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Ethics Committee Cites Leader of US House Republicans

DeLay too busy being the federal government to notice

by brenden beck

House Majority Leader Tom DeLay (R-Texas) is in time out this week. In response to a continuous string of unethical behavior dating back to 1999, the House Ethics Committee reprimanded the head of U.S. House Republicans three times in recent weeks. The committee, officially titled the House Committee on Standards of Official Conduct, has found that three separate actions by DeLay go "beyond the boundaries" of party discipline, and are in violation of the U.S. House code of ethics.

DeLay's creative interpretation of "rules" and "ethics" has drawn criticism from across the House. Joel Hefley (R-Colo.) is the chairman of the Ethics Committee, and the fact that he and the committee's other four republican members) standing up to DeLay is all the more impressive considering DeLay's power in congress. DeLay's formal responses to the accusations have showed no regret. He has said only that, "During my entire career I have worked to advance my party's legislative agenda."

DeLay's work to advance his party's agenda have most recently included holding a golf fundraiser for

energy companies just as the House was to consider energy legislation, employing the Federal Aviation Administration (over whom his authority is weak) to look for fleeing Texas state legislators who were foiling DeLay's attempt to redraw the states district lines to favor republicans, and offering to endorse the son of retiring House Representative Nick Smith of Michigan in exchange for Smith's vote on the Medicare prescription drug bill.

In an open letter to DeLay, The House Ethics Committee took issue with such actions because "at minimum, they created an appearance that donors were being provided special access to you regarding the then-pending energy legislation" and they included the "use of governmental resources for a political undertaking." The Committee can ask DeLay to go to Time Out, but has no

ability to exact penalties or initiate court proceedings, though the Texas grand jury could hold hearings and a related Department of Justice complaint is still pending.

Not surprisingly, Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) has come out



in agreement with the Ethics Committee's findings staying DeLay is "ethically unfit to lead the party."

With equal predictability the

NRA has accused Pelosi of mounting, "an anti-gun plot" against the traditionally anti gun control Representative.

It wasn't his staunchly pro-gun stance that got DeLay in trouble with the Ethics committee in 1999. He threatened legislative retaliation towards a trade group if it hired a retiring Democratic congressman, in violation of House power-abuse ethics. Nor was it his fervent support of aid to Columbia for counter-narcotics paramilitaries that got five of DeLay's political aides in legal troubles in two separate money laundering charges.

DeLay is probably undisturbed by the House of Representatives' conscience finding him to be unethical three times in two weeks, however. This is the Majority leader who once declared, when asked to put out the cigar he was smoking in a federal building (a federal crime), "I am the federal government."

NEWSBITES

Egypt Rocked by Bombs

Bomb blasts in Egypt's Sinai Peninsula hurt Arab/Jewish relations recently. Inhabited by Bedouin Arabs, Sinai has traditionally been a place where Israelis could expect kind treatment, and many often vacationed there. The attacks, which targeted two vacation resorts, killed at least 34 people, 12 of whom were Israeli tourists. Though Egypt has yet to confirm the culprit, several obscure Islamic groups have claimed responsibility for the two bombings and the United States is looking into possible connections to the recent terrorist attacks in other U.S. nations from Spain to Turkey.

Cambodia To Open "PAC II"

Though his term was for life, the King of Cambodia, Norodom Sihanouk, persuaded parliament to allow him to abdicate the throne earlier this month. Though the position is not hereditary, it does look like Sihanouk's eldest son, Norodom Sihamoni, will succeed his father. Sihamoni had been serving as a dancing teacher, ballet dancer, and choreographer in France until last month. That's not a typo.

Mad Scrilla for Peace

Last week the Nobel Peace Prize was awarded for the first time to an African woman. Wangari Maathai was given the \$1.3 Million prize for her work as leader of the Green Belt Movement, which has sought to empower women, improve the environment and fight corruption in Africa for almost 30 years. The Prize committee passed over the politicized events in Iraq and elsewhere for a different type of choice. "This is the first time environment sets the agenda for the Nobel Peace Prize, and we have added a new dimension to peace. We want to work for a better life environment in Africa," said committee chairman Ole Danbolt Mjoes. Oddly, Oprah and Tom Cruise are hosting a Nobel Prize benefit concert in Norway - The Polyphonic Spree will perform at the charity benefit.

Shock! Iraq Politicized

The Los Angeles Times reported Monday that the Bush administration plans to delay major assaults on rebel-held cities in Iraq until after the U.S. elections on November 2nd. The administration is mindful that any large-scale military offensives could affect the U.S. Presidential race, an anonymous senior official involved in strategic planning confirmed. "Once you're past the election, it changes the political ramifications" of a large-scale offensive, the official said. "We're not on hold right now. We're just not as aggressive."

all newsbites reported by
brenden beck

3 People Die from Creutzfeldt-Jakob in Ulster County

Fall in the Health of Ulster
by tim donovan

In the past three months, 3 people have been confirmed dead due to Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease in neighboring Ulster County. Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease (CJD) is most commonly known as the human homologue of Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE), or Mad Cow Disease. CJD is actually a spontaneously occurring neurodegenerative disease, while its variant (vCJD) is caused by eating BSE infected beef. The symptoms are nearly indistinguishable, including depression, headaches, withdrawal, and eventually a vegetative state. The disease is caused by prions, abnormally shaped proteins that in essence coerce neighbor proteins to bend to their malformed shape. The

end result of this systematic bending is the sponge-like appearance of a brain after the disease has run its course. Only the variant CJD has a known vector of infection in the eating of infected beef. Classical CJD has no known cause, and like its variant, no cure.

The normal incidence of the disease is roughly one in a million, while these cases in Ulster bring the county's incidence to about 1 in 60,000. Doctors have refused to comment on whether or not the cases have been determined to be classical CJD or the variant. Whether or not these deaths could have been caused by infected meat is purely up to speculation, fueled in part by the detection of a BSE

infected cow in Washington State this past year. Only one case of vCJD has ever been detected in the US, and in that case the woman had previously lived in England. For the paranoid reader, the only way to lessen exposure to the disease is to protect against the incredibly rare variant. This can be accomplished by eating quality cows that did not feed on infected cerebral-spinal tissue of other cows, or no beef at all.

Brain shrinkage and deterioration occurs rapidly



from <http://adam.about.com/encyclopedia/17146.htm>

Bush is Stealing the Election...again

A Compilation of anecdotes by Bill McCulloch and Kate Crockford. See democracynow.org for details, or listen to 92.5 FM at 5 daily

In an ongoing campaign of "legal" disenfranchisement, the Bush Justice Department has initiated unprecedented legal action to take away the rights of voters to file lawsuits to redress vote fraud or suppression, while the states have also distorted the provisional ballot remedy by imposing improper ballot restrictions. These include summarily disfranchising voters without ID, penalizing voters who show up at the "wrong" location, without redress, and limiting provisional ballot choices to candidates for federal office.

The deputy election supervisor in one of Florida's most

populous counties admitted that some 60,000 absentee ballots had gone missing. Broward county election official Gisela Salas said the matter is under investigation by law enforcement agencies. In 2000, it was Broward county that gave Al Gore his strongest support in the state of Florida. The US Postal Service says it has investigators trying to find the missing ballots, which constitute 5 percent of Broward County's electorate.

Electronic voting machines are also of dubious repute. Diebold's secret software for its computerized voting-management system mistakenly ended up on the Internet, where it was

found to have numerous security flaws. A Diebold executive and major Republican fund-raiser, Mr. O'Dell, committed a highly publicized gaffe by sending a letter to fellow Bush supporters committing to deliver Ohio's electoral votes to the president this year. Ohio is a critical swing state in this election, of course.

In California, the company is the subject of civil fraud charges over its newest voting equipment, the AccuVote TSx, whose battery and software problems during the March primaries caused 55% of San Diego polling places to open at least one hour late. The company told Califor-

nia officials that one version of its voting machine was within days of federal certification when it wasn't. And these electronic voting machines will count nearly a third of this year's votes - all without a paper trail.

Voters have also been intimidated. Polling places in Black neighborhoods in Florida were patrolled by police, and in Philadelphia last year, people who were posing as security officers drove through minority neighborhoods on election day.

The Pentagon is telling soldiers to send non-secret ballots by email to be counted by an out-sourced firm.

Mideast Heat: Israel intensifies war in Gaza

by kate crockford

"I found a device, in cooperation with the management of the world, to ensure that there will be no stopwatch here. That there will be no timetable to implement the settlers' nightmare...The significance is the freezing of the political process. And when you freeze that process you prevent the establishment of a Palestinian state and you prevent a discussion about the refugees, the borders and Jerusalem. Effectively, this whole package that is called the Palestinian state, with all that it entails, has been removed from our agenda indefinitely. And all this with authority and permission. All with a Presidential blessing and the ratification of both houses of Congress. What more could have been anticipated? What more could have been given to the settlers?"

-Avi Shavit, in the liberal Israeli newspaper Ha'aretz

Mideast violence lurks among those modern disasters capable of destroying human environments as we know them. The recent upsurge in violence, suffered largely by the Palestinians and Iraqis under Israeli/US occupation, is marked not only by its extremity but also by the resultant, general silence among the ruling populations of much of Europe and America. The technologies of power employed by the United States government have been particularly successful in silencing anti-status-quo dissent; conglomerated media owned and operated by government-friendly weapons manufacturers effectively eliminates social and political change, blinding much of the uneducated 'first-world' into a fear streaked with images of the Arab terrorist, the falling towers, and the beheadings. But seeking root causes for the world's ills (rejecting and resisting them) is a perilous endeavor, and has increasingly been met with the soft-violence of the new American empire; just weeks ago 'Freak' Radio Santa Cruz, an independent, illegal community station, was raided by US FCC and FBI officers who, armed with automatic weapons, roused the sleeping residents of the building and forced them outside before taking all of the radio equipment.

Israel's rightwing government, led by Ariel Sharon—the 'father' of the settlement movement—expands the Israeli presence in the West Bank, deepening the occupation, by creating colonies (settlements) and then sending in troops and building military bases in order to "protect" its citizen/colonizers. Sharon is brilliantly evil: he pays poor immigrants (particularly from

Russia, but other places as well) to live in the colonies, and, though Israel is institutionally and internally racist against non-European Jews, has succeeded in the entrenchment of a colonial system that is largely supported by members of its lower classes. The occupation clearly must end if there is to be peace. Sharon's vision—one shared by an increasingly alarming number of Israelis due to the increasing violence and the rhetoric of fear—is one of total ethnic cleansing.

Though he claims to be 'disengaging' from the Gaza Strip, in reality Ariel Sharon's government is stepping back from the administration of public services inside that small, beachfront ghetto; a ghetto teaming with 1.3 Palestinians who are crammed into refugee camps that are the densest places in the world, who are deep in the poverty caused by Israeli economic and military oppression. Sharon's 'disengagement plan' is no disengagement from the affairs of the average Palestinian. All entrances and exits, all trade, will be controlled by the Israelis; Israel will control the Mediterranean coast and the airspace. Palestinians will not be permitted to exit the Gaza strip through Israel, and the Egyptian government is conspiring to work with the Israelis in keeping them out of Egypt, too. 1.3 million people locked into an open-air, war-torn prison, while the US, Israel's only ally, presides over the incarceration of over 2 million of its own, largely brown, citizens.

The extreme violence we witness on television or online news sites - violence such as the kidnapping and beheading of various non-Iraqis working for the Americans and British; the violent destruction and occupation of Iraq by the US/UK militaries; the violent resistance to US occupation; the violent destruction of Palestinian homes and the missile-shelling of crowds of people (including children) in the street in Jabaliya refugee camp; the violence in Taba, Egypt, where 30-some Israeli tourists were killed in one of the rare attacks committed outside Palestine—is violence deriving its energy from Ariel Sharon's settlement policy, US support for Israel's politicide of the Palestinians, and the international silence to the daily commission of war crimes against mostly Palestinian, but sometimes Israeli, people. The attacks of 11 September—if they were committed by al-Qaeda, an axiom of which questions should be asked—happened because of these policies, their own appetite for extreme violence producing extreme violence against their own civilians in the homeland and abroad.

The occupation of Palestine must

end, in full, for justice and peace to be realized. Israel cannot survive as a racial state, and its desire to try mirrors the United States and other industrialized nations' refusal to submit to the ecological demands created by the exploitative energy policies. The blinders must come off. The system will not survive. Violence over resources will spread into the belly of the empire. It is our choice: we can submit to the totalitarianism that creeps upon us, allowing them to make us fearful and close our eyes, or we can recognize the historical importance of submitting only to the radical truth, to spreading messages not of imaginative illusions but rather of pressing realities which will transform and engulf us all if allowed to continue. Human history contains ruptures; our society is close to an externally imposed rupture. We must be ready, armed with the truth and aware of our surroundings.

Harboring illusions about the possibility of 'eradicating' Arab or Islamic 'terrorism' without addressing the fundamental impossibilities of sustaining the status-quo (the racial, colonial Israeli state; dependency on oil, etc.) defies not only ethical or humanitarian principles. Such blindness accommodates those who seek to destroy resistance to global war among those who envision possibilities for human emancipation; Dick Cheney, Osama bin Laden and Ariel Sharon are men of the same design, harboring similarly violent and regressive fantasies. Unfortunately, their fantasies are our realities.

Palestine, divided and occupied officially in 1948, will grow from the dusty streets of refugee camps and remote villages, from the teeming Gazan cities and the old capitals—Nablus, Bethlehem, Hebron. This growth will represent not only the problematic racist assumptions of some Palestinians who oppose Israel's existence on racial or religious grounds.

Palestine will be free, from the river to the sea, as a one-state, multi-ethnic democracy because the alternative is destruction to the global status quo on a scale we cannot imagine.¹ It is global totalitarianism enforced by wealthy governments and re-produced by that ultimate symbol of rebellion against powerlessness, the suicide-killer². It is a totalitarianism that succeeds not through gas chambers or secret police, but which dominates public thought and instills a

fear deep enough to accommodate their violence at home and abroad through control of media and cultural production. But it is a totalitarianism that will lead, as it did not in the mid-twentieth century, to outright global war and ecological destruction if it, and the blindness that accompanies and serves it, is not challenged and resisted. Palestine both symbolizes and enacts this process. Prepare to watch the developments in Israel and Palestine further effect the rest of us. Our only choice in resisting is to ideologically and intellectually rebel against their discourse. We must be vocal with the language we create, defining our own terms and fully contextualizing our multi-layered realities. It is in this language that I demand an end to the occupations of Palestine (in full) and Iraq and the dismantling of the military-prison-energy industrial and cultural crisis that dominates us all.

Footnotes

1 As the above descriptions of modern violence indicate, however, we are beginning to witness the fallout from the global status-quo in American and European societies.

2 While most suicide attacks have been executed by Palestinians—who are almost completely powerless with respect to changing their situation—some have been executed by wealthy, radical Islamists. The membership of the al-Qaeda movement and its regional subsidiaries demonstrates that the powerlessness driving suicide acts is not born only from poverty, nor necessarily from ignorance or internal social powerlessness. The act is an expression of powerlessness because it is increasingly clear that possibilities for changing dominant global policy regarding local liberation movements from colonialism, in direct opposition to the policies promoted by the militaristic and economically dominating United States government, are extremely limited. US and global corporate power have been successful in captivating the ruling classes of most national governments, alternatively enforcing and encouraging violent power-struggles, always pulling for the oppressive and dictatorial. Suicide attacks are thus perpetrated not only by the economically destitute. They are the act of he or she who has properly deciphered the political and historical maps which dictate our realities and has been overwhelmed by the monstrosity and hopelessness the knowledge produces. I do not support the attacks morally or politically, but recognize their origins and think it extremely important for ruling-world citizens to concomitantly identify them.

Different Perspectives on the Conflict Available Online

compiled by kate crockford

It is important for people to actually look at pictures of what the Israeli occupation forces are doing in the Palestinian territories. There is an emergency situation unfolding in the Gaza strip right now, as Israel continues its bloody program of invasion and murder in the tiny strip's northern refugee camps and cities. Over 100 people have been brutally slaughtered by the occupation forces in the past two weeks alone; by any other standards (if the Palestinians were white or European) this activity would be publicly referred to by its proper name: massacre. The massacre in Jabaliya refugee camp is marked by the traditional Israeli tactics used to destroy the civilian infrastructure and cause irreversible damage (these tactics usually include home demolition, complete closure of an entire city, the hostile occupation of civilian homes, the shooting of water cisterns, and frequent violence including illegitimate arrests, torture and murder).

Indeed, the Israeli occupation forces have recently aggravated their assault by instituting a policy of firing missiles into crowds of people on the streets. The damage (physical and psychological) caused by these sorts of attacks is truly astounding. If you are interested in learning more about Israel's brutal military occupation of Palestine, and the resultant deaths of Israeli civilians in bombings, etc., please see the following web guide to Israeli Palestinian affairs. (Note: Make no mistake about my subjectivity. When it comes to affairs as important as colonization and imperialism, we must take a stand and make our intentions clear. My intention here is to spread another point of view to an American audience largely unfamiliar with the positions of those who live under the bomb of Israeli and American military power. To put it simply, I am against colonization and politicide, and I am for a peace that finds its foundations in justice and human dignity for all. Digest the following with a clear understanding of my partiality.)

www.electronicintifada.net Electronic Intifada is a news and commentary site created and maintained by around 5 activists who work and live in Europe, the US, and the Arab world.

http://news.independent.co.uk/world/middle_east/ This is the Independent UK's Middle East page. Robert Fisk, veteran UK journalist, writes a good deal about the Israel Palestine conflict and many of his insightful articles can be found on the site.

www.haaretz.com Ha'aretz is Israel's leading centrist daily newspaper. The paper's editorials range from centrist positions to left-wing critiques of the occupation and Israeli settlement policy. Gideon Levy and Amira Hass write for Ha'aretz's Opinions page. They are two of the most vocal and informed Israeli critics of the Israeli government. Amira Hass is one of very few Israelis who lives and works in the occupied territories, and is the only Israeli journalist to do so. Her work can be found at http://www.zmag.org/meastwatch/amira_hass.htm

The next Website to visit is a part of the fabulous, Creative Commons licensed Internet archive at www.archive.org. Mosaic Middle East News is a 30-minute program that contains short, edited and translated segments of news broadcasts from throughout the Middle East (Israeli views are represented, too). You can find the pieces at <http://www.archive.org/movies/collection.php?collection=mosaic>, or go to www.archive.org, click on "Moving Images" and then click on Mosaic Middle East News. Viewing the pieces on Quicktime works best.

www.oznik.com is run by an Israeli. The blog is pretty interesting, and usually contains info that one cannot find elsewhere.

www.rafahpundits.com is another blog; this one is run by European and Arab activists who work or live in the Gaza strip. The site contains updates on Israeli military actions in the strip and on media surrounding the conflict.

Census Report Reports Staggering Inequalities

by brenden beck

Over 600 reports have been written analyzing the data gathered in the 2000 census. Most of the reports will be lost in the blitz of Iraq updates and election news, and perhaps they should be. One report however deserves headlines. The census report on Net Worth and Asset Ownership of Households tells a story that is getting glossed over.

The report analyzes the net worth of American families. It is a simple enough measure of well-being: household income minus expenditures. The report's authors are happy to announce that the median American net-worth grew in the late nineties to \$55,000 in 2000 (median worth is used instead of average because the average is too easily skewed by the über-wealthy). But the report's authors are dismayed to announce the grievous racial disparity that appears in census numbers.

The 2000 census was the first to ask about the racial make-up of the citizen, so it produced statistics like these: the median income of families in which the primary householder was white was \$79,400. The average Hispanic household maintained \$9,750 in net worth and the average black household \$7,500. The average black household is worth 9.4% of the average white. Most of the black household worth

is in durable goods, houses, cars, etc. The percentage of white wealth held in stocks and mutual fund shares is "significantly higher" than black and Hispanic households.

There are poor white people too, right? Well, no. The lowest quintile (a statistician's fancy word for "lowest fifth" of the data) of white households has a median worth of \$24,000. So 10% of white households are worth less than that and 90% are worth more. The median income of the lowest quintile of black households is \$57, Hispanic households median is \$500. So no, there are not poor white people. "Poor" whites are 42 times better off than poor blacks.

"Worth" in this article refers to economic net worth, and economic models will never tell the whole truth, but it is start. The racial inequality woven into the fabric of this country cannot be ignored. These statistics only confirm the notion that equal though they may be in law, Hispanic and black communities are systemically worse off in economic terms.

Racism has lost its position in the American political discussion. Amid a global world, foreign affairs, tax cuts, and the most recent celebrity scandal the once strong discourse about the separation of races in this country has been shoved into the fringes and labeled "politically

incorrect."

So what is to be done? Educating ourselves about the racial inequities around us is the first step. We must first talk about our privilege and our opportunity, our struggle and our restraints. Also, government programs should not be feared. The war on terrorism has pushed all other issues aside. We are told we are in a time of crisis and there is no room for less important social matters. Yet government programs have the unique ability to weather the storms of recession and of war. It was, after all, FDR's New Deal, a slew of government programs, and WWII that pulled us out of the Great Depression. The Bush administration has tried a war, and that did little to help working America. The Bush administration has tried a war, and that did little to change the gross economic inequalities between the rich and the poor, the white and the black. So it

is time for a change in perception and approach. Racial inequality is not a taboo, and neither are state and federal policy approaches.



Reacting to the results of the election

by matt rozsa

Matt Rozsa's column, "The New Emporia," appears regularly in the Observer; he has requested that the Free Press print this election-specific piece

For the previous issue of *The Observer*, it was suggested that I write an editorial discussing the likely consequences of another four years of the Bush Administration, and describe how the potential ramifications, though dire, were not apocalyptic. I agreed to write the article, and hope that the case I presented does justice to the point of view that many have described as being "pragmatically optimistic". It is in this installment of "The New Emporia," however - the last to be published before election day - that I would like to explain why I feel such a position is a significant one to bear in mind as the election approaches. Simply stated: A Bush victory is entirely

possible, and one obtained through shady and controversial means seems more likely every day. Therefore the impulse on the part of those students at this institution who are filled with righteous indignation to react to a Bush victory - legitimate or otherwise - with fervent uproar seems disquietingly conceivable, especially in light of some the heated rhetoric coming out of our campus' more radical sources. While it is important for any patriotic American to fight in the most effective manner possible against any disreputable tactics the Bush campaign might use in order to win back the White House, it is equally important that all of our actions remain controlled and productive, rather than merely hysterical and degenerative. What's more, while any victory on the part of the president that violates basic democratic precepts ought to be contested, a victory which

falls within the bounds of constitutional strictures must be recognized and accepted, regardless of the contempt with which we may hold its beneficiary.

That isn't to say that I'm not aware of the likelihood that a Bush triumph in this election might come through dubious means. Already there are reports of ballots in Ohio where John Kerry's name is nowhere to be found, and electronic voting machines in Florida that break down at the push of a button. The mere fact that a majority of the electronic machines used in this contest were manufactured by Diebold, a company with distinct right-wing leanings, should of its own accord raise the eyebrows of anybody for whom democratic values are an actual belief rather than the means with which to accomplish an end. The integral standard of any free society is the right to vote, and if the vote of any citizen is jeopardized, it is the obligation of every other citizen to see to it that the problem is rectified. Conservatives are often quick to say that the duty of those who reside in a republic is to stand foremost in its defense. On this

matter I couldn't agree more, and if it appears for a moment that Bush has stolen this election, I expect to see them right next to me on the picket lines. However it is picket lines, not barricades, that I expect to see constructed in the event of any perfidious activities on the part of the Bush team. Riots, proclamations of revolution and other acts of violence are as unproductive as they are unreasonable, their only accomplishment being the wanton destruction of life and property and the discrediting of the liberal cause in the eyes of those with whom we wish to forge alliances. I am not issuing, mind you, a call for moderation. There is nothing moderate in adhering to the tenets of the principles for which we fight as we proceed to fight for them.

More difficult than having to acknowledge the prospect of an illegitimate Bush victory, however, is contending with one even more potentially dismal - that Bush will prevail in this election with a solid mandate, one that precludes the effect of electoral corruption. It is one thing to protest a man who has stolen power; it is quite another to try to bring one down who has rightly procured it. We might

not agree with the mentality of Americans who have cast their lot with George Walker Bush. Nonetheless, if the majority of our countrymen opt to take this course, and do so through democratic means, it is our responsibility as advocates of liberty to accept their decision; much as we might disagree with it.

In a recent Question-and-Answer session with Bard College President Leon Botstein on parents' weekend, the query was posed as to how the distinguished conductor felt about the possible conduct of the American people - that is, how he would respond if they chose to extend the tenure of the American President, George W. Bush. Botstein, with his patented pensive amble, responded with one of his trademark witticisms.

"It is the burden of the inhabitants of a democracy," he commented, "to have to deal with the incomprehensible will of the majority."

Indeed it is. The founders of our country never expected that this burden be borne silently; but our own objections to it must at least be aimed in the appropriate direction, and through the proper methods.

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Get Your War On: A Command and A Book

fuck, goddamn, and other criticisms of the bush administration

by **lauren kitz**

David Rees' comic book *Get Your War On II* (Riverhead Books, 2004) is every angry liberal's best friend. All of the terrifying decisions our government makes, the infuriating politicians who make them, the state of our various wars on intangible ideas (terror, for example) – Rees expresses the gut wrenching sentiments we all feel but don't know enough curse words to express. He started the comic shortly after September 11, disturbed and angered by the United States' tactics in Operation Enduring Freedom (which at least had one of the stupidest names in military history). In response to our plan to air-drop food aid packages into Afghanistan, a country full of landmines, Rees shot back "It turns the relief effort into a fun game for the Afghan people – a game called 'See if you have any fucking arms left to eat the food we dropped after you step on a landmine trying to retrieve it'". His first collection, *Get Your War On* was published in October of 2002, and the sequel carries on the tradition of giving

the crudest, most savage, and often most eloquent commentary on contemporary politics.

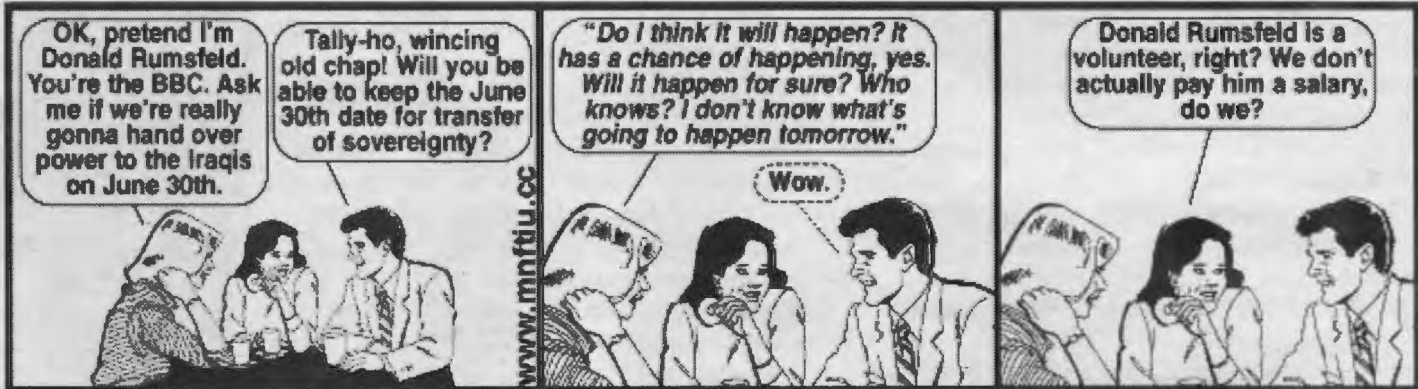
Rees sets his comics in various cubicles of an office without a name or location. His characters likewise have no identities or real personal lives; this being reinforced by the fact

in the "Who Is More Pissed Off About All This War Bullshit" contest. In other words, this book is not Republican friendly, in case there were any doubts.

The best thing about *Get Your War On II* is that it will make you laugh until you pee, which is really embarrass-

comic one co-worker remarks, "All I have to say is, once this is over, the Iraqi people better be the *freest fucking people on the face of the earth*. They better be freer than me. They better be so fucking free they can fly. . . . And I want a multi-million dollar reconstruction

to a sentiment that is patriotic and compassionate, a sentiment without which the anger would not follow. In the end, what a sympathetic reader feels most in reading these comments is the appreciation that someone had the balls to put himself and his point of view out there so fully



that the strip is not drawn but instead produced with generic clip art images. It feels as though they exist solely to criticize the Bush administration, something with which one should feel comfortable if one expects to enjoy *Get Your War On*. Rees manages to perfectly capture the leftist, anti-war sentiment that most find too politically incorrect to publicize, showing up Michael Moore by a long-shot

ing, but you won't even get embarrassed because you'll be too busy reflecting upon the sickening hypocrisy of our political system instead. Get it? It makes you laugh *and* it makes you think. Rees continues the brilliant tradition of inspiring political action through the arts. At times you won't really know whether to chuckle or grimace, and that's a good thing. In the March 20th

contract for Halliburton. God, that would really be so . . . just." The intensity of Rees' sarcasm convinces the reader to really listen to him, because they can tell he's not just some mean guy taking an easy shot at our ridiculous administration. No, Rees is driven to this level of bitterness because he really cares. And he wants you, the reader, to care. It is not difficult to see through the panicked cynicism in this book

and with so much integrity. If you enjoy politics, you should purchase this book. If you enjoy comics, you should purchase this book.

But mostly you should purchase *Get Your War On II* because the author is donating 100% of royalties to land mine relief in Afghanistan. Same goes for the original *Get Your War On*. That said, get out of here and buy the book. Or borrow it from a friend and send ten dollars to the Mine Detection & Dog Center Team #5. I don't even know what you're still doing reading this review.

Jacques Derrida July 15, 1930 – October 8, 2004

by **griffin epstein**

On October 8th, 2004, after a lengthy battle with pancreatic cancer, Algerian-born French philosopher Jacques Derrida died in a Paris hospital. Commonly seen as the predominant voice in "deconstruction", at the time of his death Derrida had published twenty-three collections of philosophical essays and treatises, received honorary degrees from multiple institutions in the U.S. and abroad, and taught at universities in New York and Paris.

Derrida studied under Michel Foucault and Louis Althusser before developing his own form of critical discourse, which involved a treatment of the aporias, or points of entangled

tension, in ideologies and texts. The project of deconstruction is not, as many of Derrida's critics would claim, a nihilistic destruction of "meaning" but rather an illumination of the inescapable prejudices of textual vantage points. His work offered discussion of difficulties, systems of control and paradoxes within analytic thought, which not even his own text could surmount. However, within Derrida's seemingly self-defeating proclamations – "only the impossible is possible" – there was always a hope, elegance, morality and progressive drive which made his work impossible to write off as studies in "meaninglessness."

(for example, see: "The University Without Conditions," *Without Alibi*, Jacques Derrida)

It is difficult to read Derrida. From his unspeakably dense *Of Grammatology* to the coinage of infinite new terminology, Derrida's critical and theoretical output was more than challenging. However, the challenge of his text is also its strength; its style manifests the complexity of its subjects.

His death was treated, at least within the confines of pop-intellectualism (The NY Times, etc.) flippantly to say the least. Characterized as unforgivably "abstruse," Derrida's contribution, both pragmatically in the

political arena (most notably, he was outspoken against the Vietnam War, and against the occupation of Iraq), and to the world of so-called "high theory," was flagrantly ignored. Though my writing isn't convincing enough to set the record straight here what I offer is a degree of levity:

For the entirety of my freshman year of college, my friend and I stalked Derrida. He had an office in the French department at NYU and on numerous occasions Kevin (6'5," head like a soccer ball, extremely conspicuous) and I (I can't go below a 6" voice) would sneak into the building, peeking in through

doors and windows, looking for him. We'd spend hours scheming; what's would Derrida appreciate in his mailbox? Kevin suggested Scatagories. I thought BrainQuest flashcards. The hard ones. We never had the balls to do anything but giggle and run away at the sound of footsteps. I doubt we were ever within fifty feet of him. On Monday, October 4th, Kevin (with help from his entire Heidegger Seminar class, which was scheduled to be taught by Derrida himself) sent a "get well" video to the Parisian hospital where Derrida was staying. Here's to hoping it arrived in time.

Anthony Hecht '44 January 16, 1923 - October 20, 2004

by **matt garklavs**

Anthony Hecht, the beloved formalist poet who candidly appraised the iniquities of humanity passed away at his home in Washington DC on October 20, 2004 at the age of 81. Hecht was an alumni of Bard College and taught as a professor of English here and at other prestigious schools. He was born in New York City in 1923, and began studying at Bard College in 1940, while it was still an experimental adjunct of Columbia University. It was here that he initially developed a strong admiration for poetry after being introduced to contemporaries like Wallace Stevens, T.S. Eliot, and W.H. Auden by a teacher named Lawrence Leighton.

After graduating from Bard in 1944, he enlisted in the army and fought in World War II. During his service, he witnessed bloody combat in France, Czechoslovakia, and

Germany. He also helped liberate a concentration camp in Bavaria by using his knowledge of French and German to listen and record the accounts of its spectators. These experiences had a profound effect upon his life and his poetry. In poems like "More Light! More Light!" the foreboding images of decay and desolation exemplify his empathy for the victims of the Holocaust: "No prayers or incense rose up in those hours/Which grew to be years, and every day came mute/Ghosts from the ovens, sifting through crisp air,/And Settled upon his eyes in a black soot."

After Hecht returned from Europe, he resumed his studies of English at Kenyon University and thereafter began a distinguished career as a professor and poet. He received an array of awards and honorary doctorates from schools and fellowships for his scholarly endeavors. This

included the Pulitzer Prize for Poetry in 1968 for his volume of poetry entitled *The Hard Hours*. Hecht also served as the Consultant of Poetry at the Library of Congress from 1982-1985 (a title now known as "Poet Laureate")

Hecht's poetry is essentially reflective of the gravity of his times. After witnessing some of the greatest horrors of the 20th century he spent the remainder of his life contemplating these experiences. Instead of simply bearing a sense of affliction and remorse, however, his poetry profoundly evokes a deep comprehension of man's deficiencies. Richard Wilbur, a contemporary poet and friend of Hecht's, eloquently spoke of this estimable quality in a poem he read on his 80th birthday celebration last year. "Who is the man whose poems dare describe man's inhumanities/ And count our deadly sins, and bare/ Such truths as cause

the blood to freeze./ Yet in whose darkest verse one sees/ How style and agile intellect/ Can both instruct and greatly please?/ I speak, of course, of Tony Hecht."

Although Hecht's poetry is sometimes defined by its somberness, it also possesses characteristics of wit and charm. The scholar William Logan wrote "Some poets are saved by grace, others by will. Hecht began as a poet of convenience and charm, of brutal form and baroque extravagance..." Hecht wry sense of humor was especially entertaining when he ridiculed the pretensions that characterized classical literature. This was the overriding tone of "The Dover Bitch," his most celebrated poem, in which he satirizes the poem by Matthew Arnold.

Hecht essentially believed that it was not the poet's duty to rely on the deception of our senses, but to use the soul and mind as a lens through which we can evoke the

deeper truths of humanity. In the concluding lines of his poem "The Transparent Man" he advises us to look past the world's superficialities. However, when we look at this excerpt now, we are left with a lasting impression of the character and wisdom that defined Hecht's genius. "And the eye, self-satisfied, will be misled./ Thinking the puzzle solved, supposing that at last/ It can look forth and comprehend the world./ That's when you have to really watch yourself./ So I hope that you won't think me plain ungrateful/ For not selecting one of your fine books./ And I take it very kindly that you came/ And sat here and let me rattle on this way".

send responses and articles to freepress@bard.edu. If you feel like we could be better, make us better; we'll publish what you send us.

This Month's Thing to Buy

by liv carrow

Since I don't have any new media items to review lately, I have chosen to review consumer products. If you have to buy a thing this month, here are a few of my favorite things to waste money on, or you can just go out and take stuff!

Bubblicious Watermelon Gum 75 cents.

The most delicious bubblegum in the world. It doesn't last longer than 45 minutes, but you can cram up to three pieces in the average mouth. Also, if you wrap the chewed pieces up in the wrappers and leave them in your car, purse, trash can, etc, all of your stuff will have that magical big-sister Bubblicious smell (free air freshener!) Goes great with hairspray and cigarette smoke as perfume.

Dunlop Tortex Guitar Pick 50 cents or so.

Clearly you will need one of these for something, it's totally worth the change to have them around, even if it's to give to someone else so they can serenade you.

Long Johns Under \$10

The best ways to keep warm in the weather, in my opinion, are as follows: 1. setting yourself on fire. 2. staying in bed all the time with seven quilts and the heat up. 3. wearing long johns under your clothes all the time. The third option is the only one that allows you to remain alive and even function as a member of society while maintaining a reasonable body temperature.



Are we running out of retro?

a future-shocked contemplation of the cycles of fashion

by will slack as dictated to jason mitchelich

Retro in the early nineties, retro fashion, was sixties fashion. But I realized, what's fucked up, is that it isn't linear. Fashion is moving ahead faster than linear time. My theory is it's a big fucking parabola. Let's say, way back in the BC times, it was futuristic, then it fell behind at some point and it became past fashion which is probably, what $x=y$? Who fucking cares. The point is, in the early nineties, we can all agree, bellbottoms...I remember having crushes on high school girls when I was in third grade and they had bell bottoms on. It was sixties fashion. Then, like, a minute later, like 94, people thought seventies was really funny. Now, I'm not trying to say that anything has ended, if you're behind the time and not fashionable...I mean, Bard is usually pretty fashionable, but there are those people who are all like "This Year, Halloween 2004, I'm going as a 70s pimp". Those



I was into that. I was a punk, the eighties were around for a while. But what we're noticing is that it's going way faster. The nineties are real retro now. Who was it that was watching "I Remember the Nineties" on VH1? That's crazy. We're in 2004. So

it's going faster. What are the implications? The implications are that soon, maybe in 2008, we're going to run out of past years to be retro. Maybe I'm infringing on an Onion article, but if I am, it's completely coincidental. I'm not even typing this, maybe it's going a completely different direction, I don't know. Anyway. That means that soon, as long as it's not sinusoidal, then soon the future will be retro. Maybe that's a paradox. The sixties had moon boots, all exaggerated version of the future, which may be a good argument for the sinusoidal thing, but soon you're gonna see all Michael J. Fox all Back to the Future, hoverboard, etc. I guess it must be sinusoidal - that is, there's a peak and a low in terms of measures of past and future in relation to current day, and that it cycles up and down along those extremes - because otherwise we'd swing back into the past so far that caveman styles would be all the rage and that's not happening.

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Obituary: John Peel

by jeffery tremaine

Respected music enthusiast and disc jockey, John Peel, passed away October 24 while on holiday in Peru. As one of the original DJs at BBC Radio 1, Peel was best known for the cutting-edge live acts he brought into his studio and his wide-ranging influence on pop and alternative music.

Peel came to BBC in 1967 when Radio 1 was first

established. Peel helped thrust Britain's burgeoning psychedelic rock and punk scenes into the mainstream during the 60's and 70's. By the 1980's, Peel's influence was well established in the realm of popular music. He began playing hip-hop acts on his British radio show well before hip-hop culture had moved out of America's urban regions. By the turn of the century Peel was sponsoring

electronic and computer-music artists on his show.

Up until the time of his death, Peel never stopped seeking out underappreciated forms of music in an effort to bring important bands and artists into the mainstream. Peel's ear for talent and innovation had a deep impact on the course of popular music during the last 40 years. He will be sorely missed.

UPCOMING SMOG SHOWS

faces of the never morning

("country, psyche folk, delta blues, all old songs made by young people")

thursday 4th

the stark fist (improvised drum and bass)

saturday 6th

sufjan stevens (sweet banjo folk pop?)

secretly canadian records)

friday 12th

hiretsukan and gfk

(ny hardcore, metal hardcore)

friday 19th

music reviews.
music reviews.
music reviews.



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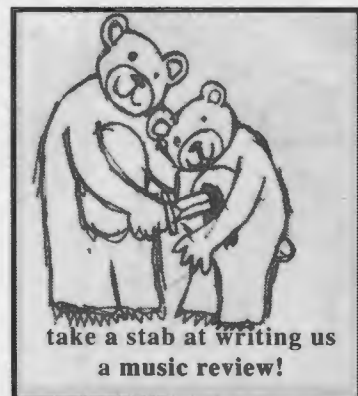


**Wolf Eyes
Burned Mind
Sub Pop**

Tim: (barging into bro's room) Is this your Max/MSP homework?
Christian: No, it's the blazing new Wolf Eyes mon. Get with it.
Tim: Alright. Wanna turn it up?
Christian: Yeah, right on.
Tim: These are the guys Mike Marcell is always crushing on, huh?
Christian: No that dude is Thurston Moore.
Tim: Wooh, that guy's really on to something for such a dinosaur.
Christian: Yea, its true. I like the way it sounds.

..
Tim: I dunno...
Christian: What? This doesn't kick your dick in?
Tim: No, it kicks my dick in, it totally kicks my dick in. Its just not much of a conversation piece ya know? Sorta anti-social or some shit, like, I don't really have anything to say to you about it.
..
Christian: Wait, you gotta hear the hot track, Black Vomit.

..
Tim: Yeah, alright, this puts my rear in gear, now I think I'm ready to party with this joint.
Christian: We're already partying with this joint, but wait till you hear this other joint, Urine Burn.
Tim: Sounds sick, but it kinda reminds me of that other joint, the Black Vomit joint
Christian: Yeah, but Sub Pop made them a mint and I heard they're moving up to some top shelf laptops for their next record.
Tim: Bard can get stoked on that.
Christian: No doubt. We need to start a noise band, ya know, so we can finally get all the mommies.
- Tim Abbondelo



**Wrangler Brutes
Zulu
Kill Rock Stars**

Perish the thought of another new punk rock band releasing a new album in this the year 2005 of our lord. With The Ramones well on their way towards a reunion in the next life, and all the new music out there sounding less and less, well, new, what does it matter anyhow. So, Kill Rock Stars are set to release Wrangler Brutes "Zulu" this month, and while the reasons to give half a fuck may be a passing thought, this guy here is gonna try and find a reason for you to believe once again, and maybe even to rebel allover the fuckin' place for the first time allover again.

- 1) Zulu totally rages, proving that there's still something new under the sun and somewhere along the gutter down Punk Rock Lane.
- 2) When your parents were still at it, they would have thrown Beatlemania out the window for a little Brutesmania: a fresh pot of total r & b, freaked out mohawk fun, and high society blues.
- 3) WR BR are gonna perform live here at bard in two weeks and wipe the Smog floors with Charming Bastards.
- 4) You still have ample time to find "Zulu" on direct connect, learn all the words, and sing along with Mr. McPheters himself. "Slam Dunk!"

-Tim Abbondelo



**Mos Def
The New Danger
Geffen**

You can't cut off both of your hands well. The second hand finds itself squirming and functional—the sad surviving twin—while the first hangs, a remembrance, and present as such. Which isn't to say some

haven't tried: Brooklyn's finest (Jay-Z having moved out and Biggie quite departed) clatter, well-tailored and shiny, down the avenue. They blink, cough, find it new: "I come back, my town's like a whole new scenery...the new-jacks up in the park smoking greenery" (Mos Def). Having severed, it would seem, his conscious-rap hand (Black Star, *Black on Both Sides*, delicacy), Mos Def finds himself unable to ditch the other and flap wingless into new territory. His new album, *The New Danger*, is fun and unpleasant like leaf blowers or wax-drip over birthday cake. Mos hired a rock band to gnash their whitened teeth while he rhymes. Which is cool. Its just that they're not very good: the maybe too-easy trick of crossing genres without musical substance, hence Guru's side-project from Gang Starr, in which he hired talented jazz musicians and talented hip-hop artists to make an album and it came out hooley.

Mos Def does, however, make several points well: he's a great singer and would be heart-breaking doing a rendition of "Time After Time" on somebody's balcony. For true. Or this: he is, next to R. Kelly, probably the most gifted soul song-writer in the genre right now—as proven by the second to last track.

I'm not trying to say that one should write pure hip-hop or pure rock and not something in between—far from it, one should simply write music without such a clutter of sunglasses at night and points to be proven. I'm just writing a review.

-Steve Brodksy



**Pig Destroyer
Terrifyer
Relapse Records**

"Nothing is True. Everything is Permitted." —William S. Burroughs. (Quote printed in inside jacket of this album.)

Violence is promised in nail biting introductions, and then it is javelined through your ear in the form of a blast beat and guitar chug chug. Each song is perfectly timed: there is just enough time to deliver truly inspired lyrics accompanied by the most sinister fucking instrumentals ever. Nearly every song manages to keep you involved in the continuity of the album. This is most clearly felt in the songs "Verminess," "Downpour Girl," "Crippled Horses," and the title track. The only song which breaks the album's momentum is "Towering Flesh," which melds grind, hardcore, and classic metal solos into a discontinuous mess.

Everything else on this album is a welcome assault. The CD comes with a special audio DVD surprise that would be anticlimactic to ruin... This entire album is gnar as fuck. Don't only buy this record. Buy everything that Relapse Records has released in the past six months; they are on point to the max.

-Brel Froebe



**Babyhead LP Compilation
SS Records**

It's on White Vinyl, bitches! Whatever, right? But the Babyhead comp is still a relatively worthwhile album to add to your collection. Here is why: the most well-known bands (i.e. the "best" bands) release the shittiest material on the album. The Country Teasers track be muthafuckin wack. Way sad. Great! But the inherent disappointment in this situation provides a special bonus: you get to hear rad songs from bands that I'm sure you have never heard about. The super star song by Sacramento's Sexy Prison, "Teen Wolves Party Like Whitney (HARD)," can only be danced to if you are a grimy ass underground dance fiend. It's some bang yo head shit. Super star song #2: THE INTELLIGENCE. Flannel Seattle. Garage post punk that doesn't just satisfy your urge to dream about robots; it fucking delivers the goods. Perfect pop guitars that are too off to be qualified as pop. Vocals are perfectly produced. This band goes on my underrated list. The primary disappointment of this compilation is the A Frames track. A Frames is the best band in the USA that you have never heard of. But their song "Bumble Bee," is muddy, sloppy, and a total letdown. However, this track is not representative or their material, which combines robots and the Misfits. Arrghh!

-Brel Froebe



Rambling with Abe:
Post-Election Fundown

If Bush wins plz come hlp me drown my sorrows... if Kerry is the vctr jubilate with me!
12-2AM
TONIGHT
WXBC... tune in or visit!
!!!!!!!
!!!!!!!

Skate Competition sadly unable to use PAC roof

by liv carrow

October 6th, the zeitgeist of our middle school years reemerged at the first ever Bard Skate Competition. The event was less of a competition than a skate showcase, since many competitors are somewhat out of practice. Several Bard skaters came out to strut their stuff as well as a whole bunch of awesome younger kids from the surrounding area.

The event took place in the back parking lot of the PAC, perhaps the most un-punk locale on campus, but was nevertheless a sight to behold. There were ramps, poles, a limbo-type apparatus, and a smashed-up pumpkin. Sam Bornstein and Grey Gerstein announced over a megaphone. There were dozens and dozens of kids going nuts in the audience for their friends and cohorts. Though most of the skaters "ate it" at least once, everyone still had some chops. And an official Skateboard Culture automobile cranked out an old school skate punk and hip hop soundtrack while the festivities raged on.

There was no official winner of the tournament, though one or two people were handed chunks of pumpkin as a trophies. No real hassling was

experienced for most of the two or three hours the fest raged on, except one visit by security guard Cliff who decided that Skateboarding is Not A Crime.

A few hours after the skating, there was the first official Smog show, a Bard-band extravaganza akin to last year's Punk Rock Prom lineup

(minus the off-campus paid members of Crestfallen/Charming Bastards, an early Black Flag cover band comprised of ex-members of the Noodles, and several other random rockers. Highlights of the evening included the headliners Lungs, whose set was just lovely, and the Tom Jones cover band fronted by Bard grad Corey Sullivan, who

reinvented the Jones songs in a style uncannily like Nick Cave and the Birthday Party.

We can hope that the Skateboarding Culture club will bring us more such fun-filled afternoons. One of the best events this semester, and from a club with a budget under \$100. Keep it alive.



Only you can prevent SMOG loss. Clean up after shows!

Japanther Rocks Out Red Room-Style at the Student MOG

by sky ferrara

So I was sitting in my room, staring at my Japanther Leather Wings Tour poster. I just finished putting up all my posters on my new dorm room wall and memories of last year started returning. I loved last year's Japanther show—there's just some-

thing about letting loose at a Japanther concert that seems to lift the weight right off my shoulders. I mean who doesn't love fuzzy, danceable beats that are being put out by two guys who appear more afraid of you than you are of joining the small, disheveled mosh

pit five feet ahead? This year's show was no exception. I danced, enjoyed the high energy they displayed, and occasionally chuckled at a variety of somewhat ironic, nonsensical lyrics that seem to embody their catch, clever slop-rock.

I like how there's a genre for performers who base their style on being really hardcore and intensely apathetic (both appearance-wise and musically), but add just enough gim-

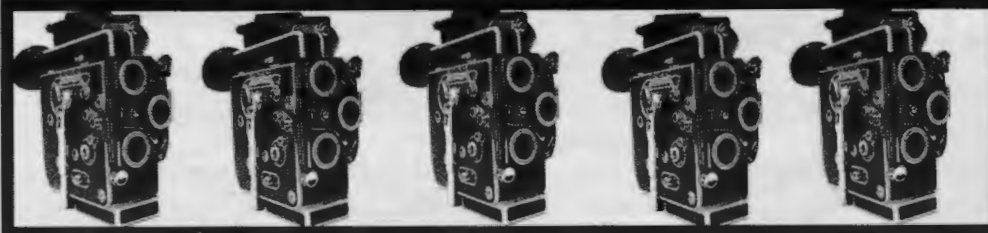
micks and melodies to make what they do interesting and enjoyable to themselves and others. Don't get me wrong, about 80 percent of the music I listen to is based on these principles—so obviously I support this genre. These performers don't really seem concerned about making their art/music better, but contain certain qualities that appeal to a variety of different crowds and let them compete with more serious artists and musicians. Telephone mics, live sampling, a three-stringed bass and a

two man ensemble seems to be working for them. Their live performances usually turn into fifty minutes of the most fun I've had in my long, miserable day. Japanther always throws down some insanely catchy tracks complete with their in-your-face attitude. I had a great time at the last Japanther show in SMOG, I guess you can say I'm a sucker for fuzzy bass/drum combos. If you missed Japanther last week, just bug Brel into getting them to come play here again soon.



Visit the Philip K. Dick Radio Hour for ELECTION NIGHT COVERAGE TUESDAY NIGHT TEN O'CLOCK

The Latest on:
- Katherine Harris
- Medical Marijuana
- President called by Midnight!



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 film \ \ film \ \ film
 film // film // film

A Very Subtitle Halloween: Top Ten Horror Movies That Are Not In English



(1988) 2. Audition 3. High Tension (Haute Tension) 4. Diabolique (1955)
 5. Funny Games 6. Suspiria 7. Horror Hotline . . . Big Head Monster
 8. A Tale of Two Sisters 9. This Night I'll Possess Your Corpse 10. Incubus

Same old Saw: Slap-dash, fun horror flick excites

by jason michelitch

It's really hard to say bad things about *Saw*. This frenetic, techno-pulsing, eerie, violent thriller is about as engaging as a film can get. The plot is complex, the pacing is hyper, and the intensity is in your face. This is, of course, hidden under a barrage of bad acting and small lapses in logic. The film opens in a dingy room where two men have been kidnapped and chained to pipes on opposite ends. There is a dead body on the floor in the center with a gun in one hand and dictaphone in the other. Both men find tapes in their pockets with messages from the famous

jigsaw killer who explains that they must follow the clues (and possibly kill each other) to stay alive. If you are thinking that this sounds like the beginning of a very twisted riddle, you are right on the money. Jigsaw's MO is that he sets up traps for his victims to kill themselves, placing them in the middle of a razor wire maze or injecting them with poison and making it a challenge to open the safe with the antidote.

The movie launches into a series of flashbacks, including the stories of how each man (Cary Elwes and *Saw* writer Leigh Whannell) ended

up in the room. Two cops, Elwes' family and Jigsaw's previous victims (only one of which survived) enter the picture and things start to get really interesting. Fast-paced chase scenes, horrific violence, tense moments, interwoven storylines and complicated mind games all serve to keep the viewer on the edge of his seat in this pulse pounding, graduated from the school of David Fincher's *Seven*.

Jigsaw, on the other hand, will go down as the luckiest killer in history. Sleeping aides wear off the exact second he wants them to; wherever he is

hiding, the people in the house won't look for him; and there are many other inconsistencies that would give away key pieces of the plot. Elwes totes around the same half-British, half-American accent he displayed in *The Princess Bride*, making many of his more emotional scenes laughable, and Whannell was clearly only cast because he wrote the screenplay (he can also be seen as Axel in *The Matrix Reloaded*). However, first time director James Wan manages to get the most out of the camera work and soundtrack in a film that is as scary as it is overproduced.

For what it is, *Saw* is about as good as it gets. It may be a little too dense or gruesome for a simple scary outing (the film was originally rated NC-17, having been cut to down to an R). However, if you are ready for the wild ride the trailer promises, it delivers in spades.



Porn Review II

Uranus or Bust:
 Watch as they Encounter the *Big Dipper* and Explore the *Milky Way!*

Uranus or Bust is raunchy. Raunchy, raunchy, raunchy, raunchy, but it is also really good. Halfway through this film, you will be left feeling satisfied and empty, with nothing more to give. Picking up where you left off in the film, and watching from there (30 minutes later, or when you wake up in the morning) provides enough hard-core anal pounding to tide you over until you can find a few minutes to do it all over again.

The cover of the film shows two young women against a celestial background, but the outer space theme is lost the second you open the cover and penetrate your DVD drive. The first scene opens with bacon frying in a pan. I am almost sure that astronauts do not eat bacon in space, but *bacon is really sexy*. Then a man begins to kiss the vagina of one of the many female stars. I do not personally find this actress to be the most attractive, but *the vagina is very sexy*. That is the first and last vagina close-up you see. From here on out, men get the "stanky on the hang-down."

The truth is, this movie is terrible and void of any outer space theme. The erotic energy of all the female co-stars combined does not cum close to one sizzling second of Jenna Jameson, Brianna Banks, or Sylvia Saint in any number of positions. You would like to think that so many unknown adult films stars would really "do it up"-sizzle on the screen in a desperate attempt to "make it big"- but these women just come across as blond and brunette cum receptacles.

Uranus or Bust is good material for anti-porn activists who might argue any number of points. My personal concern about these young women is mostly physical. Just how much can anal pounding can one girl take? How "gaping" can a hole be before she can no longer control her bowels? What about the long-term effects? Is it really worth the money? I am also concerned about the apparent lack of affection in these girls' lives, (on the set and the home front) but I find the false promise of an outer space themed adult film to be the most disturbing of all.

-Zak Kitnick

DANCE COMMANDER

(drawing of a unicorn)

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Top Ten Election Day Movies



I ♥ Huckabees: "Existential comedy" from Hollywood, land of falsity

by jason michelitch

I Heart Huckabees, a self-proclaimed "existential comedy," concerns itself chiefly with identities in crisis, which seems sadly appropriate since it seems to be suffering in the court of public opinion in a crisis the public is having over the film's identity: Philosophical Tract or Screwball Comedy? Film critics and regular people alike appear to be approaching the film from one extreme or another, without realizing that the film is writer/director David O. Russell and co-writer Jeff Baena's successful attempt to have their cake and eat it too. *Huckabees* is a film which attempts to tackle weighty subjects like *Our Place in the Universe*, but which is unafraid to simultaneously take the piss out of itself, throwing audiences who thought *Waking Life* was the deepest film since *The Seventh Seal* into confusion and disarray as they are confronted with an unrelentingly absurd look at the absurdity of human existence.

The plot, not that it really needs to be discussed, regards environmentalist poet Albert Markovski (Jason Schwartzman) who enlists the aid of two Existential Detectives (Lily Tomlin and Dustin Hoffman) in figuring out the link among three coincidental meetings, and in doing so solving the case of the meaning of Markovski's life. The detectives have other clients, including Tony Corn (Mark Wahlberg), a disillusioned firefighter who gets his philosophies confused when he starts reading a nihilist book by the existential detectives' nemesis Caterine Vauban (Isabelle Huppert); Brad Stand (Jude Law) who needs his corporate schmoozing persona reconciled with his true identity; and Brad's model

girlfriend (Naomi Watts), the bikinied spokesperson for the Huckabees corporation they both work for, who finds herself questioning whether or not she wants to be on display anymore. The fact that this disparate cast of characters manage to gel into a coherent ensemble underscores one of the film's major themes of the interconnectedness of the seemingly random. But for the moment, put aside all thoughts of existentialism, nihilism, or any other kind of -ism (also, do not think of a brown cow) and know that

to send the viewer from one scene to the next, consciously grasping whatever they're able while subconsciously absorbing the rest through visual and auditory osmosis. Each gesture and word of the film is packed with awkward comedy (awkward in a good way), shifting back and forth from subtle to blatant, though at a couple of

and large, the acting and the script are original and consistently odd and entertaining. The direction, editing, and visual tone of the picture, however, are all painfully post-Wes Anderson, to the point where, when one considers Schwartzman's blue blazer and frustrated geekiness, *Huckabees* could almost (with

at least look nice, and seem to be functional enough to let the script get its job done. Which brings us back to the question of what exactly the script's job is, beyond merely entertaining us. *Huckabees* is not a book, and it's not an article in a philosophical journal. It never tries to be either of these things and so we can't really be upset with it for not being as complete an exploration of the Question of Being as could be made in another format. The film does put forth some very stripped down versions of existentialism and nihilism, and tries to find some middle ground between them while still delivering a satisfyingly silly narrative in only 106 minutes. The film's success comes not in any grand conclusion to the questions it raises, but in its ability to recognize that raising these questions in the first place forces us to acknowledge the absurdity of existence. The movie's argument is not for either the oneness of being or the absence of meaning, but rather that while we sit and ponder these imponderables, we should remember to step outside of ourselves for a moment and notice how damned ridiculous we look, running around looking for meaning and importance and answers to Life's Big Conundrums. The fact that *Huckabees* is a serious film in which nothing is taken seriously is its greatest asset, and like all good comedy, when we watch it, we find we're really laughing at ourselves.



the cast and script are both unabashedly mental. At no point does *Huckabees* ever completely resemble a normal movie. The dialogue and scenarios are tautly constructed

moments the film veers too far into the realm of the obtrusively vulgar (seen most prominently in a very brief sex scene which seemed utterly out of place in the way it was shot). Still, by

a slight amount of tweaking) be watched as a bizarre sequel to *Rushmore*. It's a bit off-putting, for a story which seems so unique to be dressed in someone else's clothing, but the clothes

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Woodstock Film Festival Review Extravaganza

reviewed by fariyah zaman, michael lerman, and jason michelitch



Ah, Woodstock, our friendly upstate neighbor. Beloved site of infamous Rock 'n' Roll history, tasty organic culinary establishments, and one of the most accessible, most affordable film festivals in the state. If you are one of the many who have been ignoring this last fact, it's just about time to wake up.

The Woodstock Film Festival, coming out every fall with the saucy slogan "fiercely independent," has long had a fine, if low-key reputation. They tended to have a small but essential lineup of mostly American festival favorites and some impressive indie guests, with a special emphasis on films with local Catskills color. This year, the festival really appears to have upped the ante in the quantity department without compromising the quality.

The sheer number of films has increased significantly, as have ticket sales. There seems to be a greater number of foreign films included in the programming, such as the highly anticipated Hungarian thriller *Kontroll*, and *Notre Musique*, the new offering from Godard. Some of the films, such as Dylan Kidd's new offering *P.S.*, are also a major part of the lineup of bigger-name festivals like The New York Film Festival, meaning Woodstock appears to have hit the nail right on the head. And the guest list included Lili Taylor, Peter Gabriel, Bela Fleck, Sam Rockwell, Laura Linney, Maverick award winner Mira Nair, and many more. Mostly, there just seemed to be a general buzz surrounding the Woodstock Film Festival this year, the kind that comes with a sense of arrival.

Since the film festival organization is also ambitious enough to host year-round events as opposed to simply fading out after their annual triumph, I recommend that students try and keep an eye on their website, www.woodstockfilmfestival.com, to see if they live up to these goals with the same panache with which they put out their festival. For now, take a look at our reviews; many of the films will be coming out in the next year or so and you can consider it a sneak peek.

The Machinist

The highly anticipated film by Brad Anderson, director of such cult faves as *Next Stop Wonderland*, *Happy Accidents*, and *Session 9*, stars Christian Bale as Trevor Reznik, a man whose insomnia is so acute he hasn't slept in a year. The film is both a contemplation on what happens to the mind when it exists in this condition and a psychological thriller in which the protagonist is searching for its cause.

The first noticeable success of this film is its dark visual style, an interesting take on the near dream

state that Reznik calls life. Everything is generally stark and menacingly bland, locations bleak and decaying, the camera work slow and deliberate. When it's shot like this, even the carousel during a scene at the carnival becomes chilling. Think the gray tones of *Bringing Out the Dead*. Bale, who reportedly lost 63 pounds prior to shooting by living off of one can of tuna and an apple per day, fits right into the crumbling aesthetic, horrifyingly resembling a recent concentration camp survivor.

Broody mood aside, however, the film is a little bit of a mess. Despite the kind of impressive twist ending that you may be used to seeing from Anderson, without the tightest of plot progression backing it up, it doesn't have the kind of big impact that you may be used to feeling from Anderson. There are dozens of movies out there like this one, and very little that sets it apart from all of its cousins. F.Z.



P.S.

The second film of Roger Dodger director Dylan Kidd, *P.S.* is another fable of successful, middle-aged, so-called adults who are just a little bit lost and lonely. In the former, it is the pathetically womanizing Roger Swanson. In *P.S.*, it is Columbia art school admissions officer Louise Harrington, who can't seem to let go of her high school artist sweetheart that died in a car crash.

This is why she can't control herself when the graduate application of Scott Feinstadt ("That 70's Show"'s Topher Grace), painter and spitting image of her deceased love, finds its way to her desk. Louise begins an affair with Scott, leading them both through the harrowing architecture of her unraveling neuroses. We are led through a lovely little parable on how a life can change, even if the catalyst consists of all the wrong reasons.

As is customary for Kidd's work, *P.S.* features a razor-sharp script that is the highlight of the film. The writing, both witty and tender, is only helped by the sincere performances of the talented cast, including Laura Linney as the protagonist, Gabriel Byrne as her colleague and ex-husband, and Marcia Gay Harden as her scheming best friend from high school. The real star, however, is breakout leading man Topher Grace, who proves his ability to add depth to

his already acknowledged comedic timing. He's one to watch - especially in a better film.

For while the characters and dialogue are standout, the film as a whole lacks focus. The fascinating beginning and moving ending are drained of some of their impact because the middle is something of an indiscernible mass of nervous breakdowns and witty comebacks. Also, while the claustrophobic effect of Kidd's pared-down list of locations does help us understand how limited Louise's network is, I still maintain that he seems far more suited to shooting the fast pace and bright lights of the urban outdoors as he did in *Roger Dodger*. The film is entirely worth seeing, but the film is just slightly undone by its own disorganization and inevitable comparisons to its predecessor. F.Z.



Our Music

It's amazing that after 88 movies, Jean-Luc Godard still has some spark left in him. The pressure of being a living legend alone must be staggering enough to turn one's work stilted. Yet even in *Notre Musique*, the new filmic essay on politics and existentialism, this seventy-four year old filmmaker still proves to the audience that he knows what he's doing. Split into three sections, one completely comprised of found war footage (fictional and real), the film builds a foundation for discussing Hell on earth. It then goes on to tell intersecting stories of a politically active young journalist and Godard himself giving an image and text lecture to his students. Though this second act is wrought with alienation and confusing overlapping dialogue (the subtitles didn't help either), *Our Music* begins to fall into place thematically

long before it pieces itself together logically. That is to say that topics pop out at the audience like neon road signs, challenging the viewer to build their own thesis from the work. A beautiful and lush mixture of emotions and images untangles itself throughout the film, leaving us satisfied before we even realize why. M.L.



Ong Bak: Muay Thai Warrior

If you regularly attended "Kung Fu Movie Night" last semester, you may have been graced with the action styling of Phnom Yeurum. Better known as Tony Jaa, he is the young Thai star of the film *Ong Bak: Muay Thai Warrior*. Well, now Woodstock has been graced in the same way. This up and coming film features possibly the worst plotline ever - a warrior leaves his small village to retrieve the stolen head of its ancient religious statue and must fight his way to the top in the big city to find said statue - and some of the best hand-to-hand combat ever photographed. Shot over the course of five years, Jaa was said to have broken his leg from kicking someone so hard and put more than one stuntman in the hospital from work-related concussions. He was recently offered a spot on Jackie Chan's stunt team but turned it down, stating that he was going to be a star in his own right. And he is. Watching *Ong Bak* fight is like going to the circus. Jaa dives through hoops of barbed wire, smashes motorcycle helmets with his knee and fights with his legs on fire. Even if you don't like kung fu, it's hard not to be impressed. M.L.

Chain

You may not recognize the name Jem Cohen off the top of your head, but I'd be willing to guess you have heard of the band Fugazi. And if you are big enough fan, you might have seen Cohen's masterfully constructed portrait of Fugazi entitled *Instrument*. *Chain*, a contemplative new essay on how corporate culture seeps into our lives, was just a little taste of the deep, meditative work that Cohen is capable of making. Brilliantly conceived and smoothly executed, *Chain* examines the mysteries of modern technology as it affects the lives of two different women.

One is Japanese spokesperson Miho Nakaido, who is trying

to get amusement parks built in America, something like directional reversal of Tokyo Disney. Through her extended trips through the United States, Nakaido slowly turns aspects of her life over to the corporation. She even learns English, which gradually displaces Japanese as her primary language, by repeating their mission statement over and over again. Nakaido is peddling a product that essentially creates more cross-marketing, in the same way that Disney World exists to showcase its own products, characters, etc.; she gives her life over her to her work and, in turn, over to the commodity of commodity.

Unexpectedly, Cohen's second story choice deals with a

homeless girl (Mira Billotte) who tries to make her way across the country by hitchhiking. Billotte is perfectly set up as she explains that when asked to name a familiar place by her latest ride, she requests to be dropped off at the nearest mall. She's stayed there ever since. As the film continues, we realize how much her life is dictated by corporate culture, even when she seems to break all the rules. From the privately owned motels that pay her under the table - a lifestyle that dies out quickly because of the uprising of corporations - to the high priced video camera that she found outside the mall, each piece of Billotte's life is effected by the same large technological landscape that

Nakaido is plugged into - hence the title of the film.

Largely comprised of voiceovers and static cinematography that highlights urban landscapes and corporate logos, Cohen's "documentary" is fake, with Nakaido and Billotte playing fictional characters. Yet the world created in the film is very real. We are reminded of this in some of the piece's key segments, like the one where the audience watches images

of construction while listening to messages from credit card companies left on Cohen's answering machine. The complexity of the connections is often a lot to take in at once, but then again, that's kind of the point. M.L.



Cosmopolitan

A short, sweet film from Nisha Ganatra, the director of *Chutney Popcorn* and writer of *Monsoon Wedding*, *Cosmopolitan* stars Roshan Seth as an Indian family man living in the US when his wife leaves him and his daughter abandons him for a year in Mongolia with her German boyfriend. "But I've never been on my own!" he says as his family drives away, leaving him with nothing but a stack of Cosmo magazines, a week's worth of frozen dinners, and too many reminders.

Cosmopolitan is a low key film and as such

it is fairly successful. It may not have the grandeur of Ganatra's earlier projects, but that does not keep it from being one clean little package. The protagonist's struggles with familial breakdown and finding new love, specifically in the rubric of his conflicting traditions as an Indian American, are surprisingly honest and relatable. His acting is wonderful, as is that of Carol Kane, in an unusual role for her as the new love interest.

More importantly, as a whole, the film retains your emotional interest without having to take you for a traumatizing journey of some sort, which is sadly somewhat rare these days. Also, the distinctive mock-

up/homage of traditional Bollywood numbers works well, because while it breaks up the basic narrative, it is in keeping with the film's vibrant, crisp aesthetic, providing a common thread. Finally, to anybody who follows Indian diaspora film, keep an eye out for cameos by the likes of *American Desi's* Purva Bedi and Kal Penn. F.Z.



Kontroll

Somewhere between Adrian Lyne's *Jacob's Ladder* and Danny Boyle's *Trainspotting* resides Hungarian director Nimrod Antal's debut film, *Kontroll*. This moody yet hip piece of cinema can't seem to decide whether it wants to tell the story of subway traffic controllers in Budapest or the chilling tale of the murderer who lurks in the tunnels, pushing people off of platforms. Starting with the latter and quickly moving to the former before too long, *Kontroll* has a lot of trouble juggling the two storylines. Despite this, however, the unusual atmosphere of Hungary's underground allows for great cinematography and Antal proves himself as a capable director destined to make fully engaging pictures once he sticks to one subject matter. Often great to watch, *Kontroll* falls a little flat in the end, confused about both the story it wants to tell and its resolution. M.L.



Guerilla: The Taking of Patty Hearst

Most Americans have some knowledge of the story of Patty Hearst, granddaughter and heiress of entertainment mogul William Randolph Hearst, who was kidnapped while a Berkley student in the 1970's by a radical political group known as the Symbionese Liberation Army. After a few months as a kidnap victim, Hearst suddenly declared herself a member of the group, only to claim she was abused and

brainwashed upon her recovery. For Americans during the time of her abduction this still highly debated incident wasn't just a story, it was the story, that took over every news station and shocked and disturbed the nation.

Although many have chosen Hearst as the subject for their film, documentary director Robert Stone takes a very innovative approach. Rather than making a film about any of the

traditional topics - a biography of Hearst's life, the politics of the SLA, a discussion of whether Hearst was truly brainwashed or merely weak in choosing sides - Stone explores the Patty Hearst story as a cultural and media phenomenon. He talks to early members and historians to find out what about

America created a group like the SLA, and what about America made us so fascinated with their accidentally revolutionary activities. F.Z.



POPaganda: The Art and Subversion of Ron English

Ron English, for those of you who don't know, has made a name for himself as a Billboard Liberator. Frustrated with the economic injustice of who has access to public space in America, and looking for a way to get his work out of the gallery and onto the streets, English would drive around Manhattan with a team of like-minded individuals, pasting his own work over corporate-bought billboard space. And for the record, there really is no other kind of billboard space out there. From biting sociopolitical commentary to lighter mockery,

from McDonald's to Apple to Jesus, nothing was safe from English's public criticism.

Director Pedro Carvajal spent over a decade trailing English in his illegal jaunts (which, by the way, have landed him in jail on several occasions), filming during the best and worst of times, documenting his movement from billboard pirate to gallery darling, interviewing him and his family, collecting footage from talk shows, etc... His ad-hoc filming style, normally a frustrating by-product of the digital age, here matches the spirit of the artist in question.

And while the end product, this film ten years in the making, is not particularly innovative or noteworthy in and of itself, the subject matter and the director's dedication make it a film experience worth having.

English's work is so pertinent, so timely, and so plain old ballsy that there is no way you can watch this film without being entertained. Between his personality, ideas, and artwork, not to mention the inclusion of the work of other anti-corporate guerrilla artists such as Shepard Fairey, Artflux, and Cicada, there isn't a stimulus-free moment in the house. F.Z.



Off to War

Not much to be said about *Off to War* - a film which appears to actually be a television special for the Discovery Channel - about the calling up of the Arkansas National Guard. The movie is not particularly bad, but - and I feel rotten saying this - it isn't particularly interesting either. The film follows several members of the national guard as they prepare to be called up, showing us the families and lives they'll be missing for up to two years as part of their tour of service. I suppose this sounds callous, but I find myself desensitized to this kind of documentary. Everything from *Fahrenheit 9/11* to human interest stories on the evening news have wrung every last tear out of me - I'm a dry dishrag. Intellectually, of course, I feel compassion for the subjects of the film, and they're all remarkably candid about their experiences, which the film does a fairly good job of capturing. But I'm super-saturated. I can't hold any more. I'm sorry.

The most interesting part of the film, to me, isn't anything necessarily directly in the movie, but rather the documenting of the town's efforts to send their troops off with high morale and tangential points it raised for me personally. The importance of psyching up troops is something I feel doesn't really get much attention in an environment as generally anti-war as Bard, but it's worth thinking about. I remember, back before we were going into Afghanistan, a friend of mine who's far more Armed-Forces friendly than I sent me a picture of a group of soldiers in war-paint, whooping and screaming. "Isn't that awesome?" he asked me. I reacted with typical pacifist scorn that it was disgusting and displayed a disgusting mindset. "Fuck you, man" he shot back, clearly pissed off, "you want them to die out there?" My mind reeled for a moment, and what seemed paradoxical to me before became utterly clear: it doesn't matter what I think of a war, or of war in general - in order for the soldiers in it to survive, they need, to some degree, to be freed of rationality and facts. War is fucked up

and shitty, this we all agree on. But it isn't the soldiers' fault that they're in the war, and if they have to be there then I want them back in one piece. And that means, reprehensible as it may seem on paper, that I then automatically care more for the life of an American soldier than for the life of a soldier they are fighting even if I don't agree with the war. In the film, a lot of time is spent on the misconceptions of the people of Arkansas in regards to Iraq's involvement in 9/11 and in regards to international politics in general. At first this irked me, and I assumed the film was purposefully showing how ill-informed the people sent to war are about they war they are about to fight. But by the end of the film, when the soldiers are standing in the middle of a fireworks-lit, balloons and streamers send off from the entire town, I didn't care that everything about the scene was jingoistic. It had to be jingoistic. I found that I could simultaneously

despise the lies of a war-bound administration and appreciate the lies told to a group of war-bound soldiers. Anything to make sure they keep themselves alive. I'm not entirely sure how much of what I just said I'll believe tomorrow, but it's a subject worth continual consideration. And though I can't guarantee that the makers of *Off to War* intended for me to take the ball and run quite so far with it, I thank them for giving me the opportunity to do so. J.M.



Screaming Men

Deep within the chilly lands of Finland, a large freighter ship breaks its way through frozen waters. The ship deposits a chorus of 20-plus men out onto the snow, men who immediately begin to arrange themselves in three rows as their conductor steps out in front of them. He waves his arms and they begin to scream at the top their lungs, some in high shrill pitches, some with deep low grunts, all loud and fierce. The blue and pink sky glows in the background as they shiver and shake in the wind, projecting their voices for miles and miles.

These are the beautiful opening

images of Mika Ronkainen's engrossing new documentary, *Screaming Men*, a film that follows the famous Finnish choir while they search for new members, tour all over Europe and Asia, create political and phonic havoc, and incorporate new techniques such as disposal flash cameras into their pieces of "music." Centering primarily on conductor Petri Sirvio and his relationship to the Screaming Men (often harsh, but loving), the film follows the ins and outs of the group. Practices are intercut with auditions, pep talks, and performantes, and every moment has the audience glued to the screen with either humor or interest. High points include reasons

for joining the Screaming Men (one member even cites his experiences as therapeutic) to the dry, hilarious sarcasm and ego of Sirvio, often reminiscent of Lars Von Trier in *The Five Obstructions*.

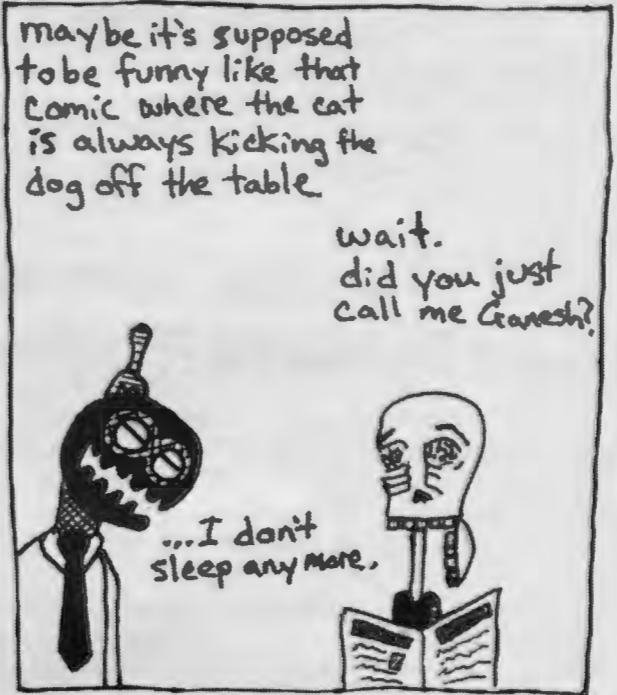
Much like the eclectic repertoire that the men perform, which includes everything from national anthems to articles in law manuscripts, Ronkainen smartly creates a blend of tones throughout the film by mixing the eye-popping cinematography of Finland with personal home video footage interviews. This synthesis of moods keeps the audience not only engaged, but also sympathetic to the characters as they scream their



way from Finland to Tokyo to Paris. Appropriately, *Huutajat*, the original title of the film, is a Finnish word that can be used for several types of sound

that comes from the mouth. And, despite its lack of deep interpretation, *Huutajat* is entertainment in the highest form. M.L.

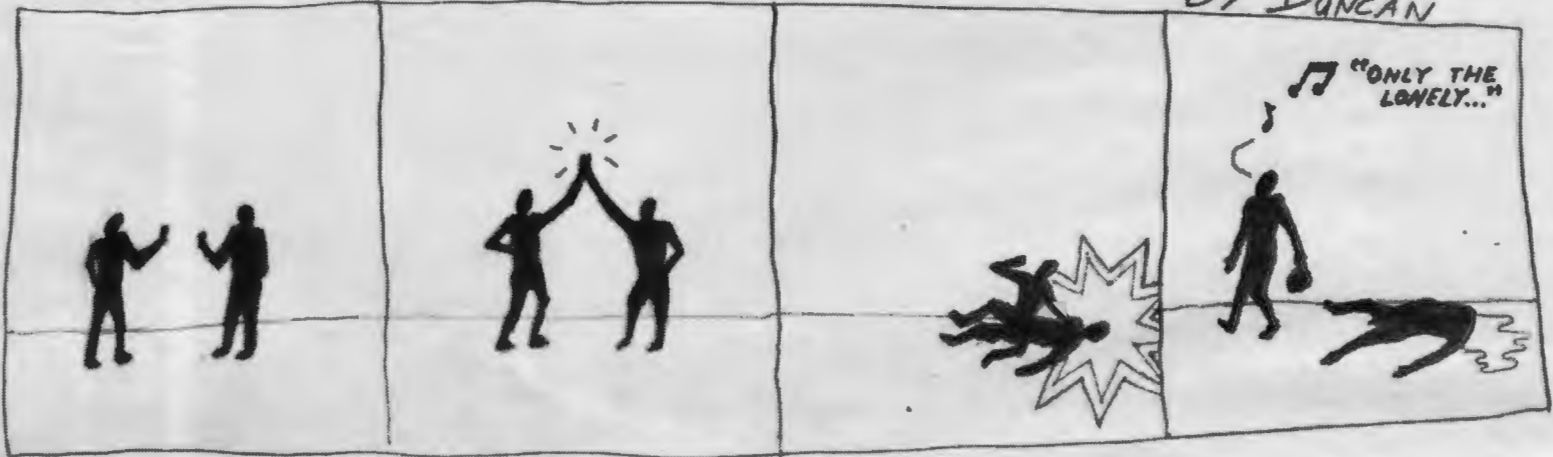
Looge



by Michael Dudczak

THE STRENUOUS LIFE

BY DUNCAN



By Caitlin Mitchell