

OBSERVER: VOLUME 20, ISSUE 11. MARCH 22, 2006

How to Spend \$100,000?

The Planning Committee and student body work together to decide

BY SARAH MARTINO

According to the Student Government Constitution, all convocation fund money that has not been spent by the end of each Spring semester is supposed to be reintegrated into the following fall semester's convocation fund. However, for at least the last ten years the leftover money has instead been sitting in a reserve fund which has now accumulated over \$100,000. After negotiation with administration members who were reluctant to make the fund public knowledge, the Central Committee announced last week that the student body had finally been granted access to the \$100,000 surplus, and a student forum was held on Wednesday, March 15, to discuss how the money should be handled.

Adriane Raff Corwin, who took over the position of Treasurer this fall, was first informed about this extra money when she asked the Director of Budgets Kimberly Keeley-Henschel, why the Central Committee's request to raise the Student Activities Fee had repeatedly been denied. The Student Activities Fee is a ten dollar fee that is part of every Bard student's tuition, and the student body has voted to raise it on numerous occasions, but has been repeatedly refused by the administration. Vice President of the College Dimitri Papadimitriou later confirmed to Central Committee Secretary Matt Wing that the presence of so much extra money was a major contributing factor in the Administration's refusal to raise the Student Activities Fee, coupled with the fact that the proposal for the raise submitted two years ago was very poorly conceived.

Following her discovery, Raff Corwin reported back to the Central Committee that a large sum of money from past semesters existed, but that she wasn't supposed to discuss it and it was not up for student use. Raff Corwin says, "I was asked not to talk about this openly, but looking back I think it was more like, 'Don't go to the *Observer* waving your arms saying there is a lot of leftover student activities fee money without talking to us first.'"

After hearing this news, the Central Committee began the task of trying to gain access to the money. Wing saw this as "[An] opening to make a clear case as to why this fund should be put fully under our control. I met with Dimitri Papadimitriou twice in the first semester and argued that it was unreasonable of the administration to deny us a student activities fee raise on the basis of this reserve fund, yet at the same time not let us tell people about it or spend it."

Chair of the Planning Committee
Adam Baz made it clear that proposals should be for large, one-time investments, which will "enhance club potential" and make a lasting impact on the club, and by extension, the school.

Wing was able to convince Papadimitriou that the students deserved access to the reserve fund, and in further meetings with Wing and Raff Corwin it was established that the reserve fund was approximately \$107,000. \$7000 are being put aside for real emergencies, like when the Sound Crew's equipment was stolen. It is still unclear how this fund was allowed to build for as long as it did, and why the administration was so withholding. Raff Corwin admits that some blame might fall on the disorganization of past Treasurers who did not keep records, and also theorizes: "Perhaps when Bill [McColloch, the previous Treasurer] was here we did use the entire [convocation] fund, and that's why he never knew about [the extra money], because it would seem logical that if we spent it all, why would he ask if we hadn't in the past? I also think perhaps five years ago treasurers were rolling over the funds, but it became useless to talk about it because we weren't actually using the rolled over funds so it was forgotten about."

The forum on March 15, which was attended by approximately fifty students, was meant to give students

the chance to voice their opinions on the use of the money and the allocation process, with the understanding that there are certain limits. Because the money is technically part of the convocation fund, it must be allocated according to the guidelines in the student government constitution. This means that in order to have access to the money you must be a club head, and you must have submitted a budget at the beginning of the semester in which you make your request. All final decisions about where the money is allocated will be made by the Planning Committee.

Chair of the Planning Committee Adam Baz made it clear that proposals should be for large, one-time investments, which will "enhance club potential" and make a lasting impact on the club, and by extension, the school. It was stressed by Wing and the Planning Committee that the reserve fund is a surplus; the money comes from past classes and when considering where to put it students should think somewhat "selflessly" about what benefits the whole community. All allocated money must be accounted for by the end of the semester, meaning that clubs cannot request money from the reserve fund and save it for a future project. Each club will be allowed to make one request from the reserve fund per semester.

While \$100,000 would not exactly foot the bill, [for a new student space,] hopefully the investment would give students a voice in the unavoidable debate over how the building will be used, such as whether it will be substance-free or not.

Preliminary proposals made at the meeting included piping, electrics, a digital light board, sound equipment, and a projector for the Old Gym, equipment and jerseys for the cycling and women's rugby teams, a vehicle for EMS, and an FM signal for WXBC. The New Orleans Relief club asked for as much as \$18,000 to be given in order to work over the summer to help rebuild and fix a high school in New Orleans, and then establish long term mentoring, literacy, and art programs that Bard students could help facilitate and participate in. At the end of the night when the cost of all the proposals were added up, the final number was upwards of \$60,000.

The one big, lasting project on everyone's mind was a new student space. With the projected budget for that project priced at \$2.8 million, \$100,000 would not exactly foot the bill, but as Wing pointed out it would show a significant dedication on the part of the student body and hopefully the investment would give students a voice in the unavoidable debate over how the building will be used, such as whether it will be substance-free or not. The Student Government (which can technically act as a club) will be submitting a proposal asking for a large sum of money to be put toward a new student space.

In the future, proposals will be made at the beginning of every semester, similar to the budget process, until the money in the fund runs out. In order to request money from the reserve fund this semester, clubs must submit their proposals via email to planncomm@bard.edu. If individual students are not part of a club but have ideas as to how to best use the money, they can email centralcom@bard.edu. All proposals must be submitted by Friday, March 24, the first day of Spring Break. This raises the issue of whether or not there should be a cap on the amount of money that can be taken from the fund each semester. After Spring Break, the Planning Committee will gather all of these proposals into a survey for students to rate what they think are the most deserving requests. The survey will also ask for opinions on whether or not there should be a cap on how much money is allowed to be allocated from the reserve fund each semester. Using the survey results and their discretion, the Planning Committee will then make all final decisions.

Clubs should note that smaller requests can still be made of the Emergency Fund, seeing as it has recently been raised by \$4000. In an email sent out to club heads over the weekend, Raff Corwin explained that she could not roll over the extra money from last semester right away because she was waiting on club receipts and was unsure how much unspent money actually existed. At first she thought that the amount being rolled over was about \$6000, \$3000 of which was allocated to clubs and \$3000 of which became this semester's original Emergency Fund. Raff Corwin reports, however, that after dealing with problems from last semester, the roll over turned out to be \$10,000, so the extra \$4000 are being placed into the Emergency Fund. As of Friday, March 17, the emergency fund was \$4650.

News from NOLA

BY KEITH MCDERMOTT

Bard's New Orleans research team needs help

The founder of the Common Ground Collective, Malik Rahim, has asked Bard students to take on projects to improve his organization. Last week Bard's New Orleans research team sent off a first draft of a resource guide and information pamphlet for New Orleans residents, organizers and volunteers, which will be distributed at the organizations Bard students worked with over winter break (and hopefully others as well). Currently, with the help of Bard's Human Rights Department, a resource website is being constructed which will contain information about volunteering, working in New Orleans, and the on-going rebuilding process. An important project Malik specified was weekly political updates, to keep his organization up-to-date on the overall picture. Much more work needs to be done in the area of calling mold abatement companies and compiling lists of volunteer organizations. If you are interested in doing research on any aspect of the rebuilding of New Orleans please contact Sarah Smith (ss559@bard.edu).

Last week Critical Resistance, a group dedicated to combating the prison industrial complex, visited Bard. They are involved, along with the NAACP, the ACLU, and Human Rights Watch, in investigating the abuse of prisoners during and after Hurricane Katrina. If you are interested in their work, check out their website, www.criticalresistance.org/katrina or email Autumn (dvelop2bthysself@yahoo.com).

Army Corps of Engineers

An investigation by the National Science Foundation has uncovered a disturbing contradiction concerning the Army Corps of Engineers' assessment of the collapse of the 17th St. Canal floodwall. In the aftermath of the storms, an Army Corps-sponsored panel found the failure to be the result of an "unforeseeable" combination of events. Spokesmen for the panel said that the specific "failure mechanism" which caused the flooding of much of the city had not been noted until 1994, long after the structures' design and construction. Two University of California-Berkeley professors leading a 34-member National Science Foundation investigation, Ray Seed and Bob Bea, in a written response, called the Corps' claims "unfortunate" and "inaccurate." Their letter noted a 1986 research project, also conducted by the Corps, which simulated the soil conditions of the New Orleans area and the effects of raising water levels. The Corps' experiment resulted in the same kind of failure that brought down the 17th St. structure during Hurricane Katrina.

According to NSF's engineers, the results of the experiments were widely circulated among Corps officials. In addition, the researchers involved in the test altered the New Orleans District, which was overseeing the design of the floodwalls, that the experiment suggested serious changes were needed. Bob Bea, in an interview with the Times-Picayune, said he "doubts this report ever made it to Modjeski and Masters (the general design firm for the 17th St. project) or Eustis (the company doing the soil tests)."

Wal-Mart looting police officers cleared of charges.

Four New Orleans police officers, who were video taped by MSNBC walking out of a Wal-Mart with a shopping cart full of shoes and clothes among a crowd of other looters, have been cleared of charges. When the MSNBC reporter asked the officers what they were doing, one officer replied "looking for looters" and turned away. Assistant Police Chief Marlon Defillo, who is also commander of the Public Integrity Bureau, said that the officers were cleared of looting charges because they had received permission from as of yet unnamed superiors to take necessities for themselves and other officers. The four officers were suspended for 10 days without pay for "neglect of duty" because they took no action to stop the looting that was taking place around them. The officer who responded to the MSNBC reporter's questioning received an additional 3-day suspension for her "discourteous" response. Two looting investigations linked to New Orleans police officers remain open. One investigation involves the theft of about 200 vehicles from a Cadillac Chevrolet lot, and the other involves a complaint received from a hotel owner who claims a group of officers kept a large stash of goods in one of his rooms.

Going Once, Going Twice, Airport security clearance goes to the highest bidder

BY ADAM T. SAMSON

The Transportation Security Administration (TSA), the agency responsible for securing the nation's airports, is set to begin implementing its "Registered Traveler Program" in June of this year. The goal of the Registered Traveler Program, according to the TSA's official website, is to "strengthen aviation security and to enhance customer service" by allowing frequent travelers to submit to voluntary background checks, which in turn will grant them access to expedited security lines. The TSA believes private firms, rather than government agencies, would best carry out the mission of implementing and running such a program. Based on a recent TSA press release, it appears the plan is nearly completed, although the particular terms and firms selected to carry out this plan will not be released until later. Anyone can request membership to this program; the individuals must submit basic personal information, as well as biometric data. At the moment, it appears fingerprints will be used, but the press release alludes to the possibility of retinal scans as well. Once a background check confirms the individual is not a threat, they will receive a Registered Traveler smart card with their fingerprints encoded within the card.

Registered Travelers will be able to use their smart card to gain entrance to "designated or dedicated security lines at participating airports and may receive additional screening benefits." Smart card holders will still have to go through metal detectors, and abide by other aviation rules, including the prohibition of certain high-risk items.

Those opposed have protested that a Registered Traveler Program will create a government instituted social-gap, wherein the wealthy are "trusted" and the less wealthy are assumed to be a greater threat to the nation's security.

The TSA is committed to giving private firms the power to run the Registered Traveler Program. Furthermore, the TSA states, in their most recent press release, that the program will be "market-driven," which means the government will not cap the price private firms charge to become a Registered Traveler. That is to say the companies can charge whatever price the market will bear and reap the associated profits. Since most of the demand will likely come from frequent business travelers and wealthy individuals who are willing to pay a considerable amount of money for the convenience of expedited security, it will probably be rather costly to become a Registered Traveler. This suggests that the average passenger will probably be priced out of the program.

Those opposed to the program have protested that a Registered Traveler Program will create a government instituted social-gap, wherein the wealthy are "trusted" and the less wealthy are assumed to be a greater threat to the nation's security. The TSA contends that its plan will benefit both the Registered Travelers and average travelers because having fewer people move through regular checkpoints will make the security checkpoint line shorter. The TSA has not fully addressed whether additional personnel will be made available to handle the Registered Travelers. However, the TSA has suggested that it will be left to the discretion of participating firms whether they want to add additional screeners or upgrade screening equipment. If the private firms elect not to add these resources, it is likely that the average passenger could be faced with longer lines as TSA personnel would be dispatched to the Registered Traveler security checkpoints.

Beyond the socio-economic questions raised by the TSA plan, others question the basic security of the plan. The TSA claims that they have considered this factor, but as of now the TSA has released very little information as to how they plan to stop terrorists from exploiting the system or the methodology for selecting the private firms that will participate in this program. According to the most recent press release, "benefits [Registered Travelers receive] will change from time to time in order to make it more difficult for terrorists to anticipate our security activities."

Shake-Up at Harvard Bard's Botstein weighs in on Lawrence Summers and the role of the college prez

BY OLIVER TRALDI

Last month Lawrence Summers announced that he would be stepping down this summer after a short and turbulent five-year stint as Harvard University's President. Before becoming Harvard's chief administration, Summers served as Chief Economist of the World Bank from 1991-1993 and Secretary of the Treasury from 1999-2001, and also received the John Bates Clark Medal and the Alan T. Waterman Award. Summers will be replaced by Derek Bok, who served as president of the college from 1971-1991, for an interim period which will likely last a year.

Summers was a controversial figure from the start. As an advocate of free trade and globalization, he angered many with a memo he wrote at the World Bank suggesting that First World pollution be exported to Third World countries. (Summers characterized the memo as an "ironic aside.") A more specific debate surrounding his administration broke out his very first semester, in the fall of 2001, when he criticized Cornel West, a nationally renowned scholar of African-American studies who was teaching at Harvard. West responded by moving to Princeton. Summers again stirred up controversy in 2002, when he called a campaign for Harvard and MIT to divest from Israel "anti-Semitic in effect."

By far Summers' most widely reported and condemned comments came in 2005, when he made a speech regarding the relatively low proportion of women in science and engineering. The reason behind this trend, he said, is that "in the special case of science and engineering, there are issues of intrinsic aptitude, and particularly of the variability of aptitude, and that those considerations are reinforced by what are in fact lesser factors." The response outside Harvard was stunning, as was the internal response: Harvard's Faculty of Arts and Sciences passed a vote of no confidence that spring.

Bard's President Leon Botstein was quoted in the February 25 edition of the *Boston Globe* supporting the

selection of a scientist as Harvard's next leader. On March 17, the Observer sat down with President Botstein to discuss his opinions on the situation at Harvard. Below is a selection of what he had to say.

On his view that the next president of Harvard should be a scientist.

"[In] my view, the future of democracy and of the preservation of freedom, particularly freedom of thought, [hinges upon] the heightening of the level of scientific literacy and of scientific understanding. Also, most [current] public policy issues, whether they be about the environment, death...issues of information...are related to the understanding of science."

On the role of Harvard's president.

"Whoever is the president of Harvard is by definition a leading spokesperson, presumably, on behalf of the future of American education...The president of Harvard is by definition a symbolic presence. It's arguably the most - potentially - visible [academic] post. There's some influence you can have on public policy with respect to research and to K-12...It's just a function of [the role's] visibility and of its prominence...In moments of history, [Harvard has] had a lot of influence. Two of its presidents [Conant and Bok] have been very successful in terms of this intervention in public policy."

About Lawrence Summers as Harvard's president.

"Several things can be said. In the absence of any reliable information...it seemed that Mr. Summers did not succeed in maintaining a give-and-take relationship with the faculty. He failed to keep lines of communication open. [It's] hard to assess why that happened, but it seemed to be the primary cause.

"The event lends itself to a variety of public interpretations, which is unfortunate, which primarily derives from the fact that he - Summers - appears to have sometimes been...not as skilled at expressing himself in public as he might have been. [Several comments about women in science] appeared to be more thoughtless than they were thoughtful...I think presidents should [speak out], but they have to be careful about making themselves understood."

President Botstein indicated that this should not be "an invitation to self-censorship" or lead to university administrators being utilized "exclusively for internal managerial issues." Botstein emphasized above all that prominent academics still have the opportunity of "salutary influence" on public policy.

Speaking from Experience: Iraq Veterans Against the War

BY DINKO ALEKSANDROV

On Saturday, March 11, Jose Vasquez and Geoffrey Millard, both Iraq veterans and members of the Iraq Veterans Against the War (IVAW), came to Bard. Beginning the presentation, Vasquez said that photographs, media, and army experience had completely changed his point of view on war. As time passed, Vasquez started having nightmares about battles and dead people. Although he still does, his leaving the army is a hope on the horizon for Vasquez. The other Iraq veteran, Geoffrey Millard, had a different experience. He chose to go to Iraq even though he knew this was "an illegal and immoral war." His ambition was to raise awareness to the public...if he survived the battles.

Although he was born in California, Vasquez was raised in a poor neighborhood in the Bronx. Growing up in such an area had its influence on his life and the decisions he made. Because of a poor financial situation, Jose didn't get a chance to go to college: "I was very naive about how folks get through college and how they pay if they are not rich." This explains Vasquez's perception that his only hope was the Army. Recruiters often visited his neighborhood to enroll new soldiers. Their presence in the area was so common that one day a tank passed through the basketball court. So when the recruiters promised Jose a great

job and traveling around the world, Vasquez did not feel he had much of a choice and eventually agreed to join the army.

Vasquez's life in the military began with his first job, weapon and vehicle maintenance in Fort Benning, GA. Some time later, Jose was moved to Hawaii, where he admits life was much better and much more of an adventure. "I did get to travel around the world too. I went to Thailand. But I started to realize I was too bright for this shit." Soon after, in December 1996, Vasquez left the army. He enrolled in college and started working on his Bachelor's degree, while at the same time holding a part-time job. Although he and his wife stayed in Hawaii at first, it wasn't long before they moved to Florida. Vasquez's adventures continued when he went back to live in New York, where he was still going to college and at the same time looking for a reserve unit he could join. (Reserve sol-

WALKING TO NEW ORLEANS

Veterans' and Survivors' March for Peace and Justice



Every Bomb Dropped on Iraq Explodes over New Orleans

diers perform training one weekend every month and for two weeks at certain times of the year.) Vasquez finally found one where they trained his as a doctor, and he became a medic in the army.

Continued on page 5

Primary Sources

French youth rebel over discriminatory law

In a highly controversial attempt to revitalize the job market for young people by making them more appealing applicants for employers, the French government recently passed the "First Job Contract" (CPE), a new law which will allow employers to fire workers under the age of 26 within the first two years of their employment without any justification. This law has enraged young French workers and university students, who have dubbed themselves the "Kleenex generation," owing to their apparent disposability. At a time when unemployment for young people has reached a staggering 50% in some parts of France, as compared to the overall unemployment rate of 10% nationally, the French government is desperate to make a dent in the problem. Prime Minister Dominique de Villepin's tactics, however, have brought students, parents, and other outraged French citizens to the streets several times in the last week. The main force behind the protests has come from a coalition of unions and student groups. On March 11, Villepin sent riot police to break up the occupation of the Sorbonne and the Collège de France, where students had barricaded themselves inside in protest of the CPE. Most recently, on March 18, anywhere from 500,000 (according to police estimates) to 1.5 million people (according to organizers) participated in marches across France. Another central demonstration is planned for Thursday, March 23.

The following statement comes from the editorial board of the World Socialist Web Site and was distributed at many of the demonstrations around France on March 18. It has been edited somewhat for length, but is available in its entirety at www.wsws.org/articles/2006/mar2006/leaf-m18.shtml.

The struggle of youth and workers in France against the Gaullist government's CPE (First Job Contract) demonstrates the growing opposition among youth and workers across Europe to the assault on jobs, wages and working conditions. The issue at stake goes to the heart of the problems facing working people throughout Europe and internationally. In the name of making business competitive, governments are pitting young workers against older workers, immigrants against the native born, low-paid workers in the East against those in the West.

According to the perverse logic of Prime Minister Villepin, in order to create employment for young workers the bosses must be given a free hand to sack them. This is just another way of saying: Accept having your working conditions driven back to Zola's times, or reconcile yourself to permanent unemployment!

The CPE robs workers 26 and younger of any legal protection. But as far as the big business organization Medef is concerned, it does not go far enough. Medef's president wants a CPE-style contract for all workers. This only confirms that the CPE will set a precedent for similar attacks on the workforce as a whole.

The wave of student strikes and occupations, actively supported by broad sections of workers, brings together youth and working people of all nationalities, religions and races. This shows the potential for defeating the ruling elite's efforts to whip up anti-immigrant prejudice by uniting working people across Europe and internationally in a common struggle to defend social conditions and democratic rights, and oppose war.

In fighting this attack by the government of President Chirac and Prime Minister Villepin, workers and youth in France are giving a lead to their brothers and sisters around the world. However, as bitter experience has proven—from the mass strikes of 1968 and 1995 to the demonstrations and walkouts of the past two years—protest by itself will not defeat the corporate/government assault on the working class. The defense of living standards and democratic rights requires a political perspective that can unite workers internationally in a common struggle against the profit system that is the source of these attacks.

The conscious and declared aim of the current mobilisation must be not simply to pressure or shift the

Continued on page 5

SPORTS SCORES

| Men's Volleyball | | | |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|---|--------|
| 03/07/06 | Ramapo College | L | 3-1 |
| 03/11/06 | Philadelphia Biblical University | W | 3-0 |
| 03/11/06 | Purchase College | W | 3-0 |
| 03/12/06 | Yeshiva University | W | 3-0 |
| 03/15/06 | SUNY New Paltz | L | 3-1 |
| 03/17/06 | Polytechnic University | W | 3-0 |
| 03/17/06 | Philadelphia Biblical University | W | 3-1 |
| 03/18/06 | D'Youville College-NEAC Championship | L | 3-0 |
| Upcoming Men's Volleyball Home Games | | | |
| 03/25/06 | Mount Saint Vincent College | | 2:00pm |
| Upcoming Men's Tennis Home Games | | | |
| 04/04/06 | Ramapo College | | 5:00pm |
| 04/09/06 | Green Mountain College | | 6:30pm |
| 04/12/06 | Keystone College | | 5:00pm |

| | |
|---------------------------------|---|
| 4 | MPR 10-1 Wed |
| Remember! Drink B4Square! |  |

Comic Book Symposium!

Featuring student writing on sequential artforms

excerpts from student artwork in graphic novel and manga,

and brief lectures from organizers *Ben Stevens, Matt Johnson, and YUKA SUZUKI.*

Concluding with "arguably the greatest comic book movie of all time!"

on April 8th
at 5:30
in Olin 102

The Bunsen Burner

Scientists' New Muscles May Spark Revolution in Milk-Money Economy

BY TRISTAN BENNETT

Devotees of the Bunsen Burner may recall the previous articles this publication has put out regarding the augmentation and supplementation of the human body. In a new twist, we return today to that realm of nature-tampering that has so affectionately flooded science news and forced this humble journalism-monster to bring you the latest in a thrill ride of human malfeasances and surefire mistakes: The Bionic Muscle (timpani pending).

Boasting arrogantly and no doubt clinking their special-occasion test tubes together, scientists at the University of Texas have developed bionic muscles which they say have a lift strength 100 times that of a normal human muscle. Quick to allege a "for the good of mankind" style scientific pursuit, the researchers hastily add that their new muscles might one day be used to construct more advanced prosthetic limbs. Showcasing the future potential of their achievement, scientists said they could even lend superhuman strength to certain professions such as firefighters, mimes, soldiers, astronauts and supervillains.

But don't be fooled - this is no Schwarzenegger style beast they're creating. The actual "muscles" bear no resemblance to our muscles of blood and sinew. No, the ingredients for superhuman muscles are simply wires, cantilevers and glass bottles. The science behind this new technology, however, is entirely biological in its origins.

Two types of muscles are currently being investigated by the Nanotech Institute at the University of Texas in Dallas. Both designs function by releasing the chemical energy of fuels such as hydrogen and alcohol while consuming oxygen. This, scientists say, replicates the first stage in breathing - taking in oxygen. The most powerful type of muscles being researched are "shorted fuel cell muscles" which convert chemical energy into heat which then causes a special shape-memory metal alloy to contract and spin Batman above your head. Turning down the heat allows the muscles to relax and Batman to pussy his way out of there on his batcycle. Fuck him.

Another type of muscle being developed converted chemical energy straight into electrical energy, which then causes a material made from carbon nanotube electrodes to bend. Science, as you can see, is impressive. The unfortunately named Dr John Madden of the University of British Columbia in Vancouver said, "The approach could transform the way complex mechanical systems are built." Added Madden, "Touchdown!"

According to Madden, the artificial muscles mimic nature in a number of ways: "The muscle consumes oxygen and fuel that can be transported via a circulation system; the muscle itself supports the chemical reaction that leads to mechanical work; electrochemical circuits can act as nerves, controlling actuation; some energy is stored locally in the muscle itself; and, like natural muscle, the materials studied contract linearly." Well thank tough actin/Tinactin for that.

For all of that, the future isn't rosy-hued for bionic musculature. The challenge now is to create a circulation system like that of humans to replace the wires in the artificial muscles. Pressures need to be generated so that waste gases could be produced and the artificial muscles could truly be described as "breathing."

CORRECTION:

Last week's edition of the Bunsen Burner was unfortunately cut-off midsentence due to an editorial oversight. The last sentence should have read, "Punching yourself in the gut has never been so easy." We apologize, Tristan.

Inside Bard

Meet Mishu

BY ELIZA JARVINEN, NESE SENOL,
AND TEGAN WALSH

Frequently seen around campus wearing a big smile, Mishu Duduta is known to spout physics jokes at whoever will listen. A first-year student from Suceava, Romania, Mishu is enrolled at Bard as a prospective chemistry and physics major. Bard is but one of the many schools he applied to, but in the end Mishu realized, "I speak English. I don't speak Chinese. Otherwise I would have gone to Beijing..." Mishu does enjoy the United States, however, and intends to stay for graduate school and beyond—preferably living in Boston. He misses his family deeply, but is resigned to fulfill his destiny: "A man's gotta do what a man's gotta do...make a lot of money."



We found Mishu on a Wednesday night sitting at the campus center help desk engrossed in an Intermediate Organic Chemistry textbook. Though he usually works in the game room, he was graciously filling in for someone at the desk. Mishu works five jobs in total, including positions at the gym and in the general chemistry lab, where he makes sure nobody drinks anything toxic. His favorite job, however, is tutoring Organic Chemistry: "I can work my own hours there, and it is also a lot of fun."

Teaching others has encouraged him to strive towards eventually becoming a professor, and next semester he plans to expand his tutoring repertoire to include physics and math. Mishu's studies are not limited to the school year, either; this summer, he plans to participate in a research program at Boston University. Although usually reserved for American citizens, correspondence with the director coupled with glowing recommendations earned him a spot in this prestigious program.

Mishu says the reason he works so hard is so that he can visit his girlfriend at MIT. "Everyone knows why I'm *really* going to Boston," he shrugs, smiling. After she came to visit him in September, Mishu says he finally felt at home at Bard. After all, he realized, "MIT is just one building," and Bard is much more picturesque.

When asked what Mishu thinks of Bard students, he paused to consider the question. "There are some great people here," he said. "And they've helped me to learn a lot about myself...But there are also some people here who are just plain weird." When asked about improving Bard, he vented about the school's shady meal plan: "Kline needs more competition. What's with the meal plan? You get 19 meals a week and 150 bard bucks, 14 meals a week and 200 Bard bucks. Minus five meals a week, 75 meals a semester. That's 50 bard bucks...What? That's communism right there." Mishu suggests that perhaps FYSEM should include the texts of Solzhenitsyn, who warns about the practical dangers such flamboyant communism entails.

Iraq Veterans, continued from page 3

"This is when I started missing the military", Vasquez recalled. "You wonder why would anyone leave the army and then go back. Well, there are a lot of reasons. They train you in something and you get a license for different things. Besides, sometimes there are moments when you are starving, it's raining outside, and yet someone would tell a joke and then the whole truck would laugh. You can't replace moments like these. Every four years, I would achieve a goal and I attributed this to the skills I learned in the army. Whereas, every time I went back to my old, poor neighborhood, my folks would still do the same shit."

Nevertheless, Vasquez's view on the military took a major turn in 2001. Like millions of Americans, his life completely changed after 9/11. "This was the first time I ever doubted the military. The way things were reported on the news struck me. Folks were saying 9/11 was just like Pearl Harbor. I know a little bit of history," Vasquez confessed with humor, "and I know that World War II ended with two atomic bombs. I was like, 'Hey, I'm not alright with that.'...Another thing was that people were saying that we were seeking revenge. Now, when you send a B-52, it's sure you're going to hit a couple of hundred people. I understand that those who died on 9/11 were regular people, going to their jobs and everything. But so were those brown people who were going to their villages and farms in Iraq. I don't think American lives are more valuable than anyone else's. The photographs I saw were another thing that pissed me off. I was thinking 'This could be my father, my brother, my cousin, dark-skinned people with dark hair and beard. They looked just like me. I felt I was on the wrong side. We were oppressing people. So the next time I put on my uniform, I felt dirty. I didn't want to wear it anymore.'

After that, Vasquez became a conscientious objector—an individual whose personal beliefs are incompatible with military service. Nevertheless, in order for him to legally leave the army, he had to file an objection. "I spoke to my wife, lawyers, soldiers I trusted," said Vasquez. "I also spoke to my dad, who is a Vietnam vet. He said, 'You know, son, I fought in a war that had no reason. I understand how you feel. I support you. If you can find a way to get out of the military, do it.' So in my paper, I spoke about religion and Buddhist philosophy. I spoke about anthropology and human rights. I believe that I should not judge a culture unless I study it and understand it from inside. I turned my objection in, but they didn't believe I wrote it myself, which was kind of offensive." A month after that, however, in February of 2005, Vasquez finally left the US army.

Geoffrey Millard, the other veteran who spoke at Bard on the 11th, started his presentation by showing his boots to everyone. He confessed he had spent 13 months in Iraq and during that time he had never worn another pair of shoes. "These boots have never been washed," said Millard. "There's still mud on them. There's still oil on them. There's still blood on them. I was in Iraq in 2004-2005. This is an illegal and immoral war. We invaded a country that never attacked the US. It violates the UN charter. Why then did we go to war? Army regulation 525-13 states the definition of terrorism: There must be violence or the threat of violence and the motivation must be political, religious, or ideological. Let's say Bush was right and we did it because of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) — a political reason. We didn't find any. Why are we still there? The next obstacle was Saddam Hussein —

another political reason. We found him; he's on trial. Now the next reason for the war was fighting for democracy, which is ideological. But the elections in Iraq are a fraud. This is not a democracy. They are a fraud because we picked their candidates. You tell me: 'But Jeff, a higher percentage of the population in Iraq voted than percentage in America.' Yes, that's right. But it's still a fraud."

Just like Vasquez, Millard grew up in a poor area where the only people who were respected were pimps and drug dealers. This had an impact on his childhood and the way he perceived life. "So this is all I wanted: respect. I didn't want to do drugs or join gangs. Instead I joined the army—the biggest gang in the world. Yes, that's right. They have their signs and signals; they wear the same uniform. I was 17 when this happened. It was fun. I got my dick hard. I blewed shit up. I became an explosive expert. What they don't tell you though is that they train you this to kill people. A single mine can cut a tank in half. We still have them in Korea, in Bosnia, in Iraq. Imagine what would happen to a child when he finds one. The media say we are rebuilding schools, instead of building them. We're rebuilding them because we bombed them. We bombed schools with children inside. Yes, that's right. You think we only bombed schools at night? We bombed hospitals with patients in them. I knew this war was illegal. I didn't want to go, but I didn't stand up for myself." When the war started, Millard had three choices: go to Canada, go to prison and get locked up in solitary, or go to war. He chose the third one, hoping that one day, if he survived, he would come back and teach people about what is hidden behind the curtains.

I understand that those who died on 9/11 were regular people, going to their jobs and everything. But so were those brown people who were going to their villages and farms in Iraq. I don't think American lives are more valuable than anyone else's.

Millard also explained a little about war tactics and why he thinks we are not winning the war. He pointed out that the war in Iraq is a guerilla war, but the US is not fighting it in guerilla terms. Rather, the army uses the traditional (some say outdated) "hammer-and-anvil" strategy. This is destructive to the US and the reason why we have lost so many soldiers. In contrast, the Iraqi guerilla forces use Improvised Explosive Devices (IED) or as they are called in the press—roadside bombs. "IED's generally have a maximum effect," Millard explained, "and the way they work is simple. The guerillas put them on the road and wait until an American convoy comes. Then BOOM! And all the soldiers are dead. The guerillas run away and lose no one."

Both members of the IVAW, Vasquez and Millard, took part of the March for Peace and Justice, which spanned the 14th to the 19th of this month. Its purpose is to call attention to government funds being spent on the Iraq rather than on rebuilding the Gulf Coast. By giving numerous speeches, camping outside, talking to people in person, Jose and Geoff hope to make a difference and stop the "illegal and immoral" war in Iraq.

French Youth, continued from page 4

government, but to force it to resign. But this raises the question: With what should the Gaullist government be replaced?

Once again, bitter experience—from Mitterrand to the Plural Left government of Jospin—demonstrates that replacing the Gaullists with governments of the Socialist Party and Communist Party is not the answer. These parties will betray in the future as they have in the past, because in the end they are opposed to a revolutionary struggle against the profit system. ...

[Villepin] has the support of the entire political establishment and international big business. As far as the French and European bourgeoisie are concerned, the only way to succeed against their longstanding economic rivals in the US and Japan and the rising threat from China and India is by gutting the living conditions and intensifying the exploitation of the European working class. All over Europe governments are imposing the same type of "labour market reforms." ...

The starting point for an effective struggle against the attacks on the working class and youth is the recognition that the source of these attacks is the historic

failure of the capitalist system itself. Capitalism is in crisis not just in France, or Europe, or the US, but on a global scale. This is the root cause of the growth of imperialist militarism and the turn to dictatorial forms of rule. ...

The struggle against the global attack on workers' rights and living standards requires the development of an international mass movement of the working class based on a socialist perspective. Such a movement must unite workers of all nationalities, races and religions and support the right of workers to live and work in any country they choose, with full and equal legal rights. It must indefatigably defend democratic and social rights and oppose imperialist war. It must champion the placing of the major financial, industrial and commercial enterprises under democratic and public ownership, so that economic life is no longer subordinated to the accumulation of corporate profit and personal wealth, but rather is organized on an international and rational basis to eliminate poverty and provide secure employment and decent living standards for all.

The working class of Europe must unite against the capitalist policies of the European Union on the basis of its own program: the Socialist United States of Europe.

Powerful Drama from South Africa

BY TOM HOUSEMAN

The first Sunday of March, an incredible travesty occurred when the Academy decided to give *Crash* its Best Picture award. But that is not what this article is about. Instead, this article will focus on the correct decision made by the Academy in the Foreign Language Film category. The film they awarded was *Tsotsi*, from South Africa, not a country normally considered a powerhouse of cinema. That perception might change though, if South Africa is able to produce more film makers like Gavin Hood, who make more films like *Tsotsi*, an emotional powerhouse that



hits every target.

Tsotsi (Presley Chweneyagae) is the leader of a small gang in the heart of Johannesburg, South Africa. Few people know his real name (Tsotsi is Zulu for gangster). He is a ruthless, heartless, loner, but when he hijacks a woman's car and discovers that her baby is still in the backseat, his life gets turned upside-down. *Tsotsi* is not sure what draws him to the child, but he

decides to take it from the car and raise it. While desperately trying to care for the helpless baby, Tsotsi starts to understand responsibility. At the same time he tries to overcome the emotional damage he suffered as a child.

Tsotsi is not a groundbreaking story; the idea of a criminal seeking redemption is an age-old tale that has been told many times, in many different ways. Based on the novel written in the 1960s by Athol Fugard, *Tsotsi*'s story is a simple one, but the events that fill the story are complex and fascinating. *Tsotsi*'s interactions with those around him reveal his character, whether he is pummeling one of his gang members for no apparent reason or holding a woman at gunpoint and forcing her to feed the baby, and Presley Chweneyagae truly brings his character to life. Chweneyagae's memorable film debut shows that his ability to produce a range of emotions in one character, even when the character's emotions contradict each other. There are also several memorable supporting performances, especially from Kenneth Ngosi as Aap, *Tsotsi*'s only true friend. Zola, who provides much of the film's music, also portrays a rival gang leader, and Mothusi Magano brings a powerful humanity to what could have been the insignificant part of Boston, one of *Tsotsi*'s gang members.

But the most important feature of *Tsotsi* is Gavin Hood's direction. The actors are talented, and Hood's script is solid, but the way Hood brings his script to the screen really raises *Tsotsi* to the next level. Every aspect of the direction, from the juxtaposition of the rich and poor neighborhoods to the use of music, and the evocation of strong performances from actors in even the smallest roles, can be accredited to Hood, who is able to fully realize the power of *Tsotsi*'s story. The cinematography is breathtaking, beautifully capturing the dirtiest areas of Johannesburg. Mostly thanks to Hood's phenomenal direction, but also to the strong acting, *Tsotsi* is a film that cannot be missed.

Bitter Tea: Crank that Shit Up!

BY KELLY MEERS

About three weeks after *Bitter Tea* leaked onto the indie music blogs, my best friend from home called to explain two theses which had been bubbling and stewing within him over the last few days. The first revelation was that "acid will blow your mind", and the second, which I will focus on more in this particular review, was that *Bitter Tea*, the Fiery Furnaces' new album--to be released officially April 18, 2006 by Fat Possum records--was "our generation's Sgt.-Fucking-Pepper's."

I, of course, missed the call because I had "Police Sweater Blood Vow," the greatly adored piece of pop perfection near the end of the album, up "way too high... again" according to my dearly misinformed (but much loved!) neighbors. I listened to the rambling message while simultaneously holding my index finger up in an attempt to silence my disgruntled hall-mate. She threw up her arms in a frustration that could only be birthed from the blasting of music during my 4:26 AM, Tuesday night listening party. I considered how absolutely incredible it is that Matt and Eleanor Friedberger, the brother/sister combo comprising The Fiery Furnaces, have pieced together an album that I



have actually bothered to listen to forwards and backwards... literally.

The Fiery Furnaces have a history of making difficult, synthesizer infused blues, rock and noise inspired albums. *Blueberry Boat*, their 2004 release that has floated me until now, was a love it or hate it affair, garnering a 9.6 from *Pitchfork* and a 2 of 5 star rating from *The Guardian*. *Bitter Tea* is no exception, because for every intricately structured pop hook, every sweet swoon brought on by Eleanor's clear and warm vocal work, and every "they could have published this as poetry" lyric there is a counter: reversed vocals and instrumentation are ubiquitous on the album (nearly completely consuming some songs including "The Vietnamese Telephone Ministry"), and Matt will never give up his love for the wonderful, yet wholly bizarre sounds he is able to produce with the aid of his keyboards and synthesizers.

The backwards vocals aren't just some gimmick, though, which is what I tried to explain to my neighbor as I set the phone down, still full of energy from my best friend's enthused declaration. She didn't want to have anything to do with it, though, and slammed her door with an admirable vigor using only her right foot (her tense hands had seemingly fused together with her matted hair in desperation). Listening to the album backwards reveals that many of the songs are near palindromes, running just as well backwards as they do forwards--structurally and often melodically solid in both directions. On songs such as the aforementioned "The Vietnamese Telephone Ministry," the backwards vocals lend an often dark meaning to the content running opposite: "This life is a disease" Matt sings in reverse under his sister's forward vocals, "Damn it all, damn it all to hell." It could be that The Fiery Furnaces even offer a musical referendum to the oftentimes shallow and meek indie music scene--by including backwards vocals, *Bitter Tea* almost demands to be listened to on some sort of serious, intellectually engaged level.

Which is what I was trying to explain to security and my PC, Noah, before they wrote me up a quiet hours violation. Oh well, it wouldn't be the first time people were actively discriminated against for their musical tastes--ask your parents how their folks felt about that Sgt.-Fucking-Pepper's deal.

Hot Dog... Or Not Dog?

BY MICHAEL J. RUBIN

Observer Pick of the Week:

Liars
Drum's Not Dead
Mute 3.21.06



Considering the amount of hype this album has received in the last month from the music press, it seems to be a bit of an afterthought to spotlight it here, but it would be an injustice to let an album this good pass by. This is their first LP since the near polemic *They Were Wrong So We Drowned*, released in 2004, an album that marked a drastic change of direction from a band who was initially rooted in a more standard indie-rock shtick back in 2001. *Drum's Not Dead* proves to be far more balanced and listenable than *They Were Wrong*, yet it still shows a boldly innovative approach.

The clear tension that comes through in this album is supposedly, according to the band, based on the concept of two characters: "Drum," who embodies bold, confident creativity, and his foil "Mt. Heart Attack," a figure of self doubt and impotence. To me this sounds like bullshit, though it does allow you to visualize the struggle at the core of this somewhat schizophrenic album.

The songs that seem to be dominated by the character of "Drum" are characterized by a pounding, cultish, tribal rhythm section; lighter, ephemeral vocals; and a sort of confused jumble of guitars as on track three, "A Visit From Drum." It's not always clear who is who and or is what in this half-baked narrative, a fact that only adds to the mystery of an album that is easily the best release so far this year. More than anything, this album surprises you, a tendency of Liars that is not always so well received. Make sure to listen to this album at least a few times. It doesn't quite melt in your mouth, but rather it gets better with each spin as you pick up on the incredible craftsmanship of Liars.

Terrestrial Tones
Dead Drunk
Paw Tracks 3.7.06

The appropriately named *Dead Drunk* is the debut from Terrestrial Tones, comprised of Brooklyn roommates Avey Tare of Animal Collective and Eric Copeland of Black Dice. This album feels like a sort of post-apocalyptic bender; a complex and strangely organic construction of infernal buzzing that accompanies the faded realization that too much whiskey has been mixed with the wrong things. It recalls the overwhelming feeling of the point when the body loses control and your worst enemy heckles you in your helpless condition outside of a party.

Opening track "Car Fumes" sounds like a post-apocalyptic revolutionary trying to break through the static of inebriation. His brutish prophecies accompany what sound like failing attempts at mechanical restoration, an aggressive and confused attempt to reorient to a more manageable reality. By track two an acceptance of this trip has begun to take hold, opening up a landscape of numbing warmth. The next few tracks conjure images of lying on the floor half-awake while various people stand over you and inform you melodramatically that you look kinda out of it. In "Plow Man," it's a large bearded Viking bellowing at you, followed by that little girl who wears too much purple, poking you softly on "Magic Trick."

Perhaps reviewing an album like this is a bit pointless because the narrative it creates for the listener is so subjective. Nonetheless, the nervous confusion and unwilling momentum that the album seems to incite would likely appeal to the more patient fans of Black Dice.

That's What's Happenin' on Stage

BY HENRY CASEY

Critics reviewing *Dave Chappelle's Block Party* will focus on the reunion of The Fugees, but the real highlight is when Kool G Rap and Big Daddy Kane make an appearance as surprise guests during The Roots' set for the song "Boom." It was one of those moments that might have escaped the notice of film critics — I'm looking at Manohla Dargis (*NY Times*) and Kenneth Turan (*LA Times*) — because they don't even have a clue who Kane and/or Kool G are, and/or how glorious it was that they showed up to steal the stage from ?uestlove's Roots crew. The album version of the song has Black Thought rapping a verse in his style, and then doing a verse-long impression of Big Daddy Kane accompanied by one in the style of Kool G Rap. The song was one of the few worthwhile tracks on *The Tipping Point*, so it was great to see The Roots salvage it by inviting Big Daddy Kane and Kool G Rap to leave the mics hotter than Dick Cheney's shotgun.

Dave Chappelle's Block Party, a documentary film directed by Michel Gondry, (*Eternal Sunshine*) follows Dave from Ohio to Brooklyn as he prepares to unleash the concert he's always wanted to see. His laundry list includes Mos Def, Talib Kweli (who needs to do something to improve his increasingly gravelly tone), Kanye West, Dead

Prez, Jill Scott, and Common, who performed with—wait for it—Erykah Badu. The concert also featured the surprise reunion of the The Fugees. Leave it to Chappelle to bring the Fugees (Lauryn Hill, Pras, and Wyclef Jean), out of a decade long feud; Dave should take his next sabbatical to the Middle East.

As much as the film is about the musicians, most of the reason why mainstream America will see this film is for Chappelle himself. The film is an interesting look into his mind, a mentality that the media has been trying to get their grips on since Dave decided to go MIA from the *Chappelle Show*. The whole movie is about Dave doing what he wants. For example: he bussed Ohio Central State University's marching band to back up Kanye West for a thrilling rendition of "Jesus Walks," as well as perform a great turn on Miri Ben-Ari's instrumental from Twista's "Overnight Celebrity." The movie also has its unconventional moments; for example, Dave goes to a Salvation Army to take the time to sit down at a piano and try his best at a Thelonious Monk piece.

The time-shifting narrative that Gondry provides has Dave leading the camera around two very different neighborhoods. The first shot is of two men trying to start up a car in Brooklyn's own Bedford-Stuyvesant projects, and then it jumps to the place he hangs his hat: Dayton, Ohio. Inside these neighborhoods, Dave finds oddball characters that it seems only he would be able to draw out from the cobwebs. Chappelle and Gondry craft spectacular profiles, peppered throughout the film, which turns out to be the biggest surprise of the movie (the brilliance of seeing Lauryn Hill belt out "Killing Me Softly," alongside Clef and Pras was lessened as their return was overhyped). We meet two old eccentric married white people who live in a run down Bed-Stuy building named "Broken Angel" that is the background to the concert. Before that, we run into Milsap, the charismatic head of Central State's Marching band (who Chappelle claims is the first black man ever to carry the name Milsap). The fact that all of these crazy characters end up seeing Dead Prez live on stage at one point is brilliant.

As a comedian whose obvious preoccupation is with race and how it is dealt with in America, it

was probably uncomfortable to be the only talent of color on Comedy Central. In *Block Party* we have Dave talking about race, but taking the never-ending subject to a new level. These are things that he might not have felt comfortable saying on Comedy Central, like how frustrating it is that Dead Prez isn't going to get airplay in white America by rapping, "Uh, who shot Biggie Smalls? / If we don't get them, they gonna get us all / I'm down for runnin' up on them crackers in they city hall." In all seriousness, Dave says, "well, that's what a lot of people in the industry are thinking about."



Gondry's direction throughout the movie is very simple, and manages to make trite concepts come off as completely sincere. Furthermore, his filming of Chappelle shows us Dave's particularly normal side, as the comedian again presents himself as a lot like the people who will see this movie: a regular fan of hip hop music. Who hasn't written down a list of great bands they'd love to see live? All Dave did was follow through on it, in a big way. *Block Party* — the most fun I've had at a theater in a while — is a movie made by a fan, for the fans, which is why it is such a success.

Unfortunately, I must note that if you want to see *Block Party*, you'll have to either hope for an internet bootleg, or take a trip to the city to see it for yourself. When I was at Kingston this past weekend seeing *V For Vendetta*, I noticed that poor box office performance took *Block Party* out of the Kingston theater after only 2 weeks of release. I guess somebody knew what they were doing when they thought that *She's The Man* needed all the showtimes it could get.



Beating Their Own Ass but the Drum's Not Dead

BY CHARLEY LANNING

It is never surprising when a whole slew of greatly anticipated albums end up being total pap. Quite often there will be a solid month of releases that plays out like an interminable SNL joke, each permutation of the Mediocre Slump Album template more disappointing than the last. Of course, these conspiracies of bad always seem to be spearheaded, or at least portended, by bigger bands fumbling hard. It makes you sadistically hope for one of those tragic van accidents that kill entire bands, just so that someone might actually be moved enough to write an effective song. Weren't the Flaming Lips so much better when they were shooting heroin, having nervous breakdowns, and suffering from life-threatening spider bites? Now, it takes them about three years to produce fifty minutes of fantasy-book, pastel, humanitarian psychedelia. Enter the musical deformity as bad as its title, *At War With The Mystics*. The Lip's gigantic letdown is matched in sheer worthlessness only by Mogwai's sloppy key to popdom, *Mr. Beast*. As for composing music, Mogwai is a stinking corpse dressed in indie blogger attire — fucking boring. They are a crumbling indie rock kingdom,

much like the Flaming Lips, doomed to repeat themselves until they get over their lost and irretrievable hit quality and make late-career "mature" albums to be filed under "adult alternative."

Weren't the Flaming Lips so much better when they were shooting heroin and suffering from life-threatening spider bites?

It may sound grim, but it fits with the depressing dramatization of life-as-a-stirring-music-video that these two records seem to share. It would all just be typical indie "cheese process" if it weren't so indicative of a shift in the scene's first string players. Bands like The Lips, Mogwai, Yo La Tengo, and Modest Mouse seemed to dominate the independent rock scene of the late 90s and early 00s. All of those semi-classic groups and their contemporaries have slumped or gotten crusty in the last three years. This spring's ears are most surely caught by the new kids, for instance: TV On The Radio or Liars. Both bands are releasing, or have released in the case of Liars, material that feels outstandingly fresh for being so obviously designed for the laptop DJs and Converse dance stars.

The pop citizenry would now be more likely to reject Flaming Lip ejaculate like "Yeah Yeah Song" and "Vein Of Stars" safari Disney pop, and burnt out ELO imitation, in favor of the more jagged, and purportedly more sophisticated, tune of Liars' epic concept suite *Drum's Not Dead*.

For now, anyway, Liars are convincing and even compelling, weaving a masterpiece out of the type of storybook format with which Phil Elvrum has been parodying himself since Mt. Eerie. The storybook thing, often the prime choice for half-witted approaches to a concept album, is executed effectively and genuinely by Liars. They

seem caught up in their own fantasy, giving way to a number of rhythmic meditations that both lose and engage the listener. Pieces like "Hold You, Drum" and "Be Quiet Mt. Heart Attack!" feel like parts of the story, and are fulfilling as simple songs in their own right. Though their album was released a month later, a veteran of underground rock tripped and split its face open on the same, easily approached method: The Lips' story seems to have originated from a napkin-and-crayon session. It hurts even worse than Mogwai, who do not try hard enough to be offensive.

While Liars seem to be transcending their immature affection for irony and kitsch, the ever-earnest Flaming Lips and seemingly thick-headed Mogwai are just now catching the cool. Both sport song titles that seem to pronounce a new era of mediocrity for the bands. See Mogwai's "Auto Rock," sapola piano ballad rock that gives away the secret that Mogwai has no more remaining human members. Also, The Lips' "The Sound Of Failure," really wins the prize for transcendent shittiness. As Wayne Coyne and company grow old and incapacitated, Liars graciously accept the hottest spring release crown like steaming indie sex from one of their ever-expanding battalion of doey-eyed Powerbook groupies.

Maybe Liars will become something truly great, but at the moment they are certainly a departure from the current stream of sloppy attempts. They think for themselves and are interesting enough that many a dolt will claim them to be "experimental mavens" and "rock 'n' roll liberators," piddly hype that hopefully won't topple the band before they reach greatness. At least bands like The Flaming Lips, Yo La Tengo, and Sonic Youth had their moments. Developing success out of an idiosyncratic approach is even more of a slim chance in today's ravenous blood-sucking octo-vampire of a scene: It is rid of its naivety and now simultaneously well-equipped and burdened, with an emphasis on pure energy and self-defeating ironic wit. Optimism leads one to believe that Liars, who have a potential command of both of these elements, may just see their own dynasty.



March 22, 2006

The Best in Modern Art

by Rebecca Giusti

Between March 9 and March 13, over 40,000 people descended upon Piers 90 and 92 on New York's west side to view the Armory Show, the city's top contemporary art fair. This year's show featured 153 galleries from around the world, and brought in an estimated \$45 million in art sales. While the Armory Show is the place to buy contemporary art in the US, it is also an ideal location for those of us without million dollar check-book balances to catch a glimpse of the newest contemporary art before it disappears into private collections.

On March 11, I set off with my trusty sidekick to check out this year's fair. It was a beautiful day, and the streets near the piers were very crowded as museum buyers, collectors, critics, students, and every other kind of art nerd lined up to get into the show. After taking a (slightly) annoying and (definitely) biased "scientific survey" on "the art world," which (not surprisingly) notified us that galleries in New York exhibit more male than female artists, we paid our ten dollars and entered Pier 90.

The fair is only supposed to show primary market art (works that have never been sold before), but some galleries also showed some secondary market art, which drew interesting comparisons to the ultra-contemporary works nearby. The most innovative and eye-catching art on display was from European galleries, mainly those from Germany and Austria, as well as from galleries displaying Asian art. An Armory Show insider I spoke with during my visit indicated that Chinese art is "very big right now." Indeed, the cover of this month's *Art and Auction*, the premier reference magazine for art buyers, features a story entitled "New Kid on the Block: Inside China's Art Market." Two notable displays from Asian artists were Tsuyoshi Ozawa's *Street Store Project*, a series of canvases which replicated street vendor's stalls; and Akira the Hustler's *2005*, a series of 36 photos documenting the artist's experiences as a drag queen and gay male prostitute.



John Westley's Red Lips shown at the Armory Show

European artists were also in high profile at this year's show. Vienna's Georg Kargl Gallery had a fabulous display, which included works by Thomas Locher, who had made large scale "collages": reproductions of human rights documents with scribbles on top; and Gabi Trinkaus, who produced a Jackson Pollock sized collage of newspaper and magazine clippings which was suggestive of a lonely cityscape. White Cube/Jay Jopling

London had a nice display with plenty of space. Crowds surrounded Sam Taylor-Wood's *Bram Stoker's Chair* photograph series from 2005, which was featured in the *New York Times*. Feigen Contemporary had a number of psychedelic graphic arts pieces by Jeremy Blake that would make any Photoshop student jealous. The most visually engaging of Blake's works were "Gower Gulch" and "Sodium Family Values"—a photo collage of a half naked woman sunbathing, President Lincoln's head, an owl, and neon scribbles, among other things. Dozens of people were consistently present at James Cohan Gallery's booth, watching Bill Viola's captivating video piece, "The Tempest," which was an ultra-slow motion film of people being sprayed down by high-powered water hoses. And Daniel Buren's mirror installation was popular with the kids and vain art-goers alike.

A number of earlier artists were on display as well. The most surprising works interspersed throughout the show were those by notable, yet under recognized female artists who produced art primarily in the latter part of the twentieth century. Latin American body artist Ana Mendieta exhibited at Galerie Lelong, performance artist Marina Abramovic had some photos at Sean Kelly, and Ronald Feldman Gallery had a wonderful Hannah Wilke retrospective. A wide range of Wilke's work was on display, from her early, brazen self-portraits to a collection of self-portraits that documented her battle with cancer much later in life.

Many of the display spaces were relatively large, and some galleries seemed to opt for a sparse, modern look, featuring only a few artists to create a coherent mini-show. While this form of display was surely more visually pleasing, the size and orderliness of the booths did not seem to matter much to the buyers. Wherever we went, buying, selling, and always bargaining, was taking place. My traveling companion was quite distracted by all the dialogues between buyers and sellers, and thought the show should reserve special hours for those interested in purchasing art to view the show, so the rest of us could experience the art in peace. I, however, thought that part of the fun of the show was the great opportunity it provided for people watching. We saw a group of three impeccably dressed young men walk quickly from booth to booth chatting on their cell phones and conversing about which artists to invest in, while an elderly couple worked their way through the show sitting down with each gallerist to privately inspect their collections. Friends of artists walked through the show pointing out certain pieces and sharing amusing anecdotes about them. One man pointed to a framed piece of paper with "Buy me, I'm at an art show" written in crayon. "Oh yeah, my friend made a hundred of those to sell here," he said, as potential buyers looked on amusedly.

As is to be expected from any large exhibition, there was a lot of great art accompanied by an equal amount of bad art. It seemed there were a lot of uncreative variations on old themes. Many artists seemed to have directly "borrowed" from artists like Warhol and Klein, focusing on celebrity culture and the socio-economic contradictions of the art world. The sometimes-claustrophobic feeling of the crowded buildings was heightened by the fact that some of the booths were incredibly small, so small

that people could not even get close enough to examine the works. Some galleries seemed to try to exhibit as many artists in as little space as possible. Other booths had pieces of art piled on the floor, reminding those of us who just came to look that the fair was not always an aesthetically pleasing display of new art, but a place for galleries to make as many sales and connections as possible.

The Libertine Doesn't Want You to Like It—I Did

BY KIRIANNNA BUTEAU

Johnny Depp has portrayed many characters as weird and isolated from mainstream society as he is, from Edward Scissorhands to Jack Sparrow to Willy Wonka. I think the only "normal" person he's played that I can name off the top of my head is Gilbert Grape, though something's apparently eating him. So it shouldn't come as a shock to anyone that for one of his most recent performances he plays a 17th century foul-mouthed, womanizing cynic in the aptly titled film, *The Libertine*.



John Wilmot, the Second Earl of Rochester (Depp), begins the film in blackness with an exquisite monologue where he emphatically states, "You will not like me," adding, "Ladies, an announcement: I am up for it, at any time," and goes on to expose himself for what he is— a terrible human being— without apology or guilt. Thus we get to see a portrait of this man's dark existence, in his home life and in his court life. Actress Lizzie Barry (Samantha Morton), for whom he does some dramatic coaching and a little more, offers him a glimmer of hope; but his sharp tongue and preference for the obscene in art, while long entertained by his fellow aristocrats, cannot ultimately be accepted when he pens and attempts to have performed a raunchy, pornographic play that even pokes fun at King Charles II (John Malkovich) himself.

Based on a Stephen Jeffreys play, *The Libertine* might be called a biopic, but I think that an accurate portrayal of Rochester's life is no more integral to the story than is Mozart's life in *Amadeus* or Thomas More's in *A Man for All Seasons*. It actually chronicles very well many particular details and events, but I doubt that director Laurence Dunmore simply wanted to say, "Let's look at this guy's life because biopics are all the rage these days!" "This guy's life" is used as a framework for some unsettling ideas.

Which brings me to something else. *The Libertine* was made in 2004, but it's my understanding that due to

controversial subject matter the nationwide US release was delayed until very recently. This confused me at first, because a few months ago the film *Casanova*, also based on a historical womanizer, came out and was a moderately successful romantic comedy. I expected *The Libertine* to be jumping on some kind of bandwagon. But this is darkly lit, with period costumes frequently begrimed by the filthy London streets. Its low budget seems to have necessitated handheld camerawork much of the time, but this really helps the mood, for the grittiness is heightened by the film quality, bringing the characters out of the 17th century or at least stripping the art design of any glamorous pretenses (found in so many period "costume dramas"). Most notably: Rochester falls in love with a woman who isn't just a featherbrained bint vulnerable to his machinations, but the story does not end happily, and (this being only a slight spoiler in my opinion) Lizzie never ultimately caves to his desires. They do, in fact, have sex, but when they do, it is as much under her conditions as much as his, and toward the

end of the film, when Rochester almost begs her to take him back, Lizzie does not suddenly transform into a wilting flower ready to throw herself back into what was really quite an abusive relationship. I consider her character to be brilliantly written and very well acted. The point is, though, that this could never, through any stretch of the imagination, be considered a cute comedy. It is much closer to *Kinsey* than *Casanova*, hence the controversy.

One complaint I've been reading from some critics is that there wasn't enough sex for a movie that should have been about sex; I would like to counter that claim by saying sex was hardly the core theme. *The Libertine* is a character study more than anything else, and while Rochester does have a lot of sex, *showing* him having sex all the time would detract from the time one might use to develop his character. So I appreciate Dunmore's discretion in that regard. Finally, of course, there is the matter of Depp's acting; this is my favorite Depp performance yet. Far from simply talented and quirky eye candy, Depp is— like so many other aspects of the film— stripped of all ornamentation here, playing a weird character but an extremely raw and complex one, displaying extraordinary talent that I think even his fans haven't yet realized he possesses. Maybe *The Libertine* will get an Oscar a year from now; but if not, I encourage everyone to see it, because it gives this movie season a great start.

March Fifth: A Day Which will Live in Infamy

BY MARY HARDING

Jack Nicholson just made the best joke I've ever heard. "Crash" as the Best Picture of the year. That's hilarious. Wait a minute. OH MY GOD! Crash really has just been called as the Best Picture of the year at the 2006 Academy Awards. That was my response while watching the Oscars two weeks ago. I was, along with most other movie buffs, anxiously awaiting the Academy's announcement of *Brokeback Mountain* as its Best Picture, thereby giving the film the recognition it deserves as the best film of the year. This was apparently not meant to be. *Brokeback* was critically adored, being the first film named best picture of the year by both the New York and Los Angeles Film Critics Circles since *Schindler's List* (which won The Oscar in 1993). It also won both the Independent Spirit Award and the British Oscar for Best Picture. Even ignoring those statistics, *Brokeback Mountain* was in every way imaginable a better film than *Crash*, but apparently the only thing that mattered to Academy voters was superficiality.

Now, obviously the Academy has been accused of such crimes before, but no one really thought that an upset like this was going to occur. So the question that needs to be asked now is: "What happened?" In a year that featured four high-quality Best Picture nominees: *Brokeback Mountain*, *Good Night and Good Luck*, *Capote*, and *Munich*, how did an insignificant film like *Crash* steal the Oscar, or even get nominated? There are those who claim the Academy's homophobia is to blame, but I think that the statement made by *Brokeback's* author, Annie Proulx, reveals the truth. Ms. Proulx wrote an article in the British Newspaper *The Guardian*, stating: "rumour has it that Lions Gate inundated the academy voters with DVD copies of *Trash* - excuse me - *Crash* a few weeks before the ballot deadline." During Oscar season it is customary for a

film's producers to make a strong campaign for their individual films—promoting them through advertising and such—but the producers of *Crash* spent an extraordinary amount of money (much more than any other campaign) making sure every voter received a copy of the film. Unlike the other films nominated, the producers of *Crash* knew that their film couldn't stand on its own, so they bombarded the Academy with copies of the movie in hopes of manipulating them into voting for the film freshest in their minds. And apparently, it worked. "Is *Crash* as bad as you claim it is?" some may ask. I respond with, "Oh, you poor little simpleton... yes. It is that bad and a thousand times worse." Let me explain.



Heath Ledger and Michelle Williams watch, stunned, as *Brokeback Mountain* gets ignored in every acting category.

First of all, Paul Haggis's insipid script is founded on the basic idea that his role of writer and director is to promote a highly (excuse the pun) black and white moralistic view of the world. Apparently, in this post-9/11 world, everyone is reverting back to some sort of repressed racism that dwells within them. Just because a person is angry or experiencing trauma, this automatically makes them racist. The situations shown in *Crash* are not

entirely unrealistic, but Haggis's assumption that everyone is now a stereotype turns his film into a cookie-cutter cliché with the message that racism is bad. Had he shown some restraint, he could have examined the subtle, deep-seated racism that lurks below the surface of many, instead of the explicit acts of racism that are less common in our increasingly PC world. Haggis was inspired to write the screenplay after he was mugged a few years ago, which leads me to believe that this film is actually his way of dealing with his own racism by trying to make the claim that everyone is racist (Perhaps to assuage his own racist guilt?). I am not denying that there are people similar to those portrayed in the film, but by jamming too many of these characters into one film, Haggis's message is weakened because the situations shown are beyond what most people would be able to relate to.

Furthermore, none of the characters really develop any identity whatsoever, only different masks of the same stereotype being constantly repeated. Every actor (with the exception of the always divine Thandie Newton) portrays an essentially hollow character. Random events occur for no reason, and apparently it now snows in L.A. There is absolutely no nuance to the film; everything is made too explicit for there to really be an sense of reality in it. Haggis's script is exceptional at establishing an exteriority of a character, but nothing substantial. No one who watches this film ever needs to think about anything going on, because whatever substance was in *Crash* is lost in the blaring message.

Then there's *Brokeback Mountain*, which is an exceptionally well-crafted film. Both Heath Ledger and Michelle Williams's performances will undoubtedly be remembered for years to come; Ledger virtually disappears into Ennis Delmar, while Williams's heartbreaking portrayal of Alma instantly proves that she is one of the best actresses of our generation (Yes, I do remember she was in *Dawson's Creek*, but don't hold it against her). Kudos to Ang Lee for becoming the first Asian director to win the Best Director Award, but that is not enough. Until next year I will be quietly haunted by this fact: the cast of *Brokeback Mountain*- 0 Oscars, 36Mafia-1 Oscar, and I will always wonder just why the Academy chose to ignore the little film that could, the best film of the year, *Brokeback Mountain*.

No Flash in the Pan

BY SOPHIA KRAEMER-DAHLIN

Flashmonster, Bard's all-sophomore Improv troupe, hit the wooden floorboards of Bard Hall once again this past Sunday, performing sketches as sophisticated as they were vulgar. Audience members squeezed into the building, impeded by a huge whiteboard offering them a chance to "Win a Date with a Flashmonster!" Once past the whiteboard they were greeted by Flashmonsters Ruth Shannon and Daniel Fishkin, who did more than just offer. "Buy a ticket!" Ruth commanded an embarrassed student. "It's... it's okay," he replied. "It's not okay!" she explained to his fleeting back. "Buy a ticket!" Daniel adopted this as a refrain, barking, "It's not okay! Buy a ticket!" at the next several gestic. ("No thank you, I'm a married woman," one lady coolly replied.) Other members of the audience, however, found themselves pleasantly titillated by the aggressive selling tactics of the two Flashmonsters, and some hundred tickets were sold.

The show itself started with one of the best sketches Flashmonster has thus far presented to the public. It began with complicated miming by monster Samuel Lang Budin, followed by a one-upping conversation with fellow poorly nourished child Ruth Shannon: "You know, sometimes I just have to have the better story!" Samuel whined. "Well, I have a disease that makes it so that if I don't have the better story, I get sick and

DIE!" Ruth replied. From there the plot progressed naturally to funeral planning, Mars, a broken hearted astronaut named Platitude (Sasha Winters), and a small child (Genya Shimkin) riding upright around the stage on a pair of jeans (Maxwell Cosmo Kramer's crotch).

Love and child-molestation were two overriding themes of the show. Romantic connection seems to be the natural way for Flashmonsters to relate: as one audience member said, "I adore the Flashmonster Improv shows, but what I really hope I'll be there for is the Flashmonster orgy. You know there has to be one, someday." The close work environment which characterizes their troupe has enabled a comfort level which allows for an easy handling of even the most sensitive subjects. The lights went out on a final tableau of embracing shampoo-fetishists Carl Kranz and Jesse Myserson, drugged, bound, and molested schoolchildren Rachel Schragis, Maxwell, and Sam, and the dead body of police investigator Daniel. Somehow Flashmonster managed to make this the inevitable end of a well-crafted sketch, and the audience left laughing, albeit guiltily.

Altogether, it was an extremely successful show, which despite having a cowboy-themed sketch, only referenced *Brokeback Mountain* once. The fluidity of the sketches attest to the almost psychic connection that the troupe has developed, and the effort put forth in the presentation inspired an audience member to exclaim, "Imagine! They do all this without water!"

The winner of the raffle, Jay Gillespie, is in for a surprise at his date with Jesse, but you'll have to learn it from the blushing couple themselves.

An Offer You Won't Refuse

BY ANNA PYCIOR

The pre-show recap was lengthy, and the episode was well paced. Overall, last Sunday night fans should have found themselves pleased with the always urgent tone set by David Chase in his *Sopranos* season premiere. The question was, of course, for this complicated dynasty of a show, whether the plot could handle a sixth beating in its illusory mafia world. It proved resilient, all in all, and presented a good kick-start towards the end of the legacy of Tony and his "family."

This might be a spoiler for those who missed it, as well as those who need to get it on DC++, but the new season of *The Sopranos* has nothing to do with the fragile situation in the New York mob, nor does it relate to the off and on marriage between Tony and Carmella. In a well-orchestrated turn, millions watched as the Boss was taken down by none other than his former superior, Uncle Junior. The now Alzheimer's inflicted character, Uncle Junior (played superbly by Dominic Chianese), has come the closest to doing the deed so many have wanted to: shoot Tony at point blank range, catching him off guard.

Increasingly, resentment towards Tony's handlings of New York conflicts caused many within and outside of his ranks to wish him ill-will. However, Chase cleverly

handed the pistol over to he who cannot be whacked, the senile relative. Whether Tony will heal or not does not seem questionable—the show is James Gandolfini and the consistently tremendous lines given to him by Chase and his writers.

The hour's weakest link lay easily in its recent turn to FBI conspirators. Last season's most notable whacking of Adrienne for conspiracy, coupled with the revelation of an old time snitch leading to the FBI bust of the New York mob, made the law enforcement as prevalent as it has ever been in the series. The one-episode plotline of Eugene Pontecorvo's FBI double-dealings last Sunday over-did the issue. True, Chase and the writers are working to establish a new era of distrust in the mob, but this plot line came across as excessive and redundant considering previous episodes.

In last season's finale, questions left the fate of NY mob Boss Johnny Sac up in the air, with a raid of his grandiose home by the FBI as the final plot twist. It brought up an insatiable curiosity for the start of the current season. The fate of the New York branch hung in limbo, yes, but this did not resonate with the more compelling issues within the series. They more often include familial problems for Tony, issues within his own ring in the New Jersey mob, and his perception of daily life as a man in charge of a "world of sin."

The fact that 7.7 million viewers tuned in Sunday makes it very clear that *The Sopranos* is not a show reliant on kitschy cliff-hangers. It is not simply the situations which make it easily one of the finest shows on television, but rather the consistently complicated, affecting, and well written plot of the life of this mobster — now in peril — which bring us back each week.



Milosevic's Justice

International justice advocates faced a major setback this week as defendant Slobodan Milosevic, the jewel in the crown of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) and a landmark prosecution for proponents of International Criminal Court (ICC) expansion, died in his cell at The Hague, only months before the expected conclusion of his six year trial. Since his death on March 11th, many have called for the figurative head of international justice, alleging inefficiency, wasting of resources, and incompetence.

Indeed it would appear that those who endorse international justice as a tool of peacemaking have their work cut out for them: now more than ever does the whole thing seem a sham. In this week alone, the Saddam trial in Iraq and the Moussaoui trial in Virginia have proven embarrassments for the US government. Meanwhile the ICC has been thwarted in efforts to bring former Sierra-Leone president Charles Taylor and Bosnian Serb army chief Ratko Mladic to justice. Even the Sudanese government undermines international justice, insisting that it will perform its own trials for those responsible for massacres in Darfur, rather than extraditing the suspect to The Hague.

Before his death, the Milosevic trail had its problems. Slobodan proved a shrewd opponent of justice, deftly maneuverings within the (often overly judicial) legal framework of international law to repeatedly delay proceedings, dog witnesses, and embarrass the court. His final act, a heart attack just 40 hours before the end of cross-examination, was the final nail in the coffin of ICTY credibility, annulling any verdict of guilt, while martyring the Butcher of Belgrade in the eyes of his constituents.

But amidst international disappointment, the trial's conclusion produced benefits nonetheless. On the one hand, the ICTY has set a precedent for indicting former heads of state. It had successfully summoned and tried Milosevic from his indictment in 1999 until his death. The ICTY also undid many of the bitter legacies of the Nuremberg and Tokyo trials' "victor's justice" by fairly applying international law to its defendant.

Many proponents of the ICTY and of broader international justice in general, contend that punitive measures are complicit with maintenance of peace and an end to genocide. The work of The Hague and others, they argue, acts as a deterrent for leaders to commit war crimes and provides closure for the families and victims of massacre. To an extent, this is true, but in light of recent events, the quixotic naïveté of some of these advocacies has come under attack.

The solution however, is not to withdraw support from international justice causes, but instead to shift that support to reform of such bodies. Presently, international justice is a golden sledgehammer—heavy, blunt and expensive. (The Yugoslav tribunal does not expect to complete its work for seventeen years—and who among us actually believe the timetable of an international organization—and at a sweeping cost of \$120 million per year.) International judiciaries need to transform from the sluggish be-all end-all instruments of broad international policy that they are today into the precise and effective tools of a comprehensive anti-genocide regime. Courts should have increased powers to pressure extradition and defend temporary amnesties, while facing stricter budget limitations, faster timetables, and significantly higher thresholds of competency.

Were the Milosevic trial limited in scope from 66 potential offences, to the 5-10 offences for which conviction would be certain, he would have instead died a guilty man. The Saddam trial is a case in which the incompetence of Iraqi courts clearly mandates intervention by an international judicial body. However, the golden sledgehammer of justice is hard to lift and slow to swing—Saddam will likely be executed, though not as the result of due process.

It is ironic, although perhaps not surprising, that the United States—a lone enthusiast of capital punishment in an international sea of consensus—is such a fervent opponent of international justice. Contrary to Bush administration policy, supporting the development of international justice is a clear and necessary complement to many of the administration's stated goals.

Like it or not, George Bush's Wilsonian jaunt through the Islamic world has exposed a cultural schism of magnitude somewhere between Nas and Jay-Z and Huntington's "clash of civilizations"—the reconciliation of these differences is imperative. If we expect the world—from Thailand and China to Saudi Arabia and even Iran—to embrace Western democracy, it is necessary to showcase the assets of constitutional liberalism, not subordinate cultures to the flaws. Given the credibility gap created by the administration's policies on torture, Guantanamo, Hamas and the like, retreating from judicial processes furthers a negative precedent. Moreover, without supporting an increase in the strength and improvement of the form of international justice, the administration will be left at sea as it attempts to pursue its newest marquee reason for invasion—Saddam.

THE EDITORS

"You Have the Right to Express Your Opinion with Civility"

BY MORGAN R. JETTO

I would like to take issue with an article by Jesse Myerson and Noah Weston published in the March 7, 2006 edition of *The Observer*. First of all, let it be known that I hold Myerson and Weston in high regard as writers. Furthermore, I don't know them well enough to have a biased opinion of them as individuals. That being said, I take issue with their diatribe in response to Rob Ross' article entitled "Rightspeak."

Mr. Myerson and Mr. Weston, next time you decide to publicly ridicule someone for his or her beliefs, try doing so individually as opposed to hiding behind the guise of co-authorship. While this is an acceptable form of critical writing, the subjective nature of the comments

expressed in "Life, Liberty, and Everything Implied," are best delivered individually. It's an issue of integrity.

Considering the fact that Mr. Myerson and Mr. Weston are regular contributors to *The Observer* neither of them should be scared of expressing their opinions, and however off-point Ross may have been in his analysis, it certainly contained elements of truth. After all, let's be honest, "rightspeak" is a serious issue with many Americans—especially on the Bard Campus, and is one of the reasons why Americans are considered lazy and offensive by most of the civilized world. Too often in this country the demand for rights is coupled with the notion that one's civic duty is optional. Indeed, it is understandable to demand certain rights, but it is more commendable to be worthy of such through hard work and sacrifice. Americans are lacking in the hard work category. Maybe Ross was blatantly off-point, but unfortunately, the tag-team vulgarity of Myerson and Weston also missed the mark.

Essentially, bully tactics are juvenile and demeaning, and in the end, below the character of the authors. In the same breath, Myerson, Weston, and Ross all missed the mark when it came to the nature of rights in America. Next time, Weston and Myerson should try opting for sincerity, as opposed to name-calling, rampant vulgarity, and degradation as means to achieve their goals.

Don't Toss Free Speech In the Furnace

Jew Fumes Were Bad Enough

BY NOAH WESTON

Being sent to prison as an old man requires a certain brand of atrocity, something on the order of skinning a child and wearing its hide while setting fire to a hospital. In Austria, they set the bar a tad lower. Last month, 68 year-old historian David Irving received a three-year prison sentence for the crime of Holocaust denial. Apparently, this is the gloriously free Western civilization that deserves protection from the frothing Muslim hordes. By stripping Irving of his freedom, Austria sends the message that while we should indignantly defend a cartoonist's right to religious defamation, a sad, decrepit codger should lose his freedom because he writes whack-job history that no informed person believes.

Now, you eager future expatriates might be thinking, "Well, that's just Austria, not my beloved, sardonically cool France!" *N'est pas*, folks. France, too, along with a number of other European countries, has branded Holocaust denial a criminal offense. Even the "only democracy in the Middle East" Israel joined the censorship party with *Uzis a blazin'*. The histories of these countries serve to explain why they have embedded such strong sensitivity into their libel laws. Europe bears, and

For reasons as obvious as the Holocaust itself, Europe does its citizens a disservice by branding falsehood of any kind in scholarly work as a criminal offense.

rightly so, the weight of fostering the sentiments and political regimes necessary for genocide against the continent's Jews. Israel owes its very existence to a post-Holocaust imperative to shelter the remainder of the Jewish population. Regardless, however, of whatever led to these laws, they reveal a profound lack of appreciation for freedom of speech and its merits.

At their base, Holocaust denial statutes punish people for erroneous thinking, under the presumption that it stems from a desire to smear the Jews as liars and diminish the Holocaust as an historical act of evil. This differs from hate speech, mind you, in that Holocaust denial can conceivably emerge from a sloshing mix of sophistry and petty contrarianism, or even anti-Semitism, but it does not amount to a direct slur intended to intimidate a person or class of people. Certainly, convincing people that genocide did not occur, when it actually did, has its gross effects, but many types of distortions do. Yet, we cannot criminalize opinion, now or ever, if we value the freedom of speech and the truths it helps to sustain.

For reasons as obvious as the Holocaust itself, Europe does its citizens a disservice by branding falsehood of any kind in scholarly work as a criminal offense. When opinions, all intent aside, become illegal, then a society has inexcusably creaked open the door to censorship of all manners of unpopular opinion. Although there is a large gulf between criminalizing Holocaust denial and, say, banning Marxist literature, if you never take that first repressive step, you will never cross another, more egregious threshold. It is worth it even if you frustrate some Jews and guilt-ridden Europeans. Personally, as a Jew I don't even mind if you deny the Holocaust, provided your alternative story involves a hot air balloon romance between Anne Frank and Winston Churchill.

In all seriousness, though, I see a larger immediate concern for these countries, specifically that by punishing schmucks like David Irving, they do not pre-

Continued on page 11

The New Emporia The Cold Civil War of 2006

BY MATTHEW ROZSA

*"Public sentiment is everything – he who moulds public sentiment is greater than he who makes statutes."
– Abraham Lincoln (August 21, 1858)*

As of July 1, 2006, it will be illegal to have an abortion in South Dakota.

The reason for this is simple. On February 22, 2006, the South Dakota legislature pushed through a bill that banned nearly all abortions throughout the state, exempting only those situations where documentation could prove that the life of the mother was at risk. Two weeks later, Governor Mike Rounds signed the act, bringing new hope to those who have waited one-third of a century to challenge *Roe v. Wade*.

Although it is not currently receiving its fair share of discussion time, the fact is that the issue of abortion is bound to take the center stage in American politics before the year is out. Now that South Dakota has passed its bill, pro-choicers have one of two options:

1) They can submit the issue to a referendum, in the hope that the citizens of their state will overturn the bill passed by their legislators, or;

2) They can appeal to the Supreme Court of the United States, challenging the constitutionality of South Dakota's bill by citing the judicial precedent set by *Roe v. Wade*.

Assuming that the referendum fails (either because it is never allowed to take place or because the citizens of South Dakota affirm the decision of their State Congress), the Planned Parenthood organizations in the state will inevitably take the issue to the judicial branch, where failure to reach resolution at the circuit court level will result in the case being brought yet again to the Supreme Court. Anti-abortion activists are wagering that the conservatism of President Bush's two new judges, Chief Justice John Roberts and Associate Justice Samuel Alito, will be enough to tilt the balance in favor of a court that will overturn *Roe v. Wade*. Were this to occur, the 1973 ruling that set aside all state statutes banning abortion would be overturned, allowing each state to decide for itself what course of action it wished to take on the abortion issue. Finally, if this fails, they still have Mississippi to hope for – that state's congress, as well as its Governor, Haley Barbour, are already talking about following in South Dakota's footsteps.

It stands to reason that, as this issue will reach a more intensified level of discussion once events of sufficient magnitude occur as to attract the attention of the news media, many Bard students will find themselves in the position of having to defend their opinions against those who feel that abortion rights should be curtailed. The capacity of intelligent individuals to do this is more significant than many might initially assume; as Abraham Lincoln astutely observed during his first debate with Senator Stephen Douglas, those who pass laws ultimately have less power than those who influence public opinion. This holds especially true in democracies, where those who create legislation are ultimately beholden to the very public who those statutes are destined to effect.

This doesn't mean that the will of the majority should always be allowed to reign supreme. As another great political sage, Thomas Jefferson, once pointed out: "All, too, will bear in mind this sacred principle, that though the will of the majority is in all cases to prevail, that will, to be rightful, must be reasonable; that the minority possess their equal rights, which equal laws must protect, and to violate which would be oppression." Indeed, one of the very problems with those who advocate overturning *Roe v. Wade* is that they wish to do so by putting at the mercy of public opinion a minority that, were it to find itself at the receiving end of mass reprobation, would be incapable of defending its inalienable rights. Even so, Lincoln is undeniably correct when he asserts that the first and most important stage in winning any political battle is to acquire the support of those citizens whose obligation it is to maintain human liberty through their vigilance. As there are many arguments which have been made in favor of abortion rights, I assume that it could not hurt – and might very well help – the dialogue on this subject if I contributed my own.

I am pro-choice for a very simple reason. Since all human beings have the right to do as they please, provided that they do not harm others in the process, it would naturally follow that women should have the right to control their reproductive systems, unless it can be proven that tangible harm is being committed against another life. While

there are many who do believe that when a woman has an abortion she is in fact harming another living being, the burden of proof lies with those who assert that a crime is being committed, rather than upon those who claim that they are innocent of any transgression. That is why I firmly believe that, until evidence is presented that fetuses past the second trimester of development are in fact alive, the government does not have the right to tell women whether they can have an abortion. Those who claim that abortion should be banned on the basis of the fact that it constitutes the taking of a human life need first to prove that a human life does in fact exist. Current arguments suggesting that this is the case remain anecdotal, hypothetical, philosophical, and circumstantial in nature. Solid and irrefutable evidence is sorely lacking, and what the Judge Harry Blackmun said in 1973 when he wrote the Court's opinion on *Roe v. Wade* holds true today: "When those trained in the respective disciplines of medicine, philosophy, and theology are unable to arrive at any consensus, the judiciary, at this point in the development of man's knowledge, is not in a position to speculate as to the answer."

In order for *Roe v. Wade* to be thus overturned, it would require the Court to render a ruling on the basis of suppositions, rather than fact. The temptation for the citizens of free societies to impose their moral opinions on others has existed since the very inception of democratic systems of government, and will have to be perpetually fought so long as any collection of civilized human beings reside on a single spot of this planet. People have the right to hold their various convictions as to how each human being should conduct himself or herself during the time that he or she spends on this Earth. What's more, they even have the right to preach their values to others, in the hope that by spreading their convictions, they can make a positive contribution to the society they inhabit. Some of the greatest social progress has come out of such behavior.

The danger lies in the moment when personal views as to what constitutes right and wrong are transformed into legislation even though they lack substantiating evidence which can prove, beyond a reasonable doubt, that the given belief actually reflects a tangible threat to the liberty of all human beings. Behind every law, every edict, every social more, there lies a fundamental set of governmental principles, and once a precedent is set in which laws can be passed without irrefutable proof being provided as to the manner in which those laws protect basic human rights, it can allow for situations in which all kinds of personal beliefs can be legislated. Indeed, under such a logical structure, any group that acquires enough power in a democratic society can use its influence to prevent those who hold different views from living in the manner of their choosing, regardless of whether those convictions cause harm to the rights of anyone else. When we fall too far down that slippery slope, liberty ends, to be replaced by a sophisticated mob rule.

Weston, Continued from page 10

serve the truth, but instead, let it drift about without the slightest bit of exercise. Without exercise, it will only atrophy. As John Stuart Mill, philosopher and liberal ideologue, told us, free speech permits the greatest contest of knowledge claims, leaving us with stronger, proven truths. In the absence of open intellectual debate, how can we even know that Irving is wrong? Sure, his work has been the subject of a few damning rebuttals, but if we really want to take the wind out of his shirtsails, we need to allow him to continue pumping out tripe that other writers can refute. Does this sound kind of messy? Well, it does not put old people in jail, bring us closer to dictatorial control over expression, or replace fortified knowledge with governmental dogma likely only to arouse skepticism, so I think I'll learn to live with a little messiness.

This whole controversy offers a few interesting insights into the world today, particularly our own country. For one thing, it seems that in the pile of American fuck-ups, we do not have to count infringement upon free speech as one of them. Generally, the "fire in a crowded building" standard holds around these parts, and I can feel safe in asserting that my recent ancestors did not die in a campaign of mass slaughter, but rather in the largest sailing accident in Polish history. In Austria, however, that would land me in a cell with an old guy who loves Hitler a little too much to tell the truth. Of course, this is all for the sake of honoring the memory of those lost in the Holocaust and ensure that it never happens again. Were it not such a debasement of historical inquiry and democratic principles, I might be flattered.

Two Stout Young Men: On Preemptive Strikes

BY MICHAEL NEWTON AND TED QUINLAN

The White House has just recently published an updated version of their national security policy. The last time the Bush administration published the document, which outlines America's foreign policy, was in 2002. Contained in both of the administration's versions is the administration's commitment to preemptive attacks on countries that possibly pose a threat to America.

Michael Newton will be arguing for the use of the preemptive strike and Ted Quinlan will argue against it. Michael won the nickel-based coin toss and will therefore begin the discussion.

MN: I would like to begin by saying that by rights I am keeping the nickel which secured me my position as debate inaugurator. It will be put to good use. The release of the new national security policy functions as reaffirmation of this country's willingness to launch preemptive strikes against those it deems to be enemies. This reaffirmation is a necessary step in the crusade against those who would rain terror upon our borders.

TQ: I would like to thank Michael for not only beginning this debate but for also immediately bringing ideology into it. This is a perfect example of how this administration and those who support it are comfortable ignoring the reasonable, logical argument against policies like the use of the preemptive attack. The problem with using this tactic against our "enemies" is that it gives them free reign to use it against us. In the national security policy that the White House just released, there are threats made against both Russia and China. Also, the document declares that the United States' effort to stop nuclear enrichment in Iran "must succeed if confrontation is to be avoided." How can we declare preemptive action to be legitimate and then go and threaten three countries, one of which has about two billion people and the fastest growing economy in the world? I fear that eventually the world will get tired of this country's threats of aggression and decide to implement their own preemptive attack.

MN: How dare you, Sir. How dare you sully the linens of the intellectual table, which I so graciously deigned to sit at with you, with the bile, slop and hot intestines which constitute liberal policy in this country? Nowhere in the revised national security policy report does it say that other countries are not allowed to preemptively strike us. Let them come, and try to breach our ramparts, if they wish. The validity of a policy of preemptive strikes is based in the fact that the scope of the world's danger has increased exponentially, from the size of a bullet hole to the circumference of a mushroom cloud, during the last twenty years. It is the rule of the wolf, and as the largest, or Alpha, wolf, America must strive to maintain this position. The countries you so martyr-ishly trot out, China, Iran, Russia, as being victims of American aggression, are no less culpable than we. China has a terrible human rights record and a blooming stock of nuclear weapons, not to mention a beef with such countries as Taiwan and Tibet, gentle lands if ever there were. Iran is a radical regime attempting to bend us over the barrel on the issue of nuclear capabilities. Russia is in the process of bulldozing over fifteen years of accumulated human rights. These are not innocent countries. In a world responsive only to force it is no longer an option for us to rest on our laurels. The policy of preemptive strike is the only type of diplomacy that the so called "thug countries" as I call them, understand.

TQ: Brilliant! I concede to your idiocy. What you are proposing, that the preemptive strike become the norm for international warfare, borders on being terminally retarded. If we allow the standards of warfare to escalate like this, we are leading the world down a path in which these "thug countries," and all others, will arm themselves to the teeth with nuclear weapons so that in the face of actual danger, or even just threats, they can launch a God-like rain of fire over the Earth, ushering in an eternal winter of despair, and above all, regret. We must set an example and

Continued on page 13

Impeachment without Blowjobs

BY JESSE MYERSON

After nearly six years of investigating the matter, I have finally disappointingly determined that President Bush has never committed the ultimate impeachable offense: getting done on the job (if a congressman did this, would it be called "getting a job in the dome?"). My suspicion, for what it's worth, is still that the reason behind this is just that it's never been offered to him, and that were it ever, the president would criminally accept. But I'm not one for pre-emptive justice, or for conviction on the basis of guesswork. No, instead, in my quest for impeachment I have, by incident, compiled a list of more minor crimes which, while by no means as egregious as what that wretched, wretched Clinton fellow did, might, taken in whole, constitute grounds for impeachment. Indulge me.

1. President Bush and his administration manipulated intelligence in order to go to war with Iraq. There were no WMD's. There were no links to Al Qaeda. There was no depleted uranium from Niger. To believe that all this "faulty intelligence" fell into the laps of Dick Cheney and Donald Rumsfeld, you have to believe beyond proof that they did not come into power wanting to go to war with Iraq. Simply go to the website of Project for the New American Century, and read their reports to disabuse yourself of such a notion (members of PNAC include Cheney, Rumsfeld, Jeb Bush, Paul Wolfowitz and others). For a full account of this atrocity, refer to Rep. John Conyers' (D-MI) report: "The Constitution in Crisis: The Downing Street Minutes and Deception, Manipulation, Torture, Retribution, and Cover-ups in the Iraq War."

2. He is illegally spying... maybe even on you. The top-secret National Security Agency was, by President Bush's recommendation, spying on Americans, without warrants. By the statutes of the 1978 Foreign Intelligence Security Act (FISA), this is strictly prohibited—in fact, part of the argument for Nixon's impeachment was that very offense. The FISA court, whose sole purpose is to hand out warrants in an extremely speedy and often even retroactive manner, has received 19,000 requests since 1979 and denied just five.

3. Among the greatest cities in the world is now a silhouette of its former self because the Administration simply didn't care to take appropriate measures to protect it. Bush looted SELA, the fund a Clinton-year congress started in order to ensure that Southern Louisiana was provided for, in case of emergency, to pay for his perverse tax-cuts and the aforementioned war in Iraq. Visit <<http://www.colorofchange.org/bush/video.html>> to watch the President as he doesn't care about the dire warnings being issued him by experts and not-so-experts (like the luckless, wretched Michael Brown). More people died than in any terrorist attack, and President Bush is largely responsible.

4. His administration, in a politically-motivated dirty trick, leaked the identity of a CIA operative. Now, I can't prove that any specific member of the administration did this, but Patrick Fitzgerald's investigation yet continues, and I am confident that when the facts are made plain, the highest reaches of the administration will be implicated. This is not only impeachable, but constitutionally punishable by execution, insofar as it is TREASON!

5. His administration was complicit in and continues to benefit from the September 11 attacks on New York, Pennsylvania, and Washington, D.C. Since November 22, 1963 (when, in Dallas, the then President's brains were blown to little tiny pieces) every poll has indicated that roughly one-third of the population believes the government's official account of the transpired events. And for good reason: you'd be nuts to believe such obvious poppycock. You'd be equally nuts to believe the government's official account of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks. So far, the best challenge of the official account is a wonderful and easily read book, David Ray Griffin's "The New Pearl Harbor: Disturbing Questions About the Bush Administration and 9/11." It's not just a good idea to read this book; it's your patriotic duty.

6. Then, of course, there is the single worst crime he committed, the most un-American, and the one that poses the greatest threat to democracy: he stole the election. I would argue that he stole two of them. For evidence of the latter, turn to another report by Congressman Conyers, this one entitled "Preserving Democracy: What Went Wrong in Ohio, Status Report of the House Judiciary Committee Democratic Staff."

Several congressmen, including John Conyers, have called either for President Bush's impeachment or for investigations thereunto. It is time we all as lovers of democracy, freedom, justice and truth, join them. The word is "impeachment." Spread it.

Pod People Escape Corny 50's Movie, Dominate Consumer Electronics Scene

BY SHOSHI ROBERTS

While walking to class in the morning, I generally see enough students listening to their iPods to give Steve Jobs an orgasm. For nine o'clock in the morning, I would say his day is off to a good start. I freely admit that I, too, own one of these ecstasy-producing gadgets. Her name is Omega, and she is just one of the 30 million iPods sold. These wonderful contraptions that pump endless hours of bliss into your ears are more than just a cause of the early onset of deafness. The ipod is a symbol of our generation.

Our generation's technological aptitude is widely accepted, and probably the reason that your grandparents and possibly even parents always call you with woeful cries of, "What's it doing now?" and "Please, please come fix it!" As our technology gets more and more advanced, our little electronic playthings get smaller and smaller. The iPod exemplifies the trend towards the ideal electronic device that will be too small to see, much less find in a pocket.

Apple introduced the first generation iPod in October of 2001, offering 5 GB of storage space and a considerably larger casing. I use the word "considerably" very loosely, because we all know that every hundredth of an inch counts when looking for the ideal mp3 player. Next, Apple introduced more storage space and a click wheel. Then came the iPod Shuffle, whose unfortunate drawback was that you had no control over what you were playing, nor could you ever read what it was.

To solve this problem, the iPod Mini was introduced in pretty colors, so you can buy one to match every outfit. However, the Mini was clearly not small enough to get

crushed by a falling book; thus, the Nano was introduced. At less than half of the size of the Mini, the Nano remedied both of these problems, but still could be swallowed by a medium-sized dog and inflict no damage. On a fun note, Apple's iPod Shuffle webpage originally contained the phrase "Do not eat iPod shuffle" in tiny print at the bottom. This message was removed within about 24 hours, but it is comforting to know that the people at Apple still have a good sense of humor. Despite dangers of accidental consumption, this tiny gadget is perfect for our extremely mobile generation because it is easily transportable. Now, we can have our entertainment piped into our ears for as long as our batteries last.

In a culture where the constantly decreasing attention span requires the majority of music video clips be no more than two seconds long (for fear that any longer might prompt the viewer to lapse back into the real world), we crave entertainment at every turn. In October of 2004, Apple added color and photo display capabilities to the iPod, just so we could stare at the screen as we were dancing our hearts out to the latest thing we gleefully swiped off a peer-to-peer client. (Of course, we are now supposed to buy these songs from iTunes music store for only \$0.99, but "free" has incomprehensibly more appeal.) No more than a year later, as our attention spans became disturbingly similar to those of ADHD goldfish, a new sensation was released: the iPod Video! With up to 60 GB of hard drive space you too can now strain your eyes in an effort to watch the next episode of *Scrubs*, *Sex and the City*, or *Clone High* (which, of course, you bought off iTunes Music Store, right?).

Indeed, the iPod represents a generation constantly on the move; a fast-paced, technologically savvy group that needs entertainment more than a Starbucks addict needs a morning triple latté. I cannot help but feel a sense of dread for the future when I see no less than seven people text messaging friends during movie screenings, as if the movie isn't entertaining enough. In ten years, we may not even have such a thing as an attention span. Our professors will be replaced with devices that whirr and flash images, and stimuli will constantly be fed to us through small chips implanted in our brains. PC and Mac users alike can rally behind our savior: the company that now advertises its computers with the phrase, "from the makers of iPod." Welcome to the cult of iPod.

Horoscopes

BY CLAIR CONNECTION

Aries (March 21-April 19)

On March 15th, NPR's *All Things Considered* ran a story about Paul Rothemund, a scientist who developed a process that allows DNA inside a drop of water to be made into shapes. To quote *All Things Considered*; "Imagine a yellow smiley face. Now imagine 50 billion smiley faces floating in a single drop of water. That's what scientists have made using a new technique for building super-tiny shapes using the familiar double helix of DNA." I find this an apt metaphor for you this week, Aries, as you are now in a good position to turn something vastly complicated and perhaps even overly personal into something light and easily assailable, like a smiley face or a map of the Americas. This process for you could be a little like Rothemund's: "It's really easy and fun, actually, to make whatever you want at the nano-scale. You design it in the computer, you order the DNA sequences, they come in the mail, you add a little bit of salt water, you heat it up and cool it down, and then an hour and a half later, it's ready to look at under the microscope."

Taurus (April 20-May 20)

Last September, Discovery News announced that every brain on the planet originated from a single ancestral brain that emerged some 700 million years ago. This mother of all brains, belonging to an unknown creature, unites every distantly related group of cognitive animals in a common ancestral chain. This week, as astrological omens have you considering your connections to others (human and otherwise) and also exploring your ability to acquire new skills, I feel that it is important for you to know that at a very basic level your thought processes are shared by everything that thinks. Suddenly, the mind isn't such a lonely place for you.

Gemini (May 21-June 20)

High above us in the air, water vapor condenses onto dust particles and slowly freezes as the air gets cold. As these bits of ice grow larger, surrounding water droplets evaporate, and more water vapor condenses on the growing snow crystals. As snow falls, there is a net flow of water from the liquid state to the solid state. This somewhat complicated and also pretty dumb analogy is intended to describe how you, Gemini, will also be experiencing a simultaneous state of liquidity and solidness this week. You might feel for example, at once soft-tempered and willful, or perhaps both indecisive and zealous. Don't worry about these contradictions. Instead, let yourself hover between them in the gray zone where new and complex thinking processes can crystallize.

Cancer (June 21-July 22)

In late February, British Arctic explorer Jim McNeill set off on the so-called Ice Warrior Expedition, a 1,000-mile solo journey towards the magnetic, geographic, and Arctic Poles, the former having never been reached by a single explorer. I mention this, Cancer, because I have a feeling that you will soon be undertaking a similar solo excursion, as you are more than ever committed to the Cancerian go-it-alone attitude. I would suggest that you compile a readiness guide for any situation that may arise along the way, asking yourself first and foremost, "what if?" This way, you can bravely venture beyond areas of assistance and engage in the sort of independent caretaking that generally earns you the criticism of your friends and astrologers alike. Make sure you are fully prepared, because once you get to the outer reaches, there will be no one there to help you, even if you originally wanted there to be.

Leo (July 23-August 22)

With both Neptune and Uranus in your sign, the planets of illusion and unexpected developments,

Continued on page 15

Planning Committee: Stop Being Afraid of Yourself

BY MICHAEL J. RUBIN

Last week's "Budget Forum Jr." held to decide how to distribute our newly "found" \$100,000 was painfully indicative of the state of the student body's democratic mobilization. Without promises of alcohol or spectacle, not only was attendance far worse than an actual Budget Forum, but the conclusions that were reached at the meeting by the "student body" (or rather, a handful of vocal students, mostly club heads) were drastically influenced by Planning Committee members around the time people decided they wanted to go to sleep. I can't blame the Planning Committee for coming to the realization (however late) that on such an unprecedented issue as the \$100,000 reserve fund, students are going to be uninformed and easily convinced by whatever the strongest speaker on the Planning Committee has to say. I take issue, however, with the empty promise of a democratic process embodied by somewhat useless, disorganized meetings.

The dominant undertones at each meeting seems to be that Planning Committee members don't trust each other to make decisions, or are uncomfortable doing so without more student input, and therefore won't take the initiative to do something bold with the resources at their disposal. However, putting up giant banners to advertise a grandiose town hall meeting

repeatedly turns into the Planning Committee talking with their friends, under the pretense that the student body is somehow being adequately represented.

If we are ever to get our \$2.6 million dollar student space (and that seems to be what the meeting last week was really about), then the planning committee has to put whatever differences they have aside and organize a mass mobilization of the student body. The student space is supposed to embody a unifying place on a campus where cliques hopelessly divide everyone. While I appreciate the attempt to make the process as democratic as possible, when these attempts repeatedly fail, or spiral into circuitous arguments where no consensus can be reached, it seems to me that the Planning Committee should act with greater confidence when it's clear that one action will benefit the student body in the long-run. Without this push, we are going to get a student space on the administration's terms—another MPR, perhaps with more "creative space"—a hollow recycled insult to the Old Gym spirit.

I am not saying that all of the reserve fund money should go towards a student space. It's evident that in terms of the whole project, \$100,000 seems like a drop in the bucket, not to mention that a significant portion could be used for some immediate, tangible benefits to the campus. Still, the Planning Committee holds the keys to the vault, and as such, has a responsibility to make it clear to the administration that the new social space needs to be its, as it our, first priority.

This doesn't mean passing around a petition for signatures. This means a combination of a significant portion of the reserve money (upwards of half) combined with the kind of mass mobilization that Bard students have shown they're capable of when it comes to helping others, whether it is New Orleans relief, B&G benefits, or various other projects that have been successful because of a strong, unified leadership pressuring a less-than-enthusiastic Bard administration.

Real American Heroes: Charles Barkley

BY TOM SCHULTZ

Charles Barkley, nicknamed Sir Charles by his admirers, is one of the greatest power forwards ever to play professional basketball.

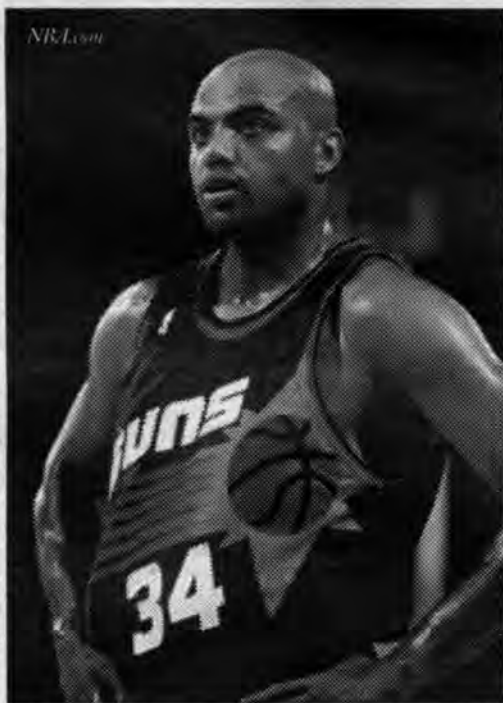
That statement might not seem too impressive to some, but take into consideration that he measured only 6'6" (unofficially much shorter) and had an enormous weight problem (he weighed 300 pounds in high school) throughout most of his life, and you begin to see just how amazing Sir Charles is.

Charles Barkley played college ball at Auburn from 1981-84, where he was an effective rebounder despite being more than half a foot shorter than the players he matched up with. He left for the NBA after his junior year and joined the Philadelphia 76ers, attempting to fill the void left by the recently retired Julius Erving. In his early pro years he was nicknamed "the round mound of rebound," but he was much more than an undersized rebounder. Charles was also a great scorer and passer, and in fact is one of only four players in NBA history to rack up 20,000 points, 10,000 rebounds, and 4,000 assists (the other are Wilt Chamberlain, Kareem Abdul-Jabbar and Karl Malone).

In 1993, Barkley was traded to the Phoenix Suns, where he spent the most memorable moments of

his career and became one of the most popular Suns players of all time. He was named NBA MVP in 1993, when he led the Suns to a Finals appearance, losing to Michael Jordan, Scottie Pippen, and the unbeatable Bulls team that dominated the decade. Barkley would never win a championship, something that has haunted him to this day, but his legacy remains untarnished by that fact.

Barkley was also a member of the "Dream Team" (the United States Olympic basketball squad) in 1992 and 1996, winning gold both years. After 1996, however, Barkley's age and weight began to catch up with him, and his career reached its twilight. He joined the Rockets in 1997, but was hobbled by injuries during his tenure there. He was forced to retire due to a horrific knee injury in the 2000 season, but returned for one game a few months later, to say goodbye to all his fans.



But merely describing Sir Charles's professional accomplishments does not tell the entire story, for it is his personality that really defines who he is. Now an analyst for TNT's *Inside the NBA*, Charles' simple wisdom shines through every Thursday night. Charles was and still is extremely outspoken and somewhat controversial, and has been involved in many fights, both on and off the court. Barkley always says exactly what he feels, public opinion be damned.

There has been speculation that Barkley will run for Governor of Alabama, which would be amazing, although it's unlikely he would win. When asked why he would run

by Bob Costas, Barkley responded, "I want to help poor people, Bob. Somehow, I'm going to help poor people."

Charles Barkley was a force on the court and is an outspoken social critic off the court. Anyone who has a TV should watch *Inside the NBA* on Thursday nights. It is probably the highlight of my Thursday. I just realized how pathetic my life is. Thank you.

Would you like to help the Spanish magazine *La Voz*?

Come and join us! It is not necessary to know Spanish, but it is necessary to have the desire to help the Hispanic community in our area. All of the meetings will be held in the Campus Center, Red Room at 7.30pm. We will meet on the following dates: March 20th, April 10th, April 24th, May 8th

ARTICLES, NEW IDEAS, CRITICISM OR HELP IN THE DISTRIBUTION - that's what we need!

HIV Testing at Bard? Yes.

The importance of testing cannot be overstated (regardless of "risk group"). Free, confidential, accurate, quick and painless, this test requires no blood to be drawn and gives results that are >99% accurate after only 20 minutes (OraQuick Advance Rapid HIV-1/2 gum swab test). Testing will be done at Health Service on Thursday, April 27th from 11am - 4pm. People will need to call Health Service at extension 7433 in advance to make an appointment, as slots are limited. A Hudson Valley group called ARCS (AIDS Related Community Services, <http://www.arcs.org>) will be doing the testing; they provide full HIV treatment and advocacy support to their HIV-positive clients. If there is the demand, ARCS will come back for a second day of testing. Please, take advantage of this opportunity as it may be more difficult to obtain a free HIV test elsewhere. HIV testing at nearby Planned Parenthood may also be obtained with an appointment (845-758-2032); however, one must have blood taken and wait for two weeks for the results. This opportunity is being brought to you by Bard's Peer Health Group in cooperation with Bard Health Services and ARCS. Look for upcoming information and resources regarding HIV/AIDS in your nearest public restroom.

Newton & Quinlan, Continued from page 11

restrict ourselves to a reasonable standard of war. Though perhaps only symbolic, the declaration of war as approved by the Congress is essential to maintaining stability. Without strict adherence to this custom we stand poised on the edge of oblivion, and every country wishing to do us harm will be sitting in the darkness, smiling, and thanking us for being the ones to make their hellfire acceptable.

MN: I should run your guts up a flagpole, sir. This country was born of fire and, God forbid or Allah hope, were it ever to fall, it would be far grander to perish in the fires that only noble combat can produce; rather than crumple under the winds of sagging empire like so many sad, dead leaves of British tea.

TQ: Are you saying that perishing under the heat of incessant nuclear bombing is noble combat?

MN: Yes. War is a banner liberal's huddle under, from which they congratulate themselves on their beautiful, shimmering, moral superiority, and framed in moral terms war is always repugnant. Of course, it's not a matter of debate. What really matters is that war is a beast that lives and dies on tactics. And preemptive strikes make sense tactically. If the policy is to destroy the enemy, the enemy should be destroyed as quickly as possible.

TQ: I was always under the impression that war is something no liberal could ever endorse, but of course you have said stupider things, so I won't hold it against you. It seems that we have reached in impasse. I believe in honor and some sense of humanity while you believe in the idea that a true soldier dies at home, watching scrambled Cinemax porn, obliterated by a smashed atom. Bravo Michael, you should be kept under a kiddie pool in the backyard of some duplex turned meth lab in Arkansas. By the way...preemptive strikes are wrong.

MN: If I had my druthers, Ted, I never would have agreed to co-write this article, thus preemptively saving myself from having to deal with the mawkish dance you call debate...I will now walk away from the finest pun I have ever made to sully my hands in the trough of personal attack, a trough you dirty pig liberals seem so desperately addicted to. I have seen Ted Quinlan try and carry a hard boiled egg between his knees, like a sort of douche-crab. It was the funniest thing I have ever seen, or shall hope to see. If I had my ultra-druthers, Latin for druthers-plus, I would make a tape of the event and put it out on the internet, where some drunken night Ted would stumble across the .gif, an embarrassing detour on his all consuming quest to find the most disturbing type of Japanese pornography...Preemptive strikes=good.

questions? comments? letters to the editor? send all feedback to observer@bard.edu

CARNAL KNOWLEDGE

The Observer's Sex Column

Letter to the Sex Editor:

This email is regarding the question from a couple weeks ago about the girl who wanted to be roughed around sexually but felt conflicted because she was a feminist. To that girl I have these words:

Nothing is demoralizing or degrading within the confines of a mutual understanding. That's what makes it an understanding and not an assault or an attempt to wound someone spiritually. If two people can agree that slapping, choking, or whatever is a reflection of their sexual hardwiring and not the way they view each other as people—then why question that shit? Enjoy each other, slap, toss, cum on whatever.

As a spin off of this idea I'd like to offer my services to Bard women who have needs not being met. If you look good and want to get consensually slapped around, get at me through this column. This is my first year here and I'm quickly coming to the realization this is the most sexually repressed college campus I've ever attended or visited—and that includes Catholic institutions. Seriously, you are supposed to be young people, stop with the low-grade drugs and get with the fucking. Best of luck, I'm here if you need choking.

I'm not looking to be shocking or contrary in a "red meat" sort of way. I just can't handle all of the labeled persona put before sexual needs that I see on this campus.

Patrick K. (Bard '09)

What's the deal with dating/hooking up with your friends' exes? When do you cross the line of respect? On such a tiny campus, I have been the victim and have victimized others with all these criss-crossing relationships. I'm just wondering, is there a standardized set of rules that friends have to adhere by? Or is it just playing it by ear?

A standardized set of rules to hooking up with friends' exes at Bard College:

- If the friend whose ex you want to get with is an actual friend, stop and think. Maybe you should ask him or her before risking the breakage of certain foggy trust boundaries.
- If the friend is an acquaintance who wouldn't think twice about having some good old romps, then go for it. Say you were drunk. They'll understand. Worst case: you get called a player or a floozy boozy slut.
- Limit the alcohol and drugs. The cycle of imbibing and hooking up could end with crazy rumors about how Sally and Todd reamed each other at the Manor Dance Party. Stories spread. Reputations flounder in dirt.
- Repeat this phrase when caught in the Bard backlash of sex-crism: "Sex is dirty only if it's done right." -Woody Allen

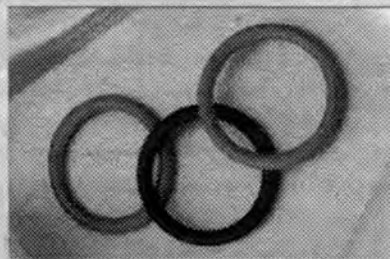
Please answer this question. It is a reoccurring problem that happens about once or twice a week. Sometimes in the middle of sex, my penis starts getting flaccid. My girlfriend is really hot, and I'm still very turned on, yet we are forced to stop sex because I cannot stay erect. Why does this happen, and what can I do to stop it? Also, is this a common thing in most guys?

Thanks, Flaccid Dong

You need a penis pump and/or cock rings. There is nothing wrong with you; your body needs a little different treatment in order to get off in a timely and controllable fashion.

The penis pump will not permanently enlarge your penis. It merely facilitates the

formation of a wider and longer lasting erection. Cock rings are used to prevent the blood from flowing out of the erect penis, and thus are a good choice for guys who go limp in Medias res. Simply get a bit stiff and slip rings around each testicle and penis. The harder you get is the harder you get and your girlfriend will not have to cease fucking for your flaccid porker. Buy these cocker rockers at www.babeland.com.



Could you publish information on what EXACTLY Bard health services does? For example, what types of birth control can you get there, how much does it cost, and how does this compare to prices in Red Hook? On a mental health related topic, how many counselors does Bard have, who are they, and is there any co-counseling on campus? Thanks, a South Campian who doesn't like to walk long distances in snow.

It is always handy to be well-informed about the health and counseling services available to you on campus—no matter how invincible you feel, there is always the killer cold virus, a suspicious vaginal sore, or a mental breakdown around the corner. You can read in full detail EXACTLY what the Bard health center does online at <http://inside.bard.edu/campus/services/healthservices>.

The health crew consists of three nurse practitioners, a registered nurse, and a rotating staff of physicians. Scheduling appointments with the health center is easy and convenient. The staff has years of experience treating STDs and they have FREE CONDOMS. The student health center provides birth control, but you can get considerably cheaper contraception at the Red Hook Planned Parenthood clinic located at 19 E. Market Street, Red Hook, NY 12571 (845-758-2032). In terms of pill or patch, you will have to ask. The counseling center staffs three counselors, a consulting psychiatrist, and an eating disorder specialist. Call x 7433 (758-7433 from off-campus). Peer counselors and tutors are also available for other community support you may require.

Email your **QUESTIONS** to gw876@bard.edu (Anything on love/hate, relationships, health problems, Bard health concerns or sex/sexuality/gender are welcomed.)

this is not intended to replace professional medical advice.

The Observer

Editor-in-Chief: Sarah Martino
 News Editor: Christine Nielsen
 Opinions Editor: Michael J. Rubin
 Graphics Editor: Will Kwok
 Calendar Editor: Sasha Winters
 Sex Editor: Genevieve Wanucha

Senior Editor: Ethan Porter
 A&E Editor: Tom Houseman
 Senior Editor: Henry Casey
 Literary Editor: Len Gutkin
 Special Projects: Noah Weston
 Cover: Zachary Kitnick

Associate Editors: Rebecca Giusti, Tom Schultz, Tanner Veal, Zarni Htun
 Editorial Board: Jeremy Bennett, Jessica Loudis, Tanner Veal
 Assistant Editors: Shoshi Roberts, Michael Newton, Ted Quinlan

Writers: Dinko Aleksandrov, Tristan Bennett, Kiriana Buteau, Clair Connection, Mary Harding, Eliza Jarvinen, Morgan Jetto, Sophia Kraemer-Dahlin, Charley Lanning, Ariana Lenarsky, Keith McDermott, Kelly Meers, Jesse Myerson, Anna Pycior, Shoshi Roberts, Matthew Rozsa, Adam Samson, Nese Senol, Tom Schultz, Oliver Traldi, Tegan Walsh

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 22

Math/CS Table 12pm Kline

"Flame" A film by Ingrid Sinclair about women in the Zimbabwean liberation war
5 Weis

Stand Up Workshop: 9pm Down the Road Cafe

IDFC: 7PM Deliverance
8:30PM You've Got Mail

Speaker Jessica Murphy
6:30 Olin 102
10pm 4SQUARE SMOG

TUESDAY, APRIL 4

Bard Democrats 9PM Campus Red Room

SMOG: Blowfly 9PM

SUNDAY, APRIL 9

BFC: A Couple of German Films
7 The Marriage of Maria Braun
9 Wings of Desire

THURSDAY, MARCH 23

French Table 12:30-1:30pm Kline President's Room

Trivia Night 9PM, DTR Cafe

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 5

Math/CS Table 12pm Kline IDFC:
7PM American History X
8:45PM American Pie 2

Stand Up Workshop: 9pm DTR

10pm 4SQUARE SMOG

MONDAY, APRIL 10

John Ashbury Poetry Series
6:30 PM Weis

Hebrew Table 6:30-7:30PM Kline Committee Room

Students for a Free Tibet 6:45pm

FRIDAY, MARCH 24

MODERATION PAPERS DUE 2PM!!

Scottish Country dancing 7:30-9:30PM Stenven Aerobics studio, Stevensen Gym

Have a Good Spring Break!

THURSDAY, APRIL 6

French Table 12:30-1:30pm Kline President's Room

Open Mic 9PM, DTR Cafe

TUESDAY, APRIL 11

Bard Democrats 9PM Campus Red Room

MONDAY, APRIL 3

Hebrew Table 6:30-7:30PM Kline Committee Room
Students for a Free Tibet
6:45pm Kline President's Room

Chagas, a documentary by Ricardo Preve
8 Weis

FRIDAY, APRIL 7

Scottish Country dancing
7:30-9:30PM Stenven Aerobics studio, Stevensen Gym

BFC: Wong Kar-Wai Night
7 Chung King Express
9 In the Mood for Love
11 2046

SMOG: Mynah, Fireflies, Mount Misery, 7PM

Because of Spring break, the *Observer* will not be meeting again until Thursday, April 6 at 8pm. Come by the basement of Tewks and help us finish up the semester.

Horoscopes, continued from page 12

your life this week might feel like the "living funeral" of Hungarian theatre director Peter Halasz. In the final stages of cancer, Halasz staged a 'lying-in' for himself at a museum in Budapest, placing himself in an open casket for a week in order to see the other side of a funeral (and supposed hear what his friends had to say about him) while he was still alive. This week, it is possible that you may find yourself in a similar situation: metaphysically distanced from your life and able to satisfy your curiosities, but perhaps not able to participate fully in the events. But Leo, don't worry, unlike Halasz, who said he planned "to depart" a few weeks after this last appearance, you will soon regain your place in the world, complete with the shocking effect of Dracula returning to life.

Virgo (August 23-September 22)

One of Sappho's fragments reads: "Once more love that loosens the limbs makes me quiver all over: the irresistible one, both kind and unkind." For the Greeks, Eros was also known as "the limb loosener," a label I suggest you adopt in the coming weeks, Virgo. This month of eclipses is the perfect time for you to explore new kinds of love. As does Sappho in her poems, choose the sort of love that is real, but also subjective and confined. Explore the mysteries of the senses, the ability to burn and freeze, be irrational and sane, to criticize and accept. In Greek, "That loosens the limbs" is *lusimeles*, made from *lusi*, which implies relaxing, easing, dilating (as in childbirth), attaining peace, and *meles*, which means limb, but also melody or tune. *Lusimeles* encapsulates all that I advise you to explore this week: everything from the melting and conflating caused by

love to the almost accidental movement into dance.

Libra (September 23-October 22)

Libra, the only inanimate sign on the zodiac, often shows a tendency to be more objective about things than other signs, and consequently to see all sides of things. This objectivity tends to become complicated when faced with the issue of self-examination, as some things are harder to see up-close. A Libra friend of mine, who has been struggling with such issues, recently told me that his goal in "soul-searching" is to achieve a head made of glass. I suggest that you take this notion to heart this week, Libra, not only by revealing your innermost thoughts to yourself, but also by making yourself into a window through which the whole world can see you in all your flaws, imperfections, and also glories.

Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

With Jupiter ruling your sign year-round, placing you at the head of the astrological parade, I feel the need to allow you to determine things for yourself this week. If I had my way, Scorpio, I would write you something along the lines of a "Choose Your Own Horoscope Adventure." Depending on what you chose, my weekly predictions for you would change and open up new sets of choices for the weeks to come. By radically inserting free-will into your chart this week, your choice will reflect where you've been. The new choices you will be presented with, in other words, will fit into a longer chain of actions. You should examine what you've already started and progress from there.

Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

Sorry, Sag, no fun metaphors for you this

week. Instead, it is time to get very serious about some things as this month's planetary alignments are heightening your natural tendencies and threatening to bring matters to an unpleasant head. For those that know you this could make things difficult, as your need to be foot-loose and fancy free is colliding more and more against your need for meaningful personal connections. Of course, the fundamental contradiction in your personality lies exactly there: while you often feel radically alone and isolated, you also tend to get claustrophobic when you are deeply involved with another person. My question for you this week is this: can you, Sag, discover how to find freedom within a close relationship or will you simply find closeness in your freedom?

Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

I recently stumbled across something both terrifying and mysterious; something known rather presumptuously as the CIA World Factbook (<http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/>). Glancing in horror over its contents, I realized that this strange document was created under the assumption that it would contain every important piece of factual information available. All of it is assumed to be objectively true. I would suggest to you, Capricorn, in spite of danger, that you act in a similar manner this week: assume that everything you know is true, and commit yourself to informing everyone about everything.

Aquarius (January 20-February 18)

With the cosmos putting an extraordinary amount of pressure on you, Aquarius, this week I would like to offer you the concept of the pressure point as something to ponder. Briefly, the pressure point is an area of

the body where a nerve or blood vessel is close to the skin, which can be used for healing or, in Martial Arts, to defend against or knock out an opponent. Some points may be painful, or cause muscle contractions, and some may even cause blackouts. However, most important for you this week is the application of pressure on your "chi," (ki or qi) the releasing or contracting energy within the body. Consider the universe your acupuncturist this week, rather than a skilled opponent, and pay attention to which parts of you are most affected by it. Make yourself vulnerable to universal pressure that will best unclog parts of you that may have been stagnating lately.

Pisces (February 19-March 20)

Yesterday March 15 marked the 2049th anniversary of Julius Caesar's assassination. Apparently, the act of Caesar taking his last breath has become a teaching tool for chemistry students worldwide. The notion is this: right before death, Caesar exhaled about .05 times 6 times 10 to the 23rd molecules of nitrogen and carbon dioxide, which is a really, really big number of molecules. These molecules spread outward from Caesar's lips and around the globe in what is apparently a very predictable pattern, so that, according to scientists, if you take a deep breath right now, at least one of the molecules you are inhaling literally came from Caesar's lungs. The reason I tell you this, Pisces, is that this week you have more than a little Caesar in you, so go into the world with courage and determination, and don't let anyone talk you into going to the senate if you don't want to.

by
Noah Weston

If you're like me, you probably spend a lot of time figuring out ways to hang housepets on your torso. I've got mine for little Smegma over here!



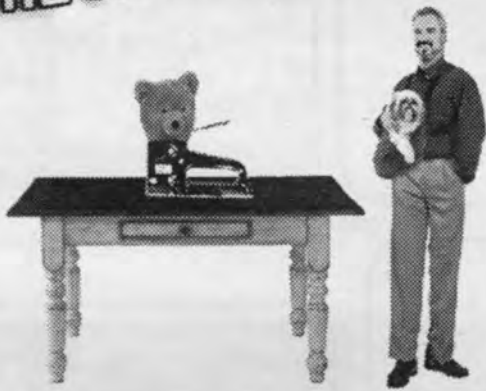
Isn't that right, Smegma?



But for you sacks of shit who don't quite have it together, I've devised a product that will revolutionize the way you make animals adhere to your body. Allow me to introduce you to....



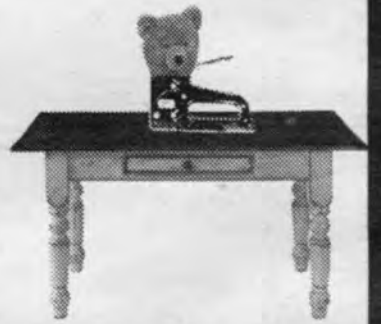
THE CRITTER FIX 4000!



With the CRITTER FIX 4000, you never have to worry about losing your dearest animal friends because they're literally stuck to you! Thanks to our patented metal fasteners, your pets will be pinned to your body, hopelessly wriggling until they sink in total defeat.

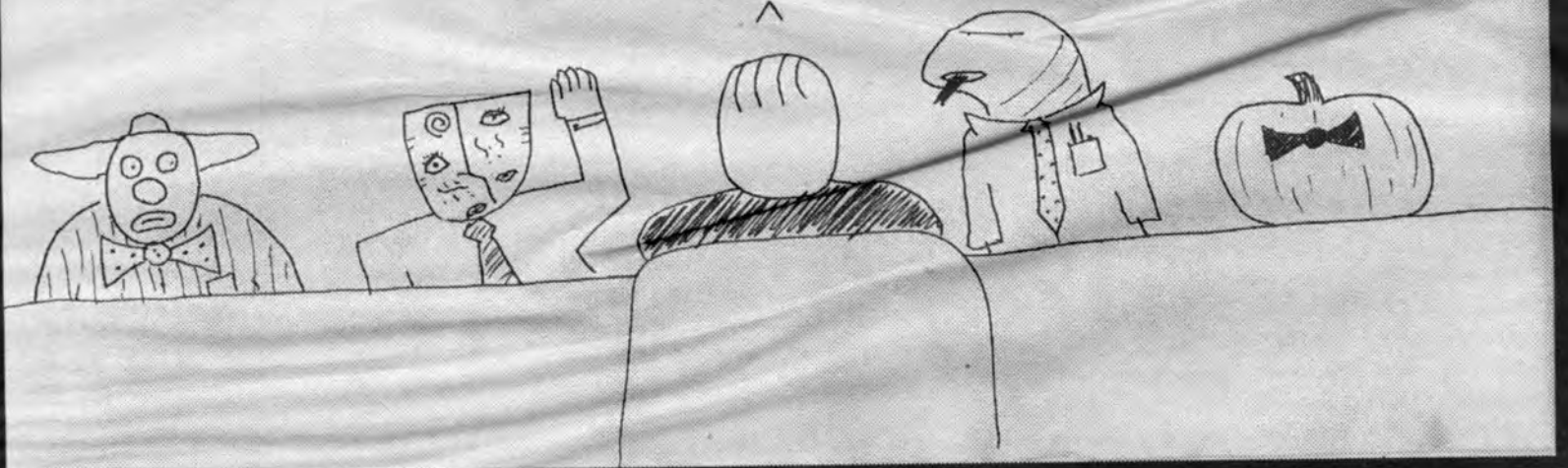


I know that you may think I've gone off the deep end, but if you ever stumble upon an enchanted carp, the gerbil of your dreams, or a broad with a killer set of big ones, you're not going to want 'em to slip by. Do yourself a favor and buy the CRITTER FIX 4000. Smegma wants a new headband.



by
M. O.

Gentlemen, after reviewing your forecast reports, it's obvious that one of you doesn't belong in this company.



Tortillas Mark Essen



FOLLOW PROCEDURE AND PROCEED WITH CAUTION!

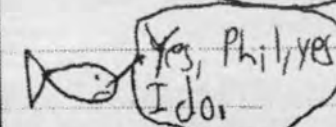
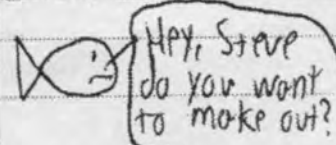
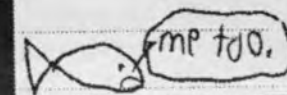
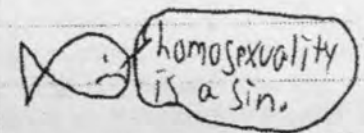
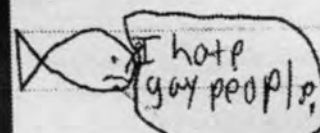
- 1 - Place saddle on dinosaur. If you prefer bareback, move on to step 2.
- 2 - You are riding a fucking dinosaur!



SURGEON'S GENERAL WARNING

Dinosaurs are not democratic. Dinosaurs do not have brains; they operate entirely on fear. Dinosaurs will fuck you up, and that is a science fact. Dinosaurs do not use tools. Dinosaurs suffer from dinobetes. Dinosaurs do not appreciate sunsets. Dinosaurs do not drive cars.

STICK IT to the MAN by TLH



FISH ARE HYPOCRITES
And they PISS in the Sea.

LEGALIZE GAY MARRIAGE