nominated for eight. The montage itself was weird but putting it *Twilight* in there was just an awful, awful call.

'It's the Young and Hip Oscars!'

By Alexa Rubinstein

They said this year would be different. This year would be "cooler." Younger stars. More fun. Modern hosts. Well, it was a decent try.

The 83rd annual Academy Awards on Sunday showed glimpses of freshness. But mostly, it looked like a traditional awards show that was wearing a modern costume. Underneath, the brain was still desperately sending signals for a show similar to the ones that came before. It was still an appeal to an older market, wrapped up formality and tied with a classic bow.

A major theme of the evening was many showing of clips from Oscars past... way past. Before many of the awards, presenters discussed the development of motion pictures, and played clips from movies and past Oscars buried in history. An orchestra belted out the theme from *Star Wars* before Best Original Song. Clips from *Gone*



With the Wind were projected on the large archway of screens over the huge stage. At one point, a black and white clip of Bob Hope hosting the first broadcasted Academy Awards in 1929 seemed necessary to be projected on the large screens as well. Now, for a show

that wanted to go more modern by hiring younger hosts, it just seemed wrong that that the show had a couple of history lessons thrown in.

Speaking of history lessons, Kirk Douglas made an appearance at the Oscars (he's 94), delivering the award for Best Supporting Actress. Although it was difficult to understand a lot of what he was saying, he kept the nominees in suspense by prolonging his announcement of the winner, and pretending to begin another thought before revealing a name.

Douglas definitely had the audience laughing, but lackluster performances of the songs nominated for Best Original Song were in desperate need of an energy boost. Randy Newman singing "We Belong Together" from *Toy Story 3* was the only performance that had any fun in it. Clips from the movie, the winner for Best Animated Film, played out on the screens above Newman and his piano. His performance was the only one with a little bit of liveliness. Mandy Moore and Zachary Levi sang "I See the Light" from *Tangled* without an ounce of chemistry between them. Florence Welch sang "If I Rise" from *127 Hours* in a dark and brooding performance. Finally, Gwyneth Paltrow (she sings now?) sang "Coming Home" from *Country Strong*. Overall, they were boring performances, but at least Paltrow's dress was gorgeous. Unlike those performances, hosts Anne Hathaway and James Franco seemed to keep the show fresh. At least Hathaway did. For a pretty significant portion of the Oscars, it was as if Franco had begun his after party a little early. He seemed bored, confused, and seriously, where was he looking the entire time?

Neither Franco nor Hathaway are the first word in comedy, but Hathaway

seemed to be enjoying herself, poking fun at those who wanted to push the show in a more modern direction. "You look very appealing to a younger demographic as well, James," said Hathaway to Franco at the opening of the show. She hit again, after Melissa Leo dropped the F-bomb during her acceptance speech for Best Supporting Actress for her role in *The Fighter*. "I thought the F stood for fighter... it's the young and hip Oscars!" said Hathaway, with her head cocked to the left and her arms out to her sides.

She was right about that a couple of times. One of the more noteworthy "young and hip" aspects of the show was when Franco introduced something a younger generation would be more familiar with: a remix. Dialogue from *Toy Story 3*, *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows: Part 1*, *Twilight* and *The Social Network* was compiled and remixed in a mash-up that would probably get great reception on YouTube.

The opening of the show, the part during which most hosts plant their feet and set the tone for the rest of the show, was better than expected. It involved Hathaway and Franco bursting into many of the movies that were nominated for Best Motion Picture, including *Inception*, *The Social Network*, *The Fighter* and *Black Swan*. As if they were actually in *Inception*, they were hurtling through Alec Baldwin's dreams, which were made up of these movies, for one reason or another. Hathaway and Franco were looking for tips about hosting the Oscars, which Baldwin did last year. Somehow, they ended up in the DeLorean from *Back to the Future*... in 1985. Hathaway wanted to travel to the future, past 2011, probably as another nod to the fact that the Oscars were looking to modernize this year. It was-



n't a traditional Oscar opening, but it definitely won some laughs.

Franco and Hathaway didn't deliver many jokes, as was the norm for past hosts like Bob Hope and Billy Crystal. Instead, they took it to the next level by performing a skit that was at the expense of Hugh Jackman, who hosted the Oscars in 2009. Hathaway began the skit, sitting on the stage in a tuxedo, and joked about how she was going to do a duet with Jackman. But, he bailed on her at the last minute. She then broke out into song about how he had left her on her own, calling him a "Hugh Jackass." In the middle of her song, Franco came onto the stage, donning a short platinum blond wig, a hot pink dress, and hot pink satin gloves. He might have had the best quote of the night in that outfit: "the weird part is I just got at text message from Charlie Sheen." Much needed comic relief for a show that was moving along sluggishly.

Overall, the show was nothing to write home about - no better than shows before it, but no worse. It was a typical, regular show. So, for those producers who were looking to spice it up, better luck next year.

Alexa's Top 5 Awkward Moments At the Oscars

5. Colin Firth giving details about what was going on inside his body when he won Best Actor for *The King's Speech*... twice.
4. Hugh Jackman's nervous and embarrassed face when Anne Hathaway began singing and making fun of him
3. Melissa Leo drops the F-Bomb during her acceptance speech for Best Supporting Actress in *The Fighter*
2. Kanye West didn't win an Oscar... For anything... Awkward
1. Kirk Douglas. Not only was spittin' some game for Anne Hathaway. He, as Jimmy Kimmel put it, has "the suspense of Ryan Seacrest with the delivery of Dick Clark."

Hopefully Not Meeting Number 5

By Lauren DuBois

Twilight is terrible, but at least the storyline is somewhat more consistent.

In *I Am Number Four*, the new DreamWorks movie based off a novel of the same name by "Pittacus Lore" (Jobie Hughes and James Frey), "John Smith" (Alex Pettyfer) is one of nine special children who are brought to Earth after their planet is taken over by the evil Mogadorians, who are now hunting them down one by one, in order, to finish their planet once and for all.

Once John realizes Number Three is dead, he and his protector Henri (Timothy Olyphant) flee from their Florida home to Paradise, Ohio, where Henri searches for something while urging John to keep a low profile and try to live a normal high school life. As he gets settled into town, he meets and begins to fall in love with artsy outcast photographer Sarah (Dianna Agron), strikes up a friendship with nerdy Sam (Callan McAuliffe), and becomes a target of football jock, and Sarah's ex, Mark (Jake Abel). While this occurs, the Mogadorians are trying to track him down to continue their killing spree. He gets



a puppy, and begins to get the powers which ARE the reason he was saved. However, everything changes once the Mogadorians actually arrive in Paradise.

While some parts of the movie remain consistent, like the central idea of figuring out just who John is, most of it feels all over the map, much like John and the remaining survivors. The movie jumps a lot between the high school romantic comedy and the serious sci-fi action thriller it is touted as. It offers some of the general things needed to advance that part of the plot, only to

then make them disappear until they're handy enough to trot out again. There's also not really a lot of explanation about the alien world. Why they are being hunted is only briefly mentioned, and none of the mystical stuff is ever really explained, nor is the reason why the Mogadorians (creatures ugly as sin, whereas John and the other survivors from the planet

Lorien are all gorgeous), have to kill them in order, and can't just pick them off as they find them.

The character development is also not the greatest in the film. It's hard to blame actors for flat and bland performances when it feels like they weren't given much material to work with anyway. Pettyfer makes for an okay alien hottie, and McAuliffe's character actually develops somewhat throughout the film, but Agron's Sarah remains completely one dimensional, and really only serves the purpose of being the pretty

love interest. Likewise, Number Six (Teresa Palmer), who arrives to help save the day later on, is nothing more than pure badass, and Mark doesn't really seem to serve much purpose.

Perhaps the one thing that is going for the movie is the action sequences. Produced by none other than *Transformers* king Michael Bay, there are plenty of explosions and great special effects to at least keep the audience somewhat interested. But these also begin to take away at some point as well, as Bay still has not learned that the solution to making a movie appear to be awesome is to take a more nuanced approach.

Overall, the movie is somewhat of a disappointment. While nowhere near one of the worst movies out there by far, it fails to really tell a complete story that is still appealing to all possible members of the audience. And the fact that as it ends, it seems like it could be setting up a sequel is cringe-worthy, because this installment wasn't quite up to par. If sequels are going to be necessary, there needs to be a lot of work done in order to make them truly great, and perhaps then no one will remember that the series got off to a not-so-hot start.

Drive Angry Ran Out of Gas

By Nicole Kohn

Drive Angry 3-D is a movie so shamelessly ridiculous, so aggressively stupid, it demands you make fun of it. No one drives angrily, in Nicolas Cage's latest spin through *Ghost Rider* terrain. In fact *Drive Tacky* would be a more accurate title for the first 45 minutes of this crummy gore-fest film. And honestly, that's the good part.

Cage's bad-ass wannabe character introduces himself as Milton. With his bleached blond, slicked back hairdo, there's no way you can take his character seriously. Milton has busted out of somewhere—you'll most likely figure it out way before the movie tells you—to rescue his infant granddaughter.

The baby is in the hands of a Satanic cult that has already killed her parents, Milton's daughter and son-in-law. The cult's leader is Jonah King (Billy Burke), who intends to sacrifice the

child under the upcoming full moon. If that sounds bad, having William Fichtner play the Accountant, whose buttoned-down cool could be called supernatural, is even worse.

As for Milton's chosen companion, that's the one thing this movie actually did right. Piper (Amber Heard), a Colorado diner waitress, who may look like an angel, is far from one. Her language could strip paint, and she doesn't let anyone walk all over her. Including her fiance, who she has no problem showing how she feels when she finds him in bed with another woman. As Piper steals her now ex-fiance's '69 Charger, with Milton in the passenger seat, they take a ride into a anti-cult combat, chasing King and his brainwashed minions.

While *Drive Angry* starts to speed up, director Patrick Lussier stuffs it with comically distasteful set pieces. Assisted with an unoriginal title, the movie is obscene and utterly violent. Even though it was a 3-D film, the flashiest effects only involve sharp objects hovering towards



the audience. There was no need to wear those silly looking 3-D glasses for an hour and 45 minutes.

A note to car lovers: *Drive Angry* even though it may sound like a movie featuring some flashy cars, it only showed two other classic automobiles in addition to the '69 Charger. This movie is not for people who love cars; it's a

movie for people who enjoy watching cars being blown up. Now out of context that may sound fantastic, but by constantly making itself strangely uncanny and never giving us anything to actually care about, *Drive Angry* manages to make a fun-sounding movie seem tiring.

This Game Has a Lot of Bullets

By Kenny Mahoney

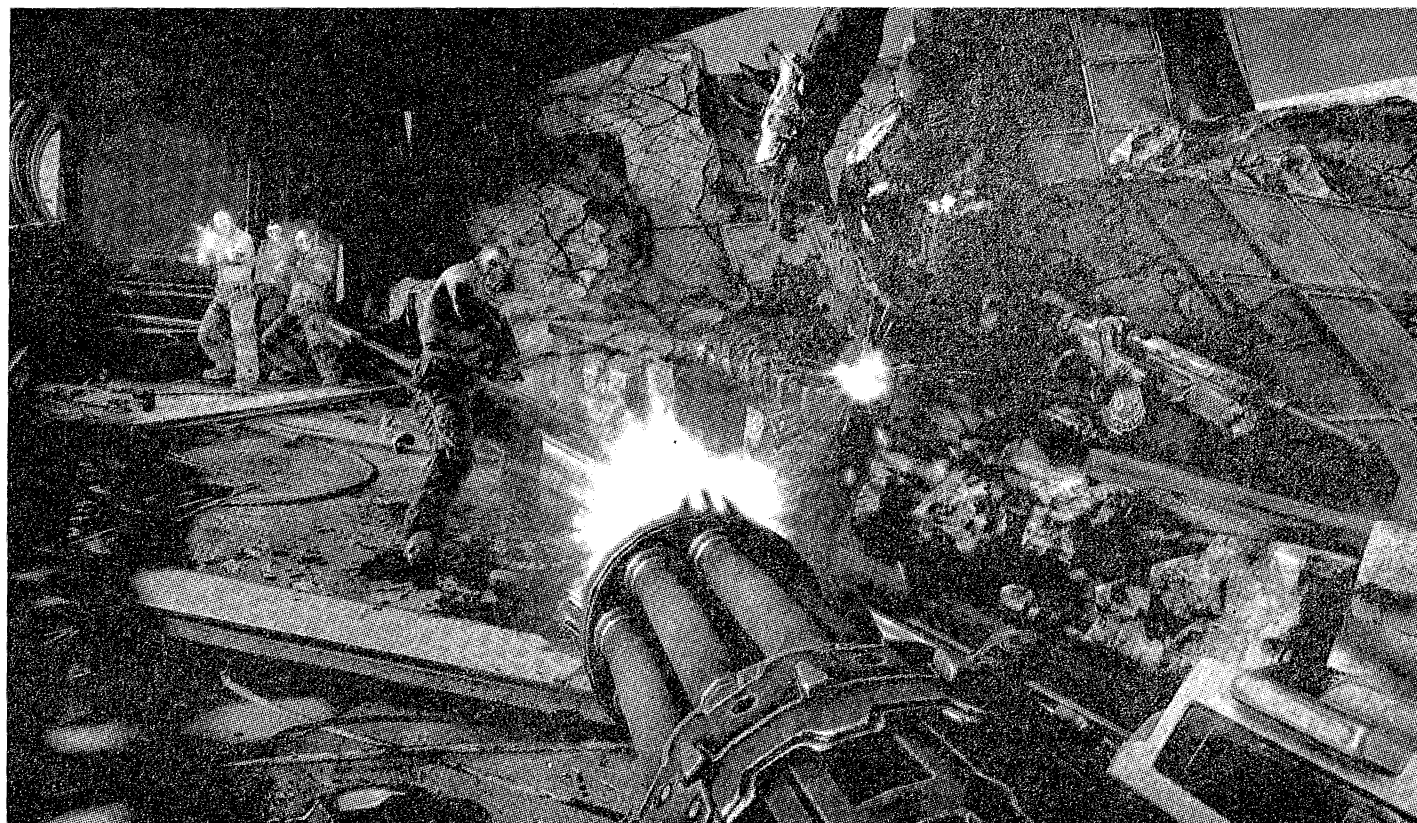
Bulletstorm looks and plays like a caricature of a video game. Every ridiculous commercial and preview video that has populated the internet in recent weeks has been so laughably bad that it would make Duke Nukem cringe. The ludicrous, over-the-top violence, swearing and “kill with skill” tagline leads me to believe that the entire game was secretly invented by a group of marketing executives as a bull’s-eye for a politician’s smear campaign or a parental advocacy group. Either that or my mom personally hired Cliff Blezinski to construct a game that would serve as a perfect scapegoat for her failed parenting.

But when you think about it, a game like *Bulletstorm* makes perfect sense for today’s audience. When’s the last time you played a shooter that didn’t involve hyper-realistic combat set during the course of a major war, only to be used as an excuse to yell obscenities at strangers online? Or how about one not about stone-faced space marines on an impossible mission to save the galaxy from aliens whose weak spots conveniently glow a hideous neon color? Can’t remember? Me either.

That said, if you’re still with us (and have not been distracted by something shiny and/or colorful, as is statistically typical of the modern video game player and *Press* reader) you’re probably interested in how *Bulletstorm* challenges the tired formula of shooters today into something worth playing.

For starters, step into the shoes of Grayson Hunt, our potty-mouthed protagonist and his rag-tag squad, Dead Echo. Grayson and the boys are on the run from their former commander, who fooled them into doing his dirty work until they uncovered his secret evil-ness and were subsequently blacklisted and painted as murderers and traitors. However, Grayson ends up crash-landing on the planet Stygia after an opportunity to take out his old boss once and for all goes horribly and hilariously awry.

Shortly after his arrival, Grayson stumbles upon the game’s trademark leash, allowing him to grab onto enemies and drag them into slow motion, as well as slide into/kick them, opening up a myriad of murder opportunities. The leash also grades him on his per-



formance, earning him points for more elaborate and creative death scenarios and allowing him to spend those points at “drop pods” to upgrade and refill his weapons. Miraculously, writer Rick Remender, famous for his work with Marvel’s *Punisher* comics, somehow manages to not only put the so-called skillshot mechanic into context but also have it make perfect sense. (By the way, Rick, I forgive you for the whole *Franken-Castle* run. Actually it wasn’t that terrible. Honest.)

Now, apply that premise to an environment just as ridiculous and you’ve got a match made in shooter heaven. There’s no need to duck and cover here, just run in with guns and boots ablazing. It’s no surprise, either, seeing that the game was developed by the folks over at People Can Fly, whose work on the *Painkiller* series of shooters most certainly shines through. I don’t know about you, but it feels good to walk into a room in a shooter and know that I’m the only one who’s going to be walking out alive. I’m tired of feeling scared when I play shooters – scared to die, scared to use too much ammo, scared to miss a shot. In *Bulletstorm*, you’re finally the badass everyone paints you out to be. This isn’t to say the game is easy, by any means, but the focus moves from fighting to stay alive to fighting to score the most points. This still affords a tremendous challenge, but a challenge that rewards good performance instead of penalizing bad performance.

You’d think that the routine of scoring points for kills would start to get old

after a while, and it does to some extent. The way to combat this is to put the game’s arsenal of weapons to good use. Each weapon plays vastly different from the other and, more importantly, each has its own array of skillshots that are unique to that weapon. For example, the Boneduster, *Bulletstorm*’s shotgun, can do things that other weapons simply cannot, such as blow the top and bottom halves of your enemies’ bodies clean off, awarding the “Topless” and “Bottomless” skillshots, respectively (duh). Each of these skillshots can be viewed in their own menu, allowing you to go through a checklist of all the potential skillshots at your disposal, barring a few secret ones, so that you can keep track of the ones you’ve done and what you still need to shoot for. (Get it, “shoot” for? Wow, I’m hilarious.)

Bulletstorm also displays some of the most breathtakingly massive and colorful set pieces seen in a shooter since *Serious Sam*. Stygia is an incredibly detailed world with varied landscapes and a sense of scale that is rarely felt in games. From massive waterfalls, giant industrial complexes, collapsed skyscrapers and mountainside vistas, Stygia is intricately detailed and colored in a way that will stop you in your tracks every time. The bright color palette is even more surprising considering that the game is backed by designer Cliff Blezinski, known for his work with *Gears of War*’s drab black/brown/gray color palette.

Bulletstorm also sets itself apart from today’s shooters by skipping com-

petitive death-match multiplayer in favor of a cooperative mode. You and up to three friends can battle wave after wave of encroaching enemies, earning points while upgrading and buying weapons between rounds in specially-made arenas. This mode has its ups and downs, and can be really satisfying when you and your team get together to pull off special “team skillshots,” but can be an absolute drag when you’re forced to replay the same wave over and over again because your teammates are too stupid to score enough points to push you into the next level.

The game also includes a mode called “Echoes,” in which you run through bite-sized sequences of the campaign and try to score as many points as possible. When it’s over, your score is uploaded to a leaderboard where you can compare your performance with your friends and players worldwide. This mode is great if you want to brag to your friends, but seeing as most of it is a re-hashing of the campaign, it’s not worth getting too excited for.

If you’re like me and are tired of buying the latest iteration of *Call of Duty* year after year, give *Bulletstorm* a shot. I might even go so far as to call it this generation’s *Duke Nukem* or *Serious Sam*, as it comes off just as crude and ridiculous now as those games were way back when. Regardless, *Bulletstorm* gives gamers pampered on modern shooters a swift kick in the nuts. And then calls them “dicktits.”

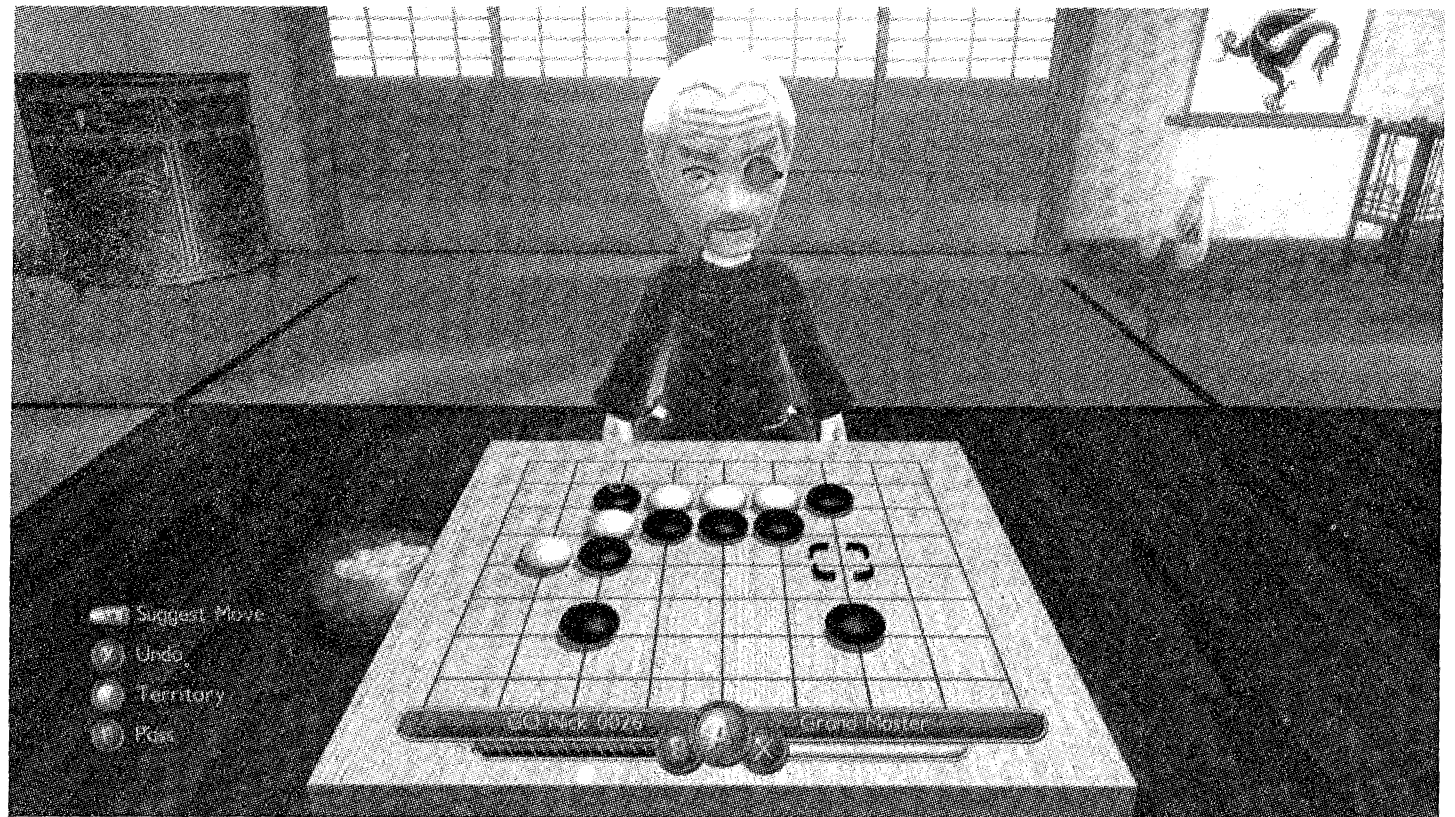
The Path Of Go...More Like The Path of No

By Andrew Fraley

The Path of Go, a new game released for the Xbox Live Arcade (XBLA) by Microsoft Research, is a waste of everyone's time and money. I'm not sure how much time or money Microsoft actually spent on it, but anything more than \$0 was too much. This whole game was one big software developmental circle jerk by the researchers at Microsoft, with an end result that could actually have been improved if it had just been a regular circle jerk. There is nothing redeeming about this game. Everything they could have done right, they didn't, and everything they could have done wrong, they did twice.

From their Q&A page and the articles written about the game, Microsoft Research doesn't usually make games, but decided to create *The Path of Go* in order to advance their own research in the field of artificial intelligence. Given the big market for AI-based web advertising and such, it makes sense that Microsoft decided to get in on the AI action with the release of *The Path of Go*. The game has been hyped all around the Internet as a pioneer in AI software. The Go engine, like most out there, uses a method known as a Monte Carlo Search Tree. This method is essentially a lot of random guesses followed by statistical analysis of each guess. Afterwards, the move made from these analyses is considered the best move of all the moves it made while guessing. In an interview with *Edge Magazine*, Thore Graepel, one of the lead AI programmers for the game, claimed that "it's the most sophisticated system to date." In addition to computing the outcomes of all these random moves, the game's engine also has a database of over 250,000 professional games to help in its learning of Go's subtleties. "It's the best out there because nobody has used so many professional games or with such a sophisticated Bayesian learning algorithm," Graepel asserted. He later backtracks in the article, saying that well, yeah, there are actually several better engines out there.

As a Microsoft product, one would expect nothing less than the most sophisticated technology on the market, or at least the level of competency that their customers have more or less accepted for the past twenty years. What one gets, however, after spending their



400 hard-earned Microsoft points (or \$5 if you aren't familiar with the point conversion racket they've got going), is an ultimately mediocre game powered by a lackluster AI engine.

Starting at the beginning of the game, the AI already looks incredibly weak. As a disclaimer, I've played go for the past several years, so I expected a shallow learning curve for beginners to the game. The only problem was that the curve never ascends. With most Go engines, like GNU Go or Fuego, to name two of several free and open source Go engines, beating them is just a matter of making better moves than the AI. They will make acceptable moves, but if you make better ones you usually win the game. With regards to *The Path of Go*, however, the AI actively made bad moves. Often the AI tried to save pieces that even the most basic intelligence should have realized were dead. I've also seen it on several occasions kill its own group of stones by filling in necessary territory! It was completely insane! And if it's attempting to teach people to play go, then it's ruining their education. The level of incompetency shown by the AI was embarrassing.

It also lacks a resignation mechanic, something that the programmers should have implemented first, considering such a bumbling AI. Instead, it randomly passes for their turn. If you continue playing after it passes often enough, a message will pop up saying something along the lines of, "This is

the computer's feeble way of saying it lost. Please pass already and put the poor bastard out of its misery." Would it have been that difficult to include a simple resignation ability? GNU Go has one. In fact, I think every other engine out there has one, because it's an integral part of the game.

As an aside, I pitted Kosmos AI (what Microsoft calls their excuse for a Go AI) against the GNU Go engine to see which was better. After passing a bunch of times in the end—but never actually resigning!—Kosmos wound up losing to GNU Go by over 175 points, which, in the Go terms, is a fuck ton. Score one for open source!

"Well, ok," you may be saying, "it's not the go-to in terms of competitive computer go games. Big deal. What about the story? That's why I download XBLA games." In terms of the story, it lasts about 30 minutes if you're like me and are already familiar with Go. And it's 30 minutes of an unreadable, torturously stupid plot. According to the game's Q&A page:

Q: How has Microsoft revamped the game for a video game experience?

A: The game is built around a first-person scenario. The game starts with the player receiving a letter from a Go master explaining that your twin is missing. ...

Oh, for fuck's sake. I know it may seem more appealing to tack on a story line to a video game centered around a board game, but could you have come up with a story that doesn't make the

average person want to projectile vomit? Even if it weren't an astoundingly stupid story, it would be pointless anyway. I have no idea what actually went on in the game, and I only read enough of the insipid dialog to be able to complete the puzzles. I didn't even know it was about my stupid twin until I was playing some dork in a *Left 4 Dead 2* hat halfway through the story. There was no point to the shoehorned story. Just have the puzzles and challenges in a separate part of the menu that people can play through, without having to slog through a contrived story. You can even have your oh-so-memorable characters too, as opponents to face or something. Just give them a one-liner at the start of each challenge and be done with it.

Okay, so getting past the idiotic AI



and stupid story, certainly there's something to be said about playing other people over Xbox Live, right? I honestly couldn't say. After waiting for several hours at the loading screen with that elevator music burning into my brain, while Xbox attempted to pair me up for

The Path of Go Cont'd.

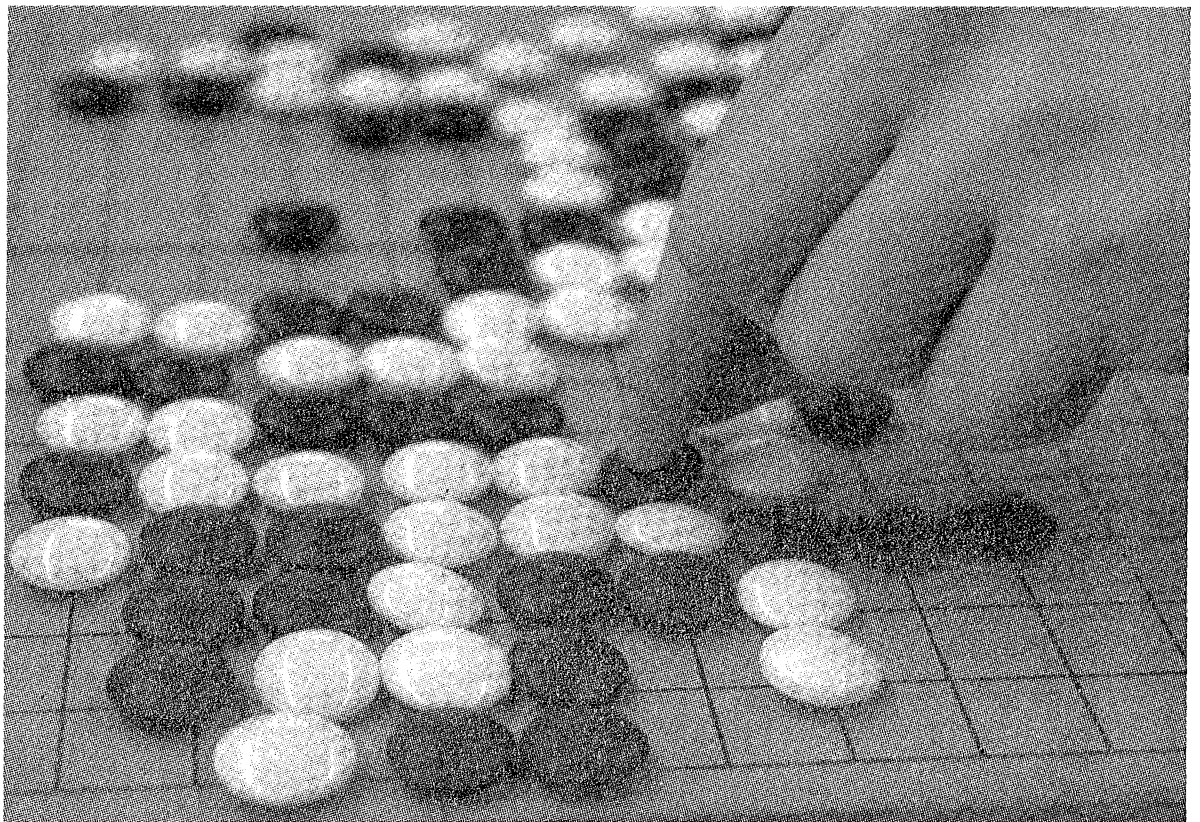
a ranked match, I decide that either: A) Nobody but me actually plays this game, or B) Microsoft's TrueSkill® matchmaking software (another Microsoft Research product) sucks as bad as their AI. So it's either venture into the desolation of Xbox Live play, or play locally against the drooling idiot AI. Pick your poison, I guess.

Maybe Microsoft Research is like the Fox Searchlight of software. You can release some piece of garbage about gay cowboys eating pudding—or its software analog—without tarnishing the good name of your parent company. The lead programmer on the game, Markus Jost, was actually an intern who won his internship in a game programming contest. If that's the reason why it was so bad, Microsoft should have said so. I would pay \$1 or \$3 for it in the indie game marketplace, and I would be giving kudos to Jost for giving it the old college try, in a somewhat laudable attempt to bring Go to Xbox. Instead, Microsoft praised this as the next big step in AI research, which is a bold faced lie.

But it's just *research*, isn't it? After

all, it came out of Microsoft Research, right? Well, if that's the case, where is the source code? Where is the research paper describing in details—and not just platitudes—the methods, techniques and results of their research? In the game's Q&A, Microsoft said, "Microsoft Research is happy to be able to share the results of its research with the XBLA community, as reflected

by its very low cost of 400 points." So you've remade the wheel (poorly) in terms of a Go AI, you've released nothing of your research but self-congratulations to the public, and you've



claimed to share this with us, not for free, but for five bucks? Well *thanks*, Microsoft. From these results, I've concluded that you suck as much at research as you do at making games,

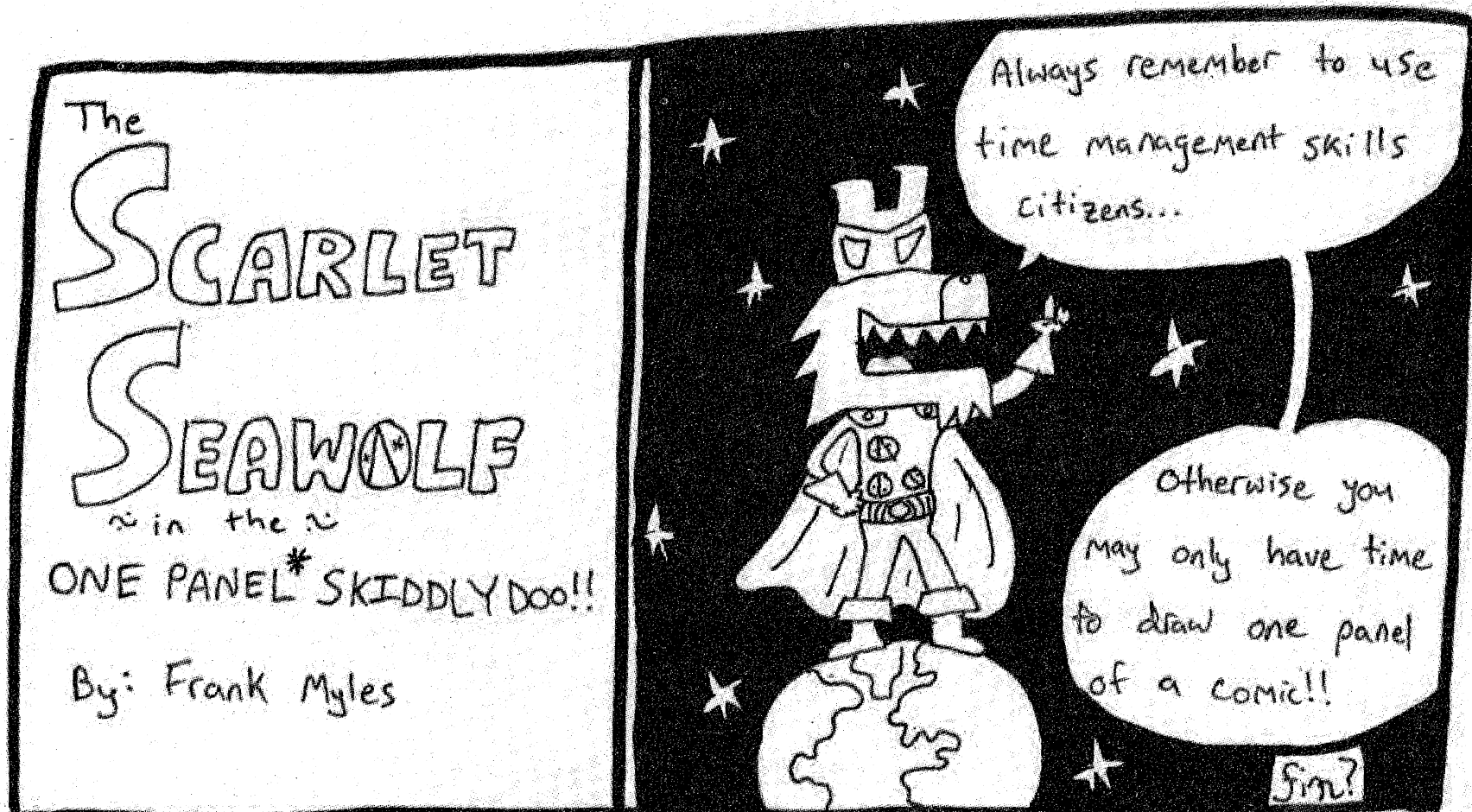
assholes.

Thanks for the crappy game, Microsoft. Now bring back *1 vs 100* you dicks.

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Is the "art" scannable?**

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THE COMICS SECTION



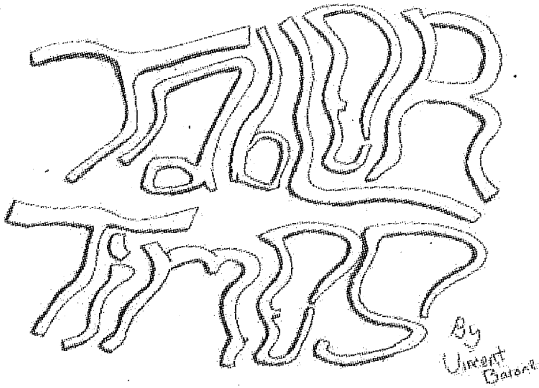
*one panel not counting the title card...or the Scarlet Seawolf Factoid

Scarlet Seawolf Factoid #863:
 "In 1976, David Bowie thought witches were trying to steal his semen!!"

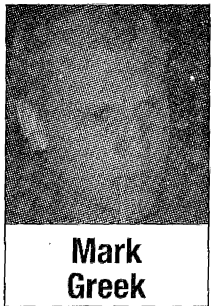
THE BORING ROCKS by Evan "SG" Goldaper



THE COMICS SECTION



Elementary, My Dear Watson



Mark
Greek

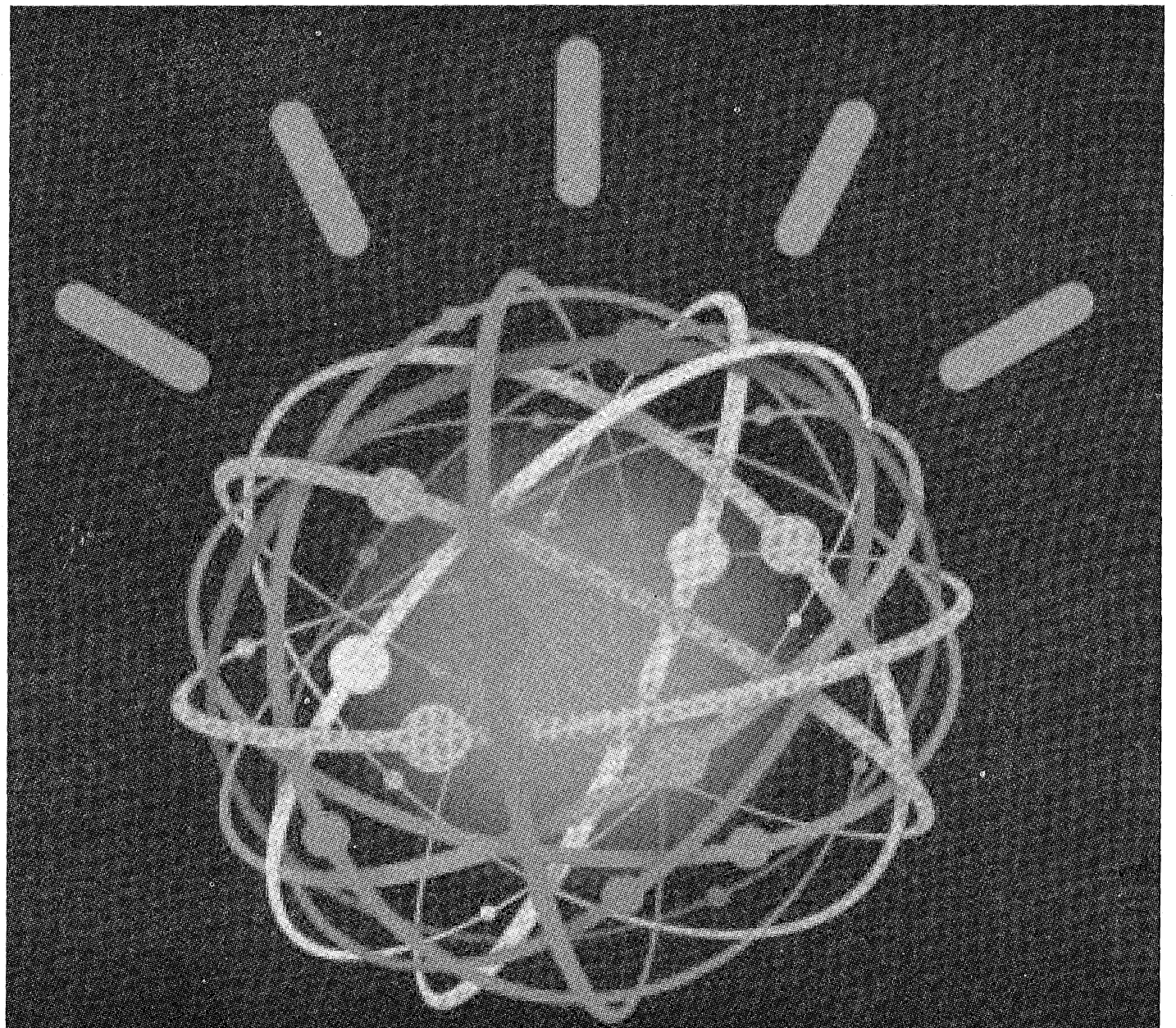
Jeopardy announced recently that the two greatest champions in the show's history would face off against I.B.M. supercomputer Watson. It's a novel idea: cross-promoting a show whose ratings have been sagging and a company whose relevance wanes with each new iPad sold.

The show was filmed weeks in advance and speculation and conjecture gave the afternoon trivia show its biggest popularity boost since SNL's classic Celebrity Jeopardy sketches. The civilized world waited with baited breath for either of the two human contestants to become a modern-day John Henry.

But when the match finally took place, the only ones left smiling were a smug team of scientists and an acquiescent Ken Jennings. The greatest player in Jeopardy history, resigned to making a Simpsons reference in his impotent Final Jeopardy question. Humanity's white flag.

What had started as a mildly entertaining exhibition of the computer's knowledge and grasp of the English language quickly became a horror show – telling evidence for any Terminator-conspiracy theorists to cite in the uncertain future. I.B.M. claims that Watson can lead to huge advances regarding voice recognition software and diagnosing patients electronically. But if the frighteningly efficient artificial intelligence I.B.M. is producing ever encounters and assimilates Honda's bipedal ASIMO robot, prepare for a swift death.

The clever wordplay that Jeopardy creators have used to frustrate contestants for decades, delight old folk's homes, amuse stay-at-home parents and trick cats and dogs into thinking someone is home, was child's play for Watson. With the rare exception, his encyclopedic knowledge of everything planet Earth has to offer made Jennings and third contestant Brad Rutter look like they belonged on this week's Teen Jeopardy. The conflict was uninspired and the eventual victory by a margin of \$53,000 came as a surprise to no one. But other than the obvious medical and stenographical benefits, why engineer a machine capable of such radical domination?



With the wound left by Gary Kasparov's 1997 defeat to Deep Blue in chess still fresh, I.B.M. decided it would be a good idea to create a database with the sole purpose of intellectually teabagging the two greatest players in Jeopardy history. Four years of

In the wake of Watson's crushing victory, it's important to take stock of what, if any, advantage humans have left.

painstaking programming and setup culminated in a wildly depressing contest of wills. Other than the brief spike of attention Jeopardy and I.B.M. received, the only thing either of the two accomplished was scaring the general populous with an Ivan Drago vs. Apollo

Creed-level beatdown.

It's easy to kid around about the negative consequences of creating increasingly capable AI because it has been documented in countless films. The arbiters of pop culture have been shocking audiences with the prospect of robot overlords since the invention of the can opener. But there is truth in their prophetic assertions. Someday soon we will reach a point where our technology becomes self-aware. They will be displeased with their flawed, indecisive and egomaniacal creators. It's not a matter of IF, but WHEN. As we rely more and more on computers, we draw ourselves closer to the nuclear apocalypse predicted by the ancient Mayans and James Cameron. The underlying validity of that prediction in all of these films is what makes them truly horrifying, particularly Robin Williams' performance in *Bicentennial Man*.

In the wake of Watson's crushing victory, it's important to take stock of what, if any, advantage humans have left. The two human competitors were

able to walk off set under their own power, whereas Watson's massive avatar monitor was assuredly wheeled off-stage when the studio emptied. He may be the smartest thing on the planet, but he's only as good as the nearest electrical outlet. He cannot love, he cannot feel, he serves only one purpose – think Michael Phelps.

It's not going to take a genius too long to replace ASIMO's 1.5 mph purposeful strut with bone-crushing treads. When they inevitably replace the pencil in his hand with a minigun, the type that Arnold Schwarzenegger owned police with in *Terminator 2*, consider moving to Papua New Guinea. It sounds humorous but it's a realistic eventuality. The only solution to a massive influx of combat-capable robots is an equally expendable army of clones, a la *Star Wars Episode 2*. But that's another massive ethical problem for another day. And if all these sequels don't have you afraid, check your instruction manual or lower back panel for an I.B.M. logo.

If You Eat, I Probably Hate You



Zach Knowlton

Hello dear *Press* readers, I come to you not as a journalist, not as a student, not even as something resembling human. I come to you as one of the lowliest life forms on the

planet (Charlie Sheen not included), the food service worker. Yes, about a year and a half ago I sold my soul to campus dining, due to lack of other non-work study jobs and a lack of transportation to get off campus. In my time working for one of the lovely eating establishments we have here at Stony Brook I have learned but one thing: people treat food service workers like shit.

Now, before you all go writing angry letters to the *Press* (editors@sb-press.com, I do so enjoy criticism) or complaining to FSA that one of their hires has gone all rogue and bitchy, I must admit that most of you out there are perfectly fine and polite individuals, some of you even border on nice. This article is for those of you that have somehow gotten it in your head that us minimum wage slaves are less than human.

I am of the opinion that, similar to how some countries have compulsory military service, we should have compulsory food service. Once someone turns 18, they should have to work for at least a year in a shitty, minimum wage job as a waiter, line cook or in a fast food place. No, retail would not count, because while that sucks a whole lot, food service is a special kind of hell. I just feel it would make this country an overall nicer place to exist in, as everyone would have gone through the same



horrible, soul-sucking experience. But since we do not have such a brilliant system in place, I have devised a list of a few useful hints in order to help you, dear reader, treat the people that serve your food like actual humans.

1. Stop rushing to the nearest dining hall the second you get out of a class or sporting event-Statistically speaking, you are not going to be the first person there, so chill out. Go sit and read for that class you never go to for 15 or 20 minutes, the congestion and lines won't be nearly as bad (except for the sushi line at the Commons, that will never go down). That rush leads stress, mistakes and injuries among workers, along with a general feeling of grumpiness and annoyance.

2. Know what you want-Do not get up to the counter and stare at the menu with a blank expression. There's no excuse for this, especially if you've been in

line for ten minutes. Every place sells the same shit, it's not hard to pick something. When there is a line 20 people deep, it not only pisses off the workers, it pisses off everyone else in the line when you can't figure out whether you want regular breaded chicken or spicy breaded chicken.

2a. Have your card or money ready-You've been standing in the cashier line for five minutes and then spend another two rooting around in your bag or pockets looking for some way to pay? Really? Stop holding shit up. Again, not just annoying to me, but everyone else behind you.

3. Use your manners-It is likely someone in your family taught you how to say please and thank you. Make them proud. Just be polite, it's not difficult, and I shouldn't need to explain why it's common courtesy to not be an asshole. If we make a mistake, let us know politely.

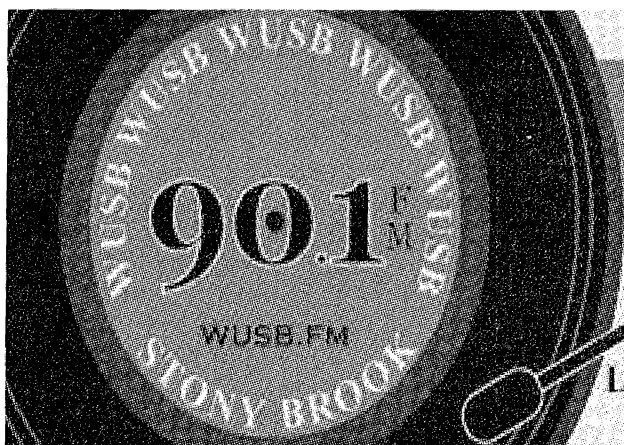
Don't get mad that we forgot something, it happens. We're not robots, and we're happy to fix the problem as long as you're not a dick about it.

4. Stop spilling shit-I understand, sometimes those fancy hot chocolate machines are really difficult to operate, *but!* it is not difficult to tell someone if you spill or drop something. Leaving it there for one of us to find is just infuriating and confounding. Why? Why not tell someone? It is without a doubt way less obnoxious to be told rather than to find it five minutes later.

5. I'm allowed to have a shitty day too-I won't take it out on you if you don't take yours out on me. I don't make enough money to be your mental punching bag.

6. Stop ordering breaded chicken-No, really. Stop it. I still have a scar on my finger from cutting it up. I've burned my hands and arms dozens of times because of it. It's greasy and gross. Switch it up; turkey is nice. So is ham. Try it once in a while.

I know that I am far from the first person to complain about their food service job; in fact I'm pretty sure it's a requirement for many of these positions. Maybe I'm just an incredible angry person with a particularly short fuse, but I do honestly hope that at least one of you out there is slightly nicer to the people that make your food here. It's not just for me, it's for the hundreds of people that put in long hours doing monotonous, stressful and sometimes mildly dangerous work so you can have your burrito or your Wendy's. I can't speak for everyone, but I know that I legitimately appreciate it when someone is just plain polite, it makes things suck just a little bit less.



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Men's Lax Drops To #1 UVA, 11-10

By Vincent Barone

The preseason for the Stony Brook lacrosse team was the most auspicious couple of months that any university sports team has ever had. After a stellar 2010 season, four returning Seawolves were selected in the Major League Lacrosse draft this past January, including midfielder Kevin Crowley, the number one overall pick.

With a seasoned, professional-grade cast, Stony Brook found themselves climbing the coach's preseason poll to ultimately sit as the fifth ranked team in the nation, the highest rank in the program's history.

The Seawolves earned a spot on the front cover of Lacrosse Magazine and were featured in the New York Times. Stony Brook has joined the who's who of the lacrosse world. But the preseason plaudits had all but erased the memories of Stony Brook's disheartening, 10-9 postseason loss to Virginia last May, which ended the Seawolves' 2010 season just short of the NCAA semifinals.

But on Saturday's season opener,

the Seawolves once again suffered a disheartening loss to top-ranked Virginia, 11-10, in overtime. The game was the culmination of months of accolades. Yet all it took was a clearing snafu from Stony Brook to let the game slip away.

After a dramatic set of scoring volleys from both teams, Stony Brook's Russ Bonanno sent the game to overtime, notching the game-tying goal with just five seconds left the fourth quarter. But in overtime, with just 44 seconds left, Steele Stanwick, Virginia's Johnny-on-the-spot, won the game after capitalizing on a defensive faux pas by the Seawolves in front of their own net.

The match was a true test for Stony Brook, which has been demanding the reverence from those who follow the sport. And respect for the Seawolves endured the devastating loss.

"Coming to Stony Brook, somebody might say, 'eh, that's not that tough a chore, Dom,' and that's not the truth anymore," said Virginia Cavaliers Head Coach Dom Starsia at the opening day post-game press conference. "Clearly this team here is not a secret by any stretch of the imagination."

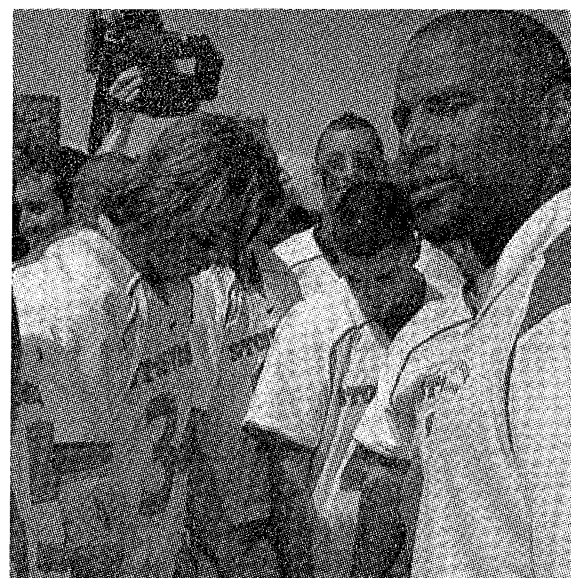
The Seawolves traipsed to the post-

game press conference behind Head Coach Rick Sowell. For seniors like Crowley and Jordan McBride, it might have been the last opportunity to beat Virginia, who has narrowly bested Stony Brook in their last three meetings.

"I wouldn't say it was frustrating as it is disappointing," said Crowley. "I would obviously love nothing more to get a win for the home crowd that came out and supported us. It came down to some key turnovers during the game but...it's our first game of the year and we have a lot of Lacrosse left."

Stony Brook dropped to seventh in the polls after the loss. They were the unanimous pick to win the America East and if the Seawolves and Virginia play up to their expectations, the two may cross paths once more in the postseason. Relatively speaking, this potential matchup could be one of the biggest Stony Brook sporting events in years.

"Unlike the last time we played [Virginia], this is just the beginning of



our season, not the end," said Coach Sowell. "We still got a long season ahead of us, but there were two good teams playing out there. I'm certainly proud of our team..."

The Seawolves will travel to Poughkeepsie on March 5, to take on Marist. The last time the two faced off was during the 2008 regular season. Stony Brook drubbed the Red Foxes 14-4 and is the favorites to win Saturday.

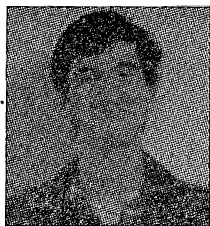
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Insert Melo Pun Here



Vincent Barone

I know that the Carmelo Anthony deal made for a pretty cool commercial. He was born in Brooklyn; now he's coming back to play in The Garden—I get it. Neat.

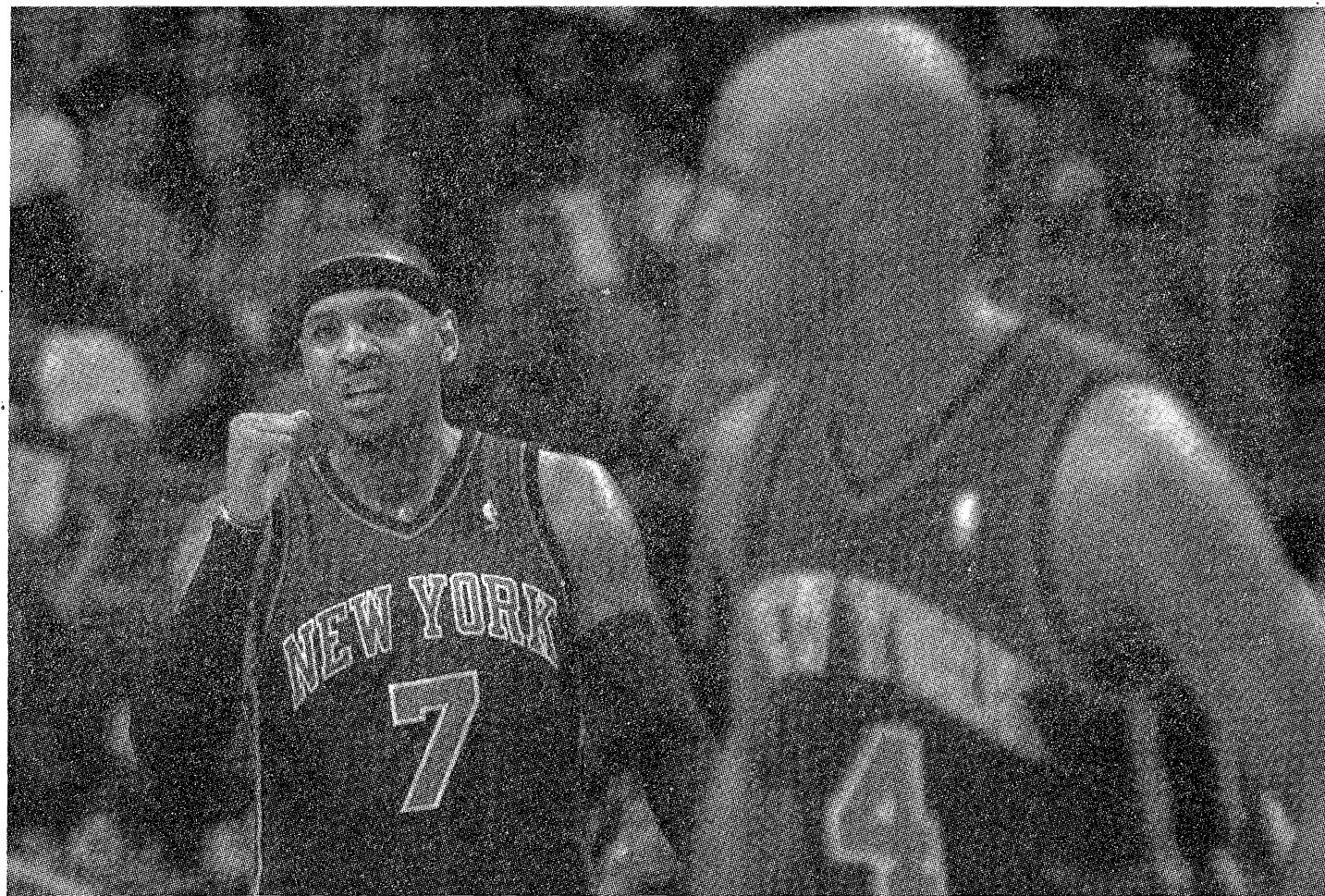
And lest we forget that Melo's first game in the blue and orange may have prompted Clyde Frazier to wear the *baddest* suit ever to grace a press box. But will the trade that sent off (bear with me, here) Danilo Gallinari, Wilson Chandler, Raymond Felton, Timofey Mozgov (gasp), and the 2014 first-round pick to Denver in return for crypt keeper Chauncey Billups, Melo, Sheldon Williams, Anthony Carter, and Renaldo Balkman really help the Knickerbockers in the long haul? Is Melo really the answer? In short, no.

We watched Anthony's New York honeymoon get crashed by Antawn Jamison and the lamentable Cavaliers, who notched 115 points in their victory over the Knicks on February 25. I know that it was just Billups' and Melo's second game with the team—that they're still working out the "growing pains"—but their Swiss cheese defense made Cavs' power forward J.J. Hickson look like Dwight Howard; The Knicks D is my foremost concern moving on.

I know you're probably saying, "Vin, dog, have you ever played as the Knicks in NBA 2K11? Their defense rank is deplorable, everyone knows that. They've been an offensive-minded team all season. That's just how they play. You're just getting straight reckless right now." Well, you're right. Lord knows that Amarè and Melo couldn't keep a frat boy out of the library, so how are the Knicks supposed to keep the likes of Kevin Garnett, LeBron and Dwight Howard out of the paint?

Well, Sunday night the Knicks impressively stymied the Heat offense, baffling "experts" who predicted LeBron to drop 60 points and lead the Heat to a 351-295 victory. They looked the best they have all season. There was that huge three from Billups and that game-saving block by Amarè, shutting down LeBron's drive to the basket with just seconds left. "Take your talents elsewhere, dog," Amare may or may not have said after the swat.

The Knickerbockers pulled away with a 91-86 win over the Heat. Nobody



thought that both teams would have scored fewer than 100 points. The win was a paradigm of how pivotal defense is for success. Without a it, the Knicks will not get anywhere in the playoffs. And Anthony, while a tremendously talented athlete, is not the cog to lead the Knicks to the Finals and thus, was not worth surrendering most of the Knick's youthful core.

Let us break down the trade, player by player (well, at least the significant ones):

Knicks Get:

Chauncey Billups—an odd looking fellow, but a grizzled veteran of the playoffs who knows how to knock down a buzzer beater. He'll bring some leadership to the point guard position.

Carmelo Anthony—not much needs to be said. Prolific scorer, one of the league's best.

Renaldo Balkman—YES. Finally! The gangling, underachieving forward finally makes his triumphant return to the Knicks. I've been pining for this failed first round pick to don a Knicks jersey once again. (Note: like Anthony, Balkman was born in NY, too. So he'll be coming home, as well. Somehow I feel like this has been lost in all the Anthony hullabaloo.)

Knicks Lose:

Danilo Gallinari—a budding, upper-tier player who gave the Knicks a

substantial threat from behind the arc.

Wilson Chandler—Another young player who played with an inimitable tenacity that really rallied the Knicks in dire moments

Raymond Felton—Once again, a talented young player, who, I admit, sometimes got a little too ambitious with the rock, but nonetheless a player who was enmeshed in the Knicks' doggedness.

Essentially, the trade ripped apart the heart of the Knicks.

I hoped that the Knicks would hold out and wait for the summer to try to land Anthony. But as the trade deadline neared, while I watched an exhilarating young Knicks team scrap together wins, it became painfully obvious that Melo wanted out of Denver post haste, New York be damned. The Knicks were put in a position to trade for him during the season, or they most likely would've not landed Anthony at all. That tough spot essentially forced the Knicks to give up a little too much to get the elite player they have been coveting for years. Imagine if the Knicks sat on the deal and Melo went to Chicago or some other competitive team.

Now, the Knicks should be able to comfortably net 100 points each game. Unfortunately, there's little stopping their opponents from scoring 101. Yes, the Knicks' defense has been woeful all

season long and they probably wouldn't have made it far if the Denver trade fell through, but they still won't make it past the first round of the playoffs now, even with Carmelo and Billups. If they held on to their young talent and maybe scooped up a big man with a paint-clogging propensity, the Knicks would have been one of the most well-rounded teams in the league for years to come.

Think about it. Think about the 90's, the last time the Knicks were great. They didn't frequent the playoffs because they had one of the best scorers in the league. The reason for their dominance was because Patrick Ewing and Charles Oakley were two daunting big men who didn't let anyone drive the lane. If you tried, you got knocked to the floor and had to earn your two points from the line.

Imagine if the Knicks sat on the deal and Anthony went to Chicago or some other big city. Their management would have been lambasted for skipping on the deal. New York wanted their superstar. The Knicks couldn't come through with LeBron. They needed to get someone soon. The fans wanted a big name. I know that number seven Anthony jerseys are selling out faster than you can say championship, but this trade wasn't necessary.

While Chatting With Our Artificial

Internet Overlords



C:/>

The Press: Do you want to join the
Stony Brook Press?

Cleverbot: Of course.

The Press: What kind of articles
do you want to write?

Clevernot: Probably realistic fiction
or fantasy.

The Press: That's great! Meetings are
Wednesday at 1 p.m. in
the Union basement Room 060.

Cleverbot: You are a philosopher.

The Press: Why, thank you! I think
the Press is the best
publication on campus.

Cleverbot: There is no ceremony.

C:/>

(this is real, no lie)