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Students to Strike on the Nineteenth

Plan to educate, provoke awareness and outrage as U.S. enters its fifth year of aggression in Iraq

A student strike is scheduled to be held at Bard College on Monday, March 19th, 2007. This day will mark the four-year anniversary of the war on Iraq. All members of the Bard and surrounding communities are welcome and encouraged to attend. The goal for the day is committing our minds and conversations to addressing the violence that the United States government is inflicting on the Middle East.

The purpose of the strike is to create a break from daily life. We are abstaining from business-as-usual, defecting from our classes and encouraging other community members to join us. We believe that the seriousness of U.S. policy and its aftermath in Iraq demand that Americans with the privilege to do so interrupt their routines for deeper, collective reflection and learning about the nightmare unfolding before us. Those of us privileged to live in a country at war and not know the difference are implicit in the violence inflicted by our host state.

The day of March 19th will include scheduled teach-ins, films, and dialogues concerning multiple facets

of Western involvement in the Middle-East, including but not limited to the history of Iraqi-U.S. relations, assessment of the current situation, and the danger that Western Imperialism poses to the region (such as the steadily increasing threat of U.S. violence against Iran). In addition to speakers and dialogue sessions, the events will include visuals intended to indicate the gravity of the situation to the entire campus. Thousands of small flags, representing the total number of dead civilians and soldiers, will fly in spaces across the campus, to give a sense of the toll of lives this war has taken thus far. Student-activist 'soldiers,' will hand out pamphlets with alternative information about the so-called, "War on Terror" and the war on Iraq, while occupying imitation checkpoints set up on the campus.

The strike will be dynamic and provoking. We are enthusiastic and committed to making March 19th the first day of a revival of the knowledge, energy, and enthusiasm necessary for sparking vigorous struggle against the injustice that haunts our very identities as citizens of the United States.

News Bites from Iraq

by kade crockford

Outrage over Imminent Execution of Iraqi Women BAGHDAD, Mar 2 (IPS) - Three young women accused of joining the Iraqi insurgency movement and engaging in "terrorism" have been sentenced to death, provoking protest from rights organizations fearing that this could be the start of more executions of women in post-Saddam Hussein Iraq. All four are being held in the Khadamiya female prison in northern Baghdad. One of the three alleged "terrorists," Muhammad, 25, gave birth to a daughter after her arrest and is still nursing the child in prison. A second, Talib, 31, is also in prison with her three-year-old child, according to Amnesty International.

Rape Cases Emerge from the Shadows BAGHDAD, Mar 1 (IPS) Reports of the gang-rape of 20-year-old Sabrine al-Janabi by three policemen has set off new demands for justice from Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki's government. Janabi, who lives in the Hai al-Amil area of southern Baghdad with her husband, was taken from her home February 18 to a police station and accused of assisting resistance fighters. Janabi told al-Jazeera on February 19 that three police commandos raped her in the police garrison after accusing her of cooking for resistance fighters. "One of them put his hand on my mouth so no one outside the room could hear me," she said in a videotaped statement. "I told them 'I did not know that an Iraqi could do this to another Iraqi.'" Nouri al-Maliki's office issued a statement that medical evidence showed Janabi had not been raped. That statement has turned the event into a political crisis.

Fallujans Defiant Amidst Chaos

FALLUJAH, Feb 22 (IPS) - Resistance attacks against U.S. forces have been continuing in Fallujah despite military onslaughts and strong security measures. Two

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Iraqi and US forces in Fallujah, Iraq during a lull in fighting. Sergeant Derek McGee (not seen here) describes his second tour in his recently published collection of stories, When I Wished I Was Here. For more, see an excerpt on page 10 and the article on page 4.

photo contributed by Derek McGee

Sound of Crashing Masonry, or Three Weeks in Al Kut

Bard student Haydt recounts experience at start of the war
 by zach haydt

It was obvious things were falling apart when we got to Al Kut, capitol of Wasit province. The palm-tree filled city of 400,000 sprawled along the banks of the Tigris River about one hundred miles East of Baghdad, very near the Iranian border. It had taken our brigade over a month to fight that far north since the invasion began on March 19, 2003. Eventually it would take only four hours for us to convoy back to Kuwait. The Iraqi army had been utterly defeated - in fact, it more disappeared than was destroyed. Yet my memories are of strings of gunshots in the night, seething protests hoisting wooden coffins outside our compound, anti-aircraft cannons in every schoolyard, on streets, in bushes in the parks, all loaded, rounds in the chamber big as your fist, ready to go. One of them could have shredded a building in moments.

I had spent most of the war in a tent, feverishly reviewing and writing up hundreds of intelligence reports each day. Rather foolishly feeling that I was missing out on something, I volunteered to leave our large brigade headquarters in an Iraqi airbase south of the city, on the southern bank of the Tigris. I was sent to a forward headquarters unit setup in the midst of the city on the other side of the river. There were thirty or forty Marines there, about half infantry and half headquarters types, and a half dozen army

Special Forces troops. There were we Marines and a handful of infantry patrols to cover the city, who patrolled by day and spent the evenings on roof tops, which reminded me of the early ancestors of man who slept in trees to avoid predators. This was the extent of governance in the city.

The former Baath Party building I lived in for three weeks was a hideous, squat, gray cement combination of blockhouse and office that had been stripped utterly bare by locals. The degree of thoroughness was amazing. Light switches were taken and the wires ripped from behind the walls, leaving cracks up to the ceiling. All the breaker boxes had been pried free as well. Two bathrooms looked like someone had thrown hand grenades in them after ripping the pipes from the walls and smashing the squat-toilets from the floor and taking them home. Every piece of furniture and all the doors were removed. A chandelier that had hung from a dome forty feet above the first story

foyer was somehow cut down and absconded with, despite the seeming impossibility of doing this without a ladder inside the building. Thinking about it made my head spin.

The only thing not stolen from the building, which in fact seemed to have been avoided as though untouchable, was a western style squat-toilet. It was located in what must have been the personal bathroom of the top Baath official in the building, and in retrospect held a grim symbolism.

This was not an exceptional case. Looting was general and intense, fueled by a desperate poverty brought on by the Iran-Iraq War and made fatal by a decade of US-backed sanctions. The substantial population of pro-Western Iraqis turned out to be a dream. In poverty the populace had become much more religious and much less educated than before the war, as we would see later. In the industry we called this a "failure of intelligence," as opposed to the

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“Pain Ray” and Other Experimental Weapons May Be Heading To Iraq

by liza birnbaum

It sounds like something out of a science-fiction novel - a “pain ray” mounted on military vehicles, designed to inflict a feeling that victims describe as excruciating - similar to being immersed in molten lava. But this is real; it's the Air Force's Active Denial System (ADS), a nonlethal weapon that's been certified for use in Iraq, despite questions about potential misuse and long-term effects.

The ADS, a weapon that shoots electromagnetic waves that penetrate skin and cause intolerable pain, akin to being burnt alive, was developed by the private contractor Raytheon for the Air Force over the course of ten years. The project remained secret until 2001, and has been in various stages of testing since then. After numerous trials involving both humans and animals, the Air Force has announced its certainty that the weapon, which provokes “prompt and highly motivated escape behavior,” does not cause long-term damage to those exposed to its beam. Although the effect of the ADS is so painful that even anesthesia did not prevent subjects from reflexively closing their eyes and turning away, reports claim that the most severe side effects are mild blisters, and that corneal damage - the most pressing concern - heals within 24 hours. The current model has a range of at least 500 meters and is mounted on a Humvee, which allows mobility and further-reaching effects than other non-lethal weapons, such as rubber bullets or tear gas.

Proponents of the ADS argue that it will allow troops to disperse dangerous crowds without having to resort to killing, and that its immediate deterrent effect will allow for easier control of chaotic situations. “It can be used to deny an area to an individual or groups, to control access, to prevent an



Active Denial System developed by US government.

individual or individuals from carrying out an undesirable activity, and to delay or disrupt adversary activity,” says Capt. Jay Delarosa, a spokesman for the Joint Non-Lethal Weapons Directorate. A promotional video on the directorate's site praises the weapon's usefulness in situations “where insurgents hide among non-combatants.”

However, human rights advocates question the system's safety and necessity. Marc Garlasco, the senior military analyst at Human Rights Watch commented in an interview: “With the Active Denial System the main desire is pain, and we have to be very careful because in international law is very clear that devices created solely for the creation of pain can eventually lead to torture and are therefore illegal, and it's very critical that the United States does a careful legal review of the Active Denial System and is open with their findings. To date they have not been open.” The possibility of misuse is grave - increasing the time or intensity of exposure could become a new means of torture and painful death. Writer Richard Hawkins questioned the weapon's soundness in real-world situations, asking, “What happens if the people

faced with such a weapon can't just run away? What happens if they're trapped in a crowd, and the crowd can't move?”

Over \$40 million is spent yearly on experimental non-lethal weapons, and the U.S. occupation of Iraq has sparked a renewed interest in such measures. One of the main categories of development is directed-energy weapons, which includes microwave-based weapons such as the ADS, as well as lasers and inventions such as the Pulsed Energy Projectile, a system that emits an infrared pulse that causes extreme pain and temporary paralysis when it hits its target. There have been several reports, although unconfirmed by the U.S. government, of a lethal laser-based weapon being tested on humans in Iraq - eyewitnesses and medical personnel describe a silent gun that melts metal and mutilates its targets without any sort of bullets or shrapnel. Analysts have speculated that these undocumented devices could be similar to the Tactical High Energy Laser (THEL) developed for use in Reagan's Star Wars initiative. Rumors of such exploitation of directed-energy systems emphasize the

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The Fantastic Tale of Acoustic Kitty and Friends

Animal cyborg warfare straight from comics to field by andy kopas

Have no fear citizens, the CIA, that bastion of information supremacy and black ops manipulation, harnesses the latest and greatest technologies to keep you, the average American, safe from whatever threats may avail you. They are in the skies, in the phones, and in the streets, monitoring and disarming all who would think to oppose the great United States of America.

Well, not exactly. Technologies they may eventually harness, but the failures along the way are numerous and occasionally notorious. The MKULTRA LSD experiments have become fairly common knowledge, but besides those the CIA was also keeping busy with experiments in the full range of mind-altering

to use the cat for long-distance incognito audio surveillance. In initial tests the cat would get too distracted by its sense of hunger, so another surgery was scheduled to deal with that problem. The new and improved Acoustic Kitty was sent on its first field test and immediately run over and slain by a passing taxi. The project was declared a total failure and complete loss.

If there was any thought that forty years of animal rights activism might have ended such gross exploitations, it's not so. Two weeks ago Chinese scientists announced that they had successfully surgically modified a pigeon to be controlled by remote. By implanting electrodes directly into areas of the brain that control movement, researchers were



substances. Humanity did not prove to be a boundary the CIA was not willing to cross, and animal warfare experiments also abounded.

Perhaps most well known of these experiments was project Acoustic Kitty of the 1960s. True to its namesake, Acoustic Kitty was a plan to turn the traditional domestic housecat into a twenty million dollar feline superspy. Surgically modified to have an antenna in its tail and a battery-powered radio in its stomach, the plan was

able to replicate the electrical impulses that command the pigeon to fly up, down, left or right. Similar results were achieved some time ago with mice as well.

While this research does have some relevant civilian application in human neuromechanics, it's hard to believe that is the driving goal. Especially given the DARPA funding of parallel research concerning sharks. Hoping to tap into the shark's natural stealth and highly refined electric and chemical senses, DARPA's intentions were to transform them into spies of the sea. Boston University professor Jelle Atema attempted to control the motion of the sharks by mimicking the neural response to the smell of squid. This would cause the shark to turn and swim in whichever was the desired direction. Professor Atema's DARPA funding has since run out, but he hopes to continue the work under a private benefactor.

Coupled with the menagerie of animals already seeing action in the war, ranging from armored dogs controlling crowds to sea lions patrolling harbors to chickens riding on top of Humvees, this news gravely reaffirms the fact that not only is animal warfare alive and kicking, its swimming and flying its way out of nightmares and science fiction stories and into the twenty-first century.

THE BARD FREE PRESS

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Schedule for March 19th

Unless noted otherwise, the location is the lawn outside of Kline. In the case of inclement weather, organizers will be available outside of Kline and post signs.

All Day. INFORMATIONAL "CHECKPOINT" [near the crosswalk at Annandale Road]. Email as916@bard.edu if you want to help distribute info.

3:00 am FLAG PLACING.
Come help create a visual representation of the deaths in Iraq in front of Kline

10:00 Film TBA [MPR]

10:30 Community Bike Ride. [Meet at Old Gym/ Bike Co-op with your bike].

12 - 12:30 OPENING REMARKS
Stage and P.A. will be set up outside of Kline for these events.

12:30 - 2:30 SPEECHES
Given by an array of Professors, former Army members, and activists. Speeches will cover a wide variety of topics, from the history of US Imperialism in the Middle East to the connections between academic education and political engagement.

2:30 - 4:30 WORKSHOPS/TALK-IN [Location TBA- meet at Kline]
Several small workshops will split off to engage students in moderated group dialogue.
The purpose is both to be educational, sharing group knowledge, but also to encourage all of us to come out of the comfort of Bard and attempt to discuss our opinions and thoughts on a variety of topics such as: Palestine, Iran, Bard students' relationship to the Iraq War. There will also be moderated open discussions (without a set topic) to generate dialogue about the day's general sentiments.

5:00 - 7:00 FILM
Battle of Algiers [MPR] (See film schedule for full description)

6:30 - 8:30 OPEN MIC
A time for students, faculty, and community to express their ideas, what they've learned and thought about during the day, read from another author's work, or anything else regarding the war. It does not need to be prepared, long, or articulate (but can be any of these!). Poetry, Music, Speeches, readings, etc.

7:15 - 8:45 FILM: My Country, My Country [MPR] (See film schedule for full description)

8:30-9 VIGIL: Meet outside of Kline to begin a candlelight vigil.

10:30 FILM: Private [MPR] (See film schedule for full description)

Letters Regarding the Strike

Dear Staff and Faculty,

We're writing to notify you that an academic strike is being called for March 19th, which marks the four-year anniversary of the war on Iraq. The purpose of the strike is to create an atmosphere dedicated to thought and conversation regarding the ongoing violence in the Middle East.

Though we understand and recognize the amount of work that professors put into their syllabi and curricula, the strike is not intended as a slight to anyone's academic pursuits. However, we feel that it is more important than ever at this time to interrupt our usual schedules to give proper attention to the war. When the U.S. began its offensive against Iraq four years ago there was a level of outrage that initiated and justified an academic strike. Rather than getting used to the fact of the war after four years and allowing ourselves to continue with the same level of comfort and routine, we should be growing more thoughtful as well as angrier and more active in our struggles against this ongoing injustice.

The events of March 19th will take place

in the MPR, and will include speakers, screenings, teach-ins, and a vigil. We know that our activities on this day will not end the war. We are under no illusions about our ability to turn any heads in Washington, or even in Albany. Our intention here is to be a catalyst for further thought, discussion, and action in the Bard community.

Currently we are looking for speakers and workshop leaders, and we would love for interested staff and faculty to be involved. If you would like to participate or contribute in any way or if you wish to contact us for other reasons, please feel free to do so. We hope that you are able to understand and empathize with this initiative. We respect whatever decision you choose to make regarding the level of your participation on March 19th. We encourage you to integrate the spirit of reflection into your day in solidarity with the students—whether it is through your work or actively participating in the day's events.

Thank you, and see you on the 19th!

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Dear Bard students!

An academic strike is being called for March 19th, which marks the four-year anniversary of the war on Iraq. The purpose of this strike is to create an atmosphere dedicated to thought and conversation regarding the ongoing violence in the Middle East. We know that Bard students and Bard faculty set great store in their academics. The strike is not intended as a slight to anyone's scholarly pursuits, but rather about making exceptional here for a day what is a perpetually exceptional circumstance: we feel that it is more important than ever at this time to interrupt our daily schedules for one day to give proper attention to the war. When the U.S. began its offensive against Iraq four

years ago there was a level of outrage that initiated and justified an academic strike. Rather than getting used to the fact of the war after four years and allowing ourselves to continue with the same level of comfort and routine, we should be getting angrier and more active in our struggles against this ongoing injustice.

We know that our activities on this day will not end the war. We are under no illusions about our ability to turn any heads in Washington, DC, or even in Albany. Our intention here is to be a catalyst for further thought, discussion, and action.

Throughout the day of March 19th, films will be shown in the MPR, starting at 10:00 A.M., and there will be speakers, speak-ins, teach-ins, and a vigil. Even if you do

not feel comfortable committing to strike for the entire day, we encourage you to attend these events and participate to your own level of comfort.

Look for the more detailed schedule elsewhere in this issue. If you are interested in speaking, teaching-in, or have any further questions, please contact us.

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SWEATSHOP-FREE HOME

From Fallujah to Rhinebeck, From Myspace to the Printed Page

A Marine's blog entries show us how soldiers cope with war, what it's like to fight an enemy, and why coming home can be painful
by daniel terna

"Well, it has happened. Someone decided to print my blogs," Derek McGee notes in a characteristically staid manner on his Myspace page on January 2nd.

When I Wished I Was Here: Dispatches from Fallujah is a collection of ruminations Rhinebeck native Sergeant McGee wrote while on his second tour in Iraq. "I started writing with no audience, and it was during the last month that I started posting on Myspace," McGee tells the Free Press about the transformation of his online entries into the sixth handmade pamphlet/book published by the Crumpled Press.

"People tell me that it's a different look at something they've heard 100 times before," McGee says. "You can't open a Newsweek or Time without finding a ton of articles about Iraq. You don't read it anymore because you don't think it's going to be anything new," McGee begins. "We're desensitized by the news...and I think I offer a personal perspective—I give it something different than that objectivity."

The normalcy of Derek McGee's Myspace page



Sgt. Derek McGee (far right) relaxing during one of the calmer moments of the war. photo contributed by derek mcgee

is unsettling. The images in his picture gallery show him blowing smoke rings from hookah, posing with friends in front of workout equipment, and it's difficult to accept the fact that these snapshots, some humorous, some more sensitive, were made under the conditions of war.

"Last week I spent three days at an Observation Post in downtown Fallujah," McGee wrote in a June entry. "There is no running water or electricity. We urinate into a pipe (where it goes I don't know) and we crap into bags which we throw out the window...Surprisingly, we actually enjoy going there for our rotation because it is a pleasant break from the rest of the company."

"The whole place is fucked," a November 30th entry begins, a month after McGee's arrival back to his home in Rhinebeck. "If you catch me drunk and honest that's what I'll tell you."

That was the Derek McGee of five months ago. As a sergeant in the Marine Reserves on his second tour of Iraq, McGee led a squad of twelve infantrymen in Fallujah. The title of his work borrows from graffiti he saw scrawled on a Port-A-John: "I Wish I Was...Where I Was...When I Wished I Was Here."

Referring to his tone of voice and use of words in the writing he did after coming home from overseas, McGee says that "it was written under a time when I was just back, and angry and disappointed with how things went and I was overcome with frustration. Now I'd be

more sanguine or optimistic," he clarifies thoughtfully. "Things change."

Nearly five months after coming home from Iraq, McGee shares an apartment with his brother. A wide banner hanging from the ceiling reads "Welcome Home Derek". His laptop's screensaver cycles through hundreds of digital photographs Derek and his fellow soldiers made while at war. Unlike his Myspace page, many are stripped of the censorship we see in the media and government's coverage of the war. In his vast collection we see close-ups of dead bodies; a view through a telescopic gun-sight; the green Fallujah bridge made famous by the killing of four American contractors that took place there. "Many of these were sent to me by friends," McGee emphasizes.

In his writing, McGee attempts to separate his outlook that the US should depart from Iraq, garnered mostly during his second tour, from his personal experiences as a soldier in the field. "I'm not trying to say the war is right or wrong, just that this is what it's like to be there for a little while, this is what happens on a day to day basis, this is how we feel when we come home," McGee explains. "Other than painting a picture of it, I don't have an agenda at all."

McGee had a relatively positive experience after his first tour in Nasiriyah. He remembers the warm welcome of cheering civilians, and the strong support he saw for US forces, the liberators. "There was no such thing as an insurgency or roadside bombs at that point," he said. "I look back at the pictures and can't believe we took the doors off our Humvees, because now that'd be suicide."

Before volunteering for a second tour, he took an Arabic language class at Columbia and a Middle Eastern politics class at Bard. "When I got to Iraq I was called a 'Haji Lover' by the men of my unit," McGee wrote. "I had spent months studying and had stacked up ten thousand in debts learning the language of the Iraqi people."

McGee was twenty-two when he joined the Marine Reserves in 1999. He had a degree in English literature from St. Lawrence University. "I didn't know how to tie a tie (he still doesn't), I wanted adventure, I didn't want to settle down, I thought the discipline would be good for me..." McGee goes on with his reasons for joining up, and he seems more nostalgic about his pre-war days. He smiles when he describes the warmth and support he received from New Yorkers during the clean-up effort at Ground Zero.



McGee's book, When I Wished I Was Here

"I miss not war, I miss having a passion about what I'm doing," McGee reminisces. "It's so much easier to leap out of bed with excitement and embrace the day when you're doing something important. Now I get out of bed and have to go through the same old motions. There's nothing about war that I enjoy, but I haven't in the civilian world found a job or career that gives me that kind of passion about work. [In Iraq] you're working sixteen hours a day, seven days a week, but you don't mind it—you're excited about it and you can't find that in the civilian world as far as I've found."

Derek is unemployed now, and doesn't seem enthusiastic about looking for work. With glasses and his red hair growing back, Derek is hard to recognize from the photos of himself in fatigues. Then again, it isn't easy to picture anyone with a helmet and gun.

The Climes, They Are A-Changin'

Nationwide campaign aims to bring global warming center stage
by nicole halpern



Focus the Nation is a national campaign designed to invite and coordinate groups of faculty and students, their local communities, people of faith, civic organizations, and political leaders from all over the United States to engage in a nationwide conversation about global warming solutions for America. Throughout the following year, teams of faculty and students from elementary schools through colleges and universities will host events with two goals in mind: to focus the growing concern about global warming and to create a sustained national discussion about clean energy solutions. On January 31, 2008, each branch of this campaign will invite their local, state, and federal political leaders and candidates for office to participate in a discussion about global warming solutions, "producing a campus-endorsed policy agenda for the 2008 elections."

As Bard's kick-off event for Focus the Nation, we will partake in Step It Up 2007. Step It Up 2007 is a national campaign demanding that Congress step it up and cut carbon emissions 80% by 2050. Declaring April 14th, 2007 National Day of Climate Action, Step It Up has already reached 48 states, where over 600 rallies are being organized to take place on what they hope will be the day of the biggest national demonstration in US history. Such gatherings are being coordinated in many of America's most treasured places: on the levees in New Orleans, on top of the melting glaciers of Mt. Rainier, and under water on the endangered coral reefs off Key West. American environmentalist Bill McKibben argues that changing light bulbs and driving hybrid cars just isn't enough when the best scientific research tells us that we have less than ten years to fundamentally change the way we alter the global climate.

On April 14th, 2007, Neighborhood Earth Watch, a local climate change action group, will sponsor BERD, the Cycling Club, the Bike Co-Op, the Environmental Collective, and other Bard and community participants to walk, march, hike, run, or cycle to Hearty Roots, which is a local community-supported farm in Tivoli, while holding up a banner demanding: "Step It Up Congress! Cut Carbon 80% by 2050!" Once we reach Hearty Roots, we will partake in environmentally-friendly activities, such as weeding the garlic field.

But why join the action? Because global warming is real, and it's terrifying. You saw *An Inconvenient Truth*, you know what's up. It's not a myth, or a fad. It's the sad, hard truth. This action is imperative, especially since the Associated Press has recently obtained a draft report prepared by the Bush administration admitting that emissions of greenhouse gases by the United States will rise 20% by 2020. That's a rise from 7.7 billion tons in 2000 to approximately 9.2 billion tons in 2020 despite the warning the International Panel on Climate Control gave only last month stating that human activity has been the main cause of warming for the past 50 years.

So mobilize! Join the rally and demand that Congress reduce carbon emissions before we cause environmental catastrophe. Meet us at the Kline parking lot on April 14th at 12:00 PM to march our way to Hearty Roots in protest. Or bring your bike and ride there—after all, each mile you bike instead of driving a car saves the world from seven pounds of carbon dioxide.

LEISURE CLASS RECORDS PRESENTS

SMOG 3:17

VIO MIRE

31 17:07

Liz Eisenberg

CASSETTE CONCRÉTE

(SAT. 8PM)

Zionism and US Mid-East Policy

Conducting an orchestra of "controlled" chaos

by kade crockford

A few months ago, in these very pages, I warned readers of a disturbing development in US policy on the Middle East. Back in November 2006 I wrote: "The liberal Israeli daily *Ha'aretz* recently reported that US military advisors have, for about a month, been working to train Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas' Presidential Guard in expectation of what the US and Israel believe will be an inevitable—and bloody—civil war between the ruling Hamas government and Abbas' party, Fatah." The recent developments are even scarier: watching Iran and Syria fund Hezbollah and Hamas, the United States stepped up its war on the region by supplying Fatah with massive arms deals. In January 2007, the Bush administration sent \$80 million dollars to the starved Palestinian Authority, but it went straight to Abbas to be spent on weapons and military training only.

In developments disturbingly familiar to the US-Soviet proxy war on Afghanistan, the US and Iran, "enemies" in the red, lustful eyes of the imperial Bush administration, are funding either side of the Israeli and American instigated, Palestinian civil-war. As Iraq burns, the US is preparing to launch an attack on Iran thirty years in the making. The disaster that is US Middle Eastern policy, particularly since Bush 2, will have far-reaching and catastrophic effects on the future of the Arab world, as well as the West. Palestine is like the canary in the coal mine: if you pay close attention, you will hear warning signs in the sharpest tones, long before they are printed on the front page of *The New York Times*.

To sort out what the US arming Fatah means at its most basic, a little history is in order: in January 2005, Palestinians held one of the most internationally observed and lauded democratic elections ever (for the Presidency). The Nationalist party man, Mahmud Abbas of Fatah, won. Bush praised the process. He and the US administration continued to rhetorically push for Middle Eastern "democracy", and in January 2006 the Palestinians held another round of certified, fair elections, this time for the parliament. Hamas won a majority and since then the Palestinian government has been frozen not only by the power deadlock within it, but also, and more devastatingly, by the heightened Israeli/American assault on its functionality.

The US and the Israeli establishments were not pleased with the results of the democratic process in 2006. And even though they had previously claimed this process itself was the necessary Palestinian step toward self-determination and peace, Israeli and American efforts since have been directed solely at the crippling of the government, the economy, and the society.

Promptly after the Hamas electoral victory, the US Congress, under heat from American Israel Public Affairs Committee and other Zionist lobbies, denounced the Palestinian government as "Terrorist" and imposed broad sanctions on dealings with the Palestinians. Humanitarian aid to the government was stopped, and within weeks hundreds of thousands of Palestinian teachers, clerks and city managers were without pay. For the past fourteen months, access to employment and standards

of living in Palestinian society have been declining precipitously.

Why would the US do something so obviously misguided and wrong as collectively punishing a civilian population for voting their conscience? Zionists or sympathizers with Israel's colonial project have a ready answer to this question and it's the typical colonial argument. The Zionists and their chorus demand that the collective punishment (sanctions) continue until Hamas recognizes "Israel's right to exist." Much has been made of this cliché, and its tragic political power is felt by each and every Palestinian in their daily life. Unfortunately, few public commentators note the crucial and powerful linguistic trick in this charge.

What is implicit in the wording of the phrase "right to exist" is that in order to be heard as articulate humans with rights and dignities, Palestinians must accept their own dehumanization. Hamas has already recognized Israel's existence, live on Al-Jazeera Arabic in January 2007. Palestinians are more aware of Israel's existence, the literal fact of it, than anyone else in the world. Its existence cannot be disputed. What Ismail Haniyeh and other Hamas officials will dispute, as all self-respecting Palestinians will, is that Israel had or has the right to dispossess them of their country, turn 900,000 of them into refugees and ethnically cleanse and enforce apartheid on those who remained. Demanding that they do so is tantamount to demanding that the American Indians recognize the Pilgrims' "right" to kill and dispossess them of their land and lives.

No self-respecting person would ever say such a thing about themselves or their people. The phrase is intentional, and highly effective, propaganda. Its function is simple: the Palestinians will never acquiesce to this primary and impossible Israeli demand, and in the Zionist line of thinking, their non-acceptance of Israeli rule over them constitutes support for "terrorism". (This has always been true for Palestinians, who live under an Israeli occupation that criminalizes any expression of self-determination, including waving the Palestinian flag.) It follows that the Palestinians' continued support for "terrorism" (or, self-respect) justifies all number of Israeli atrocities against them: the continuation of the degrading and destructive occupation, construction of settlements in Palestinian land, attacks on the economy and body of the society, the wall, the killings, etc.

But the most crucial role the clever linguistic trick plays is the answer it provides to the question of dialogue and negotiation. We would love to talk, the Israeli government says, were there only someone to talk to. As long as the Israeli preconditions remain, whereby Palestinians cease being terrorists when they accept their own dehumanization and disposal, the Palestinians will be terrorists. So long as the Palestinians remain terrorists, the Israeli government will continue to claim that there is, sadly, "no partner" for peace talks. And it will meanwhile work with both hands under the table to further dismantle the possibility of a just solution based on two democratic states living side by side.

Justifying US/Israeli sanctions and assaults on the Palestinians since the elections by arguing that the

- continued on page eleven -

The Wider War

by samuel lang budin

Based on my understanding of America's military capabilities in the Persian Gulf, with two aircraft carriers and more on the way, the United States could be bombing Iran within two hours of the time at which you read this (if it hasn't already).

Lest we forget, the initial justification given by the Bush administration for the U.S. invasion of and occupation of Iraq was that Saddam Hussein had developed and produced or was planning to develop and produce "weapons of mass destruction" and to employ them against "our" American people, and that Iraq had links to al-Qaeda, none of which was true. What's more, there was never any doubt among those responsible for planning the war that these weapons and these links would not be produced. The result of this deliberate deception is a military enterprise in which, to date, 3,200 U.S. soldiers and between 58,000 and 64,000 Iraqi civilians have died (according to www.iraqbodycount.com).

Whether Bush and his friends wanted that war because of the Bush family's historical involvement in Saddam Hussein's Iraq or for reasons relating to desired control of Iraq's oil resources or desired augmentation of the state's domestic intelligence, surveillance, and police powers, or some combination of these and other motivations, it would behoove us, whether or not we were snookered, to remember that the line that was fed to us was a lie, and that those who were feeding it knew.

The Bush administration

Invitation to Action

by jake feltham

I remember, four years ago, imagining what it would be like to live in a world where America's war in Iraq was a fact of life. At the time, to my eleventh-grade self, the invasion of Iraq seemed uncertain. I couldn't believe that even the Bush administration could do something so arrogant, unsubstantiated and wrong. I was horrified by the invasion, but there are a lot of other things to think about in high school, when you're privileged and safe and far away from war. What had been outrageous, unthinkable, exceptional became an accepted part of daily life.

I guess it's possible to get used to just about anything. At this point, I have certainly become used to this war. My daily life, and I believe the daily life of this college, is characterized by a dull unwillingness to actively challenge the war industry that this country is based on. This is not meant as an accusation. Our academic routines may and often do address issues that deal with the invasion. We may find parallel

has not only the capability, but also concrete plans to invade Iran, just as they had concrete plans to invade Iraq before September 11th and the Johnson administration had plans to send troops to fight in Viet Nam before the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution in 1964. Administrations all say that they don't have plans, and that they didn't have plans, but they always do. Cheney says that the military option is on the table, but there are other options. Bush says we're pursuing diplomacy. If the consensus among U.S. government officials is that Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad is at best a little crazy and at worst "one hundred percent totally certified nuts" (according to a U.N. weapons inspector), one might ask why the Bush administration is pursuing diplomacy at all. One might conclude that, if they are truly pursuing it, it is with the expectation that it will not succeed at doing what they say they want it to.

The point is this: it makes no real sense for the United States to fret about Iran developing a viable nuclear weapon at this historical moment. Israel doesn't believe Iran will be able to produce one for almost a decade, and Israel is actually in a position to worry about being hit. The proposed war, should it transpire, would not be about the United States of America's security. (In fact, it could only worsen it.) Beneath its surface, it would be about oil, about regime change and the destruction of the Islamic Republic in Iran, about Israel's security, and about the expansion of the new American empire.

situations in other times and places, and learn from them. We may investigate theories of political organization, literary understandings of colonialism, or even strategies of activism. But despite the relevance of our topics of study to action against the war, it seems that they rarely encounter one another. The war continues unmoved by our academic epiphanies. Below all the rhythms of our lives, buried beneath layers of privilege, is that fundamental, brutal fact of war.

I don't know how to move beyond academic engagement to a more immediate kind of action, but I know that it must begin by forcing ourselves to break with routine. We have to unsettle ourselves, disrupt our own lives, dismantle our own complacency. We need to look at the war and allow ourselves to feel how we really feel, not how it is convenient for us to feel. Then, maybe we will act how we should really act, not how it is convenient for us to act.





Bard student Zach Haydt standing in front of the Tigris during his tour of duty in Iraq

Three Weeks in Al Kut, Cont'd.

- continued from front page -

more laymen term "disaster."

My task in the blockhouse was to organize all the reports coming in from Al Kut into some semblance of an accurate picture. We had planned the war as though Iraq were a da Vinci, using the most high tech methods that money could buy. Now, after the invasion it was obviously a Pollock, but then again no, because even that follows some sort of law. Iraq had become anarchy, held together by tribal and religious affiliations, which, lacking a strong federal government in Baghdad will always be the bedrock of Mesopotamian civilization.

I said earlier that things were falling apart in Al Kut, but really they had already done so by the time we arrived. The Iraqi army units that had held the area south of the city melted away at the first contact with the U.S. Army, and the entire Baath government evacuated when the military did. Those initial U.S. army units drove on to Baghdad, leaving a week gap between their departure and the Marines arrival. Meanwhile Al Kut imploded, like Iraq was imploding in general, so forcefully it's a wonder we didn't all hear the roar of crashing masonry in our ears the entire time. According to local rumor there had been a lengthy firefight in the city the night the army left and the next day the government was gone, the police were underground, and both were replaced by a local gang. The boss had installed himself and his cronies in the mayor's office and began to fortify it. Later on when we told him the gig was up, his men riddled our building with bullets twice in one rather long night over Easter weekend.

Electricity and water service stopped. Gasoline prices skyrocketed, leading to hours-long waits in line. Hospitals were looted, as well as government buildings, factories, warehouses and museums. Out in Babylon chunks of three thousand year old masonry, covered in writing, were strewn on the ground, unguarded. On the street one day I bought a cuneiform writing spindle for \$5 from a man who lurched out of a bush with a plastic bag full of such things. I later placed it in an "amnesty box," one of many set out in American camps to encourage marines and soldiers to hand in questionable souvenirs (also grenades, landmines, five foot strings of AA rounds, etc). It was my last \$5 and he wouldn't budge, so who knows where the rest of the things are.

The worst of all the oversights were the ammo

dumps. Iraq can in some ways be likened to a fortress with a country superimposed over top, all a result of the Iran-Iraq war in the 1980s. Military bases, airstrips and supply depots sprawl along the palm shaded river bends and are hidden in reinforced desert caverns. And the ammo dumps: massive complexes which look like fields of unnaturally regular sand hills from the air, but which are actually the curved roofs of bunkers filled with munitions. 155mm artillery rounds, new, lubed AK-47s in boxes, countless rounds of ammunition, endless stacks of landmines, 1,000 pound bombs designed to be dropped from airplanes but which insurgents delight in burying alongside roads in certain especially grim sectors of the country: everything but chemical weapons. Many of these locations went unguarded for more than a year after the

"In the industry we called this a failure of intelligence, as opposed to the more laymen term disaster."

invasion, during which time tribal groups, ex-Baathists, militias and other nebulous insurgent elements raided them on a massive scale with no fear of consequence. It is because of this smorgasbord of weaponry that you now never hear of insurgents needing to smuggle anything but the most advanced technology into Iraq (and this is rare, as in warfare simple-better). This happened because there weren't enough Americans to guard any of these sites. Eventually they were given guards: untrustworthy Iraqi soldiers and worse, our former Central American allies from the Lost Decade, who were rallied to our flag by the promise of quick cash (the promises of the free market being slow to manifest back home).

We won the battle and lost the war at the exact same moment. The President and his Men, to sell the war to the American people as a fast and easy one, planned an invasion force using as few troops as possible in a best-case scenario. This wasn't done for just anything.

Massive call-ups of reservists were needed to invade Iraq, and for political purposes these could not have been kept on active duty indefinitely- eventually reservists want to return to their real jobs. The U.S. military is simply not large enough to fight a protracted insurgency in a battlefield the size of California. In Vietnam 500,000 troops couldn't do it either. Right now the U.S. military is in a state of emergency, with equipment and morale beginning to give out. Only around 130,000 or so troops have ever been deployed to Iraq at any given time post-invasion (of roughly 1.3 million soldiers and marines). That's one in ten, which means at any given time at least one in ten are in Iraq, one in ten are training to go and one in ten have just returned. We are using as many troops as we currently can, and that was not planned for by any means. Declassified documents from the National Security Archive revealed, for example, that in pre-war planning only 5,000 troops were expected to remain in Iraq by 2006. It also assumed Iraq army units would stay in garrison and a new government, led by Ahmed Chalabi's dubious Iraqi National Congress, would be in place by D-Day. The low-balled troop levels also dovetailed with Donald Rumsfeld's plan to reduce the size of the service even more than it currently is, and to rely on a new generation of technology to make up for the difference in manpower. Decreasing the size of the military makes it easier to use within a domestic political framework (a reason we will never see the draft again). This is all to say that the reason we invaded Iraq with a delusional, optimistic plan was that only such a plan was feasible given the political goals of its masterminds. As it turns out, although you can remove a government with enough smart bombs, you cannot build one with them.

I've seen both sides of that card.

Exploring Evil

by james molloy

Thinkers from Plato to Hannah Arendt have understood what we call "evil" to be a negative quality: it is not something we have, or are, but something we don't have, or are not. "Ignorance" or the lack of knowledge and critical thinking, has long been identified with this deficiency.

I think "ignorance" becomes "evil" in two ways. First, it is obvious that everything that we do affects others. When we do not think about the effects of our actions before we carry them out - including choosing to support, for example, the political actions of others - then injustices are sure to result. But, second, even if we do seem to be thinking things through, we may not be if we aren't thinking thoroughly.

By "thinking" I mean overcoming what Jean-Paul Sartre called "passional," or unsophisticated, sentimental reasoning - binaries that vastly oversimplify the profound complexities of human life. Dividing the world into conceptual twos, for example "good and evil" or "fascism and democracy" or, for an anti-Semite in the 1940s, "Jewish and non-Jewish," has always been very appealing and very dangerous for human beings. If they are bad, and we are good, then there is nothing to think about. Too often we choose this feeling. In fact we are willing to go to great lengths to avoid moral ambiguity. We thus avoid anything that disturbs us in our passive certainties, disturbs us in our sleep like the "gadfly" Socrates, even at the awful cost of the lives of others - as long as we do not see them, as long, for example, as they are overseas.

"Evil" is the belief that people are evil - or a false "passional" belief that provides a feeling of certainty. Because when we really sit down together - when a Palestinian is told by an Israeli soldier about Zionist indoctrination within the Israeli military, and the Israeli hears that the Palestinian's family was killed by his country's planes - we discover that peoples' worldviews are all too understandable, even when they are tragically incompatible. "Thinking" means having the emotional maturity to confront this uncertainty. And "evil" is acting without "thinking." Uncertainty is a condition of moral action, because complexity is the result of thinking. And people who understand this, though they still must act, will be less eager to support actions that destroy the lives of others.

Thought, in other words, should be a check on power, because one should not act on what one does not know for certain. We should be firm in our beliefs, but aware of the difficulty of acting on them. We must act, as humans and social beings always affecting others, but we should struggle with our tendency towards "passional reasoning." For Socrates in The Apology wisdom was knowledge of ignorance: knowledge of the mind's limits. Thinking is a negative act; it reveals its own deficiency.

If "ignorance" is the cause of "evil" then educating one's self and "thinking" are moral responsibilities. This is most true for people in our situation: young people who can afford to spend time cultivating this ability in a college. We are more independent than we will ever be again because, for the most part, no one depends on us yet. But, perhaps even more importantly, it is true for us as American and as global citizens.

For the first time in history, two human-caused crises, nuclear war and climate change, threaten the survival of our species. We are citizens of the most powerful nation in the world. Our government controls the world's largest nuclear arsenal and our nation is the greatest contributor to global warming. We are privileged and powerful and therefore very dangerous as Americans. We are particularly and urgently responsible for the outcome of these events.

As I've defined it, "evil" is a negative quality: it is not something we have, or are, but something we don't have, or are not. I think that now, when the stakes are higher than they have ever been, it our responsibility as students and as Americans to "think": to fill this deficiency in. Now, in college, is the time for us to exercise the muscle of citizenship.



Poetic Responses to the War



photo by ghaith abdul-ahad

Collapse

by ben seligman

Brake breaking broken waves!
At the cusp of something huge,
the foreplay and inevitable crash;
the water's weight and structure
collapses on itself and breaks itself open.

Brake breaking broken bones!
At the cusp of a bomb dropping,
the foreplay and the inevitable crash;
my best friend's weight and structure
collapses on itself and breaks itself open.

and structure collapses
at the cusp of nothing and
my best friend's bomb
dropping for the inevitable crash

(Seligman composed this poem in response to the photograph above)

March of Madness

by belle zatin

We are clothed in thousands of dollars of education
Nourished by intellectual thought and profound gesticulation
We inhale intoxications, turn, exhale eagerness and let thoughts run wild with our mouths
Saying: We wish there no clouds to darken brilliant skies
While guns shower doors framing shattered lives
Women, men, children, mothers, grandfathers, cousins, heroes, all die
Intelligence is a lie and wrong information is spewing on our stations
Long winded apologies cannot sail a boat across oceans of time
Repair houses or holes, or damaged minds
Lift heads cocked down aiming, once again
Blood showers from clouds of power
Wounded baths, but we don't look back
And who gets the last laugh? when
Torrential downfalls of
Domination are leading
The damnation of our Nation.

The Headline Read

by molly king

"Suicide Bomber Kills
Two Americans" recounting some
mistaken martyr who,
feeding his god with blood,
stuttered into the
morning-rush
family-owned
struggling restaurant
to improve the decoration- repaint the walls
with a thin spatter of sauce
and scalp.

The articles of blitz
and bloodshed, death and
delusion from the
not-so-far-off, not-so-unheard-of place
shuffle skip slide
from the headlines into 300 words
below the fold then see page A6
columns settled somewhere
between the blurb on the kite
festival and the Coach ad
until the black typeface blurs into the background
fading into our passive
back pockets, actively
ignoring what's there
because it isn't here.

But no worries: the reporter has been damn
well sure to choke
his words with
details on the two
Americans to think my
God Americans
he can't believe the bomber's
"appalling unilateralism and religious elitism."
so he barely remembers
to edit in the twenty-six twisted
bodies who couldn't
call themselves
American.

They call me a terrorist

by mugeeb sweileh

They call me a terrorist
Because my blood is Arabic
My religion is Islam
Look at me
I am the human with
The heart full of niceness
I am the human that
Gives love and greatness
Look at me
I am not a terrorist
This world always torments us
Covering us with misery
Leading us to poverty
They call me a terrorist
Without knowing
Who I really am
Without knowing the
The kindness of my heart
The way of my peaceful life
Humanity is what we all share
Equality is what we believe in
Freedom is what we seek
We should all come together
To implement our dreams
To live in a free world
Where we can find
peace and freedom.

Spell for the State

by ali stahl

Here is a spell
for compatible radicals
(who hear harmony
in the word anarchy)
sitting on their front steps
as the sun sets,
watching and waiting
for the undergrounds'
come up for parading
(when the state has finally
burned by its own bait
of hate.)

Let our evolution ! be a preamble to a revolution against this pollution
(of an illusioned solution) this government is trying to shove down
our thoughts.

The phallic towers screamed too loudly
and the buffoons- dressed up as tycoons-
watched them go down too proudly.
These are classic stories of
war-fare and glory
lie(ing) in the history (books)
of
fantastic scams.
For we're the ones bleeding
yet horrendously feeding
off the caskets
that keep coming back.

America! I've fallen
to my knees
just to hear the Lorax
gasping
to speak
for the trees-
and don't market me
rosary beads.

Let's expect
a new reign of terror
will show us our error,
and we'll say the weather
must be to blame.

a procedure

by ali stahl

(w)(a)®

the outside experts
say the age of fear
is upon and the white hat hero must draw fastest

the television says

let us create
pouring blood
phantom enemy is the
the religious regans call for
christian

g o d

funda
mental
is
t
s

to fill football stadium stands
protect us

us

the television says

hidden forces to conquer
across the global imperial bank
phantom enemy
's worshipers
islamic

we must rise!
protect

(here nothing is true and everything is permitted)

MARCH IN NYC TO END THE WAR

Sunday, March 18

Time and place to be announced.
3 days of action planned city-wide
Join UPPUNYD to mark the 4th Anniversary of this
terrible war. Let's mobilize our communities,
artists, activists and people of worship to reach for
peace calling on Congress to end the war.

4 Years Too Many
Not One More Death
Not One More Dollar
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MUSIC REVIEWS

RECENT BARD SHOWS



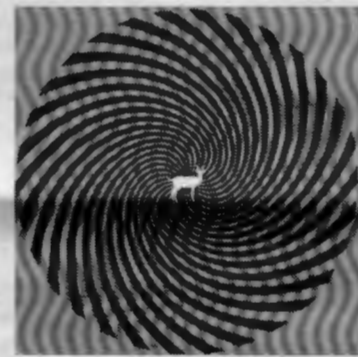
Gui Boratto
Chromaphobia
Kompakt Records

Gui Boratto's first album for Kompakt, the ruthlessly minimal German techno label, manages to bring a pleasantly surprising amount of color and animation to a genre which traditionally defines itself through the mind-numbing repetition of its rather limited sonic palette (not that this is a bad thing). To Gui's credit, this is done without resorting to any of the trashier elements of techno which have

made it such a forgettable genre for most (remember when techno was cool? My dad listened to a lot of Fatboy Slim when I was in middle school; it was awkward even then). *Chromaphobia* works well as an introduction to minimal techno, mostly because Gui, a Brazilian,

seems to lack the strength of will (or attention span) which enables those brutally efficient Germans to pound the crap out of a single 4/4 beat for fifteen minutes (again, not a bad thing); instead he reins his songs in to a reasonable length, and allows for a level of melody and dynamics, which, though always restrained, convey a pop sensibility which escapes most minimal techno. The overall effect is hypnotic, to the point where it can become easy to take the subtle and seamless interplay between melodies and rhythms for granted, and just assume that the song hardly changes from beginning to end (it so does though). At the end of the day this is still techno, and minimal or not, it is a silly thing; but that shouldn't stop anyone from enjoying it, as any album that is suitable for both dancing (Thursday night Black Swan DJs: maybe you should check this album out), and desperation-fueled homework sessions is at least worth a listen, if not your undying respect and appreciation.

-patrick reilly



Deerhunter
Cryptograms
Kranky

Deerhunter, the five-piece from Atlanta, Georgia, provide a considerably sprawling posture on their second full-length album, *Cryptograms*. While half of their songs seep into an unconscious of sounds and rhythms, the other half of the songs are interspersed with a more traditional output of composition, automatically creating a creative tension between the instrumental and the vocal. This thematic organization forces the listener into a more conundrum-like experience: from the start, the listener is aware that this album hopes to present a series of cryptograms.

Even in their most pop-tific moments, Deerhunter release a numbing calm over the listener, mildly distracting him or her from the matter at hand. Interestingly enough, *Cryptograms* represents not an album of promise or potential, but an album of dissolution and self-destruction. Deerhunter recorded this album as they lay dying, with a series of break-ups and misfortunes; this is the product of a disenchanting condition. The album is a split side, with one half touchingly

boring and recycled, and the other uniquely experimental pop. Maybe these pop-tones are their own last chance at salvaging this dystopian present state.

Recalling the organic mood of Eno-esque landscapes, Gang of Four angularity, Neu! rhythmic bass lines, Jason Pierce's and Sonic Boom's vocalic atmospheres, and an unmatched contemporary sound (something like the American post-grunge Stone Roses perhaps), Deerhunter attempts a work of pastiche, trying so hard to submerge these different powers together into one cohesive sound. The result, although not even nearly perfect, is reassuring. This is an album of unfocused imperfections, an endeavor at unstratifying their diverse influences, a work of death and destruction through beauty, an album displaying their serious promise.

-ben greenblatt



White Mice
Blassstphlegmeice
Load Records

In all appearances this mouse-themed group looks like just another spazzy, fast, noise-rock band from Providence. Their album art includes a collage of kitschy, mouse-stuffed animals and mice holding guns complete with some clever, ironic mouse song titles like "sewericide," "Mousestash Ride," and "Rattarddead." The cover art opens up to a picture of the entire band dressed in bloody lab coats wearing huge mouse masks with a close up of the bass player's hands wildly finger-tapping up the neck of his bass. I was surprised then, when I put on their first song "Blastphlegmmice" and was met with a slow sludgy breakdown in standard time, with heavy, overly distorted guitars and vocals. I kept waiting for something to happen, but they just dragged along for almost four minutes. No fills, no freakout drum solos or anything—just chugging guitars and distorted screaming. The second and third songs dragged along similarly and apart from a couple of songs like "CATASSTASTATROPHY," that sounded more like sloppy grind-core, the entire album was pretty boring. I kept picturing a tired looking audience nodding their heads respectfully, waiting for these guys to finish or at least anxious for them to speed up or do something.

-eliot pride



From the Top: Big A Little a (Aa) at SMOG, These Are Powers at SMOG, VIP Party Boys at SMOG



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FILM REVIEWS



GerMAN! Der Oscar Wiener ist die Schnitzel

by jessica loudis

The Lives of Others, or *Das Leben der Anderen*, marks the stunning debut of Florian Henckel von Donnersmarck, a writer and director who will undoubtedly remain a major presence in international cinema in spite of thanking Arnold Schwarzenegger after winning this year's foreign language Oscar. The film opens in East Berlin five years before the fall of the Wall, "with glasnost nowhere in sight", and chronicles the life of playwright Georg Dreyman (Sebastian Koch) through the wiretaps and surveillance of the Stasi, East Germany's secret police. Dreyman is initially monitored because of doubts regarding his allegiance to the communist government, especially in light of all his bohemian artist friends. Following the suicide of a blacklisted director and a party official's unwelcome advances on his girlfriend, Dreyman begins writing subversive material about the German Democratic Republic (GDR) to smuggle out to the West.

Paralleling Dreyman's story is that of Gerd Wiesler (Ulrich Mühe), a square-jawed Stasi agent whose first appearance in the film entails lecturing to a class of would-be secret police about how to make a suspect crack through unrelenting interrogation. Composed and law-abiding, shots of Wiesler reveal a man who is largely emotionless, and whose personality is mimicked in his clichéd Communist apartment, which is sterile, kitschy, and uniformly impersonal. After volunteering to head Dreyman's case, Wiesler devotes all of his time to monitoring the man's life—recording the minutiae of his everyday activities in a sanitized police report filed at the end of each shift. The scenes in which Wiesler monitor Dreyman prove to be some of the most poignant in the film—falsely intimate and rich in the contrast they show between the two men. Wiesler's transformative decision to protect Dreyman from Stasi persecution comes after he realizes he is personally invested in the man's life, and so he assumes the role of Dreyman's guardian angel.

As the film unfolds, both Dreyman and Wiesler struggle to protect themselves from the Stasi, and deny its self-proclaimed goal to "know everything"; risking their lives and careers for apparently thankless and anonymous actions. Although Dreyman and Wiesler are presented as the heroes of the story, Donnersmarck refuses to be explicitly moralistic in his plot, and neither overtly condemns his characters that cede to the pressures of communism, nor martyrs those who don't. Instead, the subtle heroism in *The Lives of Others* comes through the quiet acceptance of fate—years after the fall of communism, Wiesler is seen delivering mail in the streets of Berlin, his impassive manner unaltered.

What makes this film particularly refreshing is its refusal to tell a story that is either condescendingly simple or steeped in nostalgia. With the GDR less than twenty years buried, Donnersmarck offers an honest portrayal of the staggering scope of the secret police, and the tactics they employed to infiltrate the lives of Germans in even the most mundane dimensions. In one scene, after spotting a neighbor who has witnessed Stasi agents exiting Dreyman's recently bugged apartment, Wiesler knocks on the neighbor's door and informs her that if she tells anyone, her daughter will lose her spot at the university. Terrified and speechless, the neighbor is seen only once more before vanishing from the rest of the film. Moments such as this one, which saturate the movie, reflect the extent to which fear and uncertain privacy characterized the lives of every individual under communist Berlin.

The Power of Nightmares

Worth a viewing on google video or youtube

by jon leslie

The Power of Nightmares, a three-hour BBC documentary directed by Adam Curtis, was screened on February 21 in Weis Cinema. Curtis' film demonstrates (much more convincingly and succinctly than someone like Michael Moore) that terrorism is an invented threat. Although its conclusions are not necessarily agreeable, all the information presented is valuable in its own right: it is a 'must-see' not just for the anti-war activist, but anyone with a political conscience.

The film, which was highly controversial even when broadcasted in Britain's considerably more tolerant TV atmosphere in 2005, has, barring a few indie film festivals, never reached a serious public audience in this country. This mass neglect is not surprising for the radical nature of the film, wherein the big media—which should, for all Curtis' hard, archival, and informative work give him airtime—are effectively made to seem like mere annotations of phantasmagoria (and at worst [FOX News] more and more like a genuine Orwellian "two minute hate"). He suggests that a few masterminds and think tanks on both the neo-conservative and jihadi sides were the ideological sandmen behind this nightmare—most notably University of Chicago Professor of Political Theory Leo Strauss, disillusioned with the dream of western liberalism and a strong believer in national mythologies, especially John Wayne-style Westerns, and an Egyptian dissident named Kubd who discovered ugly America in excessive lawncare and the ballroom ballad "Baby It's Cold Outside," and became a martyr for early Islamic fundamentalist nationalism in Egypt. Although here it seems ridiculous, Curtis actually makes a compelling case for the history of the world turning on these ridiculous tastes and repulsions.

But one should keep a critical eye—not every Straussian is a neo-con in the nightmarish sense that Curtis means. Just look at Francis Fukuyama's dreamy "happy 90s," as "the end of history," or our own beloved president's affiliations (that is Leon, not George, who I'm guessing probably hasn't much to say about Straussian political theory). Nor inversely is every neo-con in the same sense a Straussian—plenty of neo-liberals supported the nightmare-inspired wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. His most thunderous platitude: "Osama bin Laden never had an Al Qaeda until the US invented one for him" is questionable in this same sense.

Although one should not be seduced into a strict reading of the film that suggests this whole war on terror is all a bad dream we're going to wake up from, when in fact even non-utopian liberalism, likewise, Islamic fundamentalism, has serious political "issues" and can represent real threats before its mythologizing, Curtis' documenting and historicizing the sense in which these threats have been inflamed is essential to understanding exactly what is (and is not) at stake in the current War on Terror.



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An excerpt from a new book by Derek McGee. See page four for a feature on the author.

September 29, 2006

The End is in Sight

THE end is now in sight. Our replacements have begun arriving; we are happy to see them. They are smiling and eager to get some action—as we once were. They are hopeful for this place and its people—as we once were. They are full of piss and vinegar and feel invincible—as we once did. We are cheerful because we know what our future holds; they are cheerful because they do not. They do not know that in several months' time some of them will be dead. I will not tell them because it would not do any good. Instead, I wish them luck and tell them to call home when they can.

Their heads are full of training that made perfect sense when it was taught to them in a classroom and drawn out in great detail on chalkboards. Undoubtedly, it all seemed splendidly logical as they sat in comfortable chairs, jotting away in their camouflage notebooks. But here it will just get them shot or blown up; they will learn this quickly, as we did. I threw my little notebook away a long time ago. It was said to me, and I didn't believe it, but it is true, "they will have the finest moments of their lives and they will have the worst moments of their lives, sometimes in the same day." I wish them luck.

I am happy to be going home. However, that happiness is not complete. I will, in my own way, miss the festering concrete sprawl of Fallujah. This feeling is in no way related to

aesthetics. It is not a pretty place. It has always been a shitty place. Then it was bombed and shot-up, and now it is just a shot-up shitty place. Piles of garbage are strewn about with the haphazardness of dead insects on a fly strip. We pay people to clean them up, then someone sees what we have done and says, "Look at that, what a good spot for me to pile my trash." Maybe this time they'll put a bomb under it if it is near a road. I will not miss the trash or the broken-down, falling-down buildings where snipers and roadside-bomb triggermen spend their days smoking cheap cigarettes, waiting for Americans to pass by. I will not miss the people here who stick out their greedy callous-free paws and ask for handouts while they do nothing to help themselves. They like to collect American money. I assume this is true because, tucked into women's purses (they know we don't search women), they keep stacks of crisp American hundred dollar bills, still in sequential order, which they got because we damaged their house, hit their car, or ran over their dog.

"We're not going to steal your damn money. Where are the men who shot the Marine?"

"Mister I didn't see anything, I love Americans, I would tell you everything."

"Fuck you, where are they? What did they look like?"

"I see nothing."

We gave candy, soccer balls, pencils and paper to the kids, and they seemed grateful. They would wave as we drove by, their tiny tongues prying tootsie roll off their tiny teeth, their shoulders pulled back by the straps of a new book bag full of new school supplies. After we would pass, their tiny hands would cover their tiny ears and they'd wait for the boom that they knew would come from under a pile of trash along the road

ahead. Somewhere around this base is a heap of candy, soccer balls, pencils and paper; I don't know where, I don't care where, it can sit there and rot. No, I will not miss the people or their self-serving lies.

What I will miss are the Marines that I have lived with and went to work with every day and night for almost a year. I will miss the excitement, the adrenalin dump. Your body can't distinguish between skydiving, bungee jumping, or being shot at; it's all a rush. Some say you haven't lived until you've almost died. That is not true, but I will say this: you will not appreciate the intense satisfaction found in merely living another day until you think you will not. That is true.

I have decided that I will never go up and say goodbye to the deceased at an open-casket funeral; a corpse can give no comfort. Instead, I'll stand in the back and look at a picture.

I'm apprehensive about my return because the world I left has changed—so have I—but we didn't do it together. I'm twenty pounds lighter, a year older, a whole lot wiser, and, if you can believe it, a whole lot better looking—I'm also currently bustling with unreleased charm. There will be new employees and new kids at my job. I will have to find a new apartment and a new car. The bartenders will be different. I've lost touch with all my friends; I didn't want that. I am single now; I don't know if I wanted that. Oh well, it is what it is.

WHEN I WISHED I WAS HERE: DISPATCHES FROM FALLUJAH, by Derek McGee (Crumpled Press, \$8). *The Crumpled Press* was founded in 2004 by two Simon's Rock College alumni; Bard professor Mario Bick's "What's On, What's Coming Off?" was also published by *The Crumpled Press*; "Books and pamphlets are individually designed and hand-made for a distinctive look and feel." (crumpledpress.org)

Getting High With the Bards

Yet Another Dispatch from Texas

by leah finnegan

Originally printed in *The Daily Texan*, February 14, 2007

I live a life on the edge. I go to the ATM alone, and sometimes at night. I take both of my antacids in the morning instead of one with breakfast and one with dinner. I return library books the exact day they are due. This constant flirtation with potential disaster keeps life exciting for me.

So naturally I've been thinking a lot about psychedelic drugs. Not in the irresponsible, thrill-seeking, destructive sense (I have enough of that on a daily basis from the activities listed above), but from a scholar's perspective. As an American Studies major, I have the opportunity to justify this kind of thinking as academic because I practically immerse myself in the lifestyle due solely to my course schedule. I am tested on Timothy Leary and Ken Kesey, whose lives seemed much improved from their curricular predecessors of the New York-sweatshop-revolt-era (could acid be the reason why?). I am assigned the romantic, benzadrine-driven notions of Jack Kerouac and William S. Burroughs; their writings percolate through my brain and urge me to try, to see for myself: this is way beyond peer pressure. This is dead-people-I-admire pressure. Pressure from the grave.

Scholars and drugs go way back. The nonconformist academic-genius lifestyle doesn't only encourage drug usage, but allows it. Reputable brainiacs have been arguing for the legalization of drugs since the eighteenth century and doing drugs for long before that. Philosophers like René Descartes used potent elixirs to release their brilliance. Descartes, in order to desert the German army, hid in a wheat barrel and tripped for days, subsequently unlocking his mind and releasing a cloudburst of transcendental idealist thoughts that influenced the direction of the Enlightenment. According to a recent article in *The Independent*, the poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge often vanished for days on opium benders. Granted, Coleridge was a depressed hypochondriac, but the article argues that his seminal works were written because of his opium-induced delusion. For many philosophers of times past,

morphine was the drug of choice: it allowed for focus and lucidity along with the standard euphoria. Modern bards like Burroughs and Allen Ginsberg are lightweight, hacky-sack tossing potheads in comparison with the astute men who shaped modern thought and their drug habits.

When considered within a scholastic framework, drugs are not masochistic tools of escape but mental catalysts toward understanding larger, indefinable gray ideas—things like the proverbial if, God, campaign finance reform. Really, drugs seem to be more of a rite of passage into the world of intellect than anything else: those whose nimble minds can withstand the effects of and/or flower from drug usage are truly the strongest and the smartest. And then there are the romantics—the scuffed-up, beat-down, drugged-over artists and writers whose lives are delicious and beautiful tragedies because of their chemical experimentation.

Can I ever be the tortured artist I desperately want to be without the influence of mescaline, benzadrine, LSD, peyote? Perhaps rationally considering drugs is enough to satiate the voices of my influences. Perhaps having the voices of my influences clouding my head already is some kind of warning sign against drugs. And, of course, there are always dreaded side effects to consider—the thought of Coleridge throwing up last night's shepherd's pie, a gaunt Descartes shaking in an alley, dressed in rags, missing teeth—the price of mind expansion. Also, you never know when drugs will yield brilliance. For every Warhol silkscreen there is a guy in Brooklyn collecting hairballs in a jar and some dude in L.A. casting kitty litter in plaster of Paris, waiting for their moments in the sun.

St. Augustine said that complete abstinence is easier than perfect moderation. It's also cleaner, cheaper, and safer. Not that safety and security are huge concerns of mine, but I have gone over the edge a few times. I've seen the dark side. I've had overdue library books. The rush is fun at first, but once you have to pay the late fee, any extractable beauty from the situation is effectively tarnished.

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The Bard Free Press clip-n-save recipe #4

Tomato and Feta Cheese Strata

by foster itter

This recipe is a variation of a frittata, which is sort of a big baked omelette. It's easy, tasty and healthy. I would even add an extra egg and a couple handfuls of nice spinach to make it more of a full meal.

TOTAL TIME: 30 MIN
SERVES: 4

INGREDIENTS

4 large eggs
1/2 cup low-fat yogurt
3 tablespoons chopped parsley
1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil
1 medium onion, thinly sliced
1 large garlic clove, thinly sliced
2 tablespoons finely chopped sage
1/2 teaspoon crushed red pepper
One 16-ounce can diced tomatoes with their juices
Salt and freshly ground pepper

5 ounces whole wheat peasant bread, cut into 1-inch cubes (4 cups)
2 ounces feta cheese, crumbled

DIRECTIONS

Preheat the oven to 450°. In a medium bowl, whisk the eggs, then whisk in the yogurt and parsley.

In a 10-inch ovenproof skillet, heat the olive oil. Add the onion, garlic, sage and crushed red pepper and cook over moderately high heat, stirring, until the onion is softened and lightly browned, about 3 minutes. Add the tomatoes and their juices, season with salt and pepper and bring to a simmer. Stir in the bread and sprinkle with the feta.

Pour the egg mixture on top and bake for 20 minutes, until golden brown. Let cool slightly, then serve.

Iraq News Bites Cont'd.

-continued from front page-

U.S. military onslaughts in 2004 left the city in a shambles and displaced an estimated 250,000 of the 350,000 residents of the city. Last month U.S. forces introduced a new phase of 'security' with the support of local Iraqi police and Sunni militias. "The big failure of the U.S. troops in Fallujah came when they began bringing Sunni secret police into the city," a member of the city council told IPS. "The situation in Ramadi, Hit, Haditha and all over al-Anbar province is now catastrophic." IPS has reported earlier that the U.S.-led coalition had backed local militias near Fallujah in an effort to combat growing resistance in the area. Many residents in Fallujah believe the U.S. military also continues to support Shia militias. Amidst the chaos and violence, residents blame occupation forces for their problems. "Americans are paying our own people to kill each other," a local tribal chief told IPS. "This is very nasty revenge."

Private Mercenaries Reach Nearly Half of Western Troops

NEW YORK, Mar 6 - During a March 5, 2007 interview with Amy Goodman, veteran Middle East journalist Richard Falk observed that the number of private mercenaries working in Iraq has nearly equaled the number of state

soldiers. "The latest figure that I have as a journalist now is that we now have in Iraq 120,000 Westerner mercenaries," he said. "That's almost equal to the total number of American troops."

Falk also described what he personally saw of the private mercenaries in the country: "They turned up during checkpoints on roads, sometimes wearing hoods or masks. Why? Why hoods? Why masks? What were they doing?" he said. "I would come across them driving vehicles through the streets of Baghdad, guns pointing out the window. 'Get out of the way! Get out of the way! Get out of the way!' Tch-tch-tch-tch-tch, in the air. Very similar to the same gangs that Saddam used . . . for security purposes to get people out of the way..."

Private mercenaries are clients of states, principally similar to the armies of kings in medieval Europe. The US government pays individual mercenaries on average six times, and up to twenty times, the combat pay of United States soldiers and marines. Unlike soldiers, their conduct is not subject to US American military law.

Israeli Terror Attack Kills One, Wounds One, both Civilians NABLUS, Palestine - On February 25, at one am on a Sunday morning, about one hundred Israeli military jeeps and armored personnel

carriers (APCs) surrounded the Palestinian city of Nablus, in the center of the West Bank. The Israeli military for the first time seized control of the radio and television frequencies in Nablus and interrupted local broadcasting to deliver threats to the population. Army generals told Palestinians that the army would not leave Nablus until it had found eight wanted men. They read the names of the men, and told people that if they left their homes they would be shot. The operation continued for days, during which the entire population of the Old City, about 40,000 people, were confined to their homes and subjected to violent house searches and vast detentions. A school inside the neighborhood was turned into a temporary interrogation center, where young men were rounded up and kept in prisoners' conditions without cause.

On Monday, February 26, Mr. Awad and his son Ashraf, 20, residents of the Old City, were on their roof when Ashraf was shot in the leg and his father was shot and killed by a sniper. Ashraf gave testimony from his hospital bed to reporters and human rights workers: "On Monday around noon, my dad went up to the roof to check on the water, which was not working. I sensed some movement outside and through the window I saw soldiers. I ran upstairs to

warn my dad that the Army was near, and as I spoke the words a dum dum bullet hit my right elbow, shattering it. My dad ran towards me to save me. When he looked back towards where the bullet had come from, he was shot by a sniper in the neck, and then in the head. "I called for help and tried to give my dad CPR. When the ambulance arrived, it was surrounded by jeeps on all sides and prevented from reaching our home. The soldiers took me into one of their jeeps while my father was still bleeding seriously. They held me for an hour and a half before taking me to an ambulance. One soldier bragged that he was the one who shot me and my dad, and followed me to the ambulance in a jeep by himself. My family told me afterwards that after the soldiers made sure of my dad's death, they allowed the medical workers to carry him down." The army claimed that the men had guns, though no guns were ever produced. There has been no army investigation into the attack and the murder.

(News bites courtesy of <http://www.dahrjamailliraq.com> and <http://www.democracynow.org>)

Crockford is a Bard Alum and currently works for the Human Rights Project.

US Mid-East Policy Cont'd.

-continued from page five-

Palestinians are supporting terror because they do not "recognize Israel's right to exist" is a distraction and a lie. Viewed within the context of other US involvement in the Middle East, this American escalation in Palestine makes it increasingly scary to imagine what will happen next. According to an administration official anonymously quoted in the Ha'aretz article, the "U.S. administration is...certain that the sanctions against Hamas will inevitably result in a violent confrontation between Hamas and Fatah, and in such a scenario, they would prefer to strengthen the 'good guys' headed by Abbas." Therefore the US designed the civil war, caused the economic collapse to precipitate it, and then funded its pick. There isn't room here to describe what the sanctions and the intensification of the Israeli occupation have done to the Palestinians, but suffice it to say it is very bad, and now Gazans are killing each other, going mad inside their "disengaged", open-air prison.

The Middle East sufficiently engorged in flames, US contractors and weapons manufacturers have another Soviet-like, perpetual enemy upon which to build business and skyrocket stocks. Meanwhile, the racism implicit in the "War on Terror", at "home" and abroad, sounded harmonious bells to the private prison industry, which has clamored onto the

bandwagon. The southwestern US is experiencing a boom in private immigration prisons. In Raymondville, Texas, the poorest city in the poorest district of the nation, a bizarre looking tent prison holds two thousand people without proper papers. Many of them were separated from their children and are being held in the desert without access to lawyers, family or friends.

Bush has fulfilled his promise: the war on terror is everywhere.

New Weapons in Iraq, Cont'd.


-continued from page two-

potential dangers of deploying weapons such as the ADS.

Previous experiences with the use of nonlethal weapons has proven that there's a high risk of misuse, and that such weapons can have unforeseen consequences, both medically and politically. While reducing civilian casualties is an admirable end, weapons such as the ADS may end up serving as means for military might instead of the "humane" ends of crowd control. And in a society in which relations between citizens and occupying troops is already tenuous, we should question the sagacity of employing a painful and mysterious weapon as a way to clear the way and control crowded situations. As of yet, the ADS and its prospective use in Iraq is still being evaluated. But the implications of such weaponry, and past and present abuse of similar technology, have already cast a shadow of doubt over this realm of technological development.

SUI GENERIS

Bard's foreign language literary review is looking for submissions and layout help! We need translations and original works in a foreign language as well as people interested in copy editing and computer formatting. Don't be shy! Make haste! All are welcome! Contact morgan.gibney@gmail.com



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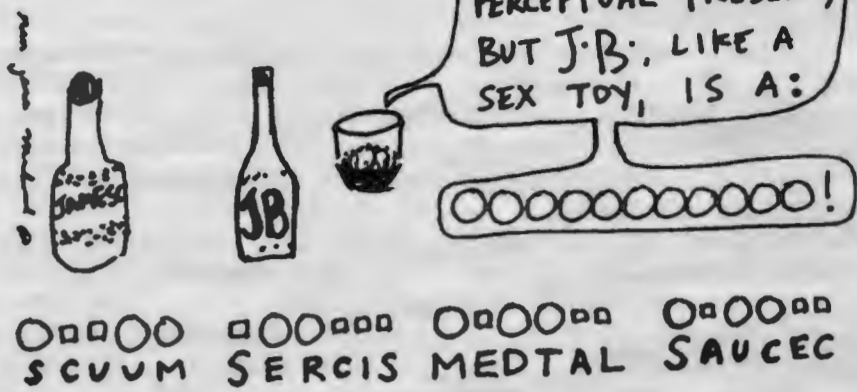
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by valery rousset



The Human Rights Project, in solidarity with the student strike, presents

Films on Algeria, Iraq and Palestine



Monday, March 19
Campus Center
MPR

5:00- *Battle of Algiers*, 125 min.

One of the most influential films in the history of political cinema, Gillo Pontecorvo's *The Battle of Algiers* focuses on the events of 1957, a key year in Algeria's struggle for independence from France. Shot in the streets of Algiers in documentary style, the film vividly re-creates the tumultuous Algerian uprising against the occupying French. The violence soon escalates on both sides in this war drama that's astonishingly relevant today.

7:15- *My Country, My Country*, 86 min.

Filmmaker Laura Poitras's fascinating Oscar-nominated documentary provides an inside look at war-torn Iraq from the perspective of a Baghdad citizen. The film follows Dr. Riyadh, a physician who serves the people in his community both as a health care provider and as an advocate in numerous areas of their lives. A critic of the U.S. occupation, Riyadh nonetheless supports democracy in Iraq and decides to run as a candidate in the tumultuous 2005 elections.

9:30- *Private*, 90 min.

Inspired by real events, documentary filmmaker Saverio Costanzo's feature debut is a minimalist psychological drama about a Palestinian family of seven suddenly confronted with a volatile situation in their home that in many ways reflects the larger ongoing conflict between Palestine and Israel. Winner of a Golden Leopard at the Locarno Film Festival, *PRIVATE* is convincingly shot in a documentary style with a hand-held camera and a quick pace. Director Costanzo has created a unique occasion for both Israeli and Palestinian actors to work together, and being an outsider himself, he has worked to maintain a neutral standpoint while dramatizing the conflict.