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the bard FREE PRESS

Wed. 10.04.00

Volume II Number 3

Annandale-on-Hudson, NY



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Gauging the Greenhouse Effect

Environmental Forum gives varied perspectives on Global Warming

AMBER BUCHHOLZ

The Bard Center For Environmental Policy inaugurated its Second Open Forum Series on Critical Environmental Issues last Thursday with a panel discussion about global climate change and its impact on industry and society. The discussion was facilitated by Peter Berle, host of National Public Radio's weekly broadcast, *The Environment Show*, and included three guest panelists presenting a wide spectrum of perspectives on the issue.

First to speak was John Firor, senior scientist at the National Center for Atmospheric Research. Firor presented the audience with a list of commonly held beliefs about climate change, defending the legitimacy of some viewpoints while challenging the veracity of others. He was able to convince the audience that the debate over whether

or not human activities are affecting the climate has come to a close, and that the consensus in the scientific community is that global warming is a very real problem.

Firor presented a graph recording levels of greenhouse gasses in the atmosphere for the last 11,000 years. After pointing out a dramatic rise that began only about two hundred years ago, or the point at which humans began to burn coal, he juxtaposed this evidence against a chart recording the average temperature in the northern hemisphere for the last 1,000 years. The second graph showed a similar trend, with the average yearly temperature varying less than half a degree Celsius until the advent of the Industrial Era, at which point the temperature began to rise considerably. "One can only conclude the notion that human activity is causing a change in the global climate is undoubtedly true," confirmed Firor.

Next to take the podium was Leslie Carothers, vice president for environment, health, and safety at United Technologies Corporation (UTC). Carothers brought to the discussion the perspective of industry in the process of recognizing and averting environmental hazards. Having worked for nearly a decade with a multinational corporation that recognizes its responsibility to the environment as well as the economic advantages of competitively pursuing safe alternatives to pollutants, she spoke with optimism about the role of industry in the creation of a cleaner global community.

Carothers made the argument that it is in the best interest of big industries to become aware of the environmental debate as soon as possible, citing UTC's experience as one of the first appliance manu-

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Taking on the IMF: Protestors in Prague, Czech Republic, confronted police and government officials during the week of September 27th. Photo essay by Ali Tonak on page 8.

Hyperreality & Media: *The Why*

Fresh from its LA run, dark comedy inhabits Scene Shop Theater

JONAH WEINER

The title of Victor Kaufold's *The Why* acts in clever compliment to one of the play's most pronounced thematic concerns, creating what the play itself seeks to create: an ambiguity, circularity, and ultimate impossibility between the ideas of question and answer. For Kaufold, the play was written in response to an inherently journalistic urge to locate the supposed reason (the "why") behind last year's outbreak of school shootings; it responds to the media based hunt—conducted everywhere from newspaper front pages and glossy spreads in *Time* magazine to the waves of radio and television—that to a large degree, Kaufold suggests here, brought into being the very creature it purports to track. A seeming result of this suggestion (i.e., that such answers can be infinitely elusive and perhaps nonexistent) is the playwright's own reluctance, manifest in the play's myriad of tongue-in-cheek episodes and self-reflexivity, to take a side on the issue, to point a finger with any significant amount of conviction. This makes sense, of course, for to take a side would be to pretend to have apprehended the inapprehensible. Effectively, it seems, Kaufold commits here to being largely noncommittal. Here, however, a question arises that maybe can be answered: is the play better or worse for this?

Kaufold's official line on *The Why* is that it is "a deconstruction of the hyper-reality created by the



media pertaining to school shootings." A much more accurate description of the play, at least as it was produced and performed last Saturday by the Bard Department of Theater, is that it constructs and displays its own hyper-real conception of the media and its by-products. This conception is at times satirically poignant and sharp and, at others, blunt and reckless; the result at these latter moments can be funny, but as attempts at pointed satire, are heavy-handed and, what's more, lapse into firm clichés. This is a risk Kaufold has entered into necessarily, though (and bravely), for insofar as he is involved in an attempt at satire, he is involved not with Characters, per se, but with Types.

The Why's opening scene does everything to confirm this, staging a comic showdown between four gunmen, each iconic to a popular genre—there is the Wild West Sheriff

(Jed Clarke), the Tarantino-esque gun toting psycho-bitch (Marisa Vural), the 30s-era sneering mobster (Jasper Patterson), and the wisecracking New York undercover/Bruce Willis cop (Greg Fisk). From here we are made the near-constant onlookers of an almost unending parade of such types, whether they be Patterson's slimy and borderline psychotic "Murder TV" anchor, Vural's ass-shaking sensationalist reporter, Clarke's rhetoric-spouting evangelist and so on.

That Kaufold and director Michael Barakiva do not infuse these roles with the least bit of depth is not in and of itself a flaw, I guess; the roles are extreme caricatures, after all, intended to be even more cardboard and unreal than their real-life media counterparts. Still, when these Types are often no more than recasts of satirical send-

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Phones off the Hook

VINCENT VALDMANIS

Bard's plagued phone system will soon be fixed by technicians from as far away as the West Coast. B&G predicts most technical issues will be resolved some time during Reading Week, if not sooner. The problems, mainly on North Campus, were caused when a manufacturer failed to correct a corrupted program disk that interfered with the operation of a new telecommunications switch installed in New Kruger. The new switch, or PBX, was fitted to increase phone capacity on North Campus and prepare for future demands from the Performing Arts Center, which is to have a high-capacity ISDN line, and the needs of the Green Dorms.

The corrupted program disk prevented connections between the main hub, located in the Henderson Computer Center, and the North Campus switching station. Phone use was further disrupted when construction vehicles damaged underground cables (and a labor strike at Citizens Communications) caused incoming callers to receive busy signals. B&G, currently understaffed with only two technicians, has hired temporary help. Software engineers are flying in from California this week to resolve the programming errors in the North Campus PBX switch.

Contrary to some rumors, voice mail systems have been unaffected by the ordeal. Voice mail complications are caused when the phone system's forwarding service does not direct a caller to a voice mailbox. The system default is for the

forwarding service to remain deactivated, which requires users who wish their calls to be answered by the voice mail system to push *7, 7600. Engineers working on the phone system occasionally have to reset it, which restores the system defaults and turns off the forwarding service. As a result, while repairs are being made to the system it is a good idea to routinely reset your forwarding service.

B&G projects the disk corruption problem to be resolved by the end of the week. Hall phone service in Oberholzer and the emergency phone network along trails has been restored. At one point this year, B&G restored 800 dial tones in two days, but with phone capacity on campus having grown from 500 ports (including jacks for phones, fax, and modem connections and Ethernet outlets) five years ago to 3,500 ports today, B&G must struggle to keep ahead when they're swamped by a widespread system shutdown. Additional pressure is added by calls from angry students and professors.

In addition to increasing phone capacity on North Campus, the new PBX switch, currently serving only Oberholzer and New Kruger, is meant to alleviate cable-line problems. When the system is fully installed and the bugs are worked out, it will allow faster connections and separate lines in every double room. B&G acknowledged the havoc and inconvenience caused by the upgrade, but said the system will soon be up and running and state of the art.

Environmental Forum cont.

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facturers to discontinue the use of chlorofluorocarbons as an air conditioner coolant. "We try to integrate the best thinking into our business strategy," she told the audience, adding that once UTC has recognized the advantages of becoming more ecologically innovative in a particular field, they are quick to improve their technology. "We think it's important to get involved and get smart early in the process to do it well. Many of our products have what is called a long 'lead time', for instance jet engines that take ten years and billions of dollars to develop, that go on to last twenty five years. This is why it is important for us to become involved in the public policy debate, we need to know what will be required of us and of our products well ahead of time."

Annie Petsonk, an international lawyer who has worked with such organizations as the United Nations Environment Programme and the U.S. based Environmental Defense Fund, took the floor next, elucidating some of the challenges of deciding what needs to be done to improve the conditions of our atmosphere and of motivating the global community to take action.

Petsonk clarified what the Kyoto Protocol on Climate Change entails and why it is so imperative for the international community to ratify and begin honoring the agreement. After intense negotiations spanning two years, delegates from across the globe met in Kyoto in December of 1997 and signed an agreement to limit global warming to one degree Celsius over the next century. The Protocol is not legally binding until ninety days after it has been ratified by fifty-five of the original parties to the convention. Petsonk used graphs to demonstrate the effects on the global economy that cutting back on industrial emissions will have if we begin to reduce immediately, contrasted against the much more catastrophic effects of waiting several years or even decades before attempting to meet the guidelines of the Kyoto Protocol. The ecological ramifications of such procrastination are equally grave, she explained, given the inertia of the earth's systems. "Think of what happens when you draw a hot bath: the water in the tub takes awhile to cool down. Likewise, we have begun to warm the oceans: the water is expanding and the sea level is rising. It may take thousands of years for that warming to settle out..."

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Before opening the discussion up to questions from the floor, Peter Berle reminded the audience that the United States has yet to ratify the Kyoto Protocol, and many nations are holding back from taking a stand on the issue because they are waiting to see what the biggest emitter of greenhouse gasses will do. Referring to his own

experiences running for public office, Berle pointed out that right now is the most critical time to discuss issues with politicians, as they are eager to make promises before an election in an attempt to win votes. "Politicians will have a harder time backing away from promises they made as a candidate than they will have rejecting issues put forth after they have already been elected. It's up to the public to draw out such promises from politicians and then hold candidates to their word once they are in office," he commented.

The first member of the audience to pose a question to the panel was Mannie Joe Green, Environmental Director for the Clearwater Action Group, who brought up the question whether or not taxes were the most desirable method of encouraging ecologically sound behavior. Annie Petsonk seized this opportunity to speak in favor of emissions trading, a system in which a ceiling is drawn for the level of emissions corporations are allowed to emit, and companies which develop systems to drastically lower their emissions can literally sell vouchers for the emissions they didn't emit to other companies who have found it more difficult to make it under the emissions ceiling. According to Petsonk, "There are times when taxation is appropriate, but the issue of global warming is unique in that we need global compliance in order to make progress. Establishing an international system of tax shifting that every country can agree on has so far proven to be too difficult, however emissions trading has been gaining popularity across the globe, especially among countries in the European Union."

Carothers answered, "Corporations should be accountable and increasingly under the law they are. I've also noticed an interesting trend in which people have begun to assume it is their responsibility to find means of enforcing environmental laws since the government seems to be unable or unwilling to." She went on to explain how the general public has tremendous power over corporations by deciding with whom to invest based on their environmental performance, or by publicly exposing their faulty ecological practices.

The evening drew to a close with the comments of Joanne Fox-Przeworsky, director of the Bard Center For Environmental Policy, urging the audience to attend the upcoming discussion of Politics and the Environment on November 2nd, the evening prior to Election Day. In response to the notion that these panel discussions were effectively 'preaching to the choir', Fox-Przeworsky said, "Come back, and bring someone who disagrees with you. Perhaps then we can enter into progressive debate."

Leslie Carothers added that so far emissions trading has proven to be highly successful in the United States, citing the reduction of sulfur dioxide far below government mandated levels. "Emissions trading stimulates corporations to competitively seek methods of reducing pollution, because emissions vouchers become a valuable commodity that every company wants a surplus of," she explained.

Dan Wolff, a senior at Vassar College and chairman of the Vassar Green Party, questioned the system of emissions trading, wondering who is going to stop American companies from buying up vouchers and continuing to pollute, and what would happen in the event that those same companies ran out of vouchers and failed to comply with international agreements. "What systems can be put into place to enforce emissions ceilings?" he asked.

Petsonk replied, "The challenge

of international law is to develop laws that countries want to obey, because there is no global police force. Very rarely do countries use physical force against one another over environmental issues. If we provide financial incentives for corporations who obey environmental regulations, so that companies can actually earn money for reducing emissions, then perhaps we can break the link between economic growth and increased pollution."

Emily MacNear, a student here at Bard, raised the question, "What measures can be taken to increase corporate responsibility, and is it viable for the government to attempt to regulate multinationals who often act as sovereign nations in and of themselves?"

Carothers answered, "Corporations should be accountable and increasingly under the law they are. I've also noticed an interesting trend in which people have begun to assume it is their responsibility to find means of enforcing environmental laws since the government seems to be unable or unwilling to." She went on to explain how the general public has tremendous power over corporations by deciding with whom to invest based on their environmental performance, or by publicly exposing their faulty ecological practices.

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FDA says A-OK to RU-486, but restrictions still apply

Future of abortion rights still uncertain until after Presidential elections

GILLIAN MEANS

Last Thursday, September 28th, the Food and Drug Administration approved RU-486, the abortion drug, which has been the subject of heated debate between groups ranging from feminists to Christian fundamentalists. The two-step treatment allows a woman to terminate a fetus early in the pregnancy, and, as some say, rendering the former abortion procedure obsolete.

Mifepristone, the first pill the woman takes, was developed in France and has been authorized for distribution since 1988. In that time, 620,000 women have used the drug as an alternative to surgical abortion.

The controversy surrounding the treatment in the United States consists mainly of the same arguments used against other methods of abortion. Opponents criticize the pill because it is proven to have numerous side effects and can result in dangerous complications.

Opponents criticize the pill because it is proven to have numerous side effects and can result in dangerous complications.

Because of the high risks involved with taking RU-486, the FDA has accompanied its approval of the drug with a number of restrictions.

Doctors providing mifepristone and the necessary prostaglandin misoprostol must be registered with distributors and meet various criteria. One is to have access to surgical facilities and expertise capable of dealing with severe bleeding or other major complications.

14-day follow-up visit is required of all women after the two drugs have been administered.

The FDA is also requiring doctors to be able to recognize women with certain health risks, such as being pregnant more than 49 days, having had ectopic (tubal) pregnancies, or being

allergic to mifepristone or any prostaglandin.

Proponents acknowledge that with all the restrictions the drug will not exactly make getting an abortion logistically

easier. It will, they argue, make the decision easier for women on moral grounds because it allows an abortion while still early in the pregnancy.

The FDA has spent a considerable amount of time studying mifepristone and deciding whether to approve it. Although having been in use in France, the United Kingdom, Sweden, China, and other countries for years, the drug will continue to be closely monitored by the FDA.



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Open Wednesday to Sunday, 7am to 6pm

Meet the Clubs: Bard Student Activist Calendar

This catalogue and calendar of activist groups and events is made in an effort to broaden campus awareness of all possible interests. It is not exclusive, and welcomes submissions from all who believe their group/event should be included. This is the first edition of what will hopefully become a monthly publication. To have something in November's edition, please email a copy to either Laila Tomkinson (lt763), or Onnesha Roychadhuri (or356). In the future, we will be reserved enough pages so please forgive the necessary slashing this time.

Student Action Collective

The Student Action Collective (SAC) is a coalition of progressive and radical groups working against all forms of oppression. In its fifth year, SAC has organized against police brutality, globalization and corporate power and has been responsible for major changes on campus as well. The SAC is a non-hierarchical, consensus-based group. Some of the current campaigns are on:

A. IRAQ:

The Iraq working group has made its focus putting an end to the UN/US enforced economic sanctions on Iraq, which are directly responsible for thousands of deaths every month. We target politicians by writing letters and making phone calls to oppose the sanctions. We send letters out to local papers, and have had some success in getting LTEs and articles published. We mainly work on events on campus - like the recent teach in, and the upcoming discussion this Sunday. We're putting together a volume of information on the sanctions to send out to local organizations as a means to form a broad coalition to end the sanctions. Meets on Tuesdays at 8pm in the basement of the Old Gym.

B. STUDENTS AGAINST SWEATSHOP LABOR:

Over the past two years, college

campuses across the USA have been the site of protests demanding that companies producing college clothing guarantee basic labor rights in their factories. Bard joined this movement in the spring of 1999, when the Student Labor Coalition pressured the Bard administration into signing a Code of Conduct for our subcontractors. The Code requires that all Bard subcontractors (specifically Chartwells at Kline, ServiceMaster, and Barnes and Noble at the bookstore) guarantee that their products are made in fair working conditions. It also requires them to disclose where those products are made and to allow monitoring agencies access to those areas.

Since then a lot has happened both nationally and locally. United Students Against Sweatshops (USAS), the national coalition of student groups, formed a monitoring agency for college apparel called the Worker Rights Consortium (WRC). Bard joined the WRC and agreed to support its efforts in February. In the meantime, the college agreed to form a four-person committee to look into the Code; three members are students (who are paid for the committee work that they do) and the fourth is Vice President for Administration James Brudvig.

The committee has concentrated on sorting through legal details with the subcontractor corporations and beginning the basis for investigations into where and how Bard products are produced. We are also maintaining connections with USAS, which has grown enormously and held its third national conference in August.

The committee has no set meeting time yet, as one of the student members graduated last year and a replacement has yet to be hired. Contact Shankar Gopalakrishnan (sg584@bard.edu, x4526) or Michael Chameides (mc753@bard.edu, x4536) for more information.

C. SCHOOL OF THE AMERICAS:

Meets on Fridays at 3pm in the basement of the Old Gym.

D. DEATH PENALTY/POLICE BRUTALITY/PRISON INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX:

Meets on Wednesdays at 6. 15 in the basement of the Old Gym.

F. ELECTION YEAR in conjunction with SAVE:

Meets on Wednesdays at 8. 30 in the basement of the Old Gym.

Wednesday, Oct. 4, NEWBURGH: Weekly vigil every Wednesday to stop the bombings and end U.S.-initiated sanctions against Iraq that have killed 1.5 million people, half of them children. From 4-5:30 p.m. at the foot of Broadway and Colden St. Sponsored by Mid-Hudson Campaign of Conscience for the Iraqi People. Info: eveellen@frontier-net.net, or call 565-1748 or 565-8309.

Wednesday, Oct. 4, ALBANY: Vigil against the Rockefeller drug laws in front of the Albany County Court House, 16 Eagle St., 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. Organized by Families Against Mandatory Minimums, (518) 452-5455, and co-sponsored by Capital District Greens.

Thursday, October 5th: Vice Presidential Debate. 9:00pm, Campus Center TV Room (live), 11:00pm Weis Cinema (taped)

Saturday, Oct. 7, NEW YORK (Hunter College): Ralph Nader will address the "Independent Politics in a Global World" conference at noon in the main auditorium. Ticket information, from the Nader2000 office, (212) 353-3111.

Saturday, Oct. 7, VARIOUS LOCATIONS: The "International Day of Protest to Stop the Militarization of Space" is going to take place in scores of cities in the U.S. and around the world, from Cape Canaveral Air Force Base to the Nevada bomb testing site, to New York City, to Chicago, to London and so on. Other slogans of the day include "No Star Wars! No Nuclear Rocket! Keep Space for Peace!" The event is being organized by a group called the Global Network Against Weapons & Nuclear Power in Space, (352) 337-9274, globalnet@mindspring.com, www.space4peace.org. Dozens of other organizations are co-sponsoring.

Sunday, Oct. 15, WASHINGTON: "March for Women's Rights," organized in the U.S. by the National Organization for Women as part of the World March of Women 2000. This event is sponsored by hundreds of organizations. Information from www.worldmarch.org. [Political note: Given the march's proximity to the elections and NOW's views, expect a certain amount of pro-Gore sentiment from the speakers.] For Albany information, contact Albany NOW at (518) 472-9120. For bus leaving from New York City (\$35 round-trip), contact NOW-NYC, 150 W 28th St., Suite 304, N.Y., N.Y. 10001, (212) -9895, Email mail@nownyc.org, www.nownyc.org.

Sunday, Oct. 15, ANYWHERE: CNN will broadcast "Rehearsing Doomsday" at 10 p.m. We have been informed "This documentary will expose the hypocrisy of current [U.S.] nuclear policy with portraits of Senators, frustrated by their lack of access to knowledge, and missiliers, gravely concerned as they watch the American people sleepwalk toward Armageddon." Activists may wish to organize group viewing and discussion events at home or on campus. The anti-nuclear group, Project Abolition, will send you a "house party organizing kit" and other information, if you wish. They are at (219) 535-1110, Email kmartin@fourth-freedom.org.

Thursday, Oct. 19, Bard campus: Listen to "All Things Censored," a Mumia CD.

Thursday, Oct. 19, multi-purpose room: Senatorial Election Forum, featuring party representatives. 7pm.

For events that do not have complete information available yet, please look out for signs or come to a SAC meeting at 7pm on Wednesdays in the basement of the Old Gym.

Bard Animal Rights Collective (BARC)

This semester, the BARC has a variety of events planned that will hopefully interest students within and outside of the animal rights movement. We meet weekly on Sundays, rotating vegan potlucks at 6:30 and meetings at 8:00 in the Manor lounge. We have begun making our own zine-style cookbook, letter writing, and getting Procter and Gamble products, a company notorious for animal testing, out of the bookstore. We are

planning a benefit show for Farm Sanctuary, a farm upstate that takes in as many farm animals as possible who have been mistreated or were about to be killed. In addition, we will be attending anti-fur protests both locally and in New York City, and will be planning an action on October 16, world day of action against McDonald's. We hope to work with the food committee and Kline to provide healthier and trustworthy vegan/vegetarian options to

students in order to provide a supportive environment for those who choose a cruelty-free lifestyle. Everyone is welcome to attend meetings and we are open to any ideas or interests that people want to include in BARC's plans for the semester. Contact mv863@bard.edu with questions or please attend one of our gatherings.

Green Party

The Bard College Green Party chapter is a progressive, grassroots activist group. Its central focus is the Nader 2000 campaign. We feel it is important to resist the 1 party

political system that is masquerading as a 2 party system. We endorse the official Green Party platform. Our goal is to create awareness on campus and in the community

about the importance of voting for a viable third party, and to build alliances with local Green chapters. Contact Matt Dineen for more info at md936@bard.edu x4421

BARD-Aid

BARD-AID is a student run emergency relief and awareness raising organization on campus. We work to raise student awareness about local, national, and international crises, and we focus on the issues that don't get much play in the media. We also throw parties and hold fundraisers and then send the money to those who need it. Our policy is to only send money to organizations that will use it directly for people in need.

Our current projects include: Trip on Sept. 29th to Brooklyn to see "A Refugee Camp in the Heart

of The City," a reproduction of the kind of refugee camps Doctors Without Borders sets up around the world, with a guided tour by one of DWB's volunteers who has recently worked in real camp.

The Quiet Revolution will be holding a party within the next couple of weeks. The \$2 admission that they charge at the door will go to Bard-Aid to donate. We have not decided who will donate to, but we have a couple of possibilities.

Some time in November we will be showing a popular 80s movie (Goonies, perhaps) in the student

center theater. We will charge admission, hand out leaflets of information. We have not yet decided where we will send the profits.

And our Beach Party, Comonawannaleiya II, is slated for December 1st. This will once again include a beach balls, *refreshments*, a sand pit, and a human auction.

People can reach Bard-Aid through Peter Malcolm at pm832@bard.edu or Rachel Mahoney rm987@bard.edu.

Bard Prison Initiative

BPI is a multi-faceted organization with several goals. Several Bard students will be hosting workshops in nearby prisons starting this semester. Teach-ins at Bard TBA. BPI is also hosting a series of five

forums, "Discussing American Justice." This semester we hope to concentrate on NY's drug and disenfranchisement laws. The next meeting will be Thursday, October 19 in the Basement of the old gym.

SAVE

SAVE, Student Activists for Voting Equality, was started during the 98-99 year by Michael Chameides and Marina Smerling ('99) when students were being denied the right to register to vote in Dutchess County. There is also a Vassar SAVE group. During the fall '99 and spring '00 semesters, SAVE, working with Joseph Luders's American Government class, held protests, press conferences, phone bombs, threatened a lawsuit, and generally pressured Dutchess County officials to stop their discrimination against students. In April of 2000, SAVE's main opponent, then Republican Elections Commissioner William Paroli, Sr. was thrown out of office on unrelated corruption charges. With the help of a county legislative panel that held public forums on student voting at Bard and Vassar campuses, SAVE successfully brought the issue so much publicity that the

new Republican Elections Commissioner visits campus regularly and registers students to vote.

This semester, with the SAC Elections Working Group, SAVE is planning to change gears. Since we can register now, what's left is to get students informed about local issues and to the polls on election day. During October and the first week of November, we're planning lots of publicity, sponsoring candidate forums on campus, more registration drives, and shuttles on election day. We also plan to publish a pamphlet highlighting several local issues that will be affected by student votes on election day. It is not yet known whether SAVE will continue after Election Day November 7th.

SAVE meets on Wednesdays at 8. 30 in the basement of the Old Gym, in conjunction with SAC's election year group.

The Fishing Line-Steve Champion & The Bard Prison Initiative

“The Faces I See”--A Perspective from Death Row

Whenever I enter the Death Row yard I always try to see it from a different perspective and after sixteen years you would think I've seen it from every angle. I haven't...no one can. A person can spend almost an entire lifetime somewhere and come to think they know everything there is to know about the place. Then one day all of a sudden, like gunshots shattering the quiet calm the person realizes (and perhaps for the first time) that they really don't know the place at all. The faces of Death Row are like that, constantly divulging themselves in sharp sudden flashes like that can alter your point of view daily. If you are not acutely observant you will miss the human subtleties and the depth of the naked faces, even if you live here.

The mosaic of faces that litter the Death Row yards is but a reflection of urban and metropolitan

cities. They are faces that speak of marginalized social conditions, of emotional and psychological baggage, and of a thousand other life deformities that painfully contort the face in unfathomable ways. These faces pace the small yard in vertical and horizontal lines or small circular patterns that unconsciously define the limited circumference of their lives. A circumference much like the yard where a single basketball, a deck of cards, and a chess set constitute the nothingness and powerlessness that has always been felt, always been a presence.

I am always amazed how the faces attempt to conceal private pain, holding it back like a levy in need of repairs. Many of the faces are those of children, virgins in their prison faces, not yet wholly men, but man enough to execute. Others are husbands and sons who have never experienced the gauntlet

of confinement and straining to make the psychic adjustment and some sense of the vertigo they exist in. Then there are the blank faces hardened by concrete and survival or stranded on a deserted mental island unable to return. But all of the faces, including mine, struggle to deal with the common thread that joins us more closely than we care to admit, that thread no matter how we look is Death.

When I observe people engaged in conversation, I watch their facial expressions and can see the undercurrent of interior feelings that looms rigid beneath the surface where changes, conflict, and aggression hovers translucently. Sometimes I catch a face staring at me, giving me that jagged penetrating gaze as if we'd once been mortal enemies, or if I remind the face of another face it once knew. I disarm it with a smile, he looks away, and in that brief space of time I

have articulated a profound message. There are times though when I feel the urge to walk up to someone whose face shows particular signs of inquietude and ask: What's wrong? but prison protocol prevents me from making such an intrusion, which can be tantamount to invading the sovereign airspace of a country--the result...War!

Okay, what can you do when you see a face experiencing what you have gone through? Well, on Death Row, you do nothing, nothing but watch in silence as the faces go from one extreme to the next. A perfect reenactment of Greek tragedy, comedy and drama, where death waits patiently to close the final scene. If I say to someone; "How are you doing?" I am met by well-honed defense reflexes aimed at protecting the ego and erecting a wall around insecurities that are too vulnerable to be exposed. I understand it so I just observe, face after

face, made bitter by time and scared by living, forged in a season of defeats and victories that have molded a battered soul. It is truly a burden to have to go through life with a phantom face.

When yard recall is announced I return to my cage bringing those many faces with me and it is necessary I meditate, tapping into the realm where even the faces become oneness, sameness, relative, and for a time the faces disappear. Later, when I am finished meditating the faces return with all of their contradictions and I wonder; from what perspective will I see them tomorrow?

Steve Champion C-58001
San Quentin State Prison
San Quentin, CA

The Wisest Vote: Strategy Version, Election Booth Style

How the Electoral College makes a vote for Gore ridiculous when compared compared to a vote for Nader

AMBER BUCHHOLZ

As many of you know, this year is not just any election year; many crucial issues are at stake. On the federal level, our next president will most likely have the opportunity to appoint two or more Supreme Court justices. As it stands, our Supreme Court is almost perfectly divided between liberal and conservative judges, and the appointment of two fresh faces to the bench could have the power to sway the Court decisively to one side of the aisle or the other. For example, two conservative pro-life judges could have a devastating affect on Roe v. Wade. We must also remember that this is a census year, which means that the task of reapportioning voting districts will fall to our state assemblies in the upcoming year. Whichever party controls our state governments will by extension control the manner in which our districts are drawn up, whether in favor of distributing the votes to benefit liberal candidates or conservative ones.

In short, this is not an election year to shine on or to take lightly. It is understandable then, how so many of the voters I interviewed for my last article, who's political views fall to the left of the Democratic Party line, could for example feel both unhappy with the prospects of voting for Gore and unwilling to cast a vote for a liberal candidate that they know cannot defeat Bush. With so much at stake, I can sympathize with voters who talk themselves into casting a ballot for the practical candidate as opposed to the ideal one.

I'm here to tell you good, that's great, I'm heartened to see any level of political strategy in action. I myself have been no stranger to the wiles of political strategy since last spring, when I re-registered myself as a Republican for the primaries.

As I mentioned before, I am a Green, but I had every intention of re-registering Democrat for the primaries in order to cast my ballot for Bradley. But after Bush started fraternizing with the cast of Deliverance in South Carolina, I thought to myself, "this man needs to be stopped!" and I did what I could to vote against him as blatantly as I was able. I wanted as many sheer numbers stacked against him as possible.

I just want to remind you, however, that in the general election, our president will not be decided by sheer numbers or by a popular vote. We in this country are blessed with a convoluted practice we like to call the 'electoral system'. If we elected presidents with a popular vote in this country, there would be no way around the fact that casting a vote for Nader, for example, would be taking a vote away from Gore. But that's not the case in November: our electoral system allows for a certain level of strategy when deciding for whom to vote.

In a certain sense, each individual vote does not count, because it is not tallied on a federal level. Instead, the popular vote is tallied on a state level, and each state in turn casts a set number of "electoral votes" for the candidate who won the popular vote of the state. Each state is allocated a number of electors equal to the number of its U.S. Congressional Representatives. In states where public opinion is divided and the polls reveal a close race, such as New Jersey, Illinois, or Florida, the decision whether or not to settle for the lesser of two evils or to vote for a third party candidate becomes more crucial. However, in states where one or another of the two major candidates is clearly in the lead, such as in New York, California, or Massachusetts (where Gore is almost undoubtedly going to win), voters with third-party tendencies

are at liberty to play around with their vote a little more. Political strategy is taken to a whole new level.

When I realized that no matter where I registered (either here or in my home state of California), and no matter who I voted for, be it Bush, Nader, Buchanan or Mickey Mouse, Gore was inevitably going to walk away with my electoral vote, I started to feel an odd sense of freedom. Gone was my guilty obligation to vote for the pseudo-liberal that made me only slightly less nauseous than the Golden Boy of Texas. I intend to vote for Nader, the only candidate I really want to be president, and in the sad event that Bush wins the election, I don't have to feel like I helped him in to office, because I didn't. Popular votes do count for something, however, and by voting for Nader what I will have done is hopefully helped push the Green Party over the crucial 5% of the popular vote they

need to garner legitimacy (and a hefty sum of federal money for the next elections). Thus I've accomplished three great things with one vote: I've voted for a candidate I truly believe in, I've helped advance the cause of third parties in general, and I've avoided doing anything that could possibly be construed as helping Bush.

I hope this article won't be interpreted as: "your vote means nothing in New York because Gore is going to win the electoral votes, so vote for Nader 'cause I say so." What I am simply trying to do is convince you of several things: primarily, that voting in this election is important, and that no matter how inevitable you may think certain forces are, you do still have the power to promote change, and secondly, I am trying to impress upon you some of the different things to take into consideration when registering to vote, to get the most out of your ballot.

If you personally feel optimistic about a Gore presidency and want to cast your ballot for him, then before you decide to register here, take the time to find out if your home state is a "swing state" where public opinion is divided and one more vote for Gore would be more powerful than in New York. If you feel ambivalent about Gore and you're registered in a state where one or the other mainstream candidates has practically already won, you now have one more good reason to break with convention, and you can do it guilt-free. Take into consideration also that those of us voting in New York will have the opportunity to help or hinder Hillary Clinton's campaign for U.S. Senate. All in all, this is an exciting year to be engaged in the political process, and I hope you all take your role as members of a democracy seriously enough to vote this upcoming election.

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Hey! Register to Vote in Dutchess

Local laws do affect our lives. Register to have a say in them.

MONICA ELKINGTON

Red Hook is a very small town, and the local laws affect us greatly. Many of us live off campus. All Bard work-study students pay income tax to New York. If a Bard student is arrested or legally charged for a crime they are detained by Dutchess County. Why shouldn't we have a say in the local laws and policies? We have to live by

We have to live by local laws and policies at least nine months out of the year. We should have our voices heard ...

local laws and policies at least nine months out of the year. We should have our voices heard in who can pollute the Hudson, who can build a huge supermarket in Red Hook, and anything else that affects the community—we are a part of the community.

Many Bard students come from areas with hotly contested political

issues this fall. For example, in Vermont, there is a possibility that the civil unions law may be repealed if a particular gubernatorial candidate is successful. One student also has told me that his home district is Strom Thurmond's district, and he wants to vote against him. In these cases, I encourage these students to vote absentee from home.

However, Dutchess County is

almost completely controlled by Republicans and Conservatives (two different parties in New York, by the way). In the local primary last week, less than 5,000 people voted for judge, and less than 7,000 voted for U.S. Senator. A total of 13 members of the Green Party voted in Dutchess County. Bard and Vassar make up about 3,000 stu-

dents. Can you imagine what a liberal voting block of that size could do to this county? A student could run for Congress!

Bard students are encouraged to vote here because many of us live nowhere but here. Some might plan to go back to their parents' houses when they leave Bard, but many of us don't even consider it. Also, absentee ballots are not counted in most states unless there is a tie. For example, if all the in-person votes are counted, and one candidate wins by 10,000 votes and there are only 5,000 absentee ballots, then the ballots are not counted.

Please register to vote in Dutchess County. It needs your help. Don't let the Republicans rule your legal life. Watch for signs about voter registration. If you haven't seen any by the time you leave for Reading Week, contact Monica by email at me573 or by phone at x4770 for a local voter registration card.

Bush: An Honest Texas Governor

Gore? Nader? Nah! George W. is the man for the job!

ROB PONCE

Students at Bard seem to think Election Day is going to be a time for them to decide between two candidates for President: Al Gore or Ralph Nader. But what about George W. Bush? I am quite disappointed that one cannot find a single person on this college campus that is considering voting Republican. Let me give you some reasons for why a Republican in the White House might not be such a bad idea.

It may be true that Governor Bush's resume for the presidency is rather thin, but he does offer a fresh approach to politics than usually found in Washington. Bush has proposed offering vouchers so parents can have more freedom in deciding where their children can go to school. Democrats do not like the voucher system because they feel it excludes the poor from having the privilege to choose a private school over a public school. This is not true. Government funded vouchers could give middle and lower middle class children a chance to attend a private school they normally couldn't afford, effectively minimizing the gap between the rich and the poor.

Bush has already taken other initiatives to help the poor. He fought the Republican Party that wanted to eliminate the department of education and he won. Governor Bush will continue to support public school funding. The only difference the Governor and the Vice President have on this issue is that Bush would additionally support a voucher system that would just be another option for students to consider when their local schools have failed them.

Abortion is a particularly hot issue during this election year for two reasons. First, the next president will have to appoint at least two supreme court justices in the next term which could possibly overturn Roe vs. Wade considering the supreme court is now 5 to 4 in favor of a woman's right to choose. Secondly, earlier this summer the Supreme Court ruled that abortions in the third trimester are legal. Some people call this barbaric procedure "partial birth abortion." The only rationale I can imagine the Supreme Court using to allow this procedure is that they did not want to start a pro-life trend in Supreme Court decisions. No matter how you define when a baby begins life, it certainly falls before the third trimester (when a fetus could survive without the mother). This places 3rd term babies in a category protecting them of basic rights.

Keeping abortion legal in the first and second trimesters gives a woman plenty of time to decide whether or not she wants to have a baby.

Although this decision does uphold a woman's right to choose, I would argue that the Supreme Court has given the pro-life movement fuel for the fire. It is hard to argue the significance of a late term abortion unless the mother's life is in danger. A democracy should not take away a woman's right to choose whether or not she wants to have a child, but there should be a line drawn somewhere. Keeping abortion legal in the first and second trimesters gives a woman plenty of time to decide whether or not she wants to have a

baby. However, abortions in the third trimester should be inexcusable unless the health of the mother is an issue. Governor Bush is pro-life but Al Gore is pro-life in his personal philosophy as well. During his tenure as senator, his voting record often fell in favor of pro-life ideology. I highly doubt George Bush would try to overturn Roe V. Wade considering the majority of Americans are pro-choice. As president, Bush would appoint judges who would see the unconstitutionality in late term abortions.

Education and abortion aside, I don't think the differences between Gore and Bush on policy are large enough to determine who would be a better president. I do think Bush seems more trustworthy than Gore. During the Clinton years a lot of people brushed off the issue of trust since the economy has been doing so well, but it is important to be able to trust your president. My decision in this election is going to be based on character since I believe there is little fundamental difference between the two candidates. People should cast serious doubts about Gore's integrity considering his countless flip-flops on important policy issues and the role he played in the so-called Buddhist fundraiser. Nader also could be considered untrustworthy, as his universal welfare policies would surely burn the surplus. Also, as an isolationist, Ralph Nader's foreign policy is non-existent compared to Bush's team of twenty foreign policy experts, all experienced and knowledgeable about how the U.S. acts as a center of world defense and trade.

From the Student Government



A campus pub was discussed as a way to alleviate drunk driving and dorm parties. Questions were raised regarding the consideration of an overseer, ownership and legitimization. The point was made that without a large graduate program at Bard there might not be enough of a population of legal adults to keep the pub in business. It was decided that more research needs to be done about campus pubs on other campuses that are the same size as Bard.

Opinions were voiced regarding the fact that more frequent shuttles are needed on weekends to stop drunk driving between Bard and Tivoli. After dinner on weekends, there could be one shuttle added (driven by a paid student driver) to make runs between Bard and Tivoli/Red Hook while the other one looped around campus.

It was also decided that there should be more community education around alcohol.

Suggestions were made to publish other schools' policies regarding alcohol to make students appreciate the leniency they enjoy at Bard. The point is to have the message be that there is a special understanding of liberalism concerning alcohol at Bard. Questions about making the TIPS alcohol training a must for alcohol party hosts also were raised.

Key Bank is Wack.

Monthly charges + No ATM = Bad Bank

JONAH WEINER

Now that Key Bank has pulled its ATM from the student center there is no place to get cash on campus—that is, without paying two dollars extra in "service charges." As far as anyone can tell, Key Bank's reasoning for the ATM's removal had something to do with cost efficiency: there was not sufficient traffic at the campus center ATM to make it worthwhile for Key to keep it running.

There's a certain history of Key pulling the rug out from under its Bard account holders. Two years ago my freshman class was offered a shuttle ride out to Red Hook during L&T on what was called "The Bank Run," and during which entirely free student checking accounts could be established...but a semester later a monthly three dollar "maintenance" charge had popped into existence, unexplained and unexpected. This soon grew to three-fifty, what I think most account holders are currently paying.

With the Key ATM pulled and a

categorically imposed surcharge put in its place, the monthly charge becomes completely ridiculous. What is one paying Key for?

And this only becomes more ridiculous when one considers the existence and convenience of Rhinebeck Savings Bank, which also has a branch in Red Hook and charges absolutely nothing for its checking account. RSB has an ATM in Tivoli, right at the shuttle stop, making it as easy to get to as any Key ATM, and from which withdrawals in multiples of ten can be made, rather than in multiples of twenty. And, for what it's worth, RSB itself is locally based, and much smaller than Key Bank.

Practically speaking, an account with Rhinebeck Savings Bank is better than one with Key. If you've got money in a Key account, close it and start one up with Rhinebeck. It's as easy as writing a check payable to yourself for the total amount in the first account and depositing it into the new one. On the memo of that check you can write: "Key Bank is Shit. Fuck Key Bank."

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Corrections: Ezer Lichtenstein was uncredited last issue for his video game review, p.10.

The Sea and Cake Return with First Full-Length in Years

Retro-pop guitar rockers keep it lighthearted on *Oui LP*

JONAH WEINER

The Sea and Cake's new *Oui LP* illustrates—and, to a certain extent, meets—an interesting challenge: how is a band, its music constructed within an almost patently upbeat, "trouble-free" medium, to make a serious and successful attempt at reaching emotional depth and intensity? How does it distance itself from the nearby realm of mindless pop vacuity and leave with its audience something substantial? If we are to talk about "range," The Sea and Cake-speaking here in terms of tempo, key, and sound—seems not to stray very far from the happier part of the musical spectrum.

From *Oui's* first song, "Afternoon Speaker," to the closing track, "I Missed the Glance," falsetto vocals bounce back and forth over Club-Med-cool-jazz-bossanova guitar riffs, underpinned by high, quickly tapping drum beats and occasional electronic seasoning. Camp influence is everywhere on *Oui*, and so even in its less buoyant,



Standing tough in the windy city: Prekop and his bloodthirsty gang wait for old ladies to mug on Division street.

slower, and more somber moments one feels that, were singer Sam Prekop to start in with some la-la-la's, it would not come as intrusive.

In an article in Artforum on the Sea and Cake's 1997 album *The Fawn* Mark van de Walle called the group's music "a kind of sonic equivalent to lava-lamp blobs. Which is not to imply that *The Fawn* or the Sea and Cake are a

purely camp experience; actually you get the sense that the guys enjoy this stuff in a truly genuine way." The image of lava lamps is great, and on *Oui* as well it is a sense of genuineness that helps to give the album ballast. Its pervasive sincerity keeps it at that much of a remove from being an easily digestible, musical Cream Puff. The songs here are a bit puffy, no

doubt, but they are meant to be taken seriously nonetheless—The Sea and Cake are not to bossa nova what Man or Astroman is to surf rock, let's say, erecting a sort of novelty shop or "camp museum" out of their music.

Largely, the source of sincerity in The Sea and Cake lies in Sam Prekop's singing, a breathy head-voice that sighs over lyrics in a combination of earnestness and hopelessness. Prekop's vocals have been described as something like Stephen Malkmus (Pavement) meets Al Green. This description is a good one, insofar as it captures both the influence of soul music on Prekop (something he himself has confirmed in interviews) and the maybe-a-bit-too-cool, slacker-style delivery within which Prekop makes the influence heard.

Similarities can be drawn as well between Prekop's vocals and those of The Apples in Stereo or The Olivia Tremor Control; and to clas-

sify The Sea and Cake alongside these acts is not to commit an injustice or untruth, I don't think, as all three have a similar interest in retro-psychedelic-pop (as does Pavement, of course, though in a different, perhaps more experimental way). And, to be sure, if it is evidence of The Sea and Cake's sincerity that gives the airy tracks of *Oui* much of their "ballast"—if it is this that prevents the songs from being wholly ephemeral, evaporating from the listener's consciousness mere seconds after they're heard—such evidence is present in the music itself, and not just Prekop's own efforts.

Overall, *Oui*, to be released in early October on Thrill Jockey records, taps into the same sort of appeal as do pop bands from The Beach Boys to Belle and Sebastian, crafting essentially unthreatening, lyrical and melodic songs that nonetheless touch important emotional chords.

Sam Prekop has been described as Steve Malkmus meets Al Green

The Devil Made 'em Do It!

The Murder City Devils fuse rock with violence on *In Name and Blood LP*

TOSH CHIANG

The road-tested Murder City Devils are decibel cranking propagators of unadulterated rock n' roll. These Seattle based thrashers have released *In Name and Blood*, a new album chock full of grit, grime, rock and gore (don't worry, there is no Tipper here). The liner notes alone are a masterpiece, depicting the band massacred Manson-style. No joke, the shots are graphic enough to send the average Pokemon fan running. And if the "eye-candy" isn't enough, there is always the allure of the music.

Punk-fueled and melodic, *In Name and Blood* batters the listener with a seamlessly arranged array of raw emotions. From the vocals to the drums this band has got its shit together. Spencer Moody's voice has a good throaty sound you'd think could come only from a well-tuned engine. Not only that but the man's pipes are melodic. His voice is a flawless accompaniment to the band, even as it alternates radically from screams to whispers, like a Pixies-era Frank Black. The addition of Leslie Hardy's full-time keyboards is also superb. Her intro on "Rum to Whiskey" is delicate yet eerie-like something out of a horror flick.

It might also be worth mentioning that these rockers have a soft side. Yes, the darkly named Murder City Devils actually write songs about love—they even do a heartfelt cover of Neil Diamond's "I'll Come Running." But don't get me wrong, the band still knows how to tear it up with their own special brand of nitro-charged retro rock. Coady Willis is energetic and pulsating, heavyweight drumming on "Idle Hands" is punishingly good; this drummer really drives the band. The song even has the



3 Denim Jackets in One Band? The members of the Murder City Devils hang out in Trailer 3 on Thursday night.

jovial "sing along while drunk" feel that every good punk anthem should. And of course, all of the Devils' patently well-constructed choruses, riffs, and songs about liquor are still here. "Demon Brother" even has a dynamite '70's rock-styled intro—a formula that guitarist Nate M a n n y applies here with success.

In regard to their earlier albums, a natural progression to the latest can easily be seen. The first self-titled album is full-on punk and vicious. Nearly every song is fast and furious. Not a bad track on it. Their sophomore effort *Broken Bottles Empty Hearts* captured the band's movement towards good ol' rock n' roll. "I Want a Lot Now" is a damn

good rock song. It inspires energetic heart-pounding glass-breaking bouncing about the room. There is also a kicking song about the legendary Johnny Thunders.

And if you don't know who Johnny Thunders is, well, go find out.

So there ya have it. If the Murder City Devils are a righteous return to rock in its most offensive and thrashing form, *In Name and Blood* is an especially fun album to listen to. And it's obvious

that the band has a good time playing it too. So buy it—damn it. These guys deserve the money.

The Murder City Devils are playing NYC at the Wetlands the weekend of October 19th. They're a notoriously good live act. Until then, drink up and rock on.

Punk-fueled and melodic, *In Name and Blood* batters the listener with a seamlessly arranged array of raw emotions.

Form Vs. Content in Blockbuster Movies

MATTHEW E. GOLDBERG

Consider for a moment two recently released Hollywood blockbusters, Cameron Crowe's *Almost Famous* and Boaz Yakin's *Remember the Titans*. Both take place in the early '70's, neither are visually distinguished, and both indulge in cheesy sentimentality without being overly manipulative.

So what's the difference between these two films? *Almost Famous* is the second major Oscar contender released by Dreamworks that contends to specifically be about American society without taking any sort of serious stance on American politics (*American Beauty* was the first—the name says it all, but the film is without a single minority face). How can a film be about rock n' roll in the early '70's without ever mentioning Vietnam, or Jimi Hendrix, or heroin? *Titans* doesn't mention Vietnam either, but it does somehow manage to imply it in the way that it portrays football as war and the coach as a drill sergeant (there's even a *de facto* war dance). And, like Oliver Stone's *Platoon*, the movie suggests that, literally and figuratively, whites have a lot to learn from blacks about "soul." The movie also spends a lot of time concentrating on uses of language: both white and black characters often "slip up," as it were, and have to be told to watch what they imply through their use of English. Even if *Titans* is fluff, it's more intellectually motivated than most fluff.

All of which begs the question: in cinema, what matters more, good filmmaking, or good intellectual ideas? This isn't even a debate worth having in the case of *Almost Famous*. Audiences should watch it (or, better yet, not watch it) as an entertaining distraction, and consid-

er the awards it will almost inevitably receive as nothing less than a disgrace. But applying this question to other recent films, like *Titans*, *Bring it On*, and, more seriously, Jim Jarmusch's *Ghost Dog*, James Toback's *Black and White*, and Stone's *Any Given Sunday*, brings up an infinitely more interesting question for cinemaphiles.

It's not a new dilemma. It's a debate which started, perhaps, with one of the gems of early film, D.W. Griffith's *Birth of a Nation*. One can watch *Birth* even today and see the influence it's had on modern film making—its editing style, its screen composition, its penchant for visual metaphors. The film's one problem? It celebrates the KKK as American heroes. Jump ahead thirty years, and Leni Riefenstahl's *The Will to Power* emerges as a powerful and indeed quite incredible piece of filmmaking, which just happens to be a Nazi propaganda film. Do these films have any artistic merit? Should they be studied or dismissed?

The only answer for a serious film lover seems to be, studied. Film, audiences and critics so often forget, is a visual art, first and foremost; things like plot are irrelevant. *Titans* deserves to be ignored not because it is formulaic, but because there's nothing which is, from a cinematic point of view, especially interesting about it (*Sunday* is a formulaic sports film as well, but visually it's rather innovative, and in the end, its intellectual ideas about race happen to be less faulty. It's everything *Titans* wishes it were.) Weak minded liberals, acting just as irresponsibly as dim-witted conservatives, have let political correctness get the better of them, and the art is what suffers (Griffith's

continued next page...

Why Do Kids Kill? A Satirical Look at School Shootings

...continued from first page
ups by now nearly standard to any comedy with purported satirical edge (from bad sketches on Saturday Night Live to Sprite's ad-mocking ad campaign), the audience can stand only so much before asking "Is this all you can think of to say?" Pushing this to the boiling point were scenes in *The Why* like that in which a straight-laced-white-toothed-vacuum-cleaning-Eisenhower-1950's couple is sent-up as (joke's on them!) mindless victims of the suburban curse of repression and insularity. None-too-subtle characters used to make a none-too-subtle and hackneyed point, they are none-too-subtly named "Mr. and Mrs. Evade."

The script recognizes the danger of its indulgence in Types, thankfully, in at least two points. One is when the play's self-reflexivity is made explicit and a self-proclaimed "legitimate journalist" (Rayna Matthews) leaps from the audience to condemn the playwright for creating in his portrayal of the media nothing more than a straw man,

easy to knock down because it is so far from the truth. (The play's self-consciousness is made implicit, by the way, in a cleverly farcical play-within-a-play which casts high school shootings against a melodramatic 90210-style backdrop—in this subplot the players were excellent, and when Greg Fisk's white-boy bully hollers "Can I get a what-what?" it is truly a moment not to be missed).

The other is in the presence of characters like Robert (David Warth), who belong to the "real people" (as opposed to the satirically hyper-real) realm of the play. Robert, a convicted and incarcerated teen shooter who looks one part baby-faced and two parts ex-convict, functions often as a silent spectator of the play's events, absorbing these events into (and summoning them up from) his own tortured consciousness. In Robert's monologues we sense an emotional intensity on behalf of the play that is absent nearly everywhere else, and so we cling to him.

We cling similarly to Jasper



Rappers Grab They Apples: From left, Warth, Geohagan, Clarke, Fisk, and Hynek in *The Why*'s play-within-the-play.

Patterson when he plays a "ticking time bomb" opposite Marisa Vural's reporter. Though this encounter is a bit clunky in its suggestion of the seductive and impure interest of the media in "violent teens," it is nonetheless given a certain power by excellent performances on the parts of both actors.

Here the juxtaposition of the play's "hyper-real" and "real" worlds was (as it wasn't in many other points) greatly successful. Patterson is liberated, albeit far too briefly, from the limited one-dimensionality of his TV Anchor alter ego, and shows a good deal of talent as a dramatic actor. Vural, as it were, plays the

reporter's one-dimensionality to near-perfect absurdity, provocatively straddling Patterson while "interviewing" him in the voice of a phone sex operator.

Technically speaking, Bard's production of *The Why* was impressive in and of itself. Covering the stage floor was a yellow triangle done up in the style of "Children Crossing" road signs. The twist here is that the sign's two figures hold an assault rifle and a bomb. There was also a hanging hive of televisions, an ominous presence above the play, as well as the interesting choice to limit the play's scenery to moveable lunch tables, playing cleverly with the idea of cafeteria-as-center of gravity for much of high school tensions.

Clever is a good word for *The Why*, then, as it gave the audience evidence of the presiding intelligence and degree of complexity at work behind. To call it ultimately unsatisfying is a good description too, however, as cleverness, in this case at least, can only take us so far.

Blockbusters cont.

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name was recently removed from the Director's Guild of America's lifetime achievement award, a move which Steven Spielberg spoke out in favor of; meanwhile, Spielberg got up and cheered for Elia Kazan at the Oscars, urging people to admire his art and forget his politics. Go figure.) Armond White, film critic for the New York Press, was, perhaps, correct to call *Ghost Dog* "The Green Mile for hipsters." Like *Mile*, *Dog* presents a noble, gifted African American male who is, essentially, a slave to white society and who, in the end, martyrs himself, as though he were Christ, to show others "the way." This view of American race relations seems overly naive and over simplified. But White was wrong to dismiss the movie altogether for its political shortcomings and then praise *Black and White* just a few weeks later. That film spends time concentrating on the way white society has become fascinated with black culture (in a more simplified way, so does *Bring it On*, a movie that would be simple T&A if not for its aspiration to make a serious comment on teenage race relations), and it correctly shows the difference between snotty rich whites and the urban blacks they adore: the whites can pull out of "the lifestyle" any time they want, while the African Americans are stuck there. But *Black and White* looks as though it were shot by a blind man; there isn't anything to say for the film's lack of visual creativity. White attempted to compare the film's aesthetic style to that of the French New Wave, but Godard and Truffaut would never allow their film to look so bland.

Furthermore, anyone who knows the private school scene that Toback portrays in his movie



Almost Famous: Jason Lee knows how false his depiction rings. The ideas are correct, but he goes over the top, past Moliere-esque satire and deep into ridiculousness. The last image, of 30 something Brooke Shields inexplicably making out with teenage Elijah Wood, who has been the subject of her character's documentary on white fascination with hip-hop culture, gets a chuckle from the audience, it's so silly. Toback, one must remember, is so delusional that in his last film, *Two Girls and a Guy*, two cuckolded women react to the betrayal of their mutual boyfriend by braiding each other's hair.

The real Godardian here is Jim Jarmusch. *Ghost Dog* finds beauty in simplicity. A dull colored shot of a pigeon takes on deep metaphoric meaning; characters watch violent, black and white cartoons as a commentary on violence and, especially, racial conflict. In the end, *Ghost Dog* seems not so much naive as optimistic; and for that, it is unfairly dismissed. Toback's film, as White suggested, may have initially scared audiences off with truths they wanted no part of, but it never gained the cult following of Jarmusch's film because, let's face it, from a film making point of view, it stinks. That audiences were able to recognize the difference between the two films is a blessing; that they continue to do so must be our mission.

...But She Plays One on TV

Renee Zellweger plays reality games in Neil LaBute's *Nurse Betty*

MARKUS KIRSCHNER

Nurse Betty is, on the surface, a movie about a woman in search of her dreams. Floating between reality and ideals, the movie presents itself as a warped view of American life, following the excursions of Betty Sizmore (Renée Zellweger), a Kansas diner waitress, to Los Angeles. Betty witnesses the gruesome and brutal killing of her white trash, car-dealing husband (Aaron Eckhart) by Charlie (Morgan Freeman) and Wesley (Chris Rock), and leaves her home in rural Kansas to go to Hollywood in search of the life she believes she has lead on her favorite television soap opera, "A Reason To Love."

The death of her husband triggers her dreams of meeting her "ex-fiance" who she sometimes believes is the soap opera character Dr. David Ravell played by the actor George McCord (Greg Kinnear). In a spiral of unexpected and sometimes jarring and startling actions, Betty ends up not only working as a nurse, but is offered a job on the soap opera to which she is devoted. The movie ends with a complete confusion of facts and realities and the perfectly executed script and direction (Neil LaBute) only highlight the impeccable acting talents of an incredible cast.

But through this cast of heavies ascends, on sparkling gossamer wings, a star: Renée Zellweger. She knows who she is, she is relentless in pursuit of her character and even through her sometimes completely delusional state, Zellweger still comes across as charming and more importantly, as a movie star. Zellweger is illuminated in the movie so well at times that she seems to glow, glisten even, and in the final scenes she wears a bright pink t-shirt with a star over her chest, merely to remind us of the transformation that transpires between our seats and the screen.

Zellweger's moliminous por-

trayal of Betty is at every moment full and concerned. Like all successful American artists, Betty becomes a persona, a character if you will, created by herself and ~~though extreme work and determination~~ (which in the end leads to her delusion) she is a success and gets everything she wants. Like the "doctor" she chases, Betty becomes an ideal in the Platonic sense; she is represented in the material world, but what one arrives at is a better understanding of what her image, her "being" even, represents. Zellweger, the actress, becomes something much more than an actress-she is the ideal of the movie celebrity-she is the star who is gazed at on the screen by her friends back home, she is the hand prints and autograph outside the Chinese Theatre.

Nurse Betty plays with the concepts surrounding Platonic ideals, not merely in questioning their existence, but by suggesting that they lie not only in philosophical thought, but in the minds of "average" Americans. The search for the material incarnations of ideals is depicted through the actions of the characters of both Freeman and Zellweger. Charlie idolizes Betty as an incarnation of something lost, a bygone time which is represented in life by a young, widowed housewife/waitress from Kansas who is brought to his attention by a newspaper article: an example based in print, not in reality. Likewise Betty falls deeply in love with the image of the doctor on her favorite soap opera. She doesn't fall in love with the actor who plays him, but rather the picture of him on her television screen. For both characters the obsession lies in the dream of an ideal.

What is most striking, though, are the thematic concerns of the dialogue of ideals and their manifestations in "real" life. Betty comes across as a completely delusional and somewhat schizophrenic

woman. Freeman's character is depicted as a dreamer and wanderer. Both characters carry with them very poor connotations in the American landscape of personalities. They are, in appearance, a crazy woman and a nomad living in realms which do not exist for their peers. The only time "reality" is represented in the film is at the appearance of weapons. It is here where the imaginary can no longer exist; at moments of questions of life or death. The weapons are always held and brandished for significant amounts of time before they are used and it is through this tangibility that the director makes his point-this touching and feeling of the image, the object and the feeling it portrays or has been given connotation to is what allows the viewer to feel to feel. To say that without the mass of the reel, we could not watch the film is to say that without the material there is no ideal. These ideals can be felt in the realm they exist, only if they are felt first tangibly and corporeally, even if it does brand you a nomad or crazy person. To feel corporeally is to feel emotionally.

As the credits of the movie rolled and Renée (or her movie star ideal realized) disappeared behind the fog and the old standard, *Que sera sera*, resounded through the theater. This song of unquestionable Destiny only showcases the need for brands and images and advertising in our society. It can be said, that as a final note, LaBute has used this song to remind us that even if we aren't as successful as Betty. It is all planned anyway.

I love ideals. I love brands. I love feeling. I love knowing that what I attempt in reality is really just an extension of my ideals. And as I Star gaze in the Autumn of the Hudson Valley, the sky becomes more and more lucid and sometimes I see things, I think might actually not exist.

Czech-Mate: IMF Protesters Represent in Prague

Bard student documents the struggle to give the third world a voice



These two protestors throw cobblestones dismantled from the sidewalks.



A line of police and a water cannon come down a street to backup their forces already present.

WORDS AND IMAGES BY ALI TONAK, FOR THE INDEPENDENT MEDIA CENTER

September 26th was not just another day in the lives of the habitants of Prague. Thousands of protestors across Europe (and a few from other continents) traveled to Prague to protest the unjust economic policies of the IMF and The World Bank. While some protestors chose to march peacefully and work their way toward the conference building where the meetings were taking place, a group of militant anarchists chose to combat the police from the first minute onward.

The Independent Media Center is a non-profit, grassroots organization formed by media activists from around the world. It operates by establishing offices in cities where political actions are happening and activists are receiving bad press from corporate media.

The Independent Media Center was present at Prague covering the protests. The IMC came out with three issues of Kontrast; a daily newspaper in Czech and English aimed at informing Czech citizens about the aim of the protests and the views of the protestors. The Independent Media Center website got an average of a million hits a day during the protests in Prague.

For more information:

IMC Praha <http://praha.indymedia.org>

IMC <http://www.indymedia.org>

Due to space constraints, the photos printed had to be cropped. Ali Tonak will be doing a presentation after reading week on his trip to Prague and his experiences working with the Independent Media Center.

thebardfreepress.vol2.issue3



Protestors rush to build barricades to use while combating the police after confronting them for more than three hours.



Leftover cobblestones mark the streets of Prague.