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Aristide Ousted by US-Backed Coup d'etat *confused spectators watch and wait*

by katie jacoby

It is Sunday, Aristide has departed from Haiti. Googled news sources make no mention of his resignation, or rather his escape from certain death. The Australian is reporting that Haitian leader Jean Bertrand Aristide was forcibly taken away from his home by US soldiers. "Aristide was not happy. He did not want to be taken away. He did not want to leave. He was not able to fight against the Americans." Flashback to Venezuela: President Chavez, forcibly removed from his palace in 2002. He denied his resignation despite the military and economic interests that threatened him with death and political sabotage. The visual records of the attempted coup in the documentary, *The Revolution Will Not be Televised*, proves how confusing it was for any reporting to be entirely accurate on the matter. This startling film plainly shows the events of the coup were distorted and manipulated in the media owned by the same individuals that led the coup. It took an actual film documentary to illustrate that most media outlets will distort and manipulate the truth for no reason other than to prevent the dangerous qualities that rise from the pursuit of truth. Few questions have been raised

by the media concerning the rebels surprisingly advanced automatic weapons (US-made M-16s), the mere legitimacy of their aims, or their ability to arrest any and all likely supporters of Aristide. NY Times Friday the 27th illustrates a man handcuffed with head bleeding, insisting he is apolitical, "I'm just a worker." Let's set the facts straight: We have just witnessed a Military Coup (clearly CIA/US backed) during which the press and our president have continued to insist they have no relation to the opposition.

The New York Times has arguably given ample coverage to the political crisis. But the amount of coverage is not in question. Why has the media been so reluctant to mention that past US policies are closely linked to the economic and human disaster in Haiti? Their extremely biased reporting is supplemented by a multitude of commentaries

from the opposition to Jean-Bertrand Aristide. Such is the tactic of "spinning" news. These rebel soldiers take on a victorious aura

characters as Guy Philippe and Louis Jodel Camblain are consistently described by the NY Times as "leaders of rebel troops intend-

wrought with political instability. Thirty-two military dictatorships bring to bear the question of how to establish and guarantee democratic traditions in such desperate conditions. This year will be Haiti's 200th year of Independence, having delivered itself from the noose of colonialism by 1804, when 400,000 enslaved African Americans rose up against French rule and achieved the world's first successful revolution of enslaved peoples. Despite their victory, the United States began its role in isolating and besieging Haiti, leading a worldwide boycott refusing to recognize Haiti as a new nation. This continued until 1864 affirming that Haiti's freedom posed a threat, in the form of a demonstrative example, to our own system of slavery.

Not surprisingly US formal foreign policy and interest in Haiti has been inconsistent in the past ten years. Though our rhetoric over democracy and liberty for all



Aristide himself at the podium

as international papers describe their consolidating grip on larger and larger Haitian cities. Such

ing to liberate the Haitian people from the Aristide Regime."

Haiti's history has been

continued on page 7...

The Pentagon Predicts Global Warming *possible ice age and "die-back"*

by brendan murray-nellis

A report published by the Pentagon in October 2003, and addressed to George W. Bush, presented national security issues concerning the predictions of dramatic global climate change. Based off of several scientific studies, the report gives national security recommendations for the U.S. in the event of an abrupt and severe climate change scenario. Although the predictions of global warming do not entirely suggest a drastic shift, there is evidence that such events have been sudden and unexpected. The Pentagon report predicts that some such event may happen around the year 2010.

This event, known as Thermohaline Circulation Collapse, would be a shift in ocean patterns particularly those in the Atlantic caused by the melting of ice in polar regions—effectively ending the warming effects of the Gulf Stream in North America and Western Europe. The reported effects of this shift will involve Siberian conditions in Europe and the Northeastern United States. These cooling effects will be accompanied by severe drought in the Midwest, Africa and Asia, causing famine and starvation in much of the already overpopulated world.

The report also predicts

a violent response by most populations in the world as they will demand food, water and energy resources. The Pentagon suggests that the military prepare for such confrontations and to expect a massive "die-back" as the carrying capacity of the earth drops. The report also suggests that the United States and Australia should build defensive fortresses around their countries in order to prevent attack from countries with lower carrying capacities and from populations of refugees who have been forced from their flooded or dry lands.

Although these predictions seem completely unfathom-

able the Pentagon Report reads: "Ocean, land, and atmosphere scientists at some of the world's most prestigious organizations have uncovered new evidence over the past decade suggesting that the plausibility of severe and rapid climate change is higher than most of the scientific community and perhaps all of the political community is prepared for." For those who don't even think this article is serious you can download the entire report for yourself by going to <http://www.greenpeace.org>.

The predictions on the effects of this shift are more closely studied in the northern hemisphere and they seem more

severe than the rest of the world. But in the southern hemisphere, little research has been done and the possible implications are unknown. The effects of the disruption in the Gulf Stream alone would disrupt weather patterns and agriculture patterns forcing an extreme shift in human activity for mere survival. Be prepared for a catastrophic event in 2010: you have six years to prepare for the most dramatic event in human history, or, so says the pentagon. For more info go to: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/climatechange/story/0,12374,1153530,00.html>

Newbriefs by the bite

compiled by: tosh chiang

Finland to Cut Alcohol Prices by 40%. Hundreds of trucks prepared to roll onto frozen roads at midnight Sunday, stocked with beer and hard cider for a population that eagerly awaits a historic government measure that will cut alcohol prices by nearly 40 percent.

http://story.news.yahoo.com/news?tmpl=story&cid=816&ncid=816&e=4&u=/ap/20040228/ap_on_re_eu/finland_cheaper_alcohol

The Pentagon announced Friday that it will issue a Global War on Terror-

ism Medal for troops who have served in Iraq, Afghanistan, and other combat zones as well as those who performed support duty, such as guarding domestic airports after the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks.

http://www.boston.com/news/nation/articles/2004/02/29/medal_for_fighting_terrorism_offered/

A row has erupted in Australia over a police ban on a traditional Aboriginal dance featuring topless women. Aborigines are furious that police told dancers from the

news thats fit to print

remote community of Papunya to stop practicing in a public park in the city of Alice Springs. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asiapacific/3493408.stm>

Millions join anti-China protest in Taiwan. More than 2.5 million people joined hands to form a 500-kilometre (310-mile) human chain stretching the length of Taiwan in a huge anti-China protest, ahead of the island's presidential elections next month, according to organizers. The high turnout for the government-backed protest highlighting

the threat posed to the island from Chinese missiles was likely to boost the re-election chances of President Chen Shui-bian, analysts said.

http://www.channelnewsasia.com/stories/aip_asiapacific/view/73144/1.html

Push buttons at most NYC crosswalks haven't worked for decades. The city deactivated the vast majority of the pedestrian buttons long ago with the emergence of computer-controlled traffic signals, even as an unwitting public con-

tinued to push on, according to city Department of Transportation officials. More than 2,700 of the 3,250 pedestrian walk buttons that still exist function essentially as mechanical placebos, city figures show. Any benefit from them is only imagined.

<http://www.chron.com/cs/CDA/ssistory.mpl/nation/2424233>

Israeli Army Kills Four Palestinians Who Challenged Apartheid Wall.

26 February: Four anti-wall protesters were killed by the Israeli

continued on next page...

Military Draft May Become Active

by amy friedell

The Senate and Congress have recently seen bills for The Universal National Service Act of 2003, "To provide for the common defense by requiring that all young persons in the United States, including women, perform a period of military service or a period of civilian service in furtherance of the national defense and homeland security, and for other purposes."

I don't wanna get drafted. If I don't hurry up and write this article, I'm gonna get drafted.

The draft is coming. possibly next summer. girls are included. school is not an excuse. canada is not an escape.

a draft is considered essential for staffing of a continued war on terrorism and maintaining . the selected service system got \$28 million added to their budget.

I read something in one of these articles about how it's set up to start right after a Bush-reelection. So make sure you don't vote for Bush.and then ... we protest? no draft no draft no draft - an underclassmen, they say, could only finish out the semester, and a college senior would have to enlist at the end of the academic year. It's what you'll do with your college education, mandatory service.

The Selective Service System has been given \$28 million they say that if the war on terrorism is to continue ... there'll have to be a draft... draft could go into effect as soon as June, 15 2005 (according to Vancouver Indymedia). No good.



Gay Marriage Down the River!

by: brendan murray-nellis

Local news made international headlines on Friday when gay marriages were issued in New Paltz. The mayor of New Paltz, Jason West, who won as a Green Party candidate, issued same sex marriages all Friday afternoon, after receiving over 100 requests to do so. The legal status of the marriages are questionable as the town clerk has refused to issue same sex marriage licenses. State officials as well have warned Jason West that he is violating the law. However, Mr. West has issued certificates, not licenses. Nevertheless, there are currently two places to get gay marriages: San Francisco and New Paltz New York!

In July 2000 Vermont

began awarding statewide civil unions. In November of last year. Massachusetts ruled it unconstitutional to bar gay marriages while Canada nationally legalized gay marriages. Although, the state of Mass. will not issue them until May. In February, mayor Newsom of San Francisco began issuing licenses without statewide recognition. And this past Friday, the mayor of New Paltz has followed the example. Gay marriage is spreading rapidly and the opposition seems weak-- even with George W. Bush on their side. In New Paltz for example there was only a dozen or so protesters of gay marriage and hundreds of supporters and swarms of journalists. The New Paltz marriages

made national news on CNN, NBC, the Washington Post and also hit international headlines. New Paltz liquor stores have signs reading "Free Champagne for Newly-weds" and large signs on the rear windows of cars gave directions to the courthouse.

The Poughkeepsie journal reports Helen Westover, a leader of Stop Planned Parenthood, a Poughkeepsie-based organization, as saying, 'I think what's not being considered, morality aside, is the law of unintended consequences, are polygamists next? If you open marriage beyond a man and a woman, can I marry my cockatiel? There are reasons why Judeo-Christian societies, and other societies, have

had these laws for thousands of years. The North American Man-Boy Love Association has been talking for years about lowering the age of consent. Is that next?" What same sex marriage has to do with lowering the age of consent is uncertain but New Paltz has new many happy new newly-weds.

the mayor of new paltz is issuing same-sex marriage certificates



young mayor west

The Grey Album v.s. EMI

by tosh chiang

The Grey Album, a remix-combo of Jay-Z's vocals from "the black album" and the beatles' "the white album," has gotten into hot water over copyright laws. A recent agreement between EMI records and producer/creator DJ Danger Mouse has resulted in the halting of distribution. EMI sent all online distributors cease and desist letters on the 24th. Nevertheless, February 25th became

known as Grey Tuesday, when 300 websites and blogs staged a 24 hour protest by loading the album for free download onto their websites. Reportedly, 1000's of copies of the album were successfully downloaded.

It's unclear as to how the copyright laws will work out since they've never been properly revamped for the digital age. EMI cannot claim protection under a

album composed of beatle's samples under copyright scrutiny

federal copyright law since that law only protects recordings made before 1972; the white album was produced in 1968. This therefore means that the Grey Tuesday protestors may also be unprotected by "fair use"—which only protects creations under the encompassing federal law. On top of all this, there may be 4 to 5 rights holders involved in the case: EMI, SonyMusic/ATV Publishing (a

Michael Jackson and Sony partnership which licenses songs for commercials), the owners to the rights of "the black album," and DJ Danger Mouse. EMI's main defense is that they de facto own the rights to the music if it involves a monetary profit from distribution.

Nonetheless, this case simply shows that the current copyright laws are unclear when it

comes to sampling. Are new products of creativity to be restricted if they contain ingredients from other albums? With any luck, the laws will be revised so as to ensure digital creativity, so that fiasco's such as this no longer occur. For more info on copyright laws, goto eff.org. For more info on EMI, download "EMI" by the sex pistols.

March for the Right to Abortion

by bonnie ruberg

To demonstrate overwhelming majority support for a woman's right to choose safe, legal abortion and birth control, the largest pro-choice majority in history will march on Washington on Sunday April 25, 2004. - Mission Statement of "March

for Women's Lives" On Sunday, April 25th, seven of the nation's leading women's rights groups will come together to make a stand on global issues of abortion and family planning. These organizations, including American

Civil Liberties Union, Black Women's Health Imperative, Feminist Majority, NARAL Pro-Choice America, National Latina Institute for Reproductive Health, National Organization for Women and Planned Parenthood Federation of America, along with

countless co-sponsors, have collaborated to organize this momentous march.

At noon the march will begin on the National Mall. After the march on Washington, from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m. there will be a rally, also held on

the National Mall. To sign up for the "March for Women's Lives," visit www.marchforwomen.org and support a woman's right to chose.

newsbites continued from page 1 Army where soldiers opened fire on demonstrators in Biddu. Zacharia Mahmoud Eid, 26, from Beit Iksa and Mohamed Rayan, 26, from Beit Diggo, were killed by live ammunition. Mohamed Saleh Bedwan, 20, was shot in the head by a "rubber" bullet [the Israeli army often uses rubber-coated metal bullets]. Abu Nabil Abu Eid died from a heart attack, provoked by an excessive amount of tear gas. Others have been shot, wounded or arrested.

http://www.indybay.org/archives/archive_by_id.php?id=1843&category_id=12

Pfizer to end tests of Viagra for women. Pfizer Inc. is ending research on whether the anti-impotency drug Viagra can be used treat female sexual problems because studies on women were inconclusive, the company said. <http://www.cnn.com/2004/HEALTH/02/28/viagra.women.ap/index.html>

Euro vote stays on hold as Britain fails 3% borrowing test. The fading prospects of a referendum on the single currency in this parliament were dealt a further blow yesterday when it emerged that Britain would fail one of the five euro-zone entry tests. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/euro/story/0,11306,1158286,00.html>

President Mugabe of Zimbabwe runs secret camps to train killers. The BBC says

it established the existence of the camps during covert filming in Zimbabwe, discovering thousands of youngsters each year being trained to kill in the name of the ruling Zanu-PF party. <http://news.independent.co.uk/world/africa/story.jsp?story=496234>

US may hold cleared detainees. Pentagon officials have confirmed that Guantanamo detainees may still be kept in detention, even if they are found

not guilty by a military tribunal. They say detainees could be kept prisoner if they are considered a security risk. If found guilty, they could also be held beyond any sentence laid down by the tribunal. The Pentagon this week laid the first charges against two foreign detainees held in Guantanamo Bay. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/3487958.stm>

US looks for missing continued on next page...

Bush in Space

by **liv carrow**

George W. Bush recently announced that he plans to increase NASA's budget by \$1 billion with the goal of establishing a moon colony by 2020. Bush predicts that American astronauts can then launch missions to Mars, with a projected arrival of 2030. He said in a speech at NASA headquarters on January 14th that "it is time for America to take the next steps" toward space exploration.

"The exploration of space has led to advances in weather forecasting, in communications, in computing, search and rescue technology, robotics, and electronics. Our investment in space exploration helped to create our satellite telecommunications network and the Global Positioning System. Medical technologies that help prolong life -- such as the imaging processing used in CAT scanners and MRI machines -- trace their origins to technology engineered for the use in space," Bush stated.

His plan includes a three-tiered approach. First, Bush wants to complete construction of an International Space Station with fifteen other nations by 2010. He

wants to return a space shuttle to flight while simultaneously developing a new Crew Exploration Vehicle, all by 2008. He projects having a lunar landing by 2020, from which point Americans can launch missions to Mars.

This program has come under attack from all sides. The most common refrain is, "With the largest national debt in American history, where will the space program get funds?". Bush claims that the NASA five-year budget of \$86 billion will remain only 1% of the national budget.

According to Space.com, a poll by the Associated Press shows that 48% of Americans support the continuation of the space program, but in a different question, 55% said they would prefer increased spending on domestic issues.

One organization seems to have a solution. LunarRepublic.com has been selling plots of moon land to private parties, claiming that when humans do populate the moon, lunar landowners will be able to shape the way the moon colony is run and will prevent taxpayers from funding moon exploration.

going where no monkey has gone before: spaceballs II

The lunar land purchase is much like the sponsorship of a whale or destitute foreign child; customers receive a photograph of their moon plot and a packet describing the topography of their land.

TheSpaceReview.com's Taylor Dinerman offers this chillingly nationalistic justification for further space colonization: "Without such a visionary program it is hard to imagine the US staying at the top of the geopolitical food chain for the next hundred years or more. As the world's leading power the US must, by its example, show the way to a free and prosperous future for all the peoples of the Earth. At this moment in history America is the only nation with the will and the resources to expand humanity's home environment."

All this talk of budget and expenditure, coupled with tidbits about American

superiority and pioneer spirit, leaves out an important question: What implications will the Bush

gave no indication of use of the moon in a military capacity. It seems as of yet that the prospect of a moon colony is still too remote and expensive to be concerned with, but the utter absence of any concern for the future neutrality and safety of space should perhaps not be overlooked.

"Mankind is drawn to the heavens for the same reason we were once drawn into unknown lands and across the open sea. We choose to explore space because doing so improves our lives, and lifts our national spirit. So let us continue the journey," Bush concluded in his speech. If space exploration is Bush's new platform for lifting the national spirit, let us hope it does not contain the same hidden aggression as so many of his other attempts.

for more information on the militarization of space,

visit space4peace.org



space exploration program have with regards to world security, weapons and nuclear arms? Bush

You Might Not Have Fencing to Kick Around

by **bonnie ruberg**

On Saturday, February 14th, in celebrating the traditional Valentine's Day spirit, the Bard fencing team went to Vassar for a day of poking other people with swords. Represented at the Vassar tournament by fifteen of the approximately twenty-five fencers on campus, Bard went up against schools like West Point - varsity teams who are sometimes just down right scary. As of the spring semester of 2004, fencing is still an intramural sport at Bard, though fencers are finding it might again be time to reclaim their

old varsity status. Bard fencing became intramural a few years ago when membership numbers sunk too low to maintain a varsity team. However, now, with potentially full squads of students on foil, epee and saber (the three different fencing weapons) the team has been hoping for a little more respect. Often pushed out of practice times or gym space by varsity sports, such as women's basketball, the fencers are grumbling for their fair share. Indeed, the team shows a good deal of promise for the upcoming

years. The coach of the fencing team, Trefor Evans, is currently a junior and will continue coaching next year. Many, if not a majority, of the twenty-five Bard fencers are freshmen - new blood that'll be around until 2007.

Even as a club put up against varsity teams, Bard left with multiple victories from the Vassar tournament, including an amazing domination in epee.

The test, however, will be how this club sport can hold up if it makes the switch to varsity. Under the new pressures and demands,

how many of its members will continue to show dedication? As Bard fencing tests the waters with a thickening schedule of meets and tournaments, the numbers are indeed thinning out. Yet many are still involved, and excited, for the future of fencing at Bard. Come by and check out the team - the aspiring athletics of sword-fighting.



Tibetan Monks To Visit Bard

source: **Bard Press Office**

Seven Tibetan Buddhist monks from the Tashi Lhunpo Monastery in south India will give a sacred cham performance at Bard College's Olin Hall on Wednesday, March 10, at 7:00 p.m. The event is free and open to the public; however, a donation of \$5 (to go toward running the monastery in exile) is requested. The monks will also take part in a free panel discussion, "Tibet: The Issues," prior to the performance at 5:00 p.m. in Manor Lounge.

The cham performance features sacred masked dances,

music, and healing chants by monks attired in richly ornamented, multicolored costumes.

With accompanying narration as well as a monastic debate demonstration, this event will provide a fascinating glimpse into Tibetan culture and heritage. In the panel discussion the monks will discuss the Panchen Lama (considered the second most important religious leader after the Dalai Lama), and Bard faculty members will speak about the history of Tibet, China relations, and free-Tibet activism

in the west.

The Tashi Lhunpo monks are on a world tour to raise awareness of the plight of the Panchen Lama, display the rich heritage of the Tibetan religion, and help raise funds to run their monastery in exile in India.

Their CD, Tashi Lhunpo Monastery: Sacred Instrumental Music (with all proceeds to support their monastery) will be released on March 10 and is available from their website, www.tashilhunpo.org, or amazon.com.

"This performance marks the 45th anniversary of the Tibetan

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/3519323.stm>

Students in Manila protest closed source software. The University of Philippines Linux Users Group (UNPLUG) declared open source software a step towards "a participatory and sustainable environment that utterly destroys the imperialist authority of Bill Gates among the academic community and the Philippines as a whole."

sacred dance and discussion panel

National Uprising Day," says Tenzin Lama, a second-year student at Bard who is also the founder of the Students for a Free Tibet (SFT) chapter at the college. She says SFT, a chapter-based network of young people and activists around the world, works in solidarity with the Tibetan people in their struggle for freedom and independence. Through education, grassroots organizing, and nonviolent action, SFT campaigns for Tibetans' fundamental right to political freedom, according to Lama, who founded the chapter at Bard in October 2003.

The event is sponsored by Students for a Free Tibet and supported by the Asian Studies Program, the College chaplaincy, the Religion Program, Trustee Leader Scholar Program, Office of Student Activities, International Student Organization, and the Office of Residential Life at Bard College.

For further information, call 845-758-6822 or e-mail t1659@bard.edu.

tanker crew. A search is continuing for 18 crew members missing after a tanker blew up off the US East Coast. At least three people died when the Bow Mariner, carrying industrial ethanol, exploded 80km (50 miles) off the Virginia coast on Saturday evening.

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/3519321.stm>

G15 leaders end Venezuela summit. The group

of developing nations, known as the G15, has ended a summit in the Venezuelan capital, Caracas. Leaders and delegates from four continents, made a joint pledge to fight poverty by sharing expertise in the field of energy. But the gathering was marred by violent clashes between troops and opponents of the Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez. Mr. Chavez warned of a government crackdown in the event of further unrest in the country.

<http://manila.indymedia.org/index.php?action=default&featureview=39>

British intelligence gave Blair 'snippets of Chirac's private conversations'. "Chirac, these reports said, had decided that Blair had usurped his own position as the natural leader of Europe. It was time for the French President to reassert himself and clip the wings of perfidious Albion. In other words, this feud was personal as well as

political." <http://news.independent.co.uk/uk/politics/story.jsp?story=495996>

Senator Kerry and President Bush are Cousins. Senator John Forbes Kerry and President George Walker Bush share many ancestors according to the president of Millisecond Publishing Company, Inc., Bruce Harrison, which makes them cousins. <http://www.prweb.com/releases/2004/1/prweb101610.htm>

Servicemaster Employees Rally Against Aramark

by emily price

On Thursday, February 19th, Servicemaster employees and Bard students marched across campus together in protest of the unfair labor practices of both the College and Aramark Corporation, the company that bought out Servicemaster in 2001. Outfitted with drums, petitions, colorful signs, and cheers, the group rallied in front of Kline, Ludlow, the Campus Center, and Olin before reaching its final destination—the Aramark office on campus, overseen by Jean Butin. "What do you want? Living wage!" cried over 30 students and staff members, demanding that Bard address the financial hardship suffered by these important members of our community.



Servicemaster is Bard's housekeeping staff, a group of 35 employees that clean 70 buildings daily on our campus. Servicemaster employ-

ees earn \$9.30, a base pay that has remained that same for past ten years—ten years in which Bard has grown tremendously with respect to both the student

body and the number of buildings and facilities maintained by the College, and ten years in which the cost of living for the average family in the Hudson Valley has

skyrocketed.

Prior to 1991, Bard directly employed its housekeeping staff, and at that time workers had equal benefits and wage increases

as all other employees of the college. The college then decided that managing a housekeeping staff, in addition to the many other managerial roles that the admin-

istration plays, was too large of an organizational undertaking, contracting out the labor to Servicemaster, a company that could run it for them. From the workers' perspective, Bard sold them out. Nine employees stopped working for the college at the time of the switch, about six of them taking an early retirement, while the rest were let go. The workers who stayed, many of them who had been at the college now

for more than 15 years, were then sold out a second time in 2001 when Aramark bought Servicemaster.

The Aramark Corporation's record of socially responsible action and fair treatment is negligible. Aramark ranks as the one of the nation's worst corporations with respect to discrimination against gays in the workplace. The question is, why does Bard choose to bring a corporation (one whose practices go against Bard's Fair Labor Code) into a small community such as ours when that money could go toward a different type of management, one more beneficial for the college?

The Aramark Corporation has not only been cheating its workers, but students and supporters of the college as well. Each year Bard pays Aramark a 4% wage increase intended to go to workers, a pay-raise that none of the employees have ever seen. Joan Wyant, a Servicemaster employee and organizer within the group, estimates that Aramark has pocketed over a million of Bard's dollars, a million dollars worth of stolen paychecks. "I'd like to know where my cut of the money went," says Sue Lapierre, "I earned it." Sue has done extensive research on the issue and is currently in the process of taking legal action to reclaim workers' rights to fair pay and fair representation. "We have union," she continues, "Why

continued on next page...

The Biodiesel Solution

by jacob gordon

how biodiesel can help us all

What is Biodiesel?

Most people don't realize that the first diesel engines were built to run on vegetable oil, and that in fact they still can. Biodiesel is vegetable oil that has been mixed with alcohol and a catalyst to produce methyl esters, a simple process which lowers the viscosity of the oil, making it suitable for use in any diesel vehicle without engine modification. Biodiesel can be made from either virgin oil pressed from plants or from recycled oil like that used in restaurants for deep frying. Either way, biodiesel is significantly cleaner to burn than petroleum diesel, and is domestically produced.

Biodiesel is a common fact of life in Europe and is just now beginning to catch on in the US, where it is being made on both very large and very small scales. Domestically, biodiesel can be purchased from various major oil companies and from small local cooperatives that are springing up around the country.

How Much Cleaner?

"In 2000, biodiesel became the only alternative fuel in the country to have successfully completed the EPA-required Tier I and Tier II health effects testing under the Clean Air Act. These indepen-

dent test conclusively demonstrated biodiesel's significant reduction of virtually all regulated emissions, and proved that biodiesel does not pose a threat to human health.

The use of biodiesel elimi-



nates sulfur emissions and aromatics, with much lower levels of unburned hydrocarbons, carbon monoxide, and smog causing particulate matter. Biodiesel is also part of a "closed carbon cycle," meaning that the carbon dioxide released when biodiesel is burned is composed only of materials recently absorbed by the plant from which the fuel was made. This differs dramatically from petroleum fossil fuels that are derived from carbon matter trapped underground. It is the release of this trapped carbon that is widely believed to be the major cause of global warming.

A Domestic Product

Biodiesel, whether made from recycled oil or from virgin seed crops, is a domestic product that benefits local economies and farmers while producing a safe and clean product. The production of fuel domestically can also decrease our dependence on foreign oil, a major contributor to global conflict. And since biodiesel can be made on the "micro-brew" level by local communities, people are

able to be more independent from the virtually corporate monopolized fuel industry.

Who is Using Biodiesel?

Biodiesel is becoming increasingly popular as an alternative fuel either blended with petroleum diesel or used alone. It is especially popular for use in school busses, as the exhaust fumes are much safer and contain far fewer mutagenic agents than conventional diesel. School districts in Illinois and Colorado are using biodiesel in their busses, as is the municipal vehicle fleet of Berkeley California. The Lollapalooza and Horde music tours, as well as Neil Young's tour,

are using biodiesel both in their trucks and in diesel generators, and many colleges and universities such as Bard and Harvard have started using biodiesel for buildings & grounds vehicles and other campus transportation. Specifically, Bard uses a 20% blend in a small number of B&G vehicles.

Also, military bases across the country currently use biodiesel, and perhaps most notably, the largest consumer of diesel fuel in the world, the US Navy, has begun making biodiesel from waste vegetable oil at the Ventura Country Naval Base, in Hueneme California. Biodiesel is also used by a growing number of individuals in their diesel cars, trucks, busses, and tractors who want to burn a cleaner, safer fuel. They either make the fuel themselves, participate in a cooperative, or buy it at commercial biodiesel filling stations and pumps.

Other Uses

While diesel cars are more common in Europe countries, a reasonable number of diesel vehicles are on the roads in the US. Mercedes-Benz has made diesel cars for decades, and Volkswagen makes several of their vehicles with highly efficient, turbo charged diesels that get upwards of 50 miles per gallon. In addition to cars, biodiesel is interchangeable with No. 2 heating oil, and can be mixed in any proportion to heat homes and buildings. Biodiesel is also being used for producing electricity with generators and microturbines. In 2001, the University of California at Riverside piloted a 6 megawatt power backup system

running on 100% biodiesel, while Boston artisan bread company Iggy's Breads of the World uses biodiesel to fuel bread ovens as well as delivery trucks.

As the world begins to acknowledge the urgency of finding alternate sources of energy, biodiesel is emerging as a highly valuable resource with some notable advantages over other fuel technologies such as solar, hybrid, or hydrogen. For instance, since biodiesel returns to the original intended fuel of the diesel engine, it can be used in existing vehicles without any engine conversion. This is especially significant for poor regions that are in no position to implement solar or other more expensive, high-tech energy solutions--in fact, biodiesel can be significantly less expensive than petroleum fuel. Biodiesel also requires very low energy input over the whole cycle of production, unlike photovoltaic solar cells, which require very high initial energy input to manufacture.

Biodiesel provides appropriate technology for many situations, especially for institutions like colleges where waste vegetable oil is produced, fleets of vehicles are used, and there is sufficient space and personpower. Colleges are also often the trailblazers of new methods and technologies, diving in where others are timid. It is remarkable to consider that the oil a place like Bard pays others to take away could replace the fuel they buy to run vehicles and heat buildings (11,000 gallons a year in the shuttle alone). Solutions might be a lot simpler than they appear.

Taco Hell: yo no quiero

by owen thompson

This Friday, March 5th, thousands of farmworkers and their allies are taking their message of workers' rights and social justice to the people who need to hear it most: the corporate executives working at Taco Bell headquarters in Irvine, CA. The rally, organized by the Coalition of Immokalee Workers (CIW), marks the climax of the latter group's Taco Bell Truth Tour 2004, which has traversed the country by bus this last week. In attendance will be countless labor, religious, community and student organizations, as well as celebrities ranging from veteran farmworker activist Dolores Huerta to anti-corporate rocker Tom Morello (of Audioslave and formerly of Rage Against the Machine).

March 5th also brings the chance to participate in this campaign to denounce a greedy fast-food giant and force it to accept responsibility for the sweatshop conditions behind the tomatoes it uses. On this day, conscientious consumers around the country will raise their voices in unison with the tomato pickers represented by the CIW through local solidarity actions, such as the one taking place at all four Taco Bell locations in Manhattan. (More on that at the end of this article.)

To understand the origins of the Taco Bell boycott, one must have some sense of the corruption and exploitation that characterize the Florida tomato industry. It is these conditions which gave rise to the

CIW.

The Coalition of Immokalee Workers is a grassroots, community-oriented organization based in Immokalee, FL. Its members are mostly of Latino, Mayan, and Haitian origin. About 80 percent come from Mexico or Guatemala. The majority work here as pickers of tomatoes and oranges, as well as other citrus fruits. All the members (including the small, communally elected office staff) are workers that earn very low wages and live in despicable conditions, exploited by the large and powerful system of corporate agribusiness.

The Florida tomato industry is built on sweat. Its workers earn poverty wages, and are often cheated even out of what they've earned by pervasive wage fraud. Stealing from the workers' wages seems almost redundant, given that they have not seen a wage increase in two decades. They are exposed to pesticides daily without being told of the dangers involved. They face violent retaliation for demanding better conditions. Some pickers in Immokalee are charged as much for rent per square foot as residents of downtown Manhattan--only these rates pay for un-air-conditioned trailers with twelve residents, rather than for fashionable townhouses.

It is these conditions which produce the dirt-cheap tomatoes used in Taco Bell's burritos and chalupas, although the company would prefer you ignored

tomatoes and the effort to boycott taco bell

that fact. Despite its commitment to buying meat products only from "suppliers who maintain the very highest standards" of animal welfare, the company has no such resolution regarding suppliers who mistreat humans.

It is important to say something of the forces that bring so many immigrant workers to Immokalee and of why they are so easily mistreated. There are many reasons for the emigration of Mexicans and Central Americans to the United States, but the most prevalent is the desire to escape poverty and search for a better life for their families. This situation is no doubt exacerbated by free trade agreements like NAFTA, which coerce weak governments into forcing small farmers from the land they cultivate to survive, adding to Latin America's ever-growing landless peasantry. Every year, thousands of Latin Americans say goodbye to husbands and wives, their parents and their children, and come here hoping for better opportunities to make a living and support their families.

These people come here in search of dreams and find nothing but nightmares. Like generations of migrant workers before them, they are exploited, abused,

and in extreme cases trapped in situations of forced labor or forced prostitution--forms of modern-day slavery, flourishing in the wealthiest nation on Earth. The government of this country knows, without a doubt, that these situations exist;

a hand in the success of three of these cases, even sending a member into a slave camp undercover when the FBI refused to use their own agent.

Despite their cooperation with federal agencies, CIW has had difficulty in recruiting the aid of the state government; in 2001, hundreds of workers and allies marched 30 miles to the palace of the governor, Jeb Bush, to ask for the support he promised them when he was campaigning. Bush did not respond. Like most politicians in Florida, he appears to value his partnership with agribusiness over his responsibility to help a desperate people.

It is clear to the members of CIW that the necessary changes in the industry will not come from the government. But they know of other ways to bring about change: In the eight years since forming the Coalition, they have seen many goals accomplished, as they like to say, "del pueblo para el pueblo"--"by the people, for the people." With general strikes, with large marches (including

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in the last five years, five cases of "wage-debt bondage" (a.k.a. slavery) have been successfully prosecuted in federal court, all involving Florida agribusiness. As described in breath-taking detail by the New Yorker and National Geographic magazines, CIW had

What Happened to the BERD Guy?

Marty gave you that mug...

by spike horwitz

Although no definite reason has been made clear at this time, Marty Reisinger, director of Bard's Environmental Resources Department (BERD), "is no longer working here." This comes days after Reisinger was warned by administrators that he was "overstepping his boundaries" by merely suggesting that the to-be-built-when-Bard-

has-money New Old Gym should include eco-friendly designs that would not only be environmentally friendly but also cost effective for the school by cutting down the energy bill. While it appears Marty was attempting to do his job by promoting environmentalism and environmental enhancement on campus, it may have cost him his

position here, which has temporarily been filled by Laurie DeCiutiis, the original director of BERD who organized the department all the way back in 2000. However, before you go shouting out "CONSPIRACY! DAMN THE MAN!" other possibilities for Marty's termination are possible. While no administrative higher power was willing to comment specifically, certain BERD work study

employees have suggested that it was merely related to his common dedication to playing hooky. Another rumor running around the mill (is that an expression?) is that he smoked too much pot, but IS THAT SUCH A CRIME??? Oh... right. It actually is. What changes will be made at BERD are unclear currently. Work study students have reported that since the sudden regime change

many operations in the Department have been shifted from the Basement of the Brook House to B&G, which one student, who wished not to be identified, said was "weird." Students who have worked for Marty will miss his sense of sarcasm and serious dedication to sticking it to "The Man." He has worked to make Bard a greener, almost Hampshire-like campus,

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Aramark, Move Out tha' Way

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weren't they there reading every single line of the contracts with us? Where did this base pay come from? This is our union and they aren't working for us."

In a meeting with Leon Botstein and Jim Brudvig last week, several Servicemaster employees, joined by Gus Feldman of the on-campus group Student Labor Dialogue, discussed their difficulties and demands. Both



Jean Butin

Brudvig and Botstein acknowledged that Aramark was negligent in its treatment of workers, and that Aramark was an expensive and inefficient means to run Bard's housekeeping services. They are still not, however, in favor of a return to direct-employment by the college. Most likely, Bard's solution would be to find another subcontractor. The first concern of the administration is the

college itself, not the workers, and while they support Servicemaster employees in the fight to reclaim their lost pay from Aramark, the college is not willing to help make up the difference.

The Buildings and Grounds workers, all of whom are directly employed by the college, are very supportive of "bringing Servicemaster back into the family." They have shown solidarity with the campaign for a living wage, seeing no reason why their friends and allies in taking care of the college should suffer discrimination, creating a second class of labor on campus.

Another notable aspect of the situation is the loyalty and affection that both B+G workers and Servicemaster employees feel toward the student and faculty population. During a student labor dialogue meeting last week, a Bard student raised the idea of striking during graduation to demand that Bard to re-hire Servicemaster employees, to which many workers replied that they wouldn't feel comfortable betraying the students that way, saying that that was our "shining moment" and it wouldn't be fair to use that as a bargaining tool.

Servicemaster employ-

ees love Bard, they have been here for years; they have stayed with us even as they have been overworked and underpaid. It seems that this a crucial moment to secure an equal and acceptable standard of treatment for them on this campus, and students can act in solidarity by signing petitions, writing letters to the college, asking their parents to call the school, and attending Student Labor Dialogue meetings Thursday evenings at 6:30 p.m. in the SAC. We must thank Servicemaster for their tireless work and demand equal rights and equal pay in our community.

A response to "Sexism and the Playground"

I found Neumann's "Sexism and the Playground" both irritating and a blow to all that feminism attempts to achieve. My understanding of the article is that the author posed an initially unpopular opinion in class and, upon being disregarded by two men, was whipped into a victimized fury about her struggles with unwanted stares from men and the alleged immaturity of Bard's male students. This debatably innocuous incident, it seems, resulted in a half-page article on the woes of paying a large tuition in order to be confronted with students who do not respect her every whim of the ideal classroom. Her call for "adult behavior and decorum" demonstrates a clear dearth of experience with adults and a thinly disguised condescension towards first-year students. Of course, I am not supporting abrasive and condescending behavior between students, but it seems to me that calling this melodramatic moment a case of sexism is a waste of ink and space. The portrayal of Bard as an unfriendly, insensitive campus inhabited by sex-crazed, immature boys is inaccurate and (to use Neumann's own word) patronizing. While I concur with her that sexism affecting both genders is prevalent in nearly every facet of living, this is an unjustified and poorly considered example.

--Olivia Cumming

Sexual Repression Equals Alcohol Poisoning *are bardiens sex shy?*

by **bonnie ruberg**

A few weeks ago, sitting around a Kline table at dinner time, my friends and I were talking about putting Christmas lights in our dorms. "When you're setting up the strands," my boyfriend says, "you just have to make sure you've got your male and female ends matched up together." "Male and female?" my one friend asks, making little grimaces of disgust and disbelief. Everyone else at the table chimes in - "You can't call it

that!" "Yuck, what an awful thing to say!" "I mean, that's ridiculous, why can't you call it something less offensive?" "What," I ask, "like the penis and vagina plugs?" An awkward silence. "Two little penises, two little vaginas - it's like double

sex every time you plug in an electric tea pot." My friends do not think this is funny.

describing your fancies. "Oh," everyone pauses here, "SILK? Do you larp?" No, I do not larp. Yes, it is possible to still like kink. And not that BDSM is, or should be for everyone. Whatever your kink is - that's great, go wild! Or hell, it's fine even if it's just vanilla (normal) sex. Every once in a while, everyone's like's vanilla. But whatever it is, be hot for something, please. Because really, the reason people hate SILK isn't because they hate BDSM, or even larpers, it's that they hate it because its open, come-on-in, free-blow-job-workshop, learn-how-to-tie-some-one-up, how's-it-going-today, sexual openness.

Last semester my boyfriend and I, reveling in the beauty of Adobe Photoshop and getting,

perhaps, a little overzealous, hung SILK posters all over campus. One of them, tacked up on the billboard post between Kline and Hegemon, featured a sassy looking red-head in a black, leather dominatrix outfit, her well-rounded, perky little breasts exposed to promote SILK's weekly meetings. After a few days someone had put out a cigarette on each of her tits - burns like the censorship squares in PG-13 movies. A couple days later, walking to class, I noticed scrawled across the poster the poster: "Is this really all you're living for?" For sex? Well no, but whoever said we were? But even so, a little bit of ass is nice now and again, isn't it?

And then, of course, there's the most obvious of arguments: drag race. Drag race: the last of it's kind, though certainly something like it (under a new and perhaps less witty name) will appear next year. Drag race is the one night when, pent up and horny from a year of sexual repression, Bard students say to hell with assigned genders and go sexually ape-shit. My straight female friend had a lesbian encounter with a gay man. But really, that's pretty normal, because after all, it's drag race.

And that's all fine, the

point being, it's not that simple, because one night of sexual release that puts thirty seven Bard students in the emergency room - well, that's not cool.

Which leads to the moral of today's story: sexual repression equals alcohol poisoning. That doesn't mean get rid of drag race, that means have twenty drag races so people won't go fucking crazy - so everyone can be a little more chill and a little bit more sexed.

Vassar has nearly twenty sex-related clubs - and one pornographic magazine, shot by students, of students, on campus! I'm not saying we should be like Vassar. I'm saying why should those old-fashioned, seven-sisters, stuck-up bastards get more ass than we do? Why are we, who are so liberal on every other issue, so uptight on this one? Why can't plug's have penises and girls-on posters be topless and why can't there be a little less repression and a little more love. And some Bard-based porn. Well, that wouldn't hurt. Whether you're ready to admit it or not, everybody needs a little love.



I am, along with my boyfriend, a member of SILK, Bard's ill-reputed BDSM club. Mostly, this is not a thing you mention in a crowd, meeting new people,

Taco Bell Tomatoes

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one of 230 miles), with a hunger strike that lasted 30 days, they have changed the face of Immo-kalee. They have done away with violence in the fields and put an end to many common wage violations. Most importantly, they have created a grassroots base of thousands of workers not entitled

to the right to organize by federal law. Fundamental change in the industry, however, remains to be seen. The CIW, despite developing what some journalist have called a "modern-day Underground Railroad" up and down the East Coast, cannot police every farm for violations of workers' rights. Only the owners of

why should you boycott?
the farms can end these abuses, and they have proven inhumanely stubborn in their resistance to negotiate with CIW and the huge workforces it represents. Only the huge corporations profiting from these sweatshop conditions have the power to bring the growers to the negotiating table. The tomato pickers who sweat for Taco Bell's bottom line

are offering the company a unique opportunity: If it chose to do so, Taco Bell could put itself at the forefront of workers' rights in the fast-food industry. It could be the first major chain to offer fast food that's also fair food. For three years, though, the company's executives have remained unpersuaded of this viewpoint. Our job as consumers is to show them that

they can longer profit by ignoring workers' rights. No longer patronizing Taco Bell's restaurants is one way of convincing them of this. Coming down to New York City on March 5th is another. For more information, write to Owen Thompson at <ot639@bard.edu>.

Kate Crockford Responds...

I would like to clarify a few things about my recent opinion piece, "Freestyle: An Uprising," and the ensuing onslaught of criticism it received from the Observer and Noah Weston. Importantly, contrary to what both he and the Observer imply, I absolutely did not call Noah Weston a racist. I said that his statement at the budget forum was a racist one. And I said it because it is true.

Weston made light of an Israeli policy that is racially segregating Jews from Palestinians and oppressing the latter. He sarcastically suggested that he build an "apartheid-style segregation wall" between the Free Press defender and him at the budget forum. This statement is racist because he implicitly denies the gravity of an Israeli policy that is slowly but surely ethnically cleansing an entire population. Such a statement is comparable to a white nationalist joking about the plight of black South Africans under apartheid. The disagreement over Israeli apartheid is an important one, too. Weston passionately denounces my analysis and dubs my conclusion about Israeli apartheid irresponsible.

Well, while I would like to think that Weston and I, the well educated Bard elite that we are, know so much about South Africa's apartheid regime, I can confidently wager that neither of us know as much as Desmond Tutu, the former Archbishop of Cape Town and chairman of South Africa's truth and reconciliation commission.

He says: "I've been very deeply distressed in my visit to the Holy Land; it reminded me so much of what happened to us black people in South Africa. I have seen the humiliation of the Palestinians at checkpoints and roadblocks, suffering like us when young white police officers prevented us from moving about."

In an article entitled "Against Israeli Apartheid" he writes: "Many South Africans are beginning to recognize the parallels to what we went through. Ronnie Kasrils and Max Ozinsky, two Jewish heroes of the anti-apartheid struggle, recently published a letter titled "Not in My Name." Signed by several hundred other prominent Jewish South Africans, the letter drew an explicit analogy between apartheid and current Israeli policies."

Further proving my point, these Tutu articles declaring the similarities between the Israeli and South African apartheid were written before plans for the wall were made public! I can only wonder what Tutu would say now that Palestinian land is being annexed and then sliced and diced into a few, non-contiguous Bantustans.

Moving on, I should emphasize both that I presented the historical details to support my thesis about why Weston's joke was offensive, and that he chose to insult me instead of presenting an alternate history to mine, which, according to him, is simplistic and reductive. I will present that historical thesis once more:

The Palestinians have tried non-violence (many continue to do so); they got

arrested, tortured, beaten, deported or killed. The Israelis--under every government since 1967; left, right or centrist--have constructed settlements in the occupied territories that have made life unbearable for many Palestinians, protracted the occupation, and are against numerous international laws. The apartheid wall--which is annexing 40 percent of the West Bank--is not for security. It is instead the--and I quote myself--"logical extension of the Zionist project: expansionism and colonialism, the continued disregard for internationally recognized borders, and, ultimately, though slowly, a process of ethnic cleansing."

Thus my ultimate goal in writing the first piece: to present an historical context within which comments like Weston's are understood to be seriously offensive.

Unfortunately, instead of responding to my criticism of his regrettable outburst, Noah sophomorically rants and raves about my sentence structure and plays stupid tricks with my oh-so-boring-and-Anglo family name. I have no problem with Noah's voicing his opinions regarding mine; what irritates me is his lack of responsibility when it comes to seriously addressing important issues.

Admittedly, Noah does address the conflict, albeit in simple terms. He says that if the Palestinians stopped attacking Israelis, the Israelis might feel assured of their safety, move the wall to their border and withdraw settlements. But this position is completely naive and smacks of ignorance.

If Palestinian extremists stopped attacking Israelis today, the Israelis would attribute the cessation of Palestinian violence to their 'security barrier' and the wall would be completed in record time and with much support from Israelis. This would happen even though the wall is not about security; it is about land annexation, demographics, and racism.

All one has to do in order to understand this profound and internationally recognized conclusion is look at the history of Zionist colonization, land annexation, settlement construction and political and spatial architectures in Israel, the West Bank and Gaza.

Or you could just ask Sharon. I'm sure if you probed him to speak beyond the 'security' rhetoric he would tell you how the annexation and deliberate disintegration of the Palestinian economy created by the wall are the logical extension of the Zionist dream (transfer) since Ben Gurion in 1948. He might also tell you how his party has been outright refusing a negotiated two-state settlement for decades simply because he, along with many others in Israel, will not stop killing and destroying until Eretz Yisrael stretches from the river to the sea.

Affirmative Action for Conservatives

by cricket

Just when you thought your college was safe, a new movement is brewing among conservatives calling for greater "Ideological diversity" on college campuses-- and threatening to revoke federal funding for colleges if they do not cooperate. Many on the political right are incensed over the fact that college professors tend to be more left than the general population. To quote Horowitz: "You could throw a dart at a list of all American universities and be virtually certain of hitting one where Republican and conservative faculty members constitute less than a dozen members of a liberal arts faculty made up of hundreds."

Conservatives plan to address this problem by turning the idea of affirmative action on its head. David Horowitz, who gained notoriety as the man who tried to run an ad in many college

newspapers about why reparations for African-Americans was racist, explains this as "using the language of the left" and turning it against them. This is a familiar neo-conservative tactic, but this may be the first active call for direct affirmative action for conservatives, or what are mind-bogglingly referred to as , "alternative majority viewpoints."

The right is "under represented" in college faculties and this is causing a climate that is not "intellectually diverse." Intellectual diversity implies that ideas have the same rights as people, even the people they are meant to oppress. More than just an appeal to diversity, the right is using affirmative action law itself to further its agenda. The landmark Supreme Court decision, Grutter vs. Bollinger, which upheld the University of Michigan's affirmative action policy, defended affirmative action by stating that

universities had a compelling interest in diversity, and that past discrimination justified a need for diversity. As Mike S. Adams puts it: "If such a rationale can be used to justify preferential treatment for minorities applying for admission as students, it would seem to apply to conservatives applying for teaching positions." Towards this end, Adams and others call for several measures, beginning with a complete restructuring of the faculty hiring process. The hiring process must be completely transparent and subjected to government oversight to catch any hints of discrimination against the under represented majority. If this is not an effective tactic, Adams recommends tying the federal and state money that colleges receive to filling certain quotas for the percentage of conservatives on the faculty.

Stoking concern about

taxpayer dollars extends beyond the hiring realm into what classes a college can offer as well. As the creepy Young Americans Foundation website puts it, "Many academic institutions no longer require courses in fundamental subjects, such as American history or Western civilization, yet use taxpayers, funds for eccentric, bizarre, and , politically correct, courses." For examples of "extremely biased leftist courses," the YAF cites a University of Michigan course called "Native American Feminism" and something called , "Elvis as Anthology" at the University of Iowa.

While this whole movement has yet to enter the public eye, it is a tragedy waiting to happen. With the government strapped for cash and looking to sap money from any and every public service, it is almost certain that within the next few years our

happily liberal colleges will find themselves under attack, having to fight for the right to choose the courses they offer, the professors they hire, and the speakers they sponsor, all because of conservatives howling for "affirmative action."

What is most painful about this whole ordeal is that conservatives are missing out on the entire point of an "alternative viewpoint," or "diverse climate." A powerful political/corporate giant with billions of dollars and virtually complete control of the U.S. media does not need its voice defended with tools meant to aid historically mistreated minorities. It runs completely counter to the meaning of words like "alternative viewpoint," and "dissent." To equate Moloch the terrible with an underprivileged teenager is an insult to human decency.

The Oil Peak

by brendan murray-nellis

If the draft and a coming ice age don't scare you, try reading this.

Oil, as we all know, is the drug of choice for the world economy. There are plenty of theories about when the oil will run out. Some say we can prolong our use of oil and some say it's almost out, but there is another theory about oil, called the Peak Oil theory. This theory, based on research by many leading geologists, predicts

that we may have already reached the peak of oil production, and therefore consumption. Sometime between 2004-2010, with conservative estimates at 2020, we will reach oil peak. Oil peak is the point at which the energy consumed by pumping the oil from the dwindling oil wells is greater than the energy we get from the oil. So this means that oil could still be extracted from the ground, but at an exorbitant price and at

an opinion piece

a loss of energy. For everyday use, oil would no longer be used. If we experienced this shift today it would mean the end of transportation and plastics, causing the grocery store to be empty, the dime store to be out of condoms in a day or two, and the end of the 'developed' world. There have even been recent reports that Saudi Arabia (currently the largest oil supplier) may have already reached Peak Oil. When asked if

there is a solution, Matthew Simmons, Energy Advisor to George W. Bush responded, "I don't think there is one. The solution is to pray." I don't think that Matthew Simmons' solution is the best one, and I advise that everyone run for the hills, start farming and get prepared to live without oil from here on out.

BERD...

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abundant with colored recycle bins and compost buckets, reducing the amount of food waste to come out of Kline, recycling ink cartridges and batteries and promoting fuel and energy efficient vehicles and structures on campus. Tragically and ironically, his position has now been recycled. God bless you Marty, who will be remembered by many as that guys who looks like the teacher from Beavis and Butthead.

What's Going on in Haiti?

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were murdered at the hands of Emmanuel Constant (a former paramilitary leader) who revealed during a 60 Minutes interview that the US and the CIA backed and supported the military coup. During the military junta rule of 1991-1994 aid money and loans flowed freely. The political landscape has, however, changed dramatically since the first democratic elections in 1994 which ushered in the Aristide-era. Both trade and humanitarian aid programs saw a marked decline as Aristide began to implement a number of genuine reforms for the Haitian people. This policy has continued under Bush II as the US has, since 2000, withheld over 500 million dollars in direct economic aid to Haiti, with dire consequences for the already impoverished people. Thus, Haiti has been in a state of economic crisis with little political or military might due to consistent coups, "fraudulent" elections, and

the inordinate influence of the military.

One definite truth that implicates the United States, Canada and well be it the entire International Community is repeated denial of emergency military aid to Aristide, calling instead for a stable political situation before they consider any action. It is especially uncanny that the timing of military aid shipment of US made M-16s to the neighboring Dominican Republic before our "rebel leaders" Louis Jodel Chamblain and Guy Philippe crossed the boarder into Haiti equipped with military fatigues, SUVs, Spanish speaking professional soldiers and armed with heavy artillery. Interestingly, both characters fled from Haiti after Louis was convicted and sentenced to life imprisonment for his part leading death squads, participating in massacres, and terrorizing the country as a paramilitary leader of the FRAPH, and Philippe was kicked

off the national police (1995) after it was alleged he was dealing drugs and plotting a coup against Aristide. Later he received training from the US Special Forces in Ecuador. Presumably they met in the Dominican Republic but have now become the embodiment of the opposition.

Both US and mainstream media have continued to grant the opposition legitimacy on the grounds of flawed elections of 2000, though Aristide was freely and fairly elected twice. The so-called flawed election was just a political stalemate in which the opposition has been responsible for stalling the democratic process. Many feel that this is due to the opposition support - at a mere 10% - which would be revealed if they were to agree to elections. So, making a smart move, the opposition demanded Aristide's resignation. Aristide was fairly elected in 1991 until the military disposed of him eight months

later. He finished his five-year term after the US reinstated him in 1994 (after that brief military junta takeover) and was overwhelmingly elected president in the election in 2000.

In the course of the disputed election debate we, of course, lose any focus on the achievements and victories of Aristide. Since elected in 1994 more schools have been opened then were opened between 1804 and 1994. The military was disbanded, healthcare system profoundly expanded and the minimum wage doubled (despite warnings from various monetary lending institutions and the US). These successes, as well as many others, have fallen from the limelight due to the corporate disinterest in positive sorties about Aristide's Lavalas party. Documentary filmmaker Kevin Pina attests to this stating, "I wrote it, submitted it and they told me they weren't interested." The story in question was about

the government's conversion of a Duvalierera (military junta in power 1991-94) drug dealer villa into a school for poor children.

The blatant disregard for Haiti's social achievements has fed the falsehoods that dominate major media sources. With the US support, the opposition has built a campaign of disinformation intended to blur the entirely transparent interests currently at play. Just as with the Chavez events on Venezuela, we see striking similarities in the oppositions control over media outlets and its distortion of the truth, while the supporting powers that be (i.e. the US or even elite Haitian monopolies) undermine the Haitian economy, social democratic progress and constitutional government. The deconstruction of democracy into chaos will now be a feeding frenzy for the mainstream media who will inevitably attribute it to Aristide's failure as a leader.

-Jerome Gaynor



Ladies Misbehavior Society.
Meets 1st and 3rd wednesday of every month in the root cellar.
all are welcome to attend.

Thurst And Lunch

an interview escapade with Thurston Moore and Lydia

by brel froebe

Last Thursday, Thurston Moore and Lydia Lunch performed poetry and spoken word in Manor Lounge. I had the opportunity to interview them both after the show. At first I wasn't sure if this interview would materialize due to the performers' need to drive back to NYC, but after Lydia flirtatiously acknowledged me during her performance, I realized that the task of interviewing had become much more probable, if not scandalous. Brel: Every time I've seen and heard your art- Lydia: How long have you heard

my art? B: About two years- Lydia: Did I have a positive effect on you? B: Up until now I've always considered experiencing your art as a shocking experience- L: But what do you realize now? That I'm your true mommy? B: Absolutely. L: I'm your real mommy. I'd take such good care of you. I would be so nice to you. B: So, the spoken word poetry that you performed this evening; what are the connections between

this type of performance and your other work, for example your release "U Turn" with Minox and your films with Richard Kern? L: I don't think there is much of a connection. I think this piece really stands on its own, but all my lyrics are true. This piece is very true and very recent, and I mean it's ridiculous that I'm still- I can't say its ridiculous that I'm still going through stuff like this: I love people. I love damaged people. If you're creative I am patient, I will put up, and I will encourage, and that's just the price you pay. And

from that, the reward is that I hope that they learn something, and then I get this to give to people, and that's the cycle of it, you know? I mean still love him and he still loves me but he just has to get over this destructive phase. I had hoped that he could within our relationship, but he couldn't. I made him worse and that's not my intention. You know, he couldn't take it; it was too much. That's not the effect it has on has on everybody, you know? It just takes a long time to get over damage. I know that from my own experi-

ence. You hope that you can help people get over it, but they have to get over it themselves. B: So what do you see yourself doing in the next few years? What are some of your new projects? L: Well I'm doing a lot more photography and more installations because I think this performance is almost like the pinnacle of my spoken word. I can't really go beyond this. I have a new album coming out in September of new material. It's very sassy, kind of funky- almost "blacksploitation,"

continued on next page..

Bard is Home to Miss Teen Nepal 2002

by mike lerhman

She's been sitting in the back of your Humanities class. She's been eating at the table next to you in Kline. She's been using the bathroom in your dorm before you in the morning. Move over Seamus Farrow and Gabby Hoffman. Look out Chinua Achebe and Adolfus Mekas. We have a real celebrity here. That's right. Amanda Manandhar Gurung, freshman

student at Bard College, is also known the Miss Teen Nepal of 2002. Gurung, a dancer since five, was convinced by her aunt into joining a Little Lady Beauty Pageant when she was twelve. After that her pageant life stopped until high school when, during a break, she was bored and decided to go interview for the Miss Teen title. She was one of 20 that were

picked out of 50 girls to go through a 15-day charm school as preparation for the big event. She never expected to win. In fact, she didn't even tell many of her friends or her boyfriend because she was afraid of ridicule.

This was probably a warranted fear because once it was over she was met with comments like,

"How ugly were the other girls?" But even Amanda was surprised by her accomplishments. "I would be fucking around in the back with my friend. I never expected to get called up." In the end, she not only won the grand prize, but also Miss Fitness (she's on the Bard Women's Basketball Team) and Miss Hair (too bad we don't have a hair team). Her prizes included a

vacuum cleaner, an exercise bike, toothpaste, shampoo (Miss Hair), pashmina shawls and a ton of candy which she shared with everyone she knows. Currently, Amanda is single, enjoys romance novels and men that look like "2 Fast 2 Furious"'s Paul Walker".

Applying Art to the Real World

by liz koerner

Perhaps you remember her curious name from last week's announce emails?

Australian born artist Natalie Jeremijenko spoke Tuesday as a guest for Tom Keenan's Human Rights Project. She is described as a "design engineer and internationally renowned technoartist interested in the socio-technical aspects of product design." A complicated description, since the kind of political, cross-disciplinary work she does is so new it hasn't had time to acquire a concise, easily understood nomen. Natalie began her lecture by posing the simple question: Can artists reveal truth? Of course, that is too simple-- what she really asks (as I understood later) is: Can artists reveal truth and information in a world that only believes in, and functions off of, a scientifically found information? Furthermore, can artists mass-reveal truth and information in a way more accessible and engaging than what we currently have?

Take this scenario: The information is "Toxic waste in

ground under local school". As things work now, the only way such information exists in the public is as an official EPA document which is long and boring and full of scientific vocabulary. Most people will not see this document, understand it, or know where it came from. It is as if the information (and the resulting action) magically appears out of nowhere from those at the top of the information pyramid. Natalie Jeremijenko, however, has thought of a way to put the power of information, at least in this situation, into the hands of virtually anyone. Her solution: transforming popular robot-dog toys (as cheap as four bucks) into "sniffer dogs" which sniff out toxic waste thanks to an implanted sensor in the butt and all-terrain wheels for doggy feet. The process, albeit slightly more complex, is described on the website (www.bureait.org/feral/). Groups in countries all over the world have created packs of these "feral" robotic dogs and used them to find, in Brooklyn for example, that some "safe levels" of toxic

waste reported by the EPA are actually false.

Perhaps Jeremijenko's main weakness is in the premise she starts with: that everyone has access to the internet and other information technology. While true, she's still got an amazingly important point.. We live in "the information age." Therefore, embracing information technology as a means of hijacking the current alienating and disengaging information system is possible--and necessary?-- to create a world where individuals are informed about their environment and inspired to participate in it.

"Use your technology before it abuses you."

Another project she presented is called "Onetrees." In this project a large batch of genetically identical trees were raised and then planted in pairs around the bay area. The point of the project is for people to interpret the differences between pairs, thus creating new information and adding to a community dialogue about the environmental and social factors that are, theoretically,

responsible for the differences. For more information see <http://cat.nyu.edu/natalie/projectdatabase/> and <http://xdesign.eng.yale.edu/feralrobots/upgradeindex.html>

Natalie Jeremijenko visits Bard

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contributor: Owen Thompson, Olivia Cumming, Jacob Gordon, Emily Rodriguez, Matthew Garklavs

"crimes"

- tosh free chinchilla chiang
- Liv stealing from the cafe Carrow
- Christine mall-lifter Neumann
- Mike clean as a perfectly clean whistle Lerman
- Fariyah drunk at prom Zaman
- reckless drew highbeams Gray
- Kelderberry 12 months up the river
- Mix-Master Dineen never inhaled
- Tim in exile Abondello
- Liz target bracelet alarm Koerner
- Kate butcher's blood Crockford
- Katie punk In drubllc Jacoby
- Brenden just plain dirty Murray-Nellis
- Cecca alcoholocaust Wrobel
- Johnny Class
- Brel rob's, drunk, from the cradle Froebe
- Bonnie love in an elevator ruberg
- Emily shotgun wedding price

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music reviews.
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everything is fine. really.

The Von Bondies
Pawn Shoppe Heart
Sire

Four years ago I was at a Detroit rock fest in a San Francisco rock venue. There were three bands: Waxwings, the Von Bondies, and the White Stripes. I was there for the White Stripes but I left with the Von Bondies; they were much better than the White Stripes. They were like some magical surprise. They had no gimmicks. They just rocked: 4 piece whisky big-beat blues-slam signed to Sympathy for the Record Industry—a damn fine name for a label if I may say so. And on the stage, the VB singer looked so emo-cute but his voice belted out with baritone fury. The drummer's kit was only a bass drum, snare and single cymbal, but the man could've been doing Keith Moon. It was a hot set.

Anyhow, I put Lack of Communication into the stereo and it wasn't as good. The live show was something amazing whereas the cd was just so-so. I'd kick it on from time to time, wonder why Jack White didn't record it better, and then just turn it up; it's still a good album.

So when I got Pawn Shoppe Heart, I was pretty excited. It's a fun effort and it certainly has that drawling grime'd empty bottle all night long push.

The recording is alive—not so flat as their first album, but still dirty and garage-rock fueled. Of course the VB have also signed onto Sire, ensuring better production, and better luck finding them at your local homogenous chain store. The first three songs—"no regrets," "broken man," and "Cmon Cmon," are probably the stand out tunes. The band still has the crooning blues groove and can still kick out a snare and chord explosion. It's a good album to get loaded to. Imagine this album as the soundtrack to your life in whatever hip, top indie 40 rock and roll bar you prefer. Keep your eye on MTV or those televisions they sell at Target too, 'cause I'm sure we'll see this band go that way.

Weird. I feel like I just wrote an obituary.

[tosh]



In Flames
Soundtrack to your
Escape
Nuclear Blast

This is a hard review for me to write. I remember being a fledgling metalhead in high school when one day my friend showed me this import called "The Jester Race" from a Swedish band called In Flames. We threw it on and immediately became obsessed. Kickass Iron Maiden riffs accom-

panied by Death Metal vocals and drums, nothing could be better.

We proceeded to track down every cd we could find of bands from Sweden that was labeled "Melodic Death Metal" and times were good for our metal hearts. Cut to today, 6 years since that fateful experience and the once beloved music of the melodic death metal scene has become totally sterile. The music has been watered down by a large sect of the American hardcore scene, and countless other bands have overdosed the underground metal scene with lame imitations. I didn't want to admit how far one of the most exciting genre's in modern metal had fallen, but now listening to "Soundtrack to Your Escape" I have no choice. The only justifiable reason for In Flames to release this musical abortion is to gain widespread commercial viability. The kickass dual guitar harmonies are almost completely absent, replaced by annoying keyboard parts and 2nd grade-level Devin Townsend atmospheric vocal arrangements. Vocalist Anders Friden, once one of the most identifiable voices in metal, ends up sounding like a whiny 4 year old throwing a temper tantrum, through his overly reliant use of clean vocals, which were never very good to start out with. I would really like to point out some redeeming factor on this record, but have yet to find any in this mix of benign nu-metal riffs and pathetic vocals. I am not sure what market In Flames is catering to, because I can't think of anyone this would appeal to. Approach with maximum caution. (if you are interested in checking out where all the In Flames hype came from check out their cds "The Jester Race," "Whoracle," or "Colony" or just say fuck In Flames and check out

Dark Tranquility they have always been the better band.)

[drew]



Ween
quebec
Sanctuary

Never fear, Ween fans. "quebec" does not disappoint. It shouldn't matter what I say about "quebec", because it is the new Ween album and I for one am not disappointed. No, in fact, far from it. I am overjoyed. Ecstatic. This is the happy answer to my prayers asking god for a new Ween album. This is what Xmas should have been. An early Easter basket full of Cadbury eggs with immunity from cavities. A rock n' roll trip to "Chocolate Town" (track 10).

Every review I have read on this album compares the second half to Pink Floyd. While I won't deny this, I'll go ahead and say that that is perfectly fine. Why does everyone hate on Pink Floyd? I won't go there. Even the wacky genius of Ween is not immune to giving props to their roots. And if doing so means making a few tracks that sound like Floyd and Zappa and Bowie and Jethro Tull, so be it. The three or four tracks which have a sort of bland, echoey pot-rock

feel are still good songs, maybe not the crazy Ween goodness that comes through more on tunes like "Zoloft," "So Many People in the Neighborhood," "Hey There Fancypants," and "Happy Colored Marbles," but good solid songs nonetheless.

Every band is entitled to change their style a bit, and also to pay tribute to their influences. If "White Pepper" gave anyone an uncomfortable sinking feeling that Ween was going pop, "quebec" is a reassuring assertion that if they leave their niche at all it will be in a direction that all of their zany fans can follow them. As for the slight metal edge that came through a bit on some earlier stuff, it seems to have been tamed away in favor of dreamier, more dissonant stuff. "quebec" lacks the relentless energy of "Chocolate and Cheese" or "GodWeenSatan" but has the same calculated cohesiveness that makes Ween albums so endearingly epic.

So while there may be more effect-laden guitar solos than beat-driven drum machine metal tracks, Ween is Ween is Ween and if you know that, you know that everything in this review is meaningless, because there is no way to tell someone about a Ween album short of slapping them across the face with a banana cream pie laced with PCP and singing an Irish ballad to them in Assyrian. [liv]

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continued from page 8..

so I'll continue to do music. The photography is kind of like crime photography in installations, and installation based on these experiences too. So it's like setting up a room where damage has occurred. That's what I'll be doing in Birmingham, UK in May.

B: What are some of your favorite artists right now?

L: Biggie Smalls, Scarface, Mystikal. Basically I like Gangsta Rap, I mean that's all I listen to. That's all I've listened to for over five years. Hardcore Murder Rap. I like the production, I like the lyrics, I like the feel, the vibe, all of it. I'm so sick of white boys whining.

B: Word Up.

L: Yeah, word up, fuck that shit. But I like Paris a lot too, who's more political. I like Tupac a lot. As far as artwork, I like Cindy Sherman, I love Damian Hirst, I love Shirin Neshat who's an Israeli artist. I'm all over the place. I love

Wanda Coleman who's an African American writer and poet.

B: So earlier I mentioned that when I first experienced your work- like your films that you made with Richard Kern- I found it to be kind of shocking. How much of your work and performances rely on shocking your audience?

L: I never feel that what I'm doing is shocking, because I'm basing it on my real experience. I think that other people who have gone through this don't find it shocking. They find that it alleviates some of their burden or their guilt or their loneliness. So if it's shocking to other people it means that that they haven't gone through it. It's never shocking to me. As a matter of fact, after seeing "Finger" I said to Richard Kern, "it isn't shocking enough." You're getting a twenty-minute dose. I lived through it. I'm not setting out to shock, I just do what I do based on reality, and

that's it.

an audience member: Do you want a beer?

L: Thank you. Is it twist off? Please, do me. Don't let him do it with his teeth.

B: What was it like performing at Bard?

L: It was good until he fingered my beer. No, it's cool doing free shows at colleges. I feel like people are trapped on campus and I think that people can relate because I hope that it will prevent them from going through some of this shit. I think it's a good place to perform. You have to make it a good place to perform. Plus you were there. That made me happy. It made me so happy seeing you sitting there. I just knew.

B: Thanks. It made me so happy too.

L: Thurston, do you want to go get a drink before we head back? Let's bring our new son with us.

At first Thurston was reluctant to do an interview, but once I had a chance to ride in his car and talk a bit, he suggested that we conduct an interview on the way to the bar.

B: So how do you think your poetry intersects with your musical career?

Thurston: When I first moved to New York as an eighteen year old after high school- I went to college for like a quarter- at that time it was 1976 and things were happening that I was really interested in. Am I going the right way?

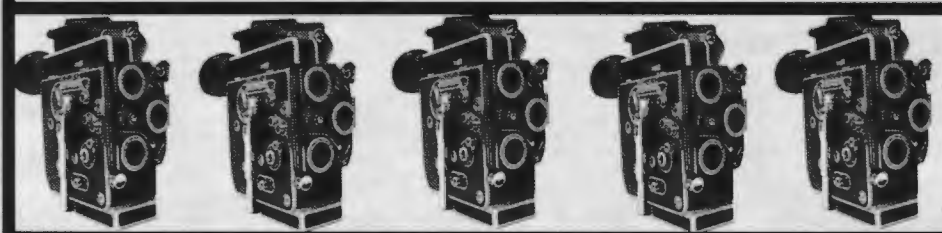
B: Yes.

B: That definitely comes through with your fusion of references to people like Lou Reed and Ginsburg.

T: Yeah, but the thing is that most poetry I don't really like because it interests itself with a confessional,

descriptive nature. I am interested in that but I'm also extremely interested in language as something else, as something that's visual, and the word itself on paper. So I'm really into "concrete-ism" and more avant-garde tendencies with language and how the word and language exists as poetry.

Unfortunately my tape recorder ran out of batteries. Thurston gave me his email address to continue the interview, which may be printed in the next issue. On a personal note, I found this evening to be incredibly auspicious: I was able to casually interview and spend time with both a cultural icon and one of my musical idols. And it was also pretty rad to be able to drink with these performers and get hugs and kisses from Lydia Lunch, the "Enfant Terrible" of avant-garde.



film // film // film
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The Passion of the Christ

Ah, the long awaited, much talked-about, Mel Gibson directed bonanza chronicling Jesus' final hours. The film that had more pre-ticket sales than any other film in history. The reenactment that sent star James Caviezel home with accidental whipping scars, shoulder separation, and the memory of being struck by lightning while hanging out on the cross for those long cold hours. Nothing compared to what the biblical Christ went through, as the movie lets you know over the course of its gut wrenching 127 running time. For those of you who are unfamiliar with the story of Christ, the passion refers to the brief but hectic section in which Jesus is betrayed, captured, tortured, and crucified. Gibson set out to show these grizzly events as realistically and true to Scripture as possible, while still having a meaningful emotional effect on the audience. I don't know about you, but I was expecting Bible meets Braveheart.

Surprisingly, however, I discovered that Gibson seems to have stumbled upon a number of successes. First of all, the film has the sort of admirable simplicity of story but complexity of character that dispels most expectations of manipulation. It is these qualities that lead to the film's greatest strength - the fact that it has taken this familiar, schematicized, abstract story of suffering and made it completely palpable, a powerful feat that must be even more profound for Christian viewers who have known this story since childhood. Christ's sacrifice takes on real meaning amidst the almost unwatchable gore galore of the torture scenes. I warn you all once again: this film gets really, really graphic. This could be seen as manipulative, yet all the details are taken right out of the Scripture. Also, the film did a nice job of keeping dialogue to a minimum, letting the sound of the Aramaic and the loaded gestures and emotions of the characters speak for themselves.

Some criticize the melodramatic quality of the film, yet despite an annoying overuse of slow motion and close up shots, there is really no way to avoid drama in this tale, and I don't blame the filmmakers for doing so. Considering the events of the story, even without their religious meaning, portraying them coolly would have just been illogical. However, I do have some criticisms of my own.

While the inclusion of various Christian artistic traditions was extremely interesting, I'm not entirely convinced it was intentional. The depiction of the passion in this film included visual symbols that became conventions much later in Christian history, such as the image of the bearded Christ, the nailing of his hands rather than his wrists, and the post-crucifixion pieta pose. It created a sort of visual catalogue of Christianity that I found very effective, but old Mel claimed he was following Scripture exactly. Also if true history were to be followed, Christ and everyone else in this film other than the Romans would be Middle Eastern. Even in this day and age, the most the film was willing to do was hire an olive-skinned cast consisting mostly of Italian actors and actresses unknown in America (excluding the made-famous-by-Matrix Monica Belluci, who didn't do much but cry in this movie anyway). Mediterranean might be close, but no cigar.

A deeper criticism would be Gibson's loose interpretation of Satan's presence in the passion. He had a blonde, androgynous character glide along smirking in this oddly semi-sexual way. That, along with the CGI demons and strangely out of place evil children, were really very unhelpful and distracting, a move that should have been avoided altogether. Also somewhat unhelpful were the various flashbacks, which assumed far too much about the viewers' familiarity with the biblical story of Christ. While they provided a lot of strong emotional content, and helped the audience understand some of the relationships between characters in the movie, they miss out on a valuable opportunity to give us information that would only increase our interest and involvement with the events. Despite my conflicted feelings about The Passion of the Christ, I was impressed with its idea and came away with the conclusion that, love it or loathe it, this film is definitely worth the hype. [farihah]



50 First Dates

We all know that Adam Sandler has hit some highs and some lows in his surprisingly varied film career, from the sensitively played Punch Drunk Love and trademark slapstick of Billy Madison to the high budget waste of time known as Anger Management. By and large, his success seems to be proportionate to the level of risk involved in his choices, even when it comes to questionable films like Eight Crazy Nights and Little Nicky. These are really pretty bad, but still enjoyable, and command a little respect for their strange bravery. 50 First Dates, on the other hand, seems to follow Sandler's more recent habit of playing it safe with bigger names and less quirk, exemplified by movies like Anger Management and Mr. Deeds. Boasting the same director as Anger Management, it falls somewhere between mediocre and boring.

Although this story of a shameless womanizer (Sandler) attempting a complicated relationship with a woman whose memory of each new day is wiped out while she sleeps has some sweet and funny moments, it lacks cohesion and good dialogue. Drew Barrymore's attempt to be cute borders on spastic, and the ensemble cast dance around and deliver demeaningly pathetic one-liners in some sort of Disney-inspired pageantry. However, if you do decide to go, you don't have to resign yourself to boredom completely. There are times where Sandler saves a scene with some of his old unique verve and when he doesn't, you can always laugh at how bad it is. [farihah]



Monster

This film is based on the real-life story of Aileen Wuornos, sometimes known as the first female serial killer in America, a highway prostitute convicted of murdering seven men. Recently executed for her crimes, Monster chronicles Wuornos' life, exploring the long and tragic history of sexual and physical abuse that may have led to her killings. It specifically focuses on a turbulent nine month period of her life between 1989 and 1990, during which time Wuornos developed a relationship with a young woman named Selby (Christina Ricci), committed the bulk of the murders, and was captured by the police.

The real value of this film lies in its fascinating story and an unexpectedly beautiful performance by Charlize Theron. Aileen's experiences hauntingly force us to consider whether or not there is a time when murder is understandable, and invert the more common occurrence of truckstop prostitutes become victims of serial killers. Despite these authentic touches, however, the Hollywood in this movie is unforgivable. The relationship between Aileen and Selby is wretchedly simplified, with Selby taking on a much more innocent and less manipulative role than her real-life counterpart may have. The brutality of her childhood and the incidents leading up to Wuornos' killings are wrongfully underdeveloped. According to her own testimonies Wuornos murdered only when under physical threat, but the movie chooses to show her becoming more and more comfortable murdering innocent men out of a permanently fueled rage. As there is little evidence for this turn of events, we can only assume this choice was made in order to increase the film's dramatic value. I would highly recommend seeing this movie only after watching Aileen Wuornos: The Selling of a Serial Killer and Aileen: Life and Death of a Serial Killer, the Nicholas Broomfield documentaries which explore both the true story of Aileen's life and crimes and the controversy behind the selling of her story to various film and television projects.



Academy Awards 2004



The year of the predictable and disappointing is among us. How bad can it get? The Academy Awards never really reflect the true achievements of the year, but the acute lack of interesting work nominated this year showed us just how little good filmmaking there really was.

The real sweep that shocked no one was Lord of the Rings finishing up with 11 awards, taking home a statue in every category it was nominated in. Peter Jackson, who's work showed a great promise that the extremely indulgent and murkily realized version of this trilogy barely lived up to, had his hand in at least three awards with Best Picture, Best Director and Best Screenplay. Also, Mystic River, showcasing talented actors in underwritten roles, managed to prove useful when it let Tim Robbins and Sean Penn, both long overdue for an award, win the prize for their acting.

But the real travesties lied in the so-called "minor" film awards. Finding Nemo beat out the much more creative and funny The Triplets of Belville in the Best Animated Feature category. Worst of all, The Fog of War, interesting, but the weakest of the Errol Morris films, beat out Capturing the Friedmans, the brilliant first feature by Moviefone creator Andrew Jarecki (see below). Morris, who is rumored to be somewhat arrogant, proved his reputation when he began his acceptance speech with, "I'd like to thank the Academy for finally recognizing my films." This is a shame, too, because years have past when he had cause to be arrogant.

The only real saving grace was Charlize Theron winning Best Actress for her portrayal of real life female serial killer Aileen Wuornos in Monster. Theron, who not only looked but also sounded and acted exactly like Wuornos, did not thank the inspiration for her character, but did unconsciously make a tongue in cheek joke about it in which she stated, "If I'm forgetting anybody, please don't kill me." All in all, the year proved to be one in which old masters finally got credited for their sub-par work and brilliant new comers (City of God took home nothing) were forgotten.

But what else could we expect in such a weak year? I could find only four films that I actually thought were anywhere close to flawless. Below is my top ten list for the year, six of which have significant flaws and probably wouldn't have been placed so high in my mind had it not been for the general lack of good work being produced. I should also note that I was lagging in making a list last year and mistakenly put City of God and Gerry on it, both of which were released this year. For that, they will not be put on this list, though they would up the number of excellent films this year to a whopping six.

1. Dogville – Leaps and bounds beyond everything else, Lars von Trier is back with a vengeance. He has managed to break his chain of melodrama by taking the worst aspects of his work and using them to his advantage. This film is an attack on America from all sides and, because of this, will not be released here until late this April. Nicole Kidman is brilliant in what can only be called the coldest satire of American life. It uses the archetype of the all American play, Thornton Wilder's Our Town, to create it's imagery. Minimal sets, no doors or windows, just riveting camera work (togglng back and forth between von Trier's Dogme-esque handheld and Escher-esque bird's eye shots), smart acting and amazing script help this film drive home. Only to be wrapped up with one of the most satisfying endings in recent cinema.
2. Capturing the Friedmans – Jarecki's documentary tells the story of a father and his youngest son who sexually abused several students in a computer class they were teaching on weekends in their small New Jersey town. Or did they? Problems arise on both sides of the argument. Too many crooked cops who seemed to have forced confessions out of the young children. A money hungry lawyer who seems to want to take the easiest way out. And as the story unfolds, it becomes quite clear that while Arnold Friedman may have been a pedophile, he also may have dragged his son down with him. To top it all off, David, the middle son, couldn't cope with the event in his mind, and, to compensate, started filming everything that happened so he wouldn't have to remember it himself. Thanks to this, the film is full of first hand footage of a family being torn apart as Jarecki builds stronger metaphors than most screenwriters can achieve in fiction films, metaphors about a family that idolizes imagery. Do yourself a favor and catch this in Weis Cinema next Sunday thanks to the Bard Film Committee.
3. Elephant – Who better to make a film about Columbine than Gus Van Sant? Such a taboo topic can be handled poorly on so many levels but Van Sant brilliantly succeeds on all these levels, showing the way in which the media and the viewers of the media perceive the deaths of these children. His long mesmerizing tracking shots mirror real life in the most naturalistic ways and jumbled time scales mix things up just enough for everyone to take something different away from the film. Maybe not as creative as his previous film Gerry (also this year), but certainly serving a much greater cause.
4. Spellbound – Nobody could have guessed that one of the most accomplished films of this year would be a documentary about the eight kids in the national spelling bee. Luckily for director Jeffrey Blitz, not only are these kids so comedically entertaining, but their parents are so eccentric that this film plays better than anything Christopher Guest's crew could ever improvise. Blitz is said to have rated the children like horses, trying to statistically determine which of them were most likely to win. He filmed twelve and certainly picked the right eight (though the DVD does include interesting footage from three more of them). This film that matches wit with hilarity and gets it's audience interested not only in its characters, but also in the history of the spelling bees in general. Most people I know who have seen it are compelled to watch the ESPN telecast of the National Spelling Bee and there is a good reason why.
5. Ichi the Killer – Takashi Miike's latest (and possibly last) great pseudo-masterpiece has finally been unleashed upon America. This brutal, belligerent, and yet hilarious comic book story (I think it is a parody of Tim Burton's Batman, but the theory has often been disputed) of an unwilling superhero and the super masochist who hunts him based on his reputation has the violence of a cult film, the wit of Alfred Jarry and the cinematic beauty of Peter Greenaway. Miike may have overstepped his boundaries on the violence in this film, but he still throws convention around like a ball of silly putty and comes up with logical characterizations played out in caricatures and interesting takes on the comic book world.
6. Memories of Murder – My real choice for Best Foreign Film this year may have been snubbed because it's messages ring truer in Korea than they do here. Nevertheless, this story of a series of real-life unsolved murders that occurred in the Korean countryside is a bizarre mix of slapstick comedy and gripping thriller. As the hopelessness of the situation ensues, the action of pulling at straws is both frustratingly sad and amazingly funny. Coupled with brilliant cinematography, both in the way that it shows the beauty of the countryside and the playfulness of the mise-en-scene, Bong-Joon Ho's second feature proves to be quite a successful one. It's too bad he lets the script fall apart in the final scenes to make sure he drives his point a little too far home.
7. Down With Love – Nobody expected the brilliance of Peyton Reid. Both in his first film, Bring It On, and in this film, he manages to blur the line between genre and parody. In Down With Love, he has refined his style, going past a simple genre like the one of campy teenage cheerleading movie, and moving on to an homage of the Rock Hudson/Doris Day films. The result makes every scene so weird that it is hard for those looking for a straight satire to find the laughs. Those who want a pure homage are a little unsettled with the way things are put together. I've gotten a lot of shit for liking this film so much, but I will stand by these points. And I find if you just go with it, it can be a fresh and bizarrely hilarious experience.
8. 28 Days Later – Speaking of genre, here is the best genre film produced in years. Danny Boyd's (Trainspotting, Shallow Grave) comeback isn't technically a zombie movie - the monsters aren't the living dead, but simply infected people - but it shares enough with the genre that it can be considered an offshoot, like a loose interpretation of a book. Shot on DV on a shoestring budget, Boyd manages to accomplish a sense of isolation and desolation in an apocalyptic landscape and proves that in a time of crisis, the most terrifying thing is what people will do to survive.
9. Lilya 4-Ever – It is kind of a one-trick pony to take a character and keep abusing them until the audience feels completely devastated to the last drop. However, this little film from Russia seems to have a kind of class in its grit. The opening makes a huge impact, blasting Rammstein in your ears while our heroine runs through deserted Eastern European streets with tears and mucus dripping down her face, and the film backs up that impact with it's devastating story. It manages to build sympathy for its characters purely out of their childlike innocence and spares nothing in tearing these characters apart.
10. A Peck on the Cheek – The latest film from Indian director Mani Rathnam may not be his best work, but still displays his brilliance, which is undeniably fresh in every film. The story of a young adopted girl who goes deep into the jungle to find her birth mother, a revolutionary who heals soldiers working to overthrow the government, is the perfect blend of real drama with Bollywood musical. Beautiful coloring and political issues patent this film with Rathnam's stamp and we are treated to emotions mixed with music mixed with heartwarming comedy. Now if only it was so trite to simply use a little girl to generate all of that, we might be in business.

So that's it. A few gems in a year of mostly disappointment and a weak award show to prove it. I thought we were heading somewhere good when Chicago took best picture last year. Well, at least they remembered to mention Stan Brakhage in deceased montage. Maybe in years to come, we will actually have an Academy Award for Best Avant-Garde Film. Hopefully Billy Crystal will have given up hosting long before that happens. [mike]

want to review a film? contact mike lerhman or fariyah zaman at freepress@bard.edu

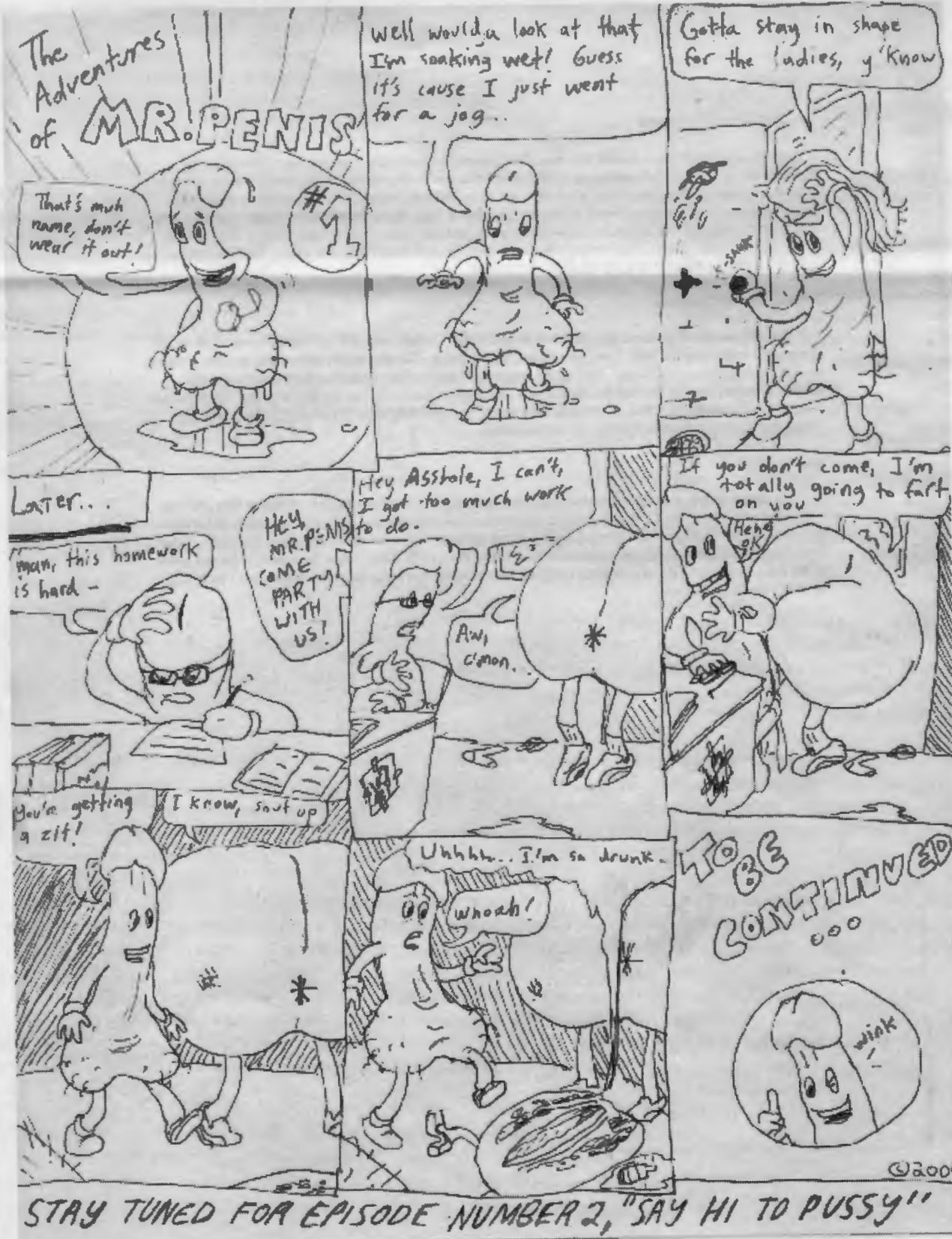
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by Michael Dudczak

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