

# clamor

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March/April 2005 • Issue 31

making  
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**MATTERS**

5-Year  
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*I'm Wide Awake, It's Morning*

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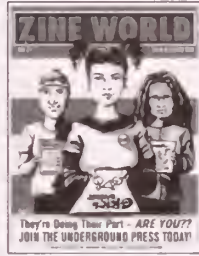
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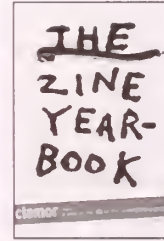
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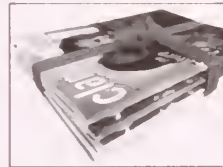
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**EDITORS/PUBLISHERS**

Jen Angel &  
Jason Kucsma

**CULTURE EDITOR**

Eric Zassenhaus

**LAYOUT & DESIGN**

Jason Kucsma

**ECONOMICS EDITOR**

Arthur Stamoulis

**WEB DESIGN**

Derek Hogue

**MEDIA EDITOR**

Catherine Komp

**VOLUNTEERS**

Mike McHone  
Jake Whiteman

**PEOPLE EDITOR**

Keidra Chaney

**PROOFREADERS**

Mike McHone, Kristen  
Schmidt, Hal Hixson  
Elliot Adams

**SEX & GENDER EDITOR**

Brian Bergen-Aurand

**COVER THIS ISSUE**

by Chet Gordon  
[www.chetgordon.com](http://www.chetgordon.com)

**REVIEW EDITOR**

Keith McCrea

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# from your editors

After five years, you'd think this whole magazine puttin' out thing would get a little easier, right? You'd get into a groove, problems would be easier to negotiate, and the damn thing would practically start putting itself out after awhile. Maybe if we weren't always upping the ante here at Clamor that would be the case, but we're still busting our asses all year long. This year, we decided to move our Clamor offices out of the home we share with two dogs and a roommate into a space in downtown Toledo. The move ultimately allows us to expand the number of things we're able to carry in the Clamor online infoSHOP ([www.clamormagazine.org/infoSHOP](http://www.clamormagazine.org/infoSHOP)), but for the meantime the move put a huge roadblock in the production schedule. Happy birthday Clamor ... here's a shitload more work for y'all to do.

Before we let the griping spoil the birthday party, we have to say that we're pretty ecstatic about how this issue came together. We really put the section editors to the test by choosing a theme that is also one of the sections in the magazine. It challenged them to come up with different interpretations of the concept of media — a challenge that might cost us a couple section editors if we try to do it again. But Jen and I started Clamor because we had been energized by the power of zine communities and we wanted to take that power and expand on it. It seemed to make sense then, that this anniversary issue would focus on media of all sorts. So we encouraged Catherine to take the media section and use it as a place for the first-ever "Clamor Golden Soapbox Awards" — special nods to people and projects that are changing the media landscape. And Brian was able to focus the sex and gender section around Chicago's Pilot TV project — a natural fit for this issue and the section. Keidra chose to highlight artists remixing mainstream culture in the people section, and Eric invited Samira Yamin to discuss art as media and resistance in Palestine in the culture section. Madeleine and Amanda appropriately directed our attention to Iraq in the politics section with two powerful pieces on making media on the ground there — one from American journalist Christian Parenti and the other from Iraq blogger "Aunt Najma." Arthur keeps us well-informed of economic struggles surrounding ownership of wifi and cable in the economics section. And of course Keith separated the wheat from the chaff to deliver you the third installment of the new review section — consider it a consumer reports guide to an often-oversaturated independent media market.

So there you have it. Jen and I just sit around and wait for everyone else to do all the work at Clamor HQ. We didn't make it this far by working hard, people! Happy 5th birthday to you readers who have been here since day one. We've got a lot more in us as long as you'll have us. For those of you just joining Clamor, get your subscriptions in now so we can keep doing this for another five years!

That's all for now. Thanks for reading,



PS: Check out the new sections "uproar" (p. 8) and "HERE" (p. 74) to see how you can have your say in Clamor! We'd love to hear from you.

PPS: The "letters" section has been pre-empted for advertising this issue. Send your letters for the next issue to [letters@clamormagazine.org](mailto:letters@clamormagazine.org).

## our mission

Clamor's mission is to provide a media outlet that reflects the reality of alternative politics and culture in a format that is accessible to people from a variety of backgrounds. Clamor exists to fill the voids left by mainstream media. We recognize and celebrate the fact that each of us can and should participate in media, politics, and culture. We publish writing and art that exemplify the value we place on autonomy, creativity, exploration, and cooperation. Clamor is an advocate of progressive social change through active creation of political and cultural alternatives.

# clamor

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**The Born in Flames Conference** will take place June 24-26th in Portland, Oregon in order to address sexual assault from a radical perspective. Our focus is on education, support and accountability. We want people from all over to come and share their ideas and experiences. Also, we are looking for volunteers, workshop facilitators and donations. Contact us: borninflamesconference@yahoo.com

**The revolution won't be televised,** but you can read about it. Books for a better world, by Mike Palacek, former federal prisoner, congressional candidate, newspaper reporter. Please visit: iowapeace.com.

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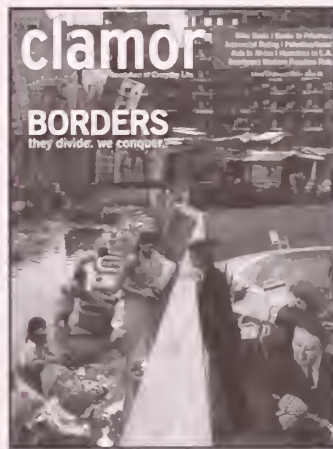
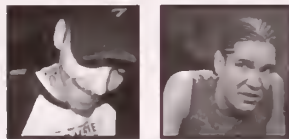
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Stephen viedclapes the opening night wrestling match at PILOT TV (see p. 59). Photo courtesy PILOT TV

# uproar

where clamor readers have their say

*this issue we asked:*

**Tell us about the first time you realized the beauty, power, or sheer ingenuity of independent media.**

I was reporting for KPFK, Pacifica's Los Angeles station, when I heard about the Independent Media Center organizing around the 2000 Democratic National Convention. **This was a group of people truly dedicated to the idea of creating an alternative to mainstream, corporate-dominated news and willing to take on the almost impossible task of organizing a full blown multimedia news outlet covering a major political event with little money and a completely volunteer staff.**

The budget was tiny — there were some donations and grants to help pay for rent and basics like phone lines, but most of the equipment was borrowed or donated.

The IMC managed to rent an entire floor in "Patriotic Hall," a building right across from the convention center where the DNC was held. The space was stuffed with an amazing array of equipment, including a makeshift television station set up in the main room and radio and print news centers in the smaller rooms.

Several hundred indy reporters arrived and from the very first day the action was nonstop. Bike messengers were dispatched to pick up audio and video from street reporters all over the city. Reporters faced rubber bullets, tear gas, and possible arrest and editors practically lived there the whole week, catching cat naps in whatever space they could find.

**I'm proud to say we gave the mainstream media a run for it's money, as tiny and temporary as we were. It was truly DIY at it's best.**

—Laura Hauther, Los Angeles CA

Joy Noga planted a seed in my brain that led me to revel the revolution of everyday life. Joy was my writing instructor at Pittsburg State University, Pittsburg, KS. She taught Introduction to Research Writing and she brought energy, enthusiasm, and fresh ideas to the classroom. Joy was a thought instigator who posed challenging questions and proffered new (to me) and interesting resources for supporting our writing. Joy often made reference to independent media resources, writings published outside the mainstream press, and one of these sources (and perhaps not so fringe) was *Ume Reader*. Joy explained that *Ume* was a good place to start exploring alternative information resources, especially for the uninitiated. I followed up her suggestion, and serendipity led me to pick up the issue that published *Ume's* best of list, and from that list, I discovered *Clamor*. From then on, I made it a point to seek out resources representing these other voices, to reflect upon the differences, to embrace diversity of ideas. Unlike mainstream media, my relationship with independent media is not one of mindless consumption nor passive recipient; neither is it merely a reinforcer of beliefs I already hold. Instead **independent media provokes and challenges me**, it causes me to raise questions, to consider other viewpoints, encourages me to act, to make connections with others, and most significantly, it values everyone as a contributor.

—Jenny Bruenger, Minneapolis MN

Long before I realized that what I was doing was being an independent journalist, I wrote for my own website. I thought I was hot with 80 hits in 6 months. Then, I created a web page about an under-reported is-



sue I investigate, military and corporate programs utilizing aerosolized heavy metal particulate, known on the net as “chemtrails.” The page got picked up by a popular alternative news website, Rense.com. Suddenly, thousands of people from all over the world were reading this page. I put a hit tracker on it and watched the results with amazement. Individuals, huge corporate and government agencies (some pretty intense), were reading the page. A few really got my attention, like the one from the Executive Office of the President of the United States. Immediately, the emails started coming in. **People, hundreds of them from around the globe, sharing information, expressing opinion, requesting additional information.** The exchange was incredible. The connections through the page grew a grass roots effort, with thousands of members, that is still active today. **I was in awe of the power of a single web page,** floating out there in cyberspace, to generate such interaction and communication between people who would otherwise have never known of each other. I’m still in awe of it.

**The moral of the story is...put it out there. Use the power of independent media, YOUR power. Tell the story, the whole story. Ask the questions. Report the truth. Create the change. Be the media.**

—Lorie Kramer, Houston TX

I realized that there was such a thing as independent media only by web. The best discoveries have been things like *Clamor*, *Lip* and the umpteen websites (eg ZNet) that provide independent news and analysis. Analysis of news and its history is in short supply here. The ABC (Australian BC) and SBS, a TV station with some government funding, have some good offerings. I have even seen people like Robert Fisk, Norman Solomon, our own John Pilger, and Noam Chomsky on these channels (miracles do happen). Anyway, I am grateful for these alternatives.

—Eugene Moreau, Hervey Bay, Australia

I remember in 1991 when I was a miserable 14 year old, I discovered college radio and it opened up another world to me. My weird friends and I could call and request depressing songs by Leonard Cohen, Morrissey, and Nirvana that expressed our adolescent troubles, and the DJ would actually play them. I was introduced to the Replacements, Pixies, the Dead Kennedys, the Dead Milkmen, Siouxsie and the Banshees, and many other classic college radio bands whose awesome talent, ingenuity, and irreverence **changed my worldview forever.** I remember calling the late-night DJ with a request and a complaint of insomnia and being told (in an educational, non-creepy way) that it may very

well have been sexual frustration that lay behind my insomnia.

When I moved to the Knoxville area later that year, the unforgettable DJ Ashley Capps introduced me to John Coltrane’s free jazz, which absolutely blew my mind. With his show “Unhinged,” he introduced me to Laurie Anderson, Sun Ra, too many new musical experiences to mention. Music of the Southern Mountains with Paul Campbell was a radio show that preserved the bluegrass Appalachian tradition. “Voices of Protest: Songs of Struggle and Discontent,” played hours of Woodie Guthrie’s tunes written to promote the Grand Coolie Dam. Alive After Five was a live broadcast of local jazz performances at the art museum. Unfortunately, the corporate-happy program director, Regina Dean, cut all this programming in favor of more NPR business news and PRI syndicated crap. I never bother listening to the radio any more.

If you care about the future of independent, diverse radio stations, please take a minute to write to the FCC (<http://www.fcc.gov/>) and let them know what a bad idea further consolidation is.

If you don’t, you have no excuse to bitch about the homogenized crap radio has turned into, and the fact that your kids will never know the delicious rebellion of independent radio.

—Erin McLean, Knoxville TN

It’s 1995. I’m seventeen, living with a punk-rock violin player and her huge dog in Alphabet City, eating lots of Cream of Wheat and powdered hot chocolate because that’s about all my minimum-wage, indie-bookstore job allows (that is, after I pay way too much rent for my half of a tiny single). One of the perks of the bookstore job is that I get to borrow books for free, so one night I take home Hillary Carlip’s *Girl Power: Young Women Speak Out*. Reading the Riot Grrrl section, **I find myself staring, stunned, at all these lines that tell me I’m not alone, not crazy...that, in fact, I might be right in suspecting there’s a larger social/cultural something that wants me to feel alone and crazy, and that I can resist it.** And then I realize that all these lines were previously published in zines — handmade, inspired, urgent little bundles of words typed fast and stapled together and sent all over the world. I started sending notes to Riot Grrrl zinemakers right away, trading dollar bills for their zines and mix tapes and stickers. Within six months I had written, assembled, and distributed the one and only issue of my first, very personal zine. It was rather young, yes; also rather melodramatic and over-stylized and other embarrassing things. But it was completely necessary -- to get some stuff off my chest and to offer something back to the global community of feminist zinemakers that had done so much, in those few months, for me.

—Jessica Hoffmann, Los Angeles CA

My freshman year at Bowling Green State University was soaked in cheap beer and cigarette smoke, but I remember this clearly: I roomed with a skinny Floridian hipster with a serious jones for zines. Being an indie rock geek from Dayton and former high school yearbook nerd, I jumped at the chance to start one. My roommate turned me onto the dubious pleasures of paper cuts, severe glue inhalation, and coffee-fueled, late-night layout sessions. Our first issue of *Polly Your Ethane* contained ill-advised poetry, political rage and a Six Finger Satellite interview. Subsequent issues appeared randomly until the zine died and I started up another (Sponiczine.com, which has managed to survive for the last eight years).

What most thrills me about zines isn’t their ability to attract free CDs and concert tickets, although that’s occasionally nice. (in a principled way of course). It’s more about the insane networking opportunities that a few well-chosen words and bit of design acumen can attract. **I’ve met so many motivated, intelligent, idea-soaked people over the years simply by putting my opinions down and paper and distributing them.** If it weren’t for independent publications I wouldn’t know about most of my favorite music, books or documentaries of the last few years. And I’d probably have fewer good friends.

—John Wenzel, Denver CO

I really got away from the underground for the longest time. It seemed like [it] had vanished! I got married (twice!) and now we have two wonderful children. Then I read an article in the *Progressive* — they interviewed Noel Ignatiev. His profound ideas about abolition blew me away. Shortly thereafter, I sent for a copy of Fred Woodworth’s *The Match!* Then I went nuts and ordered as many zines from around the world as I could get my hands on. I now also produce dozens of zines that I make, insanely, free to prisoners.

—Anthony Rayson, Chicago IL

next issue:

**For the “Break from Tradition” issue, tell us about the new traditions you’ve created for yourself and your friends.**

Send your UPROAR stories (250 words or less) to [uproar@clamormagazine.org](mailto:uproar@clamormagazine.org) by April 1, 2005



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# Saint Randi

Influential, intelligent, quick-witted. Goddess, rock star, saint. Those are just a few of the words fans use to describe Randi Rhodes, the seasoned, sharp-tongued liberal talk radio host whose eponymous daily program went national last year with the launch of Air America Radio. The former Air Force member, waitress, truck driver, and radio DJ built a strong following for her program in Palm Beach, Florida, consistently beating out Rush Limbaugh in the ratings. Returning to her native New York last year, Rhodes is now heard by millions and continues to attract one of the most diverse audiences in broadcasting. Even the vitriol of her detractors — and there are many of those too — is an indication of Rhodes's growing presence on the airwaves and in the public discourse. The Randi Rhodes Show offers plenty of informed analysis and opinion, complemented by a healthy dose of playfulness and humor. But the program is clearly distinguished by Rhodes's passion for people, coupled with her strong convictions in holding everyone accountable for their words and actions — politicians, high profile guests, callers, progressives, and fellow goddesses alike.

Interview by **Catherine Komp**

*Clamor: Why do you love radio?*

Rhodes: I don't love radio. It's the only thing I know how to do. But it is very personal, and I love that I get you all to myself when you are listening.

*You've been on nationally with Air America for almost a year now. What do you think the Randi Rhodes Show has accomplished?*

I think we've made people feel sane. Half of the country hadn't heard their own views represented in media. I hear the "You make me feel sane" comment more than any other. I think we've also identified a new market place for the 21st Century. A way to let the entrenched power know that someone was watching now. That the days of propaganda radio were coming to a close and you had better check your facts in the morning, not your talking points. I do love exposing all of their lies and hypocrisy. Their bumper sticker approach to the people of this country. No one able to speak truth to their power. I think they're feeling it already.

*You have such a captivating style and tone, that ranges dramatically throughout your four-hour show, from laughter and singing, to joking and impersonations, to despair and anger, to genuine empathy and love. I've even heard you cry on the air. And unlike many hosts who have a carefully crafted "personality," you seem to just be yourself. Do you think this is one of your strengths and why so many people tune in?*

I don't know any other way, so I can't really say. There are radio "actors" out there, and they are respected and loved, but for the life of me I don't understand it. Conservatives all do the same show every day. It's hard to tell who means what they say, and who is doing it because it is so easy to get your voice out there if you just became part of the Republican echo chamber. I can't really say why people believe the unbelievable, but some do. Sometimes I think that people accept the conservative crap because if they agree that America is going down a bad road, they may have to actually DO something, and that cuts into their TV time. But I hope that people get that I really care about them and that I have very serious concerns about our country and the troops.

*Describe one of your favorite interviews or callers.*

Oliver North. He was pure evil, and he lied. I caught him and called him out in under 10 minutes. It was scary because he is an effortless liar. But he walked out in the middle of the segment screaming at me, "I got shot. Did you?" That's a real leader, don't ya think? I loved exposing him.

*Do you have some radio idols or mentors?*

Neil Rogers is a real talent. He's on in Miami. He's the Godfather of Entertainment Talk Radio. Also, I love Phil Hendrie. Completely unique and unbelievably funny. I learned a lot from Neil, and I listen to Phil whenever I can.

*Clamor readers are well informed about the negative impact of media consolidation on what most Americans read and hear. What do you suggest is an effective course of media activism over the next few years?*

Lobby the shit out of Congress. Call, write (keep it brief). Tell them you don't think that Corporate Ownership of the media — having all the power of the media in basically six people's hands — is good for this country. Also let the media know that you think they're too chicken to write hard stories.

Blog, write, or call any show that will let you on. Ask them where the news is. Where are the pictures of our troops? Where are the

pictures of the happy Iraqis? Why is there no dialog between the U.S. and the people we "liberated?" Where is the money going? What happened to the stolen oil revenues? Why didn't we provide the Iraqis security, running water, and electricity? If we had done these things, would the Iraqis [have] supported this insurgency? Ask them if they are better off today [than] they were before we attacked.

Then there's Afghanistan. Where is Osama Bin Laden? Show us the progress in Afghanistan. Do real hour-long news specials about these two wars we are in.

Otherwise, I guess we'll start making more movies. Some of the movies that got made like *Fahrenheit 9/11* made real inroads with regard to showing people what's really going on. Some movies were made too quickly and didn't have the story telling quite down. But we'll get better at it and make more.

For my part, I must succeed in the ratings. If I do, there will be no denying me more and more access to markets.

*What do you think the alternative media landscape is missing?*

Distribution! Original programming. Real moral passion and entertainment. That's my definition of art. Some people are very smart but you end up feeling like you're listening to your favorite history teacher. Others rely on guests to carry the day. I like to make people laugh first to let them know I'm an ok girl. It's all so hard, but you have to laugh about it and in doing the comedy I find some real solutions, too.

We are talking about life and death issues for people just hanging on by their fingernails. Life and death for our troops every day. I love to give at least one moment each hour that makes people hit themselves in the head and say, "Wow, that's so simple...Why didn't I think of that." Soon they will start thinking like that.

*What do you think is the biggest threat to diversity in media?*

Deregulation. The fewer number of owners of the media, the less voices you will hear. American isn't a one-way street, you know.

*Air America has some strong female voices, including yourself, Laura Flanders, Janeane Garofalo, Lizz Winstead, and Katharine Lampkin. Additionally, I notice that many of your callers are women. Do you see the airwaves in general as a medium that's diversifying, and becoming more inclusive of women and people of color?*

You know I was told at the beginning of my career that "You will NEVER get women to listen to talk radio." When they said "never"

I thought, ok then, let's talk to women. The trick is to talk to women but never alienate men. Otherwise, you end up unmarried and alone, in NY, during the Holidays and (Oh... wait, I digress).

Seriously, I think I'm the first political talk show host to attract women listeners. Women have been called every name in the book by conservatives. From murderers to Nazis. Why would they feel comfortable listening to talk radio? I know women. My best friends are women, and they are the backbone of the American family. When the shit hits the fan, it's usually the woman who raises the kids, makes bills, and nurtures all. I've known lots of great men too. But you have to admit, there are more single moms than dads, and no one was talking to them, telling them, "I hear the baby, go breast feed."

I've let men know I adore them, and I do, but that women are just amazing creatures. We bring home the bacon, fry it up in the pan, and then wear it as pasties!

People of color have always allied with me. Maybe because I was a minority voice or because they felt that I was being held back because I was liberal and a woman and they got it. I have a bond with my listeners that I can't explain but I know is real.

*During the first few months of Air America, many people were anxious to talk about its imminent demise. A year later, you've grown rapidly and are on more than 40 affiliates. I have a two-part question. First, what do you have to say to those doomsayers, and where do you think Air America is going?*

Knowing what they were saying even BEFORE we launched, it was no surprise that they would talk us down. Now I think they see what you and I see, and I think they know their gravy train just ended. And frankly, the only people who are in radio are people who can't do anything else. They are scared and vicious and that's a bad combination if you're an "Air American." We took all their liberal listeners and we attract a good chunk of their conservative listeners who know something is wrong with this president's leadership.

*Here's your bonus question. If there was a Randi Rhodes Show trivia game, what would be the most difficult question to answer?*

You know, I think people know everything about me, my family, my friends, my dogs. (Actually, I'm down to one dog these days.) So, I'd go with:

Q. What's the name of Randi's fibroid?  
A. Bob ☆

*Listen to Randi weekdays from 3pm-7pm EST on Air America Radio (airamericaradio.com)*



# GOLDEN SOAPBOX

awards

Working in independent media often entails late nights, backaches, too much coffee, low or no pay, and the endless frustration of challenging the corporate media monsters. Despite all this, countless alternative sources of media continue to persevere, and with the accessibility of new technology, many new ones are forming. To recognize the tireless, essential, and exceptional work of our allies in independent media, Clamor is proud to present the **Golden Soapbox Awards**. Considering the scope and diversity of choices out there, we could have filled an entire issue with nominations. What follows are some of the most outstanding people, projects, and organizations filling the void in the media landscape. We give them our gratitude, praise, and support, and hope you do too.

*above: Democracy Now! host Amy Goodman interviews Haitian President Jean-Bertrand Aristide after he was forced from office into exile.*

## INTERNET NEWS, POLITICS, AND FUN

### Best Independent News Site

#### Common Dreams

[commondreams.org](http://commondreams.org)

Progressive wire, news, and press releases from around the world, all gathered in one site and updated daily. Plus there's Russel Mokiber's "Scottie and Me" section (formerly Ari and I), a must read if you're in need of a laugh, and to get an idea of the absurdity of White House press briefings.



#### Indymedia

[indymedia.org](http://indymedia.org)

No surprises here. In five short years, open-publishing Independent Media Centers have sprouted in about 150 cities across the globe, expanded to include print and broadcast, and are responsible for some of the most comprehensive, up-to-date coverage of mass demonstrations.

#### The New Standard

[newstandardnews.org](http://newstandardnews.org)

Just reaching its year anniversary, TNS has published more than 1200 original, progressive hard news articles, with extensive coverage of Iraq, Civil Liberties, and the 2004 Election. And they've even earned the distinction of being threatened by defense contractor CACI International for their coverage of torture in Iraqi prisons.

### Best News Digest

#### Buzzflash

[buzzflash.com](http://buzzflash.com)

Sometimes known as the "Undrudge Report," Buzzflash offers one of the most extensive digests of the day's news in addition to editorials, cartoonists, alerts, interviews, even an audio section titled "GOP Hypocrite of the Week."



#### Grist

[grist.org](http://grist.org)

The informative, amusing online environmental magazine also sends out a daily or weekly digest of all the latest environmental news.

#### Cursor

[cursor.org](http://cursor.org)

Daily news summaries on national and international linking to original sources. Lots of other links to blogs, online media, newspapers, media research, maps, documents and memos, people, books, and humor.

### Best News on Iraq

#### Dahr Jamail

[dahrjamailliraq.com](http://dahrjamailliraq.com)

Fed up with the corporate media coverage of the War on Iraq, Jamail independently financed his



first trip there and is one of the few "unembeds" remaining. In addition to his website, Jamail's articles appear at [Newstandardnews.org](http://Newstandardnews.org) and [Antiwar.com](http://Antiwar.com), and he is regularly interviewed on Democracy Now!, Free Speech Radio News, and Air America.

#### Al Jazeera

[english.aljazeera.net](http://english.aljazeera.net)

Anything provoking such ire from the Bush administration has got to be worth checking out (Rumsfeld has called it "Osama bin Laden's mouthpiece"). With a focus on Iraq, Afghanistan, and the Middle East, Al Jazeera added an English-version web site a few years ago.

#### Anti-War

[antiwar.com](http://antiwar.com)

A project of the libertarian, non-interventionism Randolph Bourne Institute launched during the Clinton administration, [Antiwar.com](http://Antiwar.com) provides extensive coverage of American foreign policy and imperialism through original articles and commentary, syndicated pieces, and daily links to breaking news.

#### Honorable Mention: Baghdad Burning

[riverbendblog.blogspot.com](http://riverbendblog.blogspot.com)

Riverbend's blog isn't updated often (lack of daily electricity doesn't make it easy to), but her posts vividly describe the chaos, frustration, and anger of day to day conditions for Iraqis under the US occupation – details of which are often left out of both the mainstream and independent press.

## Best Political Blog

### Dailykos

dailykos.com

While the site's been up since 2002, many people were turned on to it during Election 2004 for all the latest in voter suppression, electronic voting controversies, key state races, and GOTV campaigns. This is a favorite among both independent and mainstream media consumers, and considered one of the best and most popular political blogs, period.



### They Rule

theyrule.net

They Rule puts the US ruling class under a microscope, proving a forum, interact map and researching tools, databases, and links to help citizens understand the connections between powerful corporations, the people who run them, and their influ-

ence on the economy. An indispensable resource for journalists and concerned citizens alike.

### The Narcosphere

narcosphere.narconews.com

The blog portion of Narco News and the School of Authentic Journalism, this multi-lingual site focuses on coverage of the drug war from Latin America, and other facets of US foreign policy and imperialism. Posts come from a diverse band of international voices.

## Best Progressive Entertainment Site

### Bushflash aka Eric Blumrich

buzzflash.com and ericblumrich.com

A veritable clearinghouse of anti-Bush videos, animations, slideshows, and a community forum and gallery. Animations are also subtitled in ten languages.

### Mark Fiore

markfiore.com

Fiore takes political cartoons to another level with short, quippy flash animations - sometimes interactive ones - that provide a few laughs, while taking a critical look at US politics and the Bush administration.

### The Onion

theonion.com

More than just a free entertainment rag, the biting and unapologetic satire of *The Onion* provides timely commentary on current affairs to a nation-wide audience. Music and film reviews definitely cover the mainstream, but there are usually a few renegades in the mix too.

## RADIO

## Best Independent Radio Station

### WDRT

wort-fm.org

Madison, Wisconsin's listener-sponsored, community-powered radio station, broadcasting for nearly 30 years. Featuring locally produced public affairs programs like *Third World View*, *Her Turn*, and the *Access Hour*; and folk, punk, indie rock, blues, latino, and pan-African music shows, to name a few.



### KFAI

kfa1.org

Another community radio gem, shaking up the airwaves in the Twin Cities for 25 years. In the volunteer-powered spirit, KFAI invites the public to learn the basics of making radio, providing a venue for those people and ideas ignored by the mainstream media.

### Pacifica

pacifica.org

The oldest progressive radio network in the U.S., Pacifica has gone through much turbulence in recent years. While the organization gradually recoups from the damage, the five Pacifica stations (KPFA, KPFK, KPFT, WBAI, and WPFW) continue to provide some of the most critical and innovative news, public affairs, arts, and culture programming.

## Best Progressive Radio Host

### Amy Goodman

Host, Democracy Now!

This unflagging journalist and independent media activist, may be the predictable winner for this category, and will likely earn similar titles for years to come. But Amy Goodman's recognition is well deserved, for her dedication to social justice issues, for continuing to ask tough questions, and for exposing some of the most important, under-reported stories of the last two decades.



### Randi Rhodes

Host, The Randi Rhodes Show

Okay, so as a daily four-hour talk show on the commercial, progressive Air America network, this isn't technically "independent." But Rhodes is one of the most knowledgeable people on the radio, using facts, sources, and statistics to back up her commentary. Her program and personality are rather addicting, as the many daily callers pledging their love attest.

### Deepa Fernandes

Host, Free Speech Radio News

Another progressive voice heard daily on the airwaves, Fernandes is an accomplished, audio producer who's reported award-winning documentaries and reports on neglected communities and issues from across the globe, including Cuba, Mexico, India and Australia.

## PRINT

## Best Newspaper

### The Guardian

guardian.co.uk

*The Guardian* could very well be the longest-running independent daily still in existence. It was founded in 1821, after the army turned its weapons on a peaceful rally in Manchester, and remains free of corporate and press-baron ownership through a trust that protects the paper's independence. If you don't have access to a newsstand that carries it, you can subscribe to *The Guardian Weekly*, or of course, access the website



### Independent

independent.org

The newspaper of the NYC Indymedia Center is published biweekly and distributed for free all over the five boroughs. Content is timely and insightful, and covers a range of domestic and international news. If you don't live in NYC, a full pdf download of the publication is available online.

### Philly Independent

philadelphiaindependent.net

The *Monthly Journal of Urban Particulars* is a progressive paper offering coverage of news, culture, and the arts with an emphasis on the greater Philadelphia region. (see review in murmurs section)

## Best Magazine

### LiP

lipmagazine.org

Beginning in 1996 as a zine, LiP has evolved into a solid magazine over the years, and both print and online versions have unique offerings. (Sign-up for the weekly media picks, a colorful and often surprising digest of web audio, articles, and cartoons). The print version gets accolades for the creative, eye-catching layout and, of course, the provocative content and intelligent reporting.





## EDUCATION AND ACTIVISM

### Best Media Literacy/Activism Organization

#### Action Coalition for Media Education (ACME)

acmecoalition.org

ACME may be fairly new to the block (the organization started in 2002), but they're growing steadily with chapters in New Mexico, Vermont, and Southern California and an upcoming ACME Summit in 2006. ACME formed in response to a demand for a media literacy organization that was free from corporate media funding and other profit-driven influences. In addition to distributing curricula, ACME media activists promote independent media making and participate in local, state, and national media reform efforts.



#### Prometheusradio.org

prometheusradio.org

The founding members of this microradio powerhouse began their voyage "on the oceans of aether as pirates to protest media concentration and demand access to the airwaves." Projects include trainings, mentorships, legal advising, and the famous barnraisings during which low-power stations are constructed from the ground-up. Prometheus Radio also won a landmark lawsuit against FCC last year, which prevented the commission from further relaxing radio, TV, and newspaper ownership rules.

#### Reclaim the Media

reclaimthemediala.org

Pacific NW independent journalists, activists, and community organizers promoting press freedom and community media access, while fighting FCC deregulation and lack of diversity in the media. Seattle-area cable subscribers can watch RTM TV, Thursdays at 11 PM. The website offers news, fo-

rum, audio, media justice resources, and lots of media activism links.

### Best Media Watchdogs

#### FAIR

fair.org

One of the most visible media watchdogs, FAIR delivers timely and thorough critiques of bias and censorship in the media, and produces the bimonthly *Extra!* and weekly radio program, *Counterspin*. Subscribe to their email action alerts, and you can be a part of the growing grassroots media movement that won't let the corporate media get away with lies, distortion, and the reckless coverage that passes for journalism.



#### Project Censored

projectcensored.org

Independent media coverage is difficult enough to distribute to a large audience, much less preserve after the publication dates. But Project Censored's yearly list of 25 top overlooked and under-reported stories insures further dissemination of these important issues, and also serves as an archive for years to come. Don't forget to nominate for next year's edition!

#### Public Accuracy

accuracy.org

A media watchdog organization that throws its resources into getting alternative voices into the media — both progressive and mainstream. Each week, the IPA highlights key issues and provides a roster of experts from academia, public-interest groups, and grassroots organizations to give rapid responses about breaking stories. The work of the IPA has proved invaluable, in both helping reporters add progressive voices to their stories, and in broadening overall diversity and discourse in the media.

### Best Progressive Agitprop

#### Pink Bloque

pinkbloque.org

Frustrated by the didactic and alienating tactics of '60s radical politics still being used at demonstrations, this group of Chicago activists began energizing protests with bright colors, catchy slogans, pop music, and radical booty shaking. The spirited actions break barriers between people (especially with bystanders and law enforcement), a perfect environment to get out the word about the wage gap, militarism, civil liberties, and violence against women.



#### @TMark

rtmark.org

This subversive, culture-jamming corporation has pulled off some pretty unbelievable feats. Back in 1993, there was the Barbie Liberation Organization project, which switched the voice boxes on hundreds of Barbie and GI Joe Dolls, then returned them to stores. New projects and techniques have evolved tremendously, including Gatt.org and The Yes Men, and their continued successes in impersonating CEOs and world trade officials across the globe.

#### The People's Guide to the RNC 2004

Rncguide.com

The demonstrations in NYC for the 2004 Republican National Convention were some of the most organized and technically advanced. The RNC Guide was a tremendous resource, laying out event locations, protest sites, bathrooms, affordable restaurants and lodging, bike shops, bail bondsmen, and WIFI locations. In addition to portable sizes, the map was also available in a super-size wall version for large scale organizing.

#### Yes!

yesmagazine.org

Agriculture, Science, Race, Art, Spirituality, Politics, and Youth are just some of the areas covered in the Bainbridge Island, WA-based *Yes!* magazine. The people behind this quarterly publication also have a sister organization, the Positive Futures Network, and both seek to raise awareness of and participation in sustainable communities. Past articles include an interview with former war correspondent Chris Hedges, a resource guide for healing and resistance, and a profile of the Colombian peace movement.

#### Colorlines

colorlines.com

A multi-racial quarterly publication covering politics, culture, art, the environment, gender, labor, organizing, and the color lines that still exist in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. There is also a new wire service feature on the

website, which distributes monthly updates on news and information exploring race and race relations.

### Best Political Publication

#### Left Turn

leftturn.org

A magazine, book publisher, and network, *Left Turn* operates from cities coast to coast, exploring issues of anti-capitalism, anti-imperialism, workers' rights, and social justice. *Left Turn* articles on the agri-food system, Brazilian President Lula da Silva and neo-liberalism, and the radical reconstruction of Iraq's economy all made Project Censored's top-25.



#### In These Times

inthesetimes.com

With 28 years of history out of the Windy City, *In*

*These Times* produces some of the best investigative reporting, progressive news and analysis, and arts and culture reviews. Contributors vary issue to issue, with regular staff contributions from Salim Muwakkil, Susan Douglas, and editor Joel Bleifuss in addition to guest contributors Arundhati Roy, Kurt Vonnegut, *Clamor* contributor Kari Lyndersén, and many others.

#### Bitch

bitchmagazine.com

Inspired by a love/hate relationship with pop culture, a need to open a forum about gender in the media, and a desire to revitalize the voice of feminism, *Bitch* has been a mainstay in alternative magazine publishing for the better part of the last decade. Sharp, surprising, and witty analysis of the (mis)representations of women in film, TV, videos, magazines, and on the web.

## FILM AND VIDEO

### Best Independent Movie Distributor

#### Women Make Movies

wmm.com

This long-running multi-racial media arts organization has produced, promoted, and distributed independent films by and about women since 1972. But their international distribution program is their primary focus, getting films (500 in their catalog) out to colleges, galleries, community centers, labor halls, even the US Army.



#### Third World Newsreel

twn.org

Another seasoned independent media arts organization, Third World Newsreel has been around since 1967, with their first black and white films on the Black Panthers, the Young Lords, and the anti-war and civil rights movements. The organization also provides training, exhibitions, and technical support.

#### Whispered Media

whisperedmedia.org

A video activist collective using media tools for social, economic, and environmental justice, and to

strengthen grassroots organization. Founding members of the Video Activist Collective and Indymedia, Whisper Media is the distribution cell of these Bay Area media activists. Check out the website, where you can watch numerous clips and order videos.

### Best Film and Video Training

#### Paper Tiger TV

papertiger.org

Since 1981 this New York-based volunteer video collective has made hundreds of programs airing on public access channels that challenge and offer an alternative to mainstream media. Democratizing the process of making TV is part of their mission, and PTTV offers video production training, media literacy workshops, community screenings, and grassroots activism for anybody that wants to get involved.



#### Third World Majority

cultureisaweapon.org

Based in San Francisco, TWM is run by a collective of young women of color, and focuses on developing media programming that works toward global justice and social change through grassroots political organizing. Their focus project is a three-day com-

munity digital storytelling workshop, which teaches people to tell their stories by combining personal objects like letters, news clippings, photos, with digital media.

#### Alliance for Community Media

##### Video Machete

videomachete.org

The Chicago-based intergenerational, multi-ethnic collective trains youth to document their stories through graphic design, digital video, audio production, and multi-media projects. With a mission to produce programming ignored or erased by the mainstream media, recent projects focus on immigrant youth, LBT women, and media activism.

*Did we miss your favorite independent media project? Put them on our radar by emailing us at [soapbox@clamormagazine.org](mailto:soapbox@clamormagazine.org)*

Are you tired of swatting at flies? Frustrated that we're not forward-leaning enough on our problems? Think it's time for a full-scale review? Then this year's Allied Media Conference is for you. We'll be discussing and presenting new solutions to old problems. For all the zinesters, filmmakers, radio pirates, journalists, MCs, and friends, this is the place to come together and remove those obstacles we all face individually but can only remove collectively.

The AMC is the largest gathering of grassroots media makers from all across the country. The conference features hands-on workshops, film screenings, artist presentations, a large exhibition hall to share our work, facilitated discussions, and a series of workshops for educators on using independent media in the classroom. Set in a small, midwest town, it's also a space to strengthen our community and enjoy each other's company.

**New Solutions  
to Old Problems**

**ALLIED MEDIA CONFERENCE 2005**

**June 17-19 in Bowling Green, Ohio**

**[www.alliedmediaconference.com](http://www.alliedmediaconference.com)**

# HOW THE NEWS IS MADE

script Jessica Azulay and Catherine Komp illustration breakfast



LATER THAT DAY!





# The National Conference for Media Reform

May 13-15, 2005  
Millennium Hotel  
St. Louis, Missouri  
[www.freepress.net/conference](http://www.freepress.net/conference)

*Gathering. Momentum.*

**The war in Iraq.**

**The 2004 election.**

**Corporate media failed us on the most important issues of our time.**

**Now do something about it.**

The National Conference for Media Reform will be a crucial forum to discuss visionary and practical solutions to the problems of our media.

Join thousands of activists, educators, journalists, artists, scholars and concerned citizens this May for three days of networking, strategizing and momentum-building.

The event will offer dozens of policy roundtable discussions, hands-on workshops, and a variety of sessions on media ownership and consolidation, grassroots organizing, globalization, media literacy, public broadcasting, intellectual property, commercialism, community Internet, and much more.

## Join us

To register for the conference or for more information – including an up-to-date list of confirmed speakers and panelists, program outline, lodging options and scholarship information – visit [www.freepress.net/conference](http://www.freepress.net/conference).

Then explore the rest of the [www.freepress.net](http://www.freepress.net) Web site, where you can learn more about media reform, get the latest news from Washington and the grassroots, sign up to receive action alerts, and much more.

convened by  
**freepress** 

Free Press is a non-profit organization working to involve the public in media policy-making and to craft policies for a more democratic media system.

The 2003 National Conference for Media Reform in Madison, Wisc., brought together more than 1,700 people and invigorated the media reform movement. This year's event promises to be even better. Among those scheduled to attend:

**Eric Alterman**

*Author, What Liberal Media?*

**Bill Fletcher**

*TransAfrica Forum*

**Al Franken**

*Comedian*

**Amy Goodman**

*Democracy Now!*

**Juan Gonzalez**

*New York Daily News*

**Robert Greenwald**

*Director, Outfoxed*

**Arianna Huffington**

*Syndicated Columnist*

**Janine Jackson**

*FAIR*

**Naomi Klein**

*Author, No Logo*

**George Lakoff**

*Author, Don't Think of an Elephant*

**Robert McChesney**

*Founder, Free Press*

**John Nichols**

*The Nation*

**May 13-15, 2005 • St. Louis**



# A STAR IN MOSUL

Life in Iraq, as told by  
16-Year Old "Aunt Najma"

compiled by Charu Gupta

Over the last decade, the Internet has become the international water cooler of our times. Everybody has a version of what happened yesterday and, now, everybody has a chance not only to tell but also to publish his or her story. This became doubly important in Iraq, where war, insurgent bombs, civilian casualties, roadside attacks, U.S. tanks, and soldiers all create confusion and uncertainty in daily life.

As mainstream U.S. news outlets rely on embedded reporters to tell the stories, people are turning to a different source for on-the-ground reporting: blogs. The first of now more than 30 bloggers out of Iraq was Salam Pax (not his real name), who began posting letters to a friend in Jordan in December 2002. Hours before U.S. troops attacked, Pax wrote the now infamous words on March 21, 2003: "2 more hours untill (sic) the B52's get to Iraq."

The Iraqi bloggers write posts in varying levels of English, often intended for audiences outside Iraq. The writers include dentists, high school students, architects, and engineers. According to Rashid Khalidi, a professor of Arab Studies at Columbia University, electricity shortages keep most Iraqis from having regular access to the Internet.

Scattered throughout the blogs are readers' demands for the identities of the Iraqi bloggers. It is a blogosphere idiosyncrasy that a majority of bloggers, regardless of national boundaries, choose to write under pseudonyms. The responses to disclosure requests are usually variations on, "If you don't believe it, then don't read it." For some

*opposite:* Abdullah's niece Aya set against a picture outside of Abdullah's school.

Iraqi bloggers, the answer tends to be "I don't want to get killed," or "I want to continue writing freely."

One thing is certain, however. On the many Iraqi blogs, there is an immediacy, a visceral truth about what's happening in neighboring houses and streets. Whether their identities are known or not, bloggers connect with readers on an emotional level. And, given the lack of U.S. reporting on civilian casualties and injuries, many Iraqi bloggers provide eyewitness accounts of things that cannot be otherwise known. Even if one of them may be untrue, they are a slice of reality, chosen by the writer, and filtered through their words and perceptions.

A Star in Mosul is the blog of 16-year-old Najma Abdullah (a pseudonym – Najma is "star" in Arabic), who also calls herself "Aunt Najma" after recently welcoming her niece Aya into the world. Her father is a doctor and her mother is a civil engineer and university lecturer. Abdullah is in an advanced high school for girls and is eager to attend a university, but her education is currently another casualty of war. Her words, however, are making history.

The next few pages feature an abridged version of Abdullah's blog from November and December 2004. No spelling errors or typos have been corrected.

**Translations:**

*Eid:* Eid al-hada; Muslim holiday known as "Feast of the Sacrifice"

*Futoor:* Meal taken at sunset to break fasting

*Hijab:* Traditional Muslim woman's headscarf

*Gargo:* Grover from Sesame Street

Friday, November 12, 2004

*Crying with no tears*

Everything started the day before yesterday; they declared a curfew at Mosul TV from 4PM Wednesday, till 6AM on Friday. The Arabic media didn't mention anything and so half of the Iraqi people didn't know about it.

In the meanwhile my oldest sister was in our house, it has passed 4PM when we knew about it, so we decided to drop her at her house (Which is the same as her parents-in-law) in the morning next day.

The morning came, I was sleeping at my room upstairs, and a war of bullets started... I decided to move myself down when it started to be a heavy fighting and there were also explosions and mom was shouting at me to get down... It was 10AM. My oldest sister was ready to go, but she can't go in such situation so she decided to wait till it calms down.

My brother-in-law was supposed to come before the Eid. We didn't know when exactly, because the hospital's phone is broken... My oldest sister (Let's call her S now) was so worried that he'll come and get stuck in the other side of the city because of the curfew, so she tried to call him on a friend's mobile, it wasn't working but it did at about 11AM, she told her to tell him not to come because the situation is too bad and he won't make it till here.. The friend told her that he already started his way to Mosul an hour ago. Here S started to worry too much!! Till about 11:30, her sister-in-law called and told her to call her husband on the mobile because she's trying to and failing... She said also that her father-in-law got shot in his leg while trying to get back from the clinic, and he's in the hospital and that her husband should go with him since nobody in the neighborhood can move his head out of the door! The war was horribly improving.

S called her brother-in-law, and he told her that he is in the hospital and that his father has DIED...

I can't describe how I felt, I was crying and shaking and the tears wouldn't go out... I just held Aya who's just lost a grandpa and made sure she won't cry and make things worse. S was terribly SAD, confused, and WORRIED about everything. Mostly about her husband who's in his way to a big surprise and about her sister-in-law who's alone at home in the middle of the war, pregnant in her 9th month..

For 4 hours and a half, we were stuck at home, making sure dad won't get out of the house in this war, trying to clam Aya who was frightened after a loud explosion... Those were one of the most horrible moments in my life. People calling asking if what they've heard about S's father-in-law was true, my sister crying and worried (I've never seen her like that), 3 cars burning in the street, and then S's brother-in-law called and asked about the place

where they keep the cotton (They brought his father home, and they're trying to wash him like the Muslims do to their dead before burying them), there were no enough cotton and they can't go out to buy some.

I talked a lot till now so I'll try to shorten things. At 3PM, things calmed down... Dad drove S to her house, and there they were ready to get the body and bury it. Dad went with them since he was his friend, and came back after we've had futoor.

Till 5:30, my brother-in-law finally arrived! Thank God. He was stuck for 1:30 minutes with his luggage on the other side of the bridge, and he came on foot from the bridge to his house, eager to see his little daughter after a month of absence... And here he comes, to find his dad dead and buried!

Nobody knows who shoot him, but everybody knows that he's now in Heaven. He died in the night of power, fasting, and shahced. At least he's seen his first grandchild who'll carry his name (Aya)... His son said that this was the death that he's always dreamt of.

I had two eye doctors. Both are dead now!! Imagine! Both are killed now! This one was so kind and he was shy from me more than I was from him. Both men are great in everything and have the best manners and I'm not exaggerating.

Okay, it was a long day that I slept at 10 o'clock and I was so tired. I woke up at 2:30AM (The mosque was calling at that time, telling us to be careful and to guard the neighborhood because a bad group of robbers and destroyers has entered the city somehow!!) and started praying and reading Quran till 5:15AM. It's the night of power, we should pray a lot...

Then mom woke me up at 12AM, I was awake along time ago, but I knew there's nothing to happen, days are looong these days, and the things that happen are rarely good.

Now, we can't even get near S's house. An American Stryker is near the house shooting every car coming near by. We wanted to get Aya here so that S can be more comfortable but we couldn't.

Dad is trying to convince me that everybody has his own day to die and that not allowing him to get out is not a solution!! That's how things are going on, the war is not over and I slept at the sound of bullets and explosions last night... Mom said that this war is the worst among all the others... The Arabic media didn't mention anything!!

Tomorrow is Eid; this is the worse night of Eid I've ever been in. I wonder whether we'll wait for that song *دي عال قلبي اي دي عال قلبي* like always, or just forget about it.

I'll wake up tomorrow (If I'm alive of course) and put on my new clothes, and see if we're going to get out...

PS: I made lots of mistakes in the brother-

in-law, sister-in-law thing since I don't know how you call them in English).

*posted by Aunt Najma @ 1:18 PM*

Monday, November 15, 2004

*What's happening for two days??*

Okay, today is the first day of Eid.. I was mistaken when I said it was yesterday, it's just confusing because the mosques did say that it was yesterday but then we had an announcement on TV that denies it, so we just fasted another day and started the Eid today.

It doesn't seem like we're going out of the house! Although I really wish I will since I spent a lot of time fixing my hijab!! Mom and dad went and took Aya to spend the day here and then they'll drive her back to her mom before the curfew starts at 4 o'clock. They say that the Americans release violent dogs in the streets at night so that people won't get out (I want some respect!! Dogs!). I remember when I used to get bored at night when people start leaving and the Eid ends, now I haven't even seen any of my uncles since dad came back from Egypt.

My bundle of joy (As someone once called her) came today with a toy from her dad, he calls it Gargoor, it's one of the characters of Semsimi street (Not sure of the spelling).. Mom gave her her gift of Eid from yesterday, it's that thing that spins over her head on her bed at night and sings. Her mom said that the emotions on her face when the toys started spinning and singing (Twinkle Twinkle little star!!) were unexplainable, she was totally surprised and excited. She's surely helped her father a lot these days, she's talking to him all the time.. She doesn't speak Arabic yet, just Irr, Orr, Arr and such words.  
*posted by Aunt Najma @ 2:03 PM*

Thursday, November 18, 2004

*Going out..!*

Yeppy, I saw two more uncles today. It was calm in the morning, so we went out and visited two of my uncles, and then dropped by my big sister's house and I saw my brother-in-law for the first time for a month, and he was alright as it seemed, a little angry at crying Aya..

The weather was nice and the sky was really blue with white big nice clouds. The water in the street is reflecting the blueness of the sky and all the other things were washed by the rain. I took some pictures that I'll try to post here..

We made an arrangement with my sister and her husband that we'll come tomorrow and take Aya to stay with us till the curfew (At 4PM).

Nobody seems to be going to school soon, and the parents aren't ready to send their kids there..



We also bought bread, we've been unable to buy it for a week, now I can eat sandwiches as much as I want.. We bought falafel too, which is by the way my favourite meal.

There are no Police nor American soldiers in the streets we went through, just people.. The gasoline stations were full, and there were also a long line of cars and the drivers were waiting to their turn to fill their cars.

We can see those black pieces of cloth that the Iraqis have used to write their dead people's names on, plenty of them were hanged along the road, most of them were killed by either the terrorists or the American soldiers.. I've called my friend yesterday who told me about her brother's friend who is in the medical school.. Robbers have tried to kill him and his 18-year-old brother for their car but for some reason didn't get the car, the 18-year-old one died and the other is in the hospital now.. In the same accident, a woman with her infant were crossing the street, the infant got a bullet and died in the hospital!!

As some Iraqis have used the walls to practice their free speech after the war, a wall of a school has a writing that says: "We'll kill everyone who'll participate in the elections", in Arabic.. I was few days ago urging my parents to go participate in the elections, if we didn't vote, who will!!! But, I guess I'll stop urging anyone now since it's a dangerous thing like everything else.. Let's just hope that the ones who'll vote will vote for the RIGHT person.

*posted by Aunt Najma @ 5:54 PM*

#### **Friday, November 26, 2004**

*What's happening? (Updated)*

Today, at 7PM, we had electricity for the first time in 35 hours!! We spent all this time on the generators. There was no problem except for water. Water is so cold in winter, the heaters only operate on electricity (Although we have non-electric heaters, but dad hoped that the electricity will come soon and he didn't turn them on), and with no heaters. we have very cold water!

At night yesterday, I brushed my teeth, the water was so cold that all my teeth started aching! I didn't dare to wash my face with such cold water although I needed to (I've declared a war against acne!).

Today, I heard one BIG explosion and few far shooting! Nothing close to us.

I'm having a difficulty with studying. Although we didn't go back to school, but we do need to study! Whenever I take a school-book to read, I lose any desire to study. Whenever I take a book (Any book but not a school-book), I start reading right away with

no laziness! We might go back to schools if things stayed that way, calm and stable compared to the past few days.

And now, dear bed, here I come :)

Good night everybody,

Najma

*posted by Aunt Najma @ 1:00 AM*

#### **Tuesday, December 14, 2004**

*Bad news, funny news and good news..*

Let's start with some bad news.. A neighbor got kidnapped today at about 7:30AM. I heard the shooting and some shouting in the morning but didn't know what happened, dad heard about the kidnapping in the mosque (That's where all the neighbors exchange their news). He was kidnapped from his BED.. The kidnappers called then asking for money (50,000 US dollars!!)

I had a terrible mistake at the Chemistry exam today, it can cost me from 5 to 20 marks. I almost cried but the students were admiring my courage and how I don't cry at such stuff so I just couldn't cry.. That's better.

A little bomb exploded in front of our car the day before yesterday on our way to school. There were strykers in front of us but the explosion was small and no body was hurt. I turned the mobile on right when the explosion occurred, mom called at once, and said that dad has jumped out of bed and he's looking for us outside! I felt so sorry for them. I can't imagine how they felt when they heard the explosion.

A funny news.. I gave mom the right to have my hair cut, for the first time. I didn't care if she messed it up or not, for two reasons, nobody will see it since we're not getting out of the house, and there's no way that I can't have it cut by a hair dresser. they close their shops early and we can't get out of the house.. I just kept praying that she won't mess it up, and kept laughing of the strange way she held the scissor. Well, the results aren't bad at all!

Now, some good news. Aya's cousin was born today, it's a girl, but we didn't know what they named her. My older sister left Aya at our house and went with her husband to the hospital to take care of her sister-in-law, her husband was in Baghdad and couldn't attend the birth of his first child (Just like his brother).. Those men don't have luck to watch their children's birth.

And as usual, I'm sure there was something else, but I have to go to sleep..

Good night..

Sleep tight..

Don't let the bed bugs bite..

*posted by Aunt Najma @ 9:54 PM*

#### **Saturday, December 25, 2004**

*Merry Christmas everyone*

We went to school today, it was raining heavily, and it didn't make me feel well. But, when we reached school, they sent us back to our houses. I don't know when will we be able to go back to school and start a stable year.

We're running out of bread, and the bakery shops aren't having enough gasoil (I can't distinguish between gasoline, gasoil or anything else), and this is a problem.. Some people are freezing in their houses from the cold weather and they have no gasoil to turn on their heaters (That's something else I'm not sure of its name, I don't think you even use it!). Plus, I was telling mom that I'll need to take a shower today when dad told me that I'll have to wait till Thursday; we're not getting enough electricity to heat the water, and we don't have enough gasoil to heat it on fire.

Yes, it looks like we're going back to the dark ages and mom will soon have to bake the bread by herself..

Some better news; mom and dad are planning to buy us a video digital camera to take videos of the new changes in dear Aya's life. She discovered yesterday that she has feet and was so happy about it like her mother said..

So, Christmas is not promising here.. It looks so dark outside although it's 2PM.. We went out tomorrow for my cousin's birthday (Who became 7 years old) and people are talking about how courageous we are to go out at 4PM!! I felt sorry for this boy, he was so afraid the day before yesterday when plains were throwing rockets from the sky. But I don't blame him, mom was so scared too.

I feel like I'm getting more pessimistic everyday. But I'm more positive than I look like here..

Okay, Merry Christmas one more time, and good bye.

*posted by Aunt Najma @ 1:40 PM ☆*

*ed. note: the hospitalized brother later died.*

*Charu Gupta is a Cleveland-based freelance journalist. She writes about education, immigration and minority communities. Her work has appeared in The Progressive, Colorlines, Cleveland Scene, and Cleveland Magazine. She can be reached at charu@charugupta.net*

**"I'm having a difficulty with studying. Although we didn't go back to school, but we do need to study! Whenever I take a school-book to read, I lose any desire to study. Whenever I take a book (Any book but not a school-book), I start reading right away with no laziness! We might go back to schools if things stayed that way, calm and stable compared to the past few days."**

making media in



an interview with  
**CHRISTIAN PARENTI**

As an independent American journalist, covering the war in Iraq is a challenge, to say the least. Recognizing that reporting news would nearly be impossible, Christian Parenti, correspondent for *The Nation*, chose to focus on the culture of Iraq under occupation. "What I tried to cover is the texture, the culture of the occupation, the texture of everyday life," Parenti said in a recent interview in Brooklyn.

His writings from Iraq are compiled in his latest book, *The Freedom: Shadows and Hallucinations in Occupied Iraq*. In Iraq, Parenti embedded with elite troops and reservists, and met with members of the Sunni and Shia resistance before the threat of kidnapping became too risky. He witnessed car bombings, gunfights, and sweeps through the streets of Fallujah; he interviewed Iraqis held at Abu Ghraib and those just trying to live their lives in the midst of war.

Parenti, a 35-year old writer, is the author of two other books, *The Soft Cage* and *Lockdown America*, and is a regular contributor to *The Nation* and *The Brooklyn Rail*.

*Clamor: What is the biggest difference between the American public's perception of the situation in Iraq and that of someone who has been there?*

Parenti: The biggest difference is that the level of chaos in Iraq is much greater than most people here think. The situation in central Iraq is really out of control and I think it's headed towards a long-term meltdown. The war there is not going to stop for years and years, whether or not the U.S. stays or goes. I'm surprised people don't realize how out of control it is. It's gotten to the point now where journalists are, for the most part, locked down in their hotels. It's very hard to move around; there are very few journalists doing anything unembedded.

Another major perception is just racism, that Iraqis are simple sheepherders who live in tents. That's not the case. Iraqis are very intellectual, very sophisticated.

*As a freelance journalist there, working on a much lower budget than a lot of the television journalists had, what do you think were some of the major differences between your experiences and those of the television journalists?*

We lived in different conditions; we lived in different hotels. I had a different set of peers and, therefore, a different kind of ideological set of references or reinforcements. We stayed in budget hotels.

The last time I was there, it was me, David Enders [editor of *Baghdad Bulletin*], and Dahr Jamail [independent journalist and correspondent for *The NewStandard*]. We were all American lefties in this beat-up little hotel trying to hide out. What I wrote about more

interview by Collin Yeo

in *The Freedom* was the longer period of time I spent in the Agadeer, which was this budget hotel with mostly European and Eastern-European freelancers. Everybody was broke and people weren't as careerist. They probably did a lot more drugs than people did at the Palestine Hotel and we would have lively political debates.

When you hang out with the mainstream press, everybody is really polite and often avoid political debates. They're just dull, polite Ivy-Leaguers. When you go freelance and low budget, you end up with freaks, which is a lot more fun.

We were all pretty clearly anti-occupation. There was no pretense of, "Gee what's going here?" We were all pretty opposed to the war. I definitely feel that my reporting was what I would say was objective, true to the facts. I reported facts that disagreed with my political position, but I also didn't go there with some faux-open mind.

*Having that position, writing for The Nation, and being a freelancer, did you find yourself being treated any differently by the U.S. military?*

No. Everybody gets the run-around at the center of the circus, in the Green Zone at the press conferences. There's very little information available there. If you're a daily journalist and you need the quote immediately from the big guy about the event that day, you have to go to those things and get that.

I went to those things mostly for color because there was no real information available. If you asked difficult questions, you would get the run-around. I saw Christopher Dickey of *Newsweek*, who is a really good journalist, asking difficult questions and just getting the usual run-around. But when you deal with military on the ground, usually they are just really glad to see another American.

*What is the largest misconception about the war that is being spread by the mainstream media?*

The largest misconception is that the American empire is beneficent and competent. That's the constant implied assumption ... and it's not true. This is not a big mission of mercy. It never was and it won't ever be. You hear this again and again. Even some people on the left say, "Well, we can't cut and run; we have a responsibility." The subtext of what they're saying, which they don't even think about, is that the U.S. wants to do good, and secondly, is capable of doing good. The U.S. is in Iraq to control the Middle East for much less than charitable purposes. To control the region, because it is crucial to the economy of both Europe and Asia, and to be able to play the petroleum gendarme in that region would give the U.S. subtle but very important leverage over the two other poles of world capitalism.

*Journalists often talk about the need to remain professional in war-zones under great stress. Can you think of a time where you wanted to perhaps do more, or where you lost objectivity?*

There wasn't anytime I wanted to, like, pick up a gun or anything like that. But I constantly felt the inadequacy of my efforts, vis-à-vis the nature of the crisis there. That's sort of a constant, dull pain. You realize that one's contribution is pretty limited as a print journalist, given the momentum of the whole project and given the momentum of television. Television controls the political discourse of this country in a way that's so powerful you just inherently feel inadequate; if you don't feel inadequate, you just feel the disproportionate firepower that they have.

*You have spoken in previous interviews about Salah Hassan, the Al Jazeera reporter who was captured by the U.S. Military and put in Abu Ghraib. Do you know of many instances in which the U.S. military had a bias against foreign journalists, specifically Al Jazeera reporters?*

Yeah, there was sort of, like, an urban myth, or urban myths, that circulated among U.S. soldiers about Al Jazeera being in cahoots with the resistance. When we'd show up at some military operation and we'd say, "Hey, we're journalists. Can we talk to you and come inside the cordon search and check things out?" Often the soldiers would say, "As long as you're not Al Jazeera!"

But, with whatever big story there had been, they would have their prejudice. One time it was *Time* magazine, and the soldier said, "You're not with *Time* magazine, are you?" *Time* magazine had just profiled the resistance. I was just like, "Whatever, man, I'm NOT with *Time* magazine."

*Did that prejudice extend to other Arab news organizations or was it mainly directed at Al Jazeera?*

First of all, most soldiers couldn't even tell the difference between Al Jazeera and Reuters. The 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne (not the exact unit that I embedded with and wrote about, but guys in the same area) captured and badly beat a three-man crew from Reuters who were all Arab. So there was definitely an assumption that Arab journalists were all with Al Jazeera, never mind that Al Jazeera had been steadily toning down its politics, and that a lot of Iraqis were like, "Fuck Al Jazeera, they're sell-outs," and were following and listening much more to Al Arabiya and other channels.

There was a cognitive dissonance. The soldiers were, like, "Yeah, the press is unfair," but then they'd be glad to see you. Everybody kind of wants to be famous. They would get steely-eyed and thrust their jaws out whenever the cameras came out.

**When you go freelance and low budget, you end up with freaks, which is a lot more fun.**

*You have mentioned how Americans, both the public and military, have conscious and subconsciously racist views towards Iraqis. Do you feel that this a major reason why this war has been such a catastrophe?*

In a way, yes, but I would not want that answer to be construed as, "If the American military, the U.S. government, and the C.I.A. were just culturally sensitive in the way they went in and destroyed Iraq and humiliated everybody, the Iraqis would have accepted it." That's not what I'm saying. The root cause of the problem is the policy.

The secondary problem, which has exacerbated the core problem, is that, yes, there is a lot of ignorance about how Iraqi culture works and a lot of racism, which serves to just inflame things. But that's not the problem; that's just a sort of ancillary feedback loop that's exacerbating the problem.

The problem is that the Bush administration thinks that it can control the planet with military power and that it has rolled the dice in that direction. That's not the problem. That they invaded Iraq is the problem. ☆

*Collin Yeo is a freelance writer living in Brooklyn, NY. He is 22.*

# Video Killed the Military Recruitment

Everything I needed to know I learned playing *The Oregon Trail*. Don't shoot more game than you can eat. Make friends with the indigenous population, and always heed their advice. What you can't buy, trade for. Caulking the wagon and floating it across is preferable to fording the river. Above all, when you lose too many oxen, it's time to rethink your strategy.

These days, teenagers learn to kill the indigenous population, bomb their villages, drain the river, and build a highway across it. Video games are now taking us east, not west, pushing us into vast new frontiers we never thought imaginable in the golden years of Apple II.

Not content with dazzling us from our televisions, the war in Iraq has morphed into a computer game as well. Called *America's Army*, the game was released in October of 2002, the first of a series of games that will be released by the military over the next eight years. The software is being distributed free online and has already generated as many as four million users in the past two years.

Described by gaming magazines as "intensely realistic," *America's Army* allows players to hear the soothing chirping of birds as they reload their sniper rifles on the shooting range. Should the player feel lost or ambivalent about his purpose in securing the world's safety, he need only scroll back to the Soldier's Creed ("I am disciplined, physically and mentally tough, trained and proficient in my warrior tasks and drills") and review some positive affirmations that would put Alcoholics Anonymous to shame. Should a soldier rebel and shoot his commanding officer, he is swiftly relegated to a tiny jail cell, filled with the lonesome drones of a harmonica.

As a recruitment tactic, *America's Army* and the swath of other military-themed video games (including "Conflict: Desert Storm II — Back to Baghdad," the Air Force's "USAF: Air Dominance," and "SOCOM II: U.S. Navy Seals") appear to be a success. In 1999, recruitment numbers fell to a 30-year low, which the Defense Department chased with a \$2.2 billion recruitment budget.

The army spent between \$6 and 7 million (of tax dollars) developing the game and, now, numbers show recruitment is on the rise. In 2004, the army signed up 77,587 soldiers, compared to 74,132 in 2003.

But computer games are only a few of the targets in the military's carpet-bombing campaign of the American media. War-themed television shows that have emerged in the last few years include "JAG," "Military Diaries," and Fox News's "War Stories," a program hosted by former Iran-Contra conspirator Oliver North. At the same time, shows with hosts seen as critical of the war in Iraq, such as Phil Donahue, are being cancelled by their networks. The television waxes between promoting its own versions of war and downplaying the versions of those who are living through it.

David Robb is a Los Angeles-based journalist and author of the book *Operation Hollywood: How the Pentagon Shapes and Censors the Movies*. "Fifty years of war



above: screen shots from the *Taiga* scenes of the *America's Army* video game

# Football Star

## and New Media

by Dan Gordon with help from Am Johal

propaganda in American films has contributed to a change in the American character," he said. "We're definitely more warlike today as a result."

Robb has done extensive research into the relationship between the film industry and the military, including interviews with former soldiers who confessed that their decision to join the military was directed influenced by war-themed movies.

He adds that the relationship between the Pentagon and war-themed movies runs deeper than most people imagine. During the 1986 release of *Top Gun*, military recruiters set up booths in theaters to catch moviegoers as they left. These days, they have cut out the middleman by distributing cameras to soldiers, allowing them to record the official, sanitized versions of events as they happen and market them for distribution.

Marketing for the military has become a growth industry in the last 20 years. Recruiters have funneled more resources into professional consultants, public relations firms, focus groups, and marketing advisors in an attempt to capture the steadily decreasing attention spans of today's teenagers.

Rick Jahnkow, co-founder of Project YANO (Youth and Non-Military Opportunities), says the military is using new media to attract not only tech-savvy teenagers, but also minority populations that have been otherwise ignored by traditional media. Last year, for example, the Army teamed up with *The Source* magazine to produce a "Take it to the Streets" campaign, featuring hip-hop street parties.

"The military is particularly interested in recruiting Latinos," Jahnkow said. "To them, they're the greatest potential source of new bodies that exists. Latinos are seen as an exploitable resource." Latinos make up 9.5 percent of active forces (13 percent of the general population), and are disproportionately over-represented in the most dangerous combat jobs. Louis Caldera, former secretary of the army, argues that the military should increase their attempts to recruit Latinos. "Nearly half of all Hispanics fail to graduate. Yet they make great soldiers."

And so, in order to court the Latino recruit, the army has invested increasing amounts of money into Spanish-language media, including a website called "El Navy." These ads are often followed up with media events in Latino communities where a flame-embossed army Humvee named "Yo Soy el Army" is brought in to shock and awe audiences. A system that has failed to accommodate the needs of Spanish-speakers while, at the same time, dangles the promise of citizenship to a select few, has made this population especially vulnerable to the seduction of recruiters' promises.

What the producers of these video games, TV shows, and websites all fail to mention is that in real life you can't use a parental control setting or a fast-forward button to blot out the violence of war. As the hours spent in front of the screen turn into years, the images young people consume may, in the end, come to consume them entirely. ☆

*Dan Gordon lives in South Minneapolis where he doubles as a student and an aspiring ninja. He also publishes Duluth's Dark Underbelly, a zine about the underground history of Duluth, which can be purchased by sending an email to [dgordon@umn.edu](mailto:dgordon@umn.edu).*



above: Soldiers teach civilians about military weapons at a conference for the America's Army video game.

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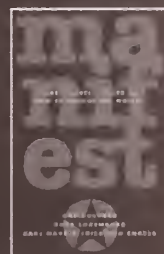
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- \*burmese "men" lp cd (load) - \$9/\$12
- \*bum collector #13 (Stickfigure) - \$5
- \*cotton museum "crippled slots" 10" (scratch and sniff) - \$10.00
- \*coulier "cool cooler coulier" cd (Stickfigure) - \$8.50
- \*deerhunter "tum it up faggot" lp (Stickfigure) - \$8
- \*eye, yamataka & john zorn "nanunai II" Cd (t zadik) - \$14
- \*gravenhurst "black holes in the..." 12" (warp) - \$8
- \*hossin "lead singer" lp cd (ache) - \$10/\$10
- \*mouth of the architect "time and withering" cd (translation loss) - \$10.50
- \*now denial the "viva, viva threatening" lp cd (scorched earth policy/sabotage) - \$10/\$12
- \*o lahm "hello spiral" cd (active suspension) - \$14
- \*on! Air! Library's h'lp (pretty activity) - \$10
- \*pedestrian "toss & turn" 12" (artico) - \$8.50
- \*quantazelle "coaster" cd (subvariant) - \$13
- \*seven days of samsara s'h'cd (self released) - \$7.50
- \*sightings "arrived in gold" lp (load) - \$9
- \*submission hold "what holds back the elephant" lp cd (g7/welcoming committee) - \$12/\$12
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are  
curious  
and open  
to the life  
around you,  
if you are  
troubled as to why, how and by whom political  
power is held and used, if you sense there  
must be good intellectual reasons for  
your unease, if your curiosity  
and openness drive you  
toward wishing to act  
with others, to "do  
something," you already  
have much in common  
with the writers  
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# Down to the Wire

Defending Community WiFi  
from Verizon and the Telecom Giants

Words: Gwen Shaffer Illustration: Tom Pokinko

In an attempt to influence telecom regulations, phone and cable giants have hooked up federal lawmakers with nearly a half-billion dollars since 1998. Verizon Communications alone contributed \$102 million to elected officials who, frequently, pulled the plug on the competition. So it comes as no surprise to industry watchdogs that this former “Baby Bell” acted with megabit speed last year when Philadelphia Mayor John Street announced plans to provide affordable wireless Internet services to the entire city.

Philadelphia is rolling out a plan to build a \$10 million wireless broadband network this summer, charging subscribers a fraction of the prices set by the region’s dominant broadband service providers Comcast and Verizon. A low-cost wireless network run by the city threatens to topple the local duopoly — and apparently that’s scary even for an international corporation like Verizon, which earned \$67.8 billion in operating revenues during 2003.

The legislation signed by Pennsylvania Gov. Ed Rendell in November originally contained a provision that would bar local governments from providing telecommunications services for a fee. The language was buried in a complex 30-page bill drafted by industry lobbyists that gives telephone companies financial incentives to hasten the rollout of broadband networks (a deal that will net Verizon about \$3 billion).

But just days before a scheduled state Senate vote, Philadelphia wireless advocates discovered the provision. They began lighting up switchboards in Harrisburg. Media justice activists had paid scant attention to the bill earlier because it wasn’t poised to come up for a floor vote in 2004, says Hannah Sassaman, program director for Prometheus Radio in Philadelphia.

“It only started to move after Philadelphia officials made plans to create a WiFi network,” she says. “Then legislators pushed the bill through during Thanksgiving, just before their recess, when they assumed no one was looking.”

Both local organizations (such as Media Tank and the Pennsylvania Public Interest Research Group) and the national groups Common Cause and MoveOn engaged in lobbying efforts. They sent out email alerts to members asking them to urge Gov. Rendell to veto H.B. 30.

In response to the pressure, senators amended the bill to allow broadband services operating by Jan. 1, 2006 to continue, which buys Philadelphia enough time to get its ambitious 135 square-mile WiFi project going. Some activists believe the compromise leaves every other municipality in the state high and dry, but Sassaman is confident.

“The governor didn’t veto what is clearly a crappy bill,” she concedes. “But by making tens of thousands of phone calls, we did have an influence.” When signing the bill, Rendell promised to work with any municipality interested in establishing its own telecom network. “So it wasn’t just a win for Philadelphia,” Sassaman says.

Pennsylvania is the fifteenth state to bar or restrict municipalities from providing telecom services, and both Ohio and Nebraska are considering similar laws. Nonetheless, the circumstances under which the legislation passed constitute “a watershed event,” says Jeffrey Chester, executive director of the Center for Digital Democracy in Washington.

“Previously, telecom lobbyists trying to prevent communities from competing in broadband had fallen under the radar screen. Now people are asking: is the Internet a system to generate revenue for pri-

vate companies or is it a global information utility that is core to our democracy?"

Pennsylvania State Rep. William Adolph, Jr. chairs the House Committee on Environmental Resources and Energy. He says he sponsored six public hearings on H.B. 30 during a 20-month period, "without hearing a peep of concern" from local officials in Philadelphia or any other municipality.

It wasn't until activists fought the companion bill in the state Senate that Adolph realized they opposed restrictions being placed on municipalities, he says.

"At the last minute, I received a copy of the amendment that was worked out. Prior to that, I'd never even heard of the WiFi issue," Adolph says. "The over-riding goal of H.B. 30 is to accelerate the deployment of broadband. If the city of Philadelphia can deploy a WiFi network, I have no problem with it."

High-speed, wireless applications like the one planned for Philadelphia have the potential to bridge the digital divide. They require minimal infrastructure investment and are comparatively inexpensive to operate. As WiFi — and soon WiMax — hotspots spread, the policy implications for both mass media access and freedom of speech could be huge.

Philadelphia, where an estimated 60 percent of residents currently lack broadband Internet access, is a prime example. Even if Comcast and Verizon offered broadband in these underserved communities, low-income residents couldn't afford to shell out \$50 a month to pay for it.

Dianah Neff, Chief Information Officer for Philadelphia, says her goal is to keep monthly fees "below \$20." She hopes to create a "blueprint" for tackling the information gap that other cities around the country can emulate. "As CIO, my job is to watch emerging technologies and fuse them with the mayor's goals," Neff says. "Strong families and neighborhoods are key ingredients of the Street administration. So I began thinking of a way to encourage economic development, overcome the digital divide and enhance quality of life for Philadelphians."

Other major U.S. cities including Atlanta, San Francisco, Seattle and Dayton have announced plans to develop their own citywide WiFi networks. Today, wireless networks carry the same cachet as swanky sports stadiums and convention centers. Cities are betting they will help attract tech-savvy businesses, encourage tourism and project a hip image capable of wooing young professionals.

Both Philadelphia and Atlanta plan to partner with private telecom companies to manage day-to-day operations of their WiFi networks. And this prospect has some media reform proponents on edge. Activists in Philadelphia stress that they enthusiastically embrace all efforts to eliminate the digital divide. But they can't help worrying that once the city contracts out management of the initiative — Neff hopes to float a request for proposals this March — it will morph into simply another opportunity for corporate profits.

"Will users be forced to interface with ads or a corporate homepage?" wonders Wendy Hyatt, director of the Philadelphia Cable Access Coalition. "We can all receive content. But how can we add content to the Web? The city needs to provide training along with the technology."

Verizon, Comcast and Internet Service Providers in other states have tried to stonewall paid services offered by cities around the country on the grounds that governments have an unfair competitive advantage. Obviously, municipalities can tap into public funds and they don't have to pay taxes. Also, the telecoms grumble, public sector projects are subject to fewer regulations.

But James Baller, a Washington, D.C. lawyer who represents local governments, says the industry argument "betrays the facts." In reality, municipalities must comply with the same state laws as private companies. Not to mention that private sector communications firms benefit from "billions of dollars of tax incentives," Baller says.

In Pennsylvania, this is certainly the case. In December, just

weeks after the state legislature passed the telecom bill, Philadelphia City Council members approved a \$30 million grant for construction of a downtown skyscraper that will serve as Comcast's headquarters.

Even if state or federal lawmakers succeed in barring municipalities from building wireless mesh clouds over their cities, the telecom giants will have a harder time blocking residents from taking matters into their own hands — or, more precisely, their own monitors and keyboards. Tan Vu manages the Digital Inclusion Program in West Philly. That initiative has given away 150 computers to community members over the past year, and operates a WiFi network used by about 100 low-income web users who pay just \$5 per month.

"The state restrictions on competition are unfortunate," Vu says. "But at the same time, if individuals are determined to create community networks, they can't be stopped." That's because — as scores of cash-strapped school districts, libraries, hospitals and non-profits around the country have already discovered — creating a WiFi network requires little more than a cast-off computer and a \$25 satellite dish from Radio Shack.

The "open access" facet of WiFi is what makes community wireless initiatives genuinely revolutionary. The Federal Communications Commission regulates TV and radio broadcast interference by issuing licenses. Similarly, cable and phone companies own the infrastructure used to carry voice and media content. By contrast, WiFi users finally have an opportunity to customize the technology to fit their specific needs.

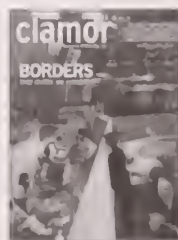
"With WiFi, government and industry restrictions are no longer necessary. The principal here is non-discrimination," says Dr. Mark Cooper, director of research for the Consumer Federation of America. Cooper characterizes WiFi hotspots in public spaces as "the sewers and streets of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century" because they are available for use by every citizen.

Two years ago, a group of independent media activists began setting up a WiFi network in Champaign — Urbana, Illinois. "We knocked on doors and told residents we wanted to put an antenna on their roofs and give them free Internet access," says Ben Scott, a former University of Illinois grad student. In June, Urbana council members chipped in \$18,600 to fund expansion of the hotspots. The city now boasts a wireless Internet network that serves the entire downtown area for free, says Scott.

This story is not unique. And as the WiFi movement catches on, incumbent broadband providers are certain to fight back with even more muscle and moolah. It is easy to see why these players are nervous. WiFi constitutes more than another form of competition. It could, eventually, eliminate the need for DSL and cable modems altogether.

"In the long-term, there's no reason consumers should fork over \$100 a month for high-speed Internet," says Chester, of the Center for Digital Democracy. "The cable and phone giants want to control the broadband market, but that's got to change."★

*Gwen Shaffer is a staff writer for the Philadelphia Weekly, where she covers local politics. Her work has appeared in The New Republic, The Nation, Columbia Journalism Review and The Environmental Magazine. Comments may be e-mailed to [gwenlshaffer@comcast.net](mailto:gwenlshaffer@comcast.net).*



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# FIXING RADIO

words Jonathan Lawson photos Josh Ayala

What's wrong with radio? Everyone seems to have an answer. The oldest form of electronic mass communication is still the most ubiquitous, found in homes, cars, and businesses across the country — not to mention fields, forests, and street corners. Amidst an expanding array of media networks with national and international reach — now including satellite radio and Internet broadcasting as well as TV and cable networks — radio retains a local character which is its last unique asset.

At its theoretical best, the FCC promotes quality radio broadcasting measured by the traditional standards of competition, diversity, “localism,” and accountability. Over two decades, however, large media owners and business associations have adeptly persuaded Congress and the FCC to sweep away many public protections, allowing large-scale private media owners to squeeze out local owners and wring millions in profits out of the public airwaves with minimal oversight or accountability to local communities.

These changes have impacted all forms of media but have taken hold most dramatically in radio. FCC Commissioner Michael Copps recently described radio as “a very sick canary in the coal mine.” Musicians hoping to get their music played on commercial FM face insurmountable hurdles. Music fans are unable to hear local bands. Local citizens scan the commercial FM dial in vain for local voices providing quality news reporting. Radio employees face layoffs, voice-tracking, anti-union management, and reduced creative control.

Still, many people within each of these groups care enough to ask whether radio can do a better job at serving local communities with cultural and informational programming. Can radio be saved with better public policy?

## Fixing Radio Forum

This question led an unusual coalition of music community advocates, media reformers and local broadcasters in Seattle to hold a public forum focused entirely on Fixing Radio. The forum took place last February in Seattle's Experience Music Project, a building designed by Frank Gehry to resemble the carcass of a smashed guitar — a symbol, perhaps, of the train wreck radio has become in the eyes of many critical listeners and broadcasters alike. Organizers hoped, however, that the forum would be able to harness this criticism, drawing creative solutions — and policy proposals — out of popular discontent.

*left: Rapper/Recording artist Sir Mix-A-Lot speaking on a panel at the Fixing Radio forum.*

"There's a unique moment in history here in terms of the policy apparatus around radio, a broad consensus in Congress and at the FCC that radio consolidation has gone way too far," said Michael Bracy of the DC-based Future of Music Coalition, one of the Fixing Radio planners and a speaker on the first of two panels. "It now falls on us as citizens to go to policymakers, and say: 'you've heard from the industry — Clear Channel, the National Association of Broadcasters — you've heard what they want from radio. This is what we want to happen with radio.'"

The discussion that emerged over a long afternoon ranged considerably, reflecting the diverse backgrounds of the participants. Panelists included representatives from each of the sponsoring organizations: the media activist group Reclaim the Media, the northwest regional chapter of the Recording Academy, the Future of Music Coalition, and noncommercial modern rock station KEXP. Commercial radio was represented too — by Phil Manning, program director of highly-rated Entercom station KNDD "The End," and Frank Barrow, operations manager for Seattle's black-owned radio group. Two Clear Channel representatives — an on-air host from Seattle urban station KUBE and an executive — were originally scheduled to take part, but got cold feet at the last minute. Other participants represented public, community, Low-Power FM and satellite radio operations, and labor unions representing musicians and radio employees.

Perhaps the most striking facet of the Fixing Radio discussion was the amount of shared frustration with contemporary commercial radio. Different panelists and constituencies saw different problems and different solutions — but all pointed to a single problem which overshadowed and fed into all others: the steroidal corporatism and massive consolidation which has transformed local radio.

### Media Consolidation

The issue of ownership consolidation — and particularly its largest practitioner, Clear Channel — was the 800-pound gorilla in the room throughout the forum. Deregulation of ownership caps allowed Clear Channel to rise from a 40-station regional chain to a 1300-station international titan in just a few years, turning the brand into a kind of national shorthand for a whole range of problems introduced or exacerbated by consolidation: reductions in local accountability and local content; expansion of barely legal payola or "pay-for-play" schemes; deceptive "voice tracking" attacks on the collective bargaining rights of employees; near-monopoly control of advertising; and concert revenues in urban and rural areas.

The removal of sensible ownership caps in 1996 opened the door wide to these prob-

lems. In addition to restoring the caps, David Meinert, regional president of the Recording Academy, proposes the remedy used to deal with anti-consumer monopoly in the telecom business: corporate breakups. "I'm not scared to go to a legislator and say, look, you need to break up Clear Channel. And you not only need to break them up, you need to make sure that radio station owners can't own concert venues and can't own newspapers."

"I do not want to live in a world where Clear Channel owns all the radio stations in a city, the Seattle P-I [the local newspaper], and Channel 5 [television station]," Meinert continued. "Already 50% of the people who get radio news get it from Clear Channel. Those are George Bush's friends — I'm not happy about that. You know, we're going to live in a really fucked up world if that happens, and we need to do something about it." This was months before Clear Channel announced that Fox News would become its official network-wide news provider — likely to further expand both Clear Channel's news audience and the network's conservative slant.

### What's Really Indecent?

All Fixing Radio panelists were instantly dismissive of the Congressional furor about broadcast indecency that has made a huge media splash since Janet Jackson's 2004 Super Bowl flash. "What's really indecent," said KBSC public affairs director Bruce Wirth, "is that we're focusing on [Howard Stern] and Janet Jackson's tit, when we should be focusing on more important problems... Clear Channel is coming out smelling like roses because they voluntarily pulled Stern from a handful of stations... These are the same stations that were out there cheering the war that has wound up killing hundreds of Americans, not to mention Iraqi civilians."

For Ann Chaitowitz, director for sound recordings at the American Federation of Television and Radio Artists (AFTRA), the flurry of calls to hike indecency fines brought up an additional set of concerns. Often, she said, radio companies like Clear Channel don't pay indecency fines themselves, instead passing them along to individual announcers or even musicians. The practice is deeply ironic, as ratings-hungry commercial networks clearly place demands on hosts like Stern and Bubba the Love Sponge to be as outrageous and offensive as possible, in their endless and craven pursuit of higher ratings and thus advertising revenue. Musicians, when producing their work, should not have to worry about the possibility of someday facing censorship or fines if a DJ somewhere offends a listener by playing their music.

Of course, that only becomes a concern if an artist's music makes it onto the air at all. That is an increasingly difficult challenge for local musicians when programming de-

isions are made at distant corporate headquarters, and the hurdles between artists and commercial airplay include controversial but widespread "tollbooth" practices involving the exchange of cash or services in exchange for a shot at airplay. For musicians and their advocates, such practices ought to be considered basic ethical violations, as well as barriers to the normal development of our shared music culture. Meinert argues that, under current industry conditions, it would have been impossible for Nirvana and other Seattle bands to have broken nationally, because local commercial rock stations no longer have the freedom to build playlists based on ground-up trends, absent the backing of industry forces.

### Holding Broadcasters Accountable

The airwaves, of course, belong to the public. Their use by commercial broadcasters, licensed, but free of charge, constitutes a tremendous public subsidy. In return for their use of the airwaves, each station is bound to serve the public interest in various ways. Each station must apply to the FCC every few years to renew their licenses. If the FCC determines that a station has failed to provide valuable public service to its local audience, it can lose its license. This, however, never happens — and station managers know it.

"My personal opinion is that the renewal process is a sham," said KEXP manager Tom Mara. "I don't think it's too much to ask for a radio station to connect with its local community. The general manager of a station should walk into a room and be able to make a case to local organizations and local citizens why they should get that license again. I think the FCC ought to play an increased role in that — but that assessment also needs to be done locally, so it's not just a matter of sending a bunch of forms to Washington DC." Several participants agreed that license renewals should not only be tougher, but conducted locally, with public hearings and mechanisms allowing for real discussion of what a station should be doing for its community.

Even some commercial broadcasters expressed a wish for more articulate mechanisms for audience accountability. In commercial radio, profits are the ultimate bottom line. But for program directors it's the Arbitron ratings rather than profit/loss statements that hang directly over their heads. KNDD program director Phil Manning used the Fixing Radio Forum to do a little venting about what many see as a very flawed measure. "When half of my damn listeners don't even fill out [the Arbitron listener diaries] and be accountable for their airwaves, it disallows me from taking risks. It forces commercial radio to unfortunately be conservative. It forces us to have these silly-ass 225-song playlists." Manning pointed out that Arbitron's diary system tends



above: David Meinert of Fuzed Music and Ann Chaitovitz from the American Federation of Television and Radio Artists engaged in a discussion at the Fixing Radio forum.

not to poll young listeners: "this is why you don't have youth-focused programming."

"When you're ratings-driven," added KBCS's Bruce Wirth, "who gets left out? Where's the diversity in that system? There's only one African-American personality in Seattle FM radio today; that's crazy. I can't think of a Latino personality either."

### Low-Power and Community Radio

True community broadcasting, where it exists, offers the public direct ways to kick out the jams of mainstream. Wirth's KBCS is an excellent example — a college-licensed station with an independent operations staff committed both to fielding a diverse on-air staff of local volunteers and training an expanding pool of community journalists for the station's local public affairs programs. "Community radio moves beyond localism," said Wirth. "It's about training community members to make their own radio, getting their voices on the air, not censored by some production staff or program directors."

In some areas of the country, Low-Power FM offers an opportunity for community groups, religious and civic organizations to launch their own noncommercial radio station with little cost. Unfortunately, full nationwide availability of LPFM has been delayed for years by opposition from the commercial broadcasting lobby and from National Public Radio. Activist groups including the Future

of Music Coalition and Reclaim the Media are hopeful that legislation expanding LPFM will be reintroduced in Congress this spring.

### More People's Hearings

The best ideas from the two-day Fixing Radio Forum were eventually distilled into a concise set of 32 policy recommendations, published as the *Seattle Statement on Radio*. The document has since been put to work in various ways — submitted to the FCC as part of a national inquiry into localism, used as a tool for lobbying members of Congress, and serving as a template for media codes of conduct and other statements of principles.

Organizers also hope that their idea of holding a forum like this won't stop in Seattle. "This should happen all over the country," exclaimed a young man from the audience at the end of the Fixing Radio discussion. Several forum panelists had also taken part in one of the previous year's FCC hearings on ownership — but none of those formal hearings generated either the ranging, informal dialogue or the creative planning that emerged from the Fixing Radio Forum.

While the Seattle forum took a hopeful look into radio's future, both the event and the resulting *Seattle Statement* left a whole range of important questions unexamined. When digital broadcasting dramatically increases the number of stations that can coexist on the radio dial, will local community groups and

entrepreneurs have the opportunity to launch new local radio stations, or will existing broadcasters simply control more channels? Should localized programming on national satellite radio be encouraged or prohibited? How should the public interest be protected as digital networks continue to transform electronic media?

These and many other questions point out the need for many more public conversations about fixing media — and more local manifestoes on progressive media policy. While 2005 will see the FCC and Congress hold more such hearings in DC and around the country, the Fixing Radio Forum showed that there's no reason for a community to wait around for them to arrive. Reflecting on his experience organizing around the previous year's FCC hearing, band manager-turned-activist David Meinert laid it out simply: "Going into that event we were told by a lot of people that the regulations were just going to be lifted, and that we had no chance. We ignored all that, we thought we could make a difference, and we made a difference. We can make a difference." ☆

*Jonathan Lawson is co-director of Reclaim the Media in Seattle and editor of the Seattle Statement on Radio, which can be read in its entirety at [reclaimthemedialog.org/seattlestatement](http://reclaimthemedialog.org/seattlestatement). For more information on the issues, see [reclaimthemedialog.org](http://reclaimthemedialog.org), [futureofmusic.org](http://futureofmusic.org) and [musicforamerica.org](http://musicforamerica.org).*

# Demanding More of Cable Monopolies

By Barbara J. Isenberg

In 2002, Comcast said it would stop monitoring and recording customers' use of the Internet — and then it started charging people for browsing the web "too much."

In 2003, Comcast said it would protect customers' Social Security numbers, credit histories, and phone numbers from other corporations it works with — but rather than change its business operations, it simply reworded its privacy policy.

In 2004, Comcast said it would improve customer service and respond more quickly to complaints — but, according to market analysts J.D. Power and Associates, its customer satisfaction levels were below the national industry standard for the third year in a row.

And now a contingent of media, labor, consumer, and social justice groups are in place to "demand more" of the "on demand" cable firm.

Comcast had humble beginnings. In 1963, three men bought a 1,200-subscriber cable system in Tupelo, Mississippi, calling it American Cable Systems. Through numer-

ous mergers and acquisitions, the company increased its subscriber base across the U.S. By 1969, the cable provider had set up its permanent home in Philadelphia and changed its name to Comcast Corporation. Now a multi-million dollar industry establishment, Comcast is the country's leading cable provider, boasting more than 68,000 employees and 21 million cable customers in 35 states. It is also the country's largest broadband service provider. This market power has allowed the company's rates to rise more than three times the rate of inflation.

In the City of Brotherly Love, 75 percent of all cable subscribers pay monthly bills to the hometown giant. These days, however, there is not a whole lot of "brotherly love" between Philly residents and the cable monopoly, due to complaints about the company's treatment of customers and employees. Fortunately for Comcast, its customers have few alternatives. As a result of market agreements brokered with the city, Comcast is the only cable provider available to its customers.

Seeking to pressure Comcast to respond fairly to the complaints of its customers and employees, Media Tank, a local advocacy and media literacy organization, launched the Philadelphia Grassroots Cable Coalition ("the Coalition") in June 2004. The Coalition started by seeking out organizations that not only had a bone to pick with Comcast, but the backbone to stand up to one of the largest businesses in the entire region. Today, the Coalition comprises the Coalition of Labor Union Women, the Communications Workers of America, Jobs with Justice, the Kensington Welfare Rights Union, the Philadelphia Community Access Coalition, and the Pennsylvania Public Interest Research Group (PennPIRG). Each group brings different constituents and mobilizing tools to the table, helping to work toward common goals while retaining the individual focus of each organization.

"The goal of the Grassroots Cable Coalition is to educate the public and bring pressure to bear on Comcast," says Media Tank's executive director, Inja Coates. "We're trying to create a way for people to feel more empowered in dealing with their cable company. The different lenses of each group brings people in at different points of interest."

Beth McConnell, executive director of PennPIRG, says she thinks it is important for smaller groups to join in the battle to fight

## Important Media Ownership Rules: Past, Present, and Future

**Newspaper/Broadcast Cross-Ownership Restriction:** Enacted in 1975, this rule prohibits a single company from owning a newspaper and television station in the same market. The Bush administration is trying to repeal this rule for large- and medium-sized markets.

**Radio/TV Cross-Ownership Restriction:** The original 1970 rule prevented a single company from owning a radio and television station in the same market. That rule was weakened in 1996 to allow for a company to own one of each in small markets, and one television station and multiple radio stations in large markets.

**National TV Ownership Rule:** In 1941, this rule put numerical restrictions on the number of television stations a company could own. It has since been amended and now prevents a single company from owning enough television stations to reach more than 35 percent of the nation's homes. The Bush administration is trying to change the cap to 45 percent.

**Local TV Multiple Ownership Rule:** This rule prevents a single company from owning multiple television stations in a single market, with some exceptions for very large markets. The Bush administration is trying to weaken this rule, allowing a single company to own up to three stations in many markets.

**Dual Television Network Rule:** Today, this rule prohibits one television network (such as ABC, CBS, NBC, or FOX) from buying up another. The Bush administration upheld this rule in a recent regulatory review.

**Local Radio Ownership Rule:** Companies had been limited to owning no more than 40 radio stations nationwide. This nationwide cap was lifted in 1996, and a company may now own up to eight radio stations in a single market. Viacom's Infinity Radio Network now owns 180 stations and Clear Channel Communications owns 1300 stations. It's hard to



Participants and observers of the rally face the Clothespin sculpture in front of Comcast's headquarters across from Philadelphia's City Hall photo courtesy Media Tank

## Inside the Philadelphia Grassroots Cable Coalition



Alec Meltzer, Media Tank board member, speaks. Photo courtesy of Media Tank

such a large corporation. "We see this as an opportunity to hold Comcast accountable for its outrageous prices and shoddy customer service, and to hold city and state politicians accountable for giving Comcast tax breaks," McConnell says. "As a monopoly, Comcast has an obligation to serve the public interest. We'd like to see the corporation immediately lower rates for all customers in Pennsylvania and improve their service."

The Coalition's first step was coming together to issue a "Code of Conduct" for Comcast, which it made public at a press conference outside the corporation's headquarters in October 2004. The document details the Coalition members' problems with the company and suggests actions it should take to reform itself. Calling on Comcast to show a "greater level of corporate responsibility," the code demands lower rates, respect for customers' privacy, recognition of union and labor concerns, support for public access television, customer choice of Internet service providers, and affordable access to information technology for all people.

"The main problem with Comcast is accountability," says Joy Butts of the Kensington Welfare Rights Union. The Philadelphia campaign's next steps include working with City Council to organize a public input committee to advise future negotiations with the cable giant. The hope is that this type of activism will convince Comcast to deal with the Coalition demands and to start making real-world concessions.

Part of what makes Media Tank's work so unique is its focus on grassroots efforts. Instead of the majority of the "real" work happening in a large, centralized office with smaller duties being delegated to the grassroots, the Coalition is made up of numerous local organizations working together to set their own collective agenda. The Coalition then works in conjunction with similar localized efforts in other communities.

Currently, there are other grassroots cable projects underway in Seattle, San Francisco, Chicago, and elsewhere. The campaigns all network in a way that the experiences and expertise gained at the local level can be coordinated nationally.

"Each city's success is translatable to another's," says Coates, who adds, "Of course, because Philly is home to Comcast, we have an extra role being in the 'belly of the beast.' We are just at the beginning of what we're doing and where we can go with this." ☆

*Barbara J. Isenberg is an intern at Media Tank in Philadelphia, PA and is completing a journalism degree at Temple University. She can be reached at isenberg@temple.edu.*

### Who Benefits from Media Ownership Rules?

**Journalists:** When there are competing news outlets in a given market, there are more jobs for reporters. Media consolidation allows owners to cut newsroom staff, having one reporter do the job of several. That adds uncompensated responsibilities and hassles for working journalists, and is even worse for those looking for work.

**Artists:** When media companies merge, their negotiating power over independent producers, freelance writers, cartoonists, and others increases dramatically. The creative control and compensation that people in these creative positions can command is greatly reduced.

**Other Media Workers:** Much as with journalists, the technicians, printers, administrators, and other men and women who keep broadcast stations and newspapers running find their positions become increasingly "redundant" as their employers merge with one another.

**Small Businesses:** When there is a wide range of competing, local media outlets in a given market, small businesses can find easy access to affordable advertising. With media consolidation, preference is given to transnational corporations that can purchase national advertising packages.

**Political Candidates:** Political candidates for local races will have an increasingly difficult time attracting unpaid news coverage as local outlets disappear due to consolidation. This is especially true for third party candidates.

**Nonprofits and Activists:** Advocates for the environment, children, consumer justice, and other progressive causes will face more difficulties garnering local media coverage when there are fewer media outlets competing for a story.

**Subscribers:** The more concentrated media becomes, the more it is a seller's market. Prices for cable subscribers, newspaper subscribers, and Internet users will continue to rise.

**Communities:** As local newsrooms become smaller and smaller due to consolidation, and stations find synergy by piping in cheap "content" for their news shows, coverage of local issues will suffer. That's bad whether you care about the corruption in city hall or just want to know the score of the local high school soccer game.

-Arthur Stamoulis

# IN A GLOBAL VILLAGE, NO ONE CAN HEAR YOU SCREAM.

Television broadcasting has been dying a protracted death for many years, it's just that nobody bothered to notice. The parent networks NBC, ABC, CBS, and FOX will surely survive, albeit in a significantly diminished form. But the many small affiliate stations that dot the country, some no more than mom and pop concerns, face uncertain futures. No longer gilded fortresses with licenses to print money, over-the-air broadcasters must face increased competition from many sources, most notably cable and direct broadcast satellite (DBS), like Rupert Murdoch's DirectTV. Quite simply, the affiliates have failed, over twenty years, to carve out a "post-broadcast" identity for themselves. Instead they have assented to being carried on non-broadcast cable and DBS feeds, inviting a sort of strategic euthanasia.

With the meteoric rise of cable and satellite television, it is conceivable that the Tiffany Network and the Glorious Peacock could one day command all the cache — and viewership — of, say, Food TV. But only if Peter Jennings can whip up a good soufflé. And in case anyone hasn't noticed, Comcast, the largest cable system (and the largest content buyer) has been flexing its purchasing power of late, negotiating bruising deals with its providers. You see, content may be what draws the eyeballs to the TV screen, but the pipe still wears the pants.

During its formative years, cable relied heavily on broadcast network programming. Appropriately, the industry's focus was on building out its cable infrastructure. Television content origination was a luxury reserved for the cash-rich broadcasters. For a cable system, the local network affiliate was the equivalent of the anchor store at a mall. It provided a critical mass around which lesser venues could cluster. In time, those "lesser venues" (Discovery, Animal Planet, The History Channel, HBO, etc.) grew up to command brand name stature in their own right. The original consumer selling point was not cable programming, but improved reception of over-the-air stations via coaxial cable. Believe it or not, many people liked their local programming, so much so that they were willing to pay a few bucks to get a better picture via cable.

But now the training wheels are off and it's the cable guy holding the remote. A content originator in its own right, cable is now making the networks prove their value — what a rude departure from the days when cable begged permission to carry the local network affiliates! While cable began life as a redundant delivery system, today it's the broadcasters who face possible death by redundancy.

A mere 10 percent of today's TV watchers take their programming directly from a broadcasting source (as opposed to 80 percent in 1985). Most receive their "over-the-air" network content via cable (80 percent) or DBS (10 percent). This represents a staggering decline, not to mention a perilous end-run, for the broadcasters. Even though most people have abandoned free broadcast TV for pay alternatives, simply having the free TV option lends some pricing discipline to cable and satellite providers. Without broadcast TV, pay TV subscription rates will certainly continue their upward trend, and at a redoubled rate.

But aside from their role in controlling cable prices, why would anyone care about the poor affiliate stations? Well, they're



Norman Ball  
Brandon Bauer



the last leg of the mainstream media landscape with any "community service" impulse left. Affiliate stations' local TV news programs are still most Americans' go-to source for regional events and news. Radio consolidation succeeded in killing community radio and enshrining Howard Stern. Newspapers' circulation numbers are on a fast sprint to oblivion. Think public access television is the ultimate solution? Ask anyone at your local cable company's public access channel what Viacom and Cox think of their "public duty" to carry those tacky little citizen shows. They hate it, and would love nothing more than to commandeer the channel for Home Improvement: The Basement Network. Despite all the problems with local TV news shows, these programs are one of the only easily accessible sources of information on what's locally. Call me paranoid, but it almost seems like someone doesn't want us to know what's going on in our own neighborhoods.

What with their exposés on last night's *Survivor* episode and their taking fifteen minutes to acknowledge that, yes, in fact, it is going to rain tomorrow, it may be tempting to say good riddance to the local newscasts. The ease that much of what is broadcast on local television news is racist, sexist, classist, heterosexist, and of a generally poor quality is not too hard to make, but that

doesn't mean that local television doesn't provide some benefit.

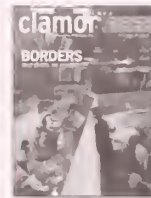
Let's start with one example. The tragedy of war becomes suddenly more "authentic" when we learn about the young guy in the neighboring town getting killed. Hey, he went to the same mall we did. By contrast, the faceless casualty numbers that flash across national media outlets have a disembodied, obligatory quality. I believe we're talking here about the abstracted nature of numbers versus "bringing it on home." Local news excels at putting a face on the larger event. Whereas globalism wants only faceless masses trolling the aisles of Walmart — the less we know about one another, the better.

When the big guys think about local-based programs they get return-on-investment indigestion: just think of all those multiplicative production costs! Bean counters to the bone, they want to shove *one* program down the pipe. After all, why create numerous versions of crap when you can get away with one big monolithic piece of crap? And don't give me all that "global village" hooie. Like most Americans, my stomping grounds still consist of a 30-square mile patch — and I want to know something about it!

There is still some hope for the affiliates — if they can show some strategic gumption. The future, should they seek to have one, lies

in multicasting. Using the digital broadcast spectrum each current station has been assigned as part of the high-definition television (HDTV) transition, a cluster of digital broadcast channels could be offered regionally, in effect creating a localized "mini-cable" system in a crisp, clear digital broadcast format.

The parent networks oppose multicasting and plan to feed the affiliates with a single HDTV signal, so the affiliates would be on their own to create this sort of service. But if they don't take advantage of the one real benefit they provide to viewers — localism — local TV stations will soon become one more of a long line of community-based resources that appears on the brink of extinction. It is up to the local broadcasters, and the local media advocates, to ensure that a significant space for localism is carved out in the brave new digital world. ☆



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Global Palestine Return Coalition

# the Art of Resistance



Nothing in my two weeks in the West Bank was as expected. The horrors were more horrific and the oppression more oppressive than I could have ever imagined. Hearing a mother whose son was shot dead while standing on a sidewalk; walking through the rubble of newly-demolished homes; seeing soldiers shoot at boys throwing stones at the Apartheid Wall; visiting the town of Jayyous where said wall separates residents from their farmland; or witnessing countless other atrocities that should not be imagined, let alone experienced — the struggle seemed hopeless. Yet amidst the horror, oppression, and inhumanity, a vibrant, revolutionary poster and public art movement endures, with the explicit goal of bringing an end to the Israeli occupation of a people and the land they still call Palestine.

Walking down Jerusalem's alleys, or the streets of the West Bank — whether in Ramallah, Hebron, Bethlehem, Nazareth, or wherever, it is certain: the art of resistance is everywhere. It's as I imagine the poster-adorned streets of Cuba looked in the '60s, or Chile's mural movement in the '70s, or even perhaps tagged New York subway trains flying by in the late '70s and early '80s. Whether calling for the release of political prisoners, an end to the construction of the Apartheid/Annexation Wall, or mourning another unnecessary death, these images give artists creative control over an ever-changing, asphyxiating landscape.

With the new, nine-meter high, concrete incarnation of the Apartheid Wall, symbols of Israeli occupation are increasingly visible across the landscape. The Wall snakes through hillsides, sometimes encircling entire villages, separating sister cities, and in one instance even surrounding a single home on all sides. Emblematic of Israeli occupation, the Wall is more than an obtrusive visual element; it represents an oppressive force that controls both people and land. While much of the wall has been landscaped on the Israeli side, the better to meld into the surrounding countryside, it has been left a stark, menacing reminder of occupation on the Palestinian side. But wherever the Wall goes up, so do images condemning it.

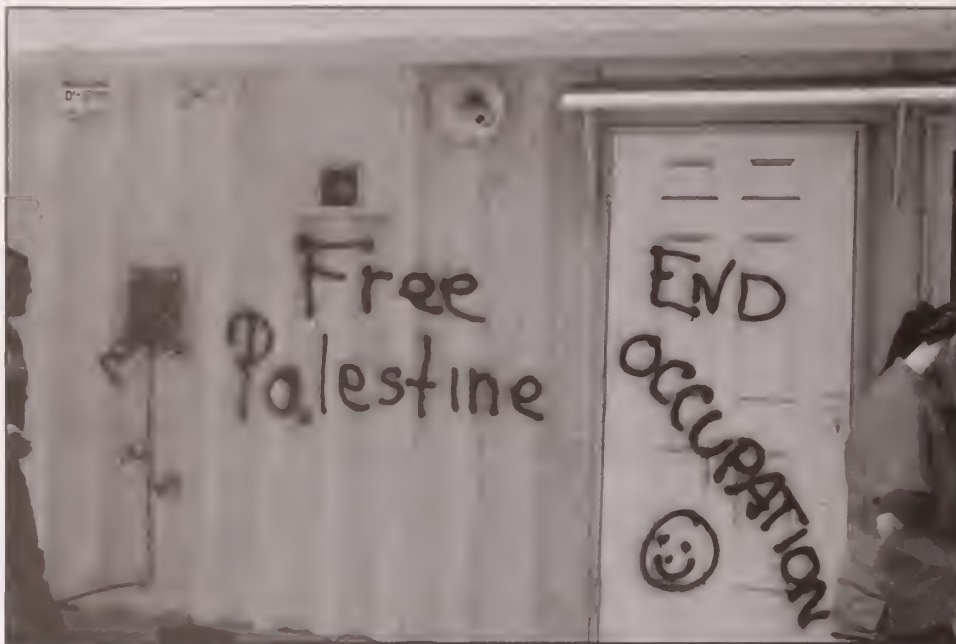
words and images Samira Yamin

## Representing the Everyday

Amongst the various public art forms, posters are by far the most prevalent, especially on the walls of high-traffic streets in heavily populated cities. In Ramallah, posters literally cover the streets and every conceivable surface, with messages ranging from memorializing the life of Edward Said, to advertising a parade for Arun Gandhi to still others demanding the release of political prisoners. Some are worn and withered, their colors faded and their words illegible. But constant posterage quickly replaces old cracked images with fresh ones, adding to the palimpsest of messages that bolster the walls of virtually every building in Palestine.

Posters are the most visible public art form for a few pragmatic reasons. As opposed to murals or graffiti, they are cheap and easy to reproduce and distribute. Taken as a whole, they record and direct the energy of the street, preserving the minutiae of daily events, and thereby protecting against what Carol Wells of the Center for the Study of Political Graphics calls historical amnesia. "Posters," she says, "are the collective memory of the oppressed." Because the general population has no access to mainstream media, posters serve to empower and inform, as an alternative outlet through which the surrogate voice of the people can reverberate throughout the streets.

Most common are *shaheed*, or martyr, posters, commemorating the lives of those



## Murals: Building on the Foundation

Murals are the least common form of public art and serve a different purpose, tending to be collective projects as opposed to individual works, and monumental, in every sense of the word. They are commemorative and enduring, creating an air of permanence not found in posters, which tear and fade, or graffiti, which is often washed away or painted over. They are also removed from graffiti and poster campaigns in that they are not a form of guerrilla art. Thoroughly planned, tediously executed, they tend to promote community involvement and steadfast resistance rather than immediate action and individual dissent.

In Deheisha Refugee Camp, murals are especially prevalent, covering the walls near the entrance and in the cultural center's stairwell. These murals recall life before occupation. One depicts the Palestinian flag as a piece of land, with the names of Deheisha residents' hometowns painted around it. Inside, other murals show cities from which residents were exiled upon the 1948 founding of Israel and subsequent wars, as well as activities such as glass-blowing and farming, which displacement now prevents them from doing. These murals are somewhat nostalgic of life before occupation, keeping hope alive that Deheisha residents will one day return to the homes they loved and the activities they once enjoyed.

Especially powerful is a mural in Mas'ha painted on the Apartheid Wall surrounding the Hani Amer family home on all four sides. This was painted by the children of the house with help from the International Women's Peace Service (IWPS), depicting flowers, birds, children and lush hillsides. In a profound act of creative resistance, these children turned an otherwise sobering symbol of occupation into a canvas to display what little innocence they struggle to hold on to.

The accumulation of images plastered throughout the West Bank transforms the environment, acting as a reclamation of the land over which Palestinians are otherwise powerless. Whereas the Apartheid Wall is an obtrusive visual symbol of occupation throughout the already repressive landscape, public art returns creative control to Palestinian hands. When I returned to Los Angeles, a good friend told me that as long as there is resistance, there is hope, and that there will once again be a free Palestine. If art is any marker of the strength of resistance, I would dare to hope that I will live to see that Palestine. ★

*Samira can be reached at  
samyamina@gmail.com*

killed while fighting, or as a result of military action. Generally, images of *shouhada* serve a dual purpose of grieving and immortalizing. Family members display framed photos of those lost during resistance in the home, and show them regularly during the storytelling process, connecting the narration to its human essence. This dual function manifests itself in posters as well, where a picture of the resistance fighter is accompanied by his name and a short description of his life story, or of his efforts at combating the occupation, along with how he died. Some posters depict children who were killed by the IDF, including a description of the events leading up to their deaths. Stenciled images of *shouhada* can also be found throughout the West Bank.

Organizations also produce posters to spread news about their campaigns to document and bring an end to human rights violations. Al Haq, a Ramallah-based human rights organization, recently began a poster campaign promoting their documentary, *The Spider's Web*. These posters, printed on much higher quality paper with a restricted palette of black, white and red, illustrate the phrase "Collective Punishment is a Crime," and feature images of mass arrests, house demolitions, movement restriction, property damage and the Apartheid Wall. The Jerusalem coalition, Palestinian Environmental NGOs Network (PENGON), created a similar poster series in conjunction with their campaign to resist the Wall. These posters were made specifically for PENGON by international artists and come in several languages. They depict the Wall and either its effects on people and the land, or alternately, acts of resistance that result in the Wall's destruction.

### Tagging the Territories

Like posters, graffiti and stencils line high-traffic streets, but are also found throughout less urban areas. Especially common is the

increasing amount of graffiti branding the Apartheid Wall with declarations of outrage at this symbol of occupation. The portion of the Wall which encircles the city of Qualqilya is a popular place for internationals to scrawl solidarity messages. On its ominous surface, one encounters declarations of outrage and solidarity: "Retournez la Terre au Palestiniens" ("Give the land back to Palestinians") or, more simply, "Shame." The spray-painted messages barely reach a third of the way up, further emphasizing the Wall's monstrous height. One of the most striking sites, along the portion of the Wall separating the cities of Abou Deis and Eizaria from Jerusalem, bears a beautiful landscape image of Jerusalem as viewed through the bars of a prison window.

Palestinian graffiti, like its more high-profile European and American counterparts, functions as a sort of branding or reclaiming of physical space. Tagging, in itself an act of defiance, is further emphasized in the contentious context of military occupation. Unlike American and European graffiti art, it is highly nationalistic and places less importance on the aesthetics of script. Common are paragraphs of Arabic writing condemning the Wall, or occupation in general, covering entire sides of buildings. Crude paintings of Palestinian flags, illegal until Oslo, can also be found throughout Jerusalem and the West Bank. This branding is a simple act of reclamation that goes hand in hand with continuing to call the entire land Palestine.

One ubiquitous Bethlehem troupe, Jesh, tags its name, intertwined with the Palestinian flag, throughout the city and suburbs. In addition to their graffiti, they also commonly use stencils. Various Palestinian heroes, Che Guevara or the shape of pre-1948 Palestine, are stenciled onto city walls, accompanied by an image of their name as a way of signing the work.

# WALK WITH ME

## Revolutionary Theater Thrives in Lockdown



Felix Vasquez in *Walk With Me*

by Jeremy Smith

First, you walk into the front door of the lobby. You sign the visitor book. You put all of your personal belongings into a locker. You join a small group that is escorted down a hallway that is sterile and bright. You reach a door. You hear a loud unlocking sound and the door opens from seemingly nowhere. Your group is escorted into a small room the size of a large elevator. The door locks behind you. For a split second you don't know if you are getting out. Then another door opens and you are allowed to leave. You enter into a larger room that reminds you of a middle school cafeteria, except for the small booths with phones on one side of the room. You are here to see a "performance." There is a makeshift stage with props, a set, and lights. There are seats for an audience, but you are in a jail. You are here to see a "play" performed by inmates, but not just any play. By the end of the evening, the realities and complexities of what is funneling young men and women into a cycle of poverty, violence, drug abuse, family dysfunction, emotional exile, and eventually, prison, will be revealed to a stunned audience of community members, prison officials, and fellow prisoners, and it will be done in a way that is awe inspiring, beautiful, and revolutionary.

The Performance Project began in 2000 as collaboration between two artists, Aimee Dowling and Julie Lichtenberg, and eight men who were incarcerated at the minimum security Hampshire County Jail and House of Correction, located in Northampton, MA. Between 2000 and 2003 the Performance Project has produced four original works of theater and movement: *Not So Very Far From Here*, *59 Places*, *Works In Progress*, and *Counting the Minutes*. The Performance Project is part of a larger program at the jail called Lifeskills, which also includes music, art, and mural making. "It was designed to establish and teach skills that would enhance someone's ability to live independently on the outside, hopefully in a crime-free environment," says Sheriff Robert Garvey.

The performances are a product of life stories, developed through improvisational exercises held over the course of several weeks. Stories of addiction, abandonment, isolation, disappointment, anger, happiness, desperation, rage. The group then identifies common themes in their stories and develop scenes and choreography through the improvisations. The improvisations are then videotaped, transcribed, and shaped into a script. From there, the group reads

*continued next page*

the scenes, critiques, and collectively re-works the script. Ultimately, the participants each communicate their story not as singular isolated experiences, but as stories woven together with the experiences of other group members, and crafted into a whole. The finished piece is then performed over several nights inside and, more recently, outside the jail.

Part of what makes this experiment in prison therapy and art unique is that its content raises challenging questions for its audience and society at large, as the process of its production helps challenge, counsel, and heal many of those who participate. "What role does society play in all of this?" asks Pam Bardsley, the first female member of the company. "Society absolutely plays a role. It played a role before, while, and after someone's incarcerated. I guess where I'm at today is that I've become accountable for *me*, now I want society to start becoming accountable for society. In this project we can bring out some messages about that."

What is also a unique trait of the project is its relationship to the audience. Be they fellow prisoners or members of the outside community, many of the issues central to these performances raise questions pertinent to individuals-at-risk, and the community of which they're a part — but on a highly personal level. "The work that we're doing right now is not asking people to look at issues and ideas," says artistic director Julie Lichtenberg, "it's asking audience members to hear about people's life experiences and hopefully see connections in their own lives."

"It's allowing us a voice, it's shining a light on our darkness," says Felix Vasquez, a recent addition to the group. "As an audience member, I felt a voice where I thought there was no voice. A lot of it brought back some painful memories, and at the same time it brought back a sense of peace to know that it wasn't hidden...Here it is before my eyes, the same things I used to do." When he was ten years old, Felix's mother was a prostitute and drug user, while he sold drugs to put food on the table. When his pent-up frustration brought him to the department of Social Services & the Department of Youth Services looking for help, they turned him away, saying that they couldn't help him because he hadn't committed a crime. "I was lost and I was crying out for help, nobody wanted to help me, and here I am with a gang, a group of people who by all standards is negative and this and that, but there is a unity that I didn't find at home. There's somebody who can hug me and say 'I love you,' even though he's gonna say, 'let's go do some drugs, let's go shoot at those people.' But there was that righteous love. [In the Performance Project] we try to say 'you don't have to let it sit in you and softly kill you, you can let it out in the form of expressing yourself artistically'"

Walk with me  
I dare you to.  
Walk with me?  
I rather you run with the truth  
It might just see you through  
Walk with me in this darkness  
Come! Walk with me in spite of  
lack of light  
Keep walking, what's wrong when  
Nothing is ever RIGHT  
Walk with me through these alleys  
at night

It's all right gunshots bring light  
To the nights under streetlights  
Walk with me, or  
Keep Running

Some things will never be right  
Walk with me, feel my misery  
Run with me, I show you loyalty  
Run quickly and escape my tragedies  
Walk with me through these  
murky waters  
I can see clearly my only memory  
Tragically is of Pain & Agony,  
they got the best of me;  
unfortunately the only people  
Who will always walk with me are my  
Dead friends & enemies (Pete Rock,  
MigMoney, Miguel Fanu, Pocholo,  
Joey M, jonny Blaze Sylvia, Mexicano,  
Loose, Rest In Peace).

-Felix Vasquez 2004

The personal connection that the performers have with the material is central to understanding the impact that this work has on both the viewer and performer. "Ten years ago I would have seen this project as a way to merge my commitments to working for social justice with being an artist, but now the project is far more personal," says Lichtenberg. "I grew up with stories of survival, family stories. Particularly stories of my mother and grandmother who were in hiding and imprisoned during WWII in Nazi-occupied France. I realized that the personal connection in this work for me is [in understanding] how various forms of societal oppression contribute to different forms of incarceration or imprisonment — specifically racism."

The reaction from the local authorities has been positive. "The first time we put on a play here and invited the public in to view [it], I thought it would be disastrous, but we've done it several times now and people look forward to it. The first time we had a play I sat in the audience, and I watched the parents of some of the inmates come in and the inmates themselves after the play was being almost like 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade kids after an elementary school performance," says Sheriff Garvey. "They were so enthused and so proud of what they had done." Garvey also recognizes other benefits beyond personal satisfaction. "It encourages a connect with the outer community and the institution. We are a part of the community."

So what is next for the project? In July 2002, inmates interested in working together beyond the jail joined with other local artists to form a non-profit organization called The Performance Company. The goal is to take the work being done inside the jail and attempt to reach a larger audience outside of the prison population.

A mentoring program, run by current members of the Performance Company, has also been established to help new members fresh out of jail deal with the difficult issues of relapse, recidivism, and housing and job issues. Three of the members, including Felix, are focusing on working with youth at risk through various youth empowerment organizations and DYS.

"(We want to) allow these kids, before it's too late, a way of artistically showing their anger, even if it's poetry, acting, or drawing, or art. Allowing them the chance to create something beautiful out of the ugliness.... I see this as being a revolutionary movement, being a new way of theater, a new forum of art. I think this is going to go a long way, it might take us 2-3 years, whatever, but I'm in it for the long haul, I ain't turning back."

The vehicle of theater and movement is a way to viscerally correct the often skewed perception Americans have of what prisons and the people who inhabit them are like. During a performance by The Performance Company, the inmates and artists ask us to feel their happiness, their pain, their struggle, their rush. To not only passively watch, but to engage in the process, and to walk with them towards a better understanding, towards a very personal and far-reaching resolution.

*If tears were words and emotions could be heard  
It would take a lifetime to hear what I have to say  
But even longer to understand.*

-Felix Vasquez

For more information, contact The Performance Project at 413-586-4960 or email [julie.l@comcast.net](mailto:julie.l@comcast.net) ☆

*Jeremy Smith is a video editor/producer with the Media Education Foundation in Northampton, MA and is a resident of the post-industrial playground of Holyoke, MA. His political work includes membership in the Flywheel Arts Collective of Easthampton, MA, the Western Mass Revolutionary Drum Core, as well as other activist groups. His other passions are music, friends, and the undeniably delicious vegetarian cuisine of his lovely fiancée Margaret. You can email him at [youthelectronia@comcast.net](mailto:youthelectronia@comcast.net)*



all photos courtesy Chiapas Media Project

# THROUGH THEIR OWN EYES

## the Chiapas Media Project

Max Sussman

The story is well known. In January 1994, just after President Clinton signed the NAFTA legislation, the Zapatista Army of National Liberation took a dramatically different action regarding globalization. After organizing in the indigenous communities of Chiapas for over 10 years, the Zapatistas broke onto the international scene as they took hold of five cities in Chiapas and declared war on the Mexican government. Accounts of their demands for autonomy for the indigenous communities of Chiapas spread around the world. Elements of the uprising have interested progressive and radical activists, both the mainstream and independent media, as well as anthropologists, sociologists, and political scientists — all of whom have told and retold the story of the Zapatistas from their own perspectives.

*But where was the story as told by the Zapatistas?*

Alex Halkin asked herself a similar question during a 1995 visit to Chiapas, while filming a documentary about a humanitarian campaign there. She recalls thinking, "Here's a group of people who are extremely organized, are interested in communication...and at this point are completely dependent on both the mass media and even the independent media to tell their story." Out of this idea rose the Chiapas Media Project (CMP). Rather than be yet another project documenting the Zapatistas from the outside, the CMP strives to provide video

equipment and training to empower the indigenous communities of Chiapas to tell their own stories.

The Zapatistas' ability to communicate with a supportive international community is undoubtedly an important reason that the Mexican government quickly called a cease-fire and acquiesced to their demands for negotiations. But the idea that the Zapatistas had easy access to the Internet and a well-planned international media campaign is largely myth. For the most part, they were reliant on extensive support networks to mobilize the support needed to stop the Mexican government from immediately crushing the uprising.

The Zapatistas' dependence on outside support for representation in the media was problematic. According to Paco Vasquez, a worker in the Chiapas office of the CMP, "We were not represented in the proper manner by the media. There was a lack of information about what indigenous people are, and what is their history. We don't feel represented in media; we don't feel represented in the history books. There was a need for people to tell their own story."

This is exactly what the CMP hopes to address. Shortly after her visit, Halkin began talks with local authorities in the Chiapas municipalities. She recalls discussions "about the idea of bringing video technology and training to the communities, and people were really interested in it." It took a few more years to raise the money to do it. At first, there was no plan for a long-term organization like the CMP. But after the initial workshops, it was clear to Halkin that this was something the communities in Chiapas were interested in. The CMP became official in early 1998.

"We started with very basic cameras in 1998," recalls Vasquez. After a few years, when money from international distribution and University presentations made it possible, digital equipment includ-

ing cameras and editing suites were sent to Chiapas. Currently, grant money comprises about one-third of their budget.

From the outset, there was a strong focus on disseminating knowledge throughout the members of the communities in Chiapas. According to Vasquez, "The idea was not to concentrate on the ability to train or the ability to produce but to pass as much to the people so they can be independent."

Only community leaders attended the early workshops, but the skill-sharing workshops are now include a much larger section of the communities. A regional video coordinator works in each of the areas where the CMP operates, and this coordinator teaches most of the workshops.

The activities of the CMP and the experiences of those involved serve to deconstruct romanticized notions of indigenous communities. Halkin acknowledges the often-held belief that, "We're bringing in this technology from the West that's going to contaminate the pure indigenous people," but quickly goes on to discredit that idea. "These people have been contaminated for over 500 years by people from the 'outside.' Basically what they've told me is that they keep what's useful and they get rid of what's not useful."

Vasquez is a little more cautious. "To me," he says, "it's always a matter of whether communities have the right to decide" whether they want these tools in their communities or not. Because, unlike typical nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), the CMP is fully accountable to the communities in which they work, they can be certain that their work is defined by the needs of the communities. As Halkin says, "the way to look at the project in Chiapas is that we work for the communities. They're the ones that call the shots."

Not surprisingly, Zapatista productions tend to reflect fundamental differences in culture between the indigenous people of Chiapas and Western/Americanized culture. One noticeable difference is the lack of voice-over narration. Halkin attributes this to the fact that the members of the communities have always had others speak for them, and are therefore wary of third-person, omniscient narratives.

The Zapatistas also use video as a tool for collective critique. The latest production is about the role of women Zapatistas, and it will be a strong indictment of patriarchy within the movement. "There are not many organizations that air their difficulties and problems out in public, and I think that's one thing that's really interesting about how the Zapatistas are using video now," Halkin says.

The filmmakers in Chiapas are for the most part farmers first, which largely accounts for the structural and organizational differences in the way productions are made. Who is going to put in extra work on people's farms if they are busy working on a movie? Who is going to be involved in making the movie? When the production crew visits another village to film there, that village will have to find places for the crew to stay, feed them, and help with transportation. The decision to make a movie affects more than just those who are working on the production; it affects the entire community and all the communities where it will occur. Does this affect the length of time it takes to produce a movie? "Yes!" Halkin says laughing, "I can say that with absolute certainty."

The CMP is currently finishing work on a video called "Eyes on What's Inside." It focuses on the rape of two indigenous women by

members of the Mexican military in Guerrero, in the face of increased militarization of that region. Much of the CMP's work in Guerrero focuses on documentation of human rights abuses.

Where is the CMP heading now? They are nearing the completion of establishing four regional media centers, all of which have satellite Internet access and digital video and audio production capabilities. Two centers are up and running now, one is waiting for funds to buy equipment, and the fourth is under construction. It will be up to the communities to decide how the centers should be used.

Along with representing the political aims of the Zapatistas, these productions will likely promote the economic and commercial interests of Chiapas residents. "It's not just whose hands get to go on the video equipment" that is important, says Halkin. Fair trade projects including farming co-ops, coffee, honey, and crafts all rely heavily on communication with vendors and distributors internationally, and these projects benefit the communities as a whole rather than a certain individual. This is another difference between the Zapatista model and what Halkin calls the "individualistic approach." "Everything is collectivized," she says, so it's not like any one person benefits more

than another from the use of the media centers. "You have to look at it in a different kind of way."

A project like the CMP essentially sets the terms for its own conclusion: once there is sufficient equipment and indigenous people trained to use it, the work of the CMP in Chiapas is essentially done. As Vasquez puts it, the CMP is finished "when [the Zapatistas] decide that we're not needed, or necessary for the continuation of this project." It's likely that the Chicago office will stay open to coordinate distribution and touring presentations, which are



two of the main sources of funds for the project. But the CMP was designed to render itself unnecessary in Chiapas.

The CMP productions are examples of what Halkin refers to as "indigenous media." For years, independent and mainstream media have been telling the story of the Zapatistas. "The story that they want to tell is more important than the story that somebody from the outside wants to tell about them," says Halkin. With the means of producing film and video at their disposal, the outside world will get not only a better understanding of the concerns and individual stories of the Zapatistas, but a lesson in new ways of telling these stories as well.

For more information, see the Chiapas Media Project website at [www.promedios.org](http://www.promedios.org).

*Max Sussman is a contributing editor to Critical Moment ([criticalmoment.org](http://criticalmoment.org)). He is currently working on a documentary film about water rights in the Detroit area ([standingpoint.org](http://standingpoint.org)). You can reach him at [max@michiganinc.org](mailto:max@michiganinc.org).*



# A Bridge Over Troubled Channels

## A New Muslim-American TV Network Connects East and West via Cable

by Lisa A. Haamid



The master control room of Bridges TV in Buffalo, NY.

### “If we do not define ourselves, others will”

This is a theme that repeats throughout the press releases, statements, and website for Bridges TV. The fledgling network made its broadcast debut from Buffalo, New York in November. Billed as the first-ever American Muslim television network in English, the programming will “celebrate the American Muslim lifestyle and culture,” delivering news and entertainment to the approximately eight million Muslims in North America. Buffalo is home to a flourishing community of Muslim — Americans, among them, Bridges TV founder and CEO, Muzzammil Hassan.

Why an English-language Muslim-American television network? Only 3 percent of all Muslims in the world are Arabic-speaking, and most Muslims in the United States are both English-proficient and have growing families with children whose first language is English. Bridges TV has been created to address and express the needs and concerns of this large and growing segment of American society.

“When I was growing up in Poughkeepsie, New York, in the late ‘70s, early ‘80s, hardly anyone knew what a Muslim was,” says Samina Salahuddin, Director of Media Relations at Bridges TV. “Today, however, not only do most people know what a Muslim is, but they know about all the ethnicities and sects of Muslims! Unfortunately, the reason for this is because of all the media attention given to Muslim insurgents or terrorists.”

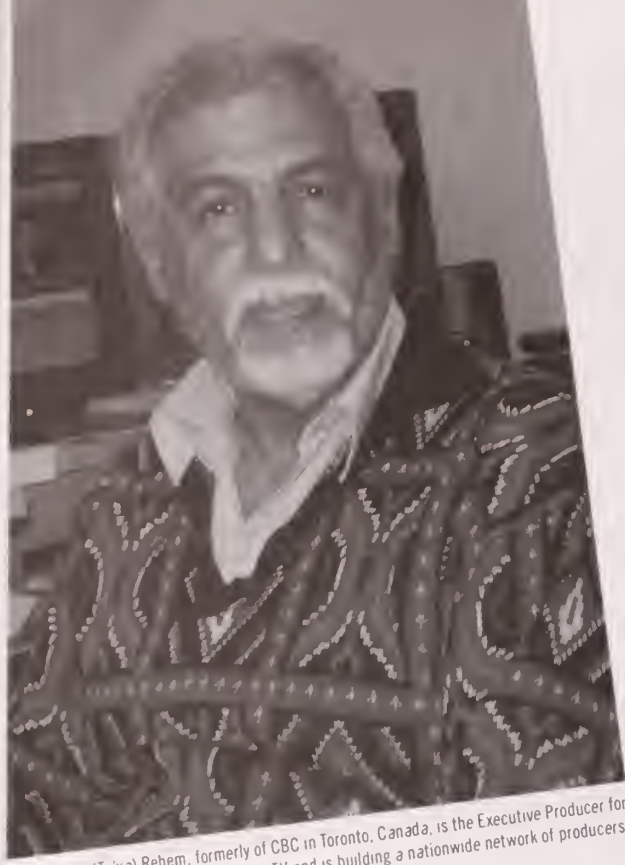
Such bias without substance can easily create an environment fertile for bigotry and hatred, as well as self-doubt and shame. According to the San Francisco Chronicle, there was a 1,600 percent increase in reported hate crimes against Muslims in the first year after 9/11. To what degree did the media influence these crimes? Deedra Abboud, Executive Director of the Council on American Islamic Relations (CAIR, an Islamic civil rights organization), observed, “As an activist, I hear people of other faiths stating what Muslims believe. [These statements are] based almost exclusively on what they read and see on

American TV — Bridges TV will give Muslims in America the opportunity to visually define themselves.”

### Getting off the Defensive

After 9/11, an environment of fear and misdirected anger made many Muslims feel on the defensive. Mosques held open-houses to bring about the understanding that Islam does not condone murder or what happened on September 11, 2001, and the community spent much time condemning the attacks. Many now feel it’s time to work for positive change in a constructive, proactive way. Bridges TV is not a political device. It is not being set up solely to counter what right-wing pundits are saying on the mainstream TV. It promotes no sect of Islam nor any political ideology. Its aim is to give Muslim viewers a place to turn where they can see their ideals respectfully expressed, and where they are less likely to hear the terms which have now become cliché, such as “extremist, radical, cleric,” or “Islamic terrorist,” etc. Instead, Bridges TV hopes to provide a place for the expression of a positive self-identity, much like what Telemundo has done for the Hispanic-American or what BET has done for African-Americans. Maryam Mir, an Irish-American Muslim living in Tucson, Arizona comments on the need for even greater visible diversity in the United States, “The history of our nation has proven that when a variety of voices speak out — whether they are Chinese, Italian, Jewish, or Native Americans and now American Muslims — our country is stronger for it.” Bridges TV is hoping to spark the interest of non-Muslim viewers as well. Bridging the chasm of disinformation about Muslims is as vital a mission as providing specific programming for Muslims.

Samina Salahuddin comments, “The reason I became involved with Bridges TV is because I know that Muslims in America do not fall into the categories of “terrorist” or “insurgent” ... We are such a diverse community with so many stories and unique issues that would benefit greatly from a network like Bridges.”



Taye (Ta'ya) Rehem, formerly of CBC in Toronto, Canada, is the Executive Producer for Bridges TV and is building a nationwide network of producers

## Capitalism, Democracy, and Islam, Live

Bridges' viewer base is as financially attractive, perhaps more so than other minority and ethnic groups which have established their own spaces among the channels. Muslims are, on average, more highly educated and possess greater purchasing power than other demographics. According to Zogby International, they are expected to double in number in the US over the next decade. While this is good news for any novice station, it also poses potential and familiar problems. When asked whether he was afraid of corrupting influences from sponsors, Hassan answered without hesitation that the subscribers are the primary base of influence, "Every month people are voting for us with their wallets," he says. The network is entirely privately funded, and no foreign funding or foreign governments have a hand in sponsoring Bridges. He adds with a chuckle, "We're a 100 percent made-in-the-USA product."

The hub of Bridges TV nationwide programming is the WNED-TV studio, in Buffalo. From there the signal is broadcast through Globecast World TV, a national satellite provider. Globecast has one million subscribers, a potential hedge for the fledgling Bridges network to gain exposure and increase its own subscription numbers. Bridges TV also has agreements with Comcast Cable Company, the nation's largest cable operator, with more than 22 million potential viewers. Sources for programming include independent producers working through community cable access televisions across the country, some imported programming from the BBC, and other programs developed specifically for Bridges TV. On their website, they invite independent programmers to submit samples of work for broadcast consideration.

## A New Expression of the American Mix.

As its name implies, Bridges TV is trying to link Muslim communities with other Muslim communities across the nation, as it tries to bridge the gap between Muslim and non-Muslim communities. A single bridge can only transport so much freight, and it will take a lot of hands to make this bridge strong. But if we are to change the uneven way Islam and Muslims are represented in mainstream media, Muslims must take pen in hand and write, edit, produce, and broadcast. The remedy to the current lop-sidedness will take time, vision, and a sustained effort. Drawing on the combined voices of America's diverse Muslim populations, and with a strong plan for its development, Bridges TV promises to add a new, and often overlooked, perspective to American media. ☆

For more information, see [www.bridgestv.com](http://www.bridgestv.com)

The responsibility of representing such a large segment of society poses potential problems as well. Visit any city with a substantial Muslim population and you're likely to see a spectrum of attitudes to both faith and lifestyle. When asked how he could represent such a broad variety of interpretations of Islam, Hassan restated his network's position of allowing viewers to access scenes of moderate Islamic life in America. It is not the mission of the network, he says, to give room to every Islamic voice out there. In fact, in discussing the criteria that programs would have to meet in order to be considered for broadcast, Hassan said that they're interested in presenting the mainstream, temperate Muslim who works, raises a family, and pays taxes... just like any other American. The network will actively screen out any submissions which they consider to be extremist and inflammatory. That's not to say there won't be debates and lively discussions. But in all the myopic concentration on extreme interpretations of Islam over the last years, Bridges is looking to broaden the image.

When asked if there is any concern about pressure to represent Muslims as particularly assimilated into American culture, Hassan again deferred to the primary mission of the network, which is to be a platform for other Muslims to present their own view. As the name implies, they're focusing on content which will establish and strengthen "bridges of friendship and understanding with America"

Aasiya Zubair (left), wife of Bridges TV CEO Muzzammil Hassan (right), came up with the idea of an American Muslim lifestyle network and encouraged her husband to write a business plan





Philippe Pearlstein, *Top Female Models in the Mirror*, 1981, oil on canvas, Toledo Museum of Art, Toledo, Ohio. A 1982 Enshrinement Gift of Edward Drummond Libbey.

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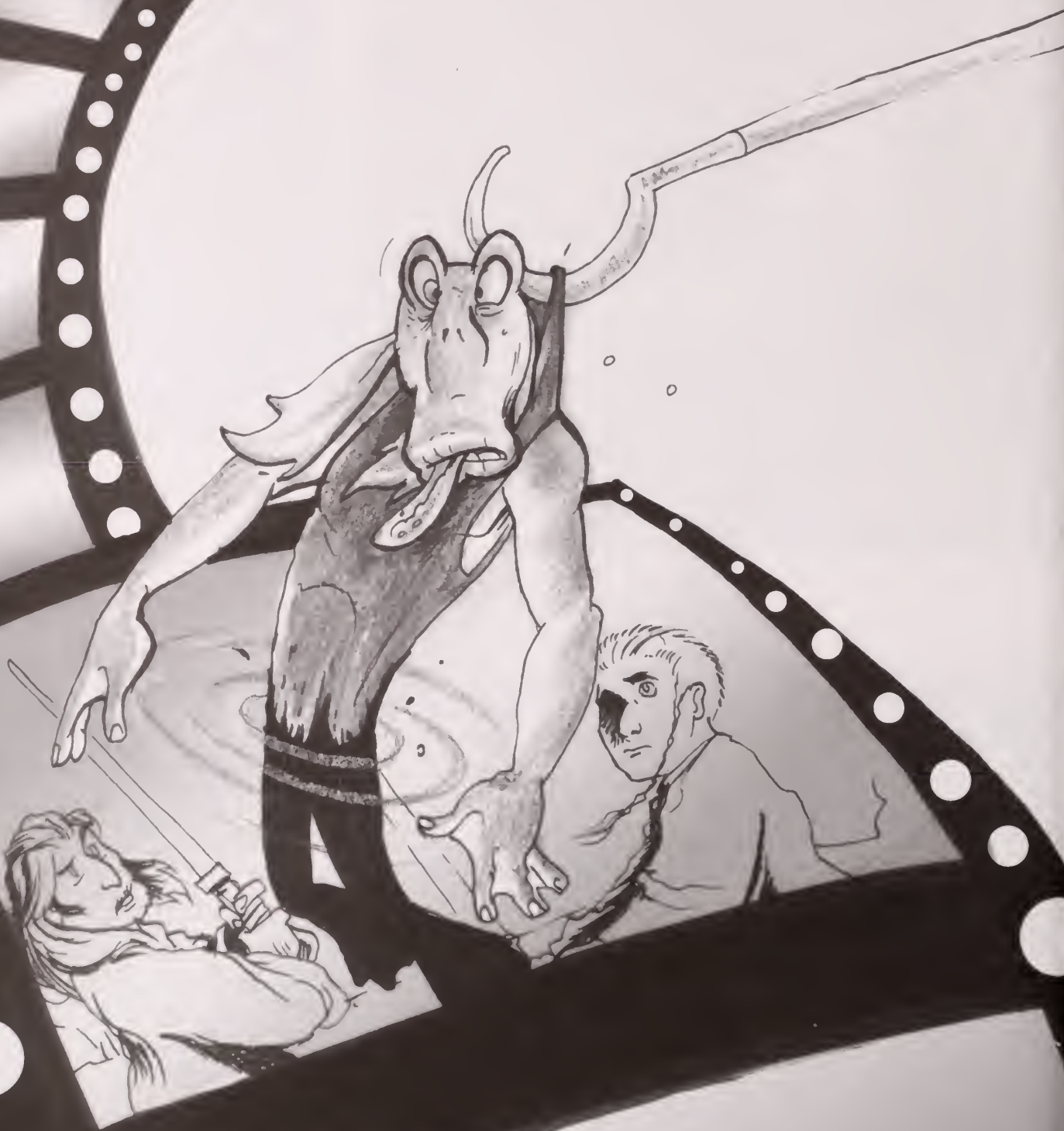
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# taking Power from the Past

remix artists  
create positive  
alternatives from  
cultural dustbins

After Texan Brad Neely watched the first Harry Potter movie, he decided to DIY it into something new, writing and performing an alternate parody soundtrack that anyone can download and play while watching the movie. In his version, *Wizard People, Dear Reader*, Harry, Hermione, and Ron are alcoholics and Quidditch has homoerotic undertones. His new version has been shown at the New York Underground Film Festival and the San Francisco Indie Fest.

Using elements of others' works can lead to new art, but it can also be seen as a form of poaching someone else's creative output. Others believe that remixing culture is part of a vibrant new cultural movement. One of the strongest advocates for this movement is DJ/conceptual artist Paul Miller (aka DJ Spooky).

Recently, DJ Spooky has been touring, presenting his video remix of D.W. Griffith's 1915 film *The Birth of a Nation* called "Rebirth of a Nation." DJ Spooky is part of a larger cultural context for remix culture. On his website (Djspooky.com), DJ Spooky explains that he created this new version to challenge the way people view the original film and history itself. While the original film is disturbing and racist, used as a propaganda tool by the Ku Klux Klan, DJ Spooky does not veer away from the artistic intensity of the original film. "Repressing memory is not a good way to make sure that we learn from the mistakes of the past," he said in a phone interview.

"DJing helps people view collective memory, to help us understand how we create culture from digital memory. [Remixing culture helps us] to have tools to think of the present and to understand the past. The hardest part is for America to live up to its ideals...which is due to lack of awareness of history." In addition to remixing *Birth of a Nation*, DJ Spooky has remixed the Blue Series, an influential jazz release, into *Celestial Mechanix*. He also plans to continue to remix films — his next film-based project is a remix of Nazi-era propagandist Leni Riefenstahl's "Triumph of the Will."

Remixes aren't always done with artistic motivations, but can sometimes just serve as the results of a frustrated fan armed with video editing software. Many fans of the original *Star Wars* trilogy who had waited almost twenty years for more movies from George Lucas were disappointed with the new movies. One anonymous fan took action in 2001, by creating "The Phantom Edit" from the movie *Star Wars Episode I: The Phantom Menace*, by re-editing the movie, eliminating the reviled Jar Jar Binks character and focusing on action sequences. While DJ Spooky is able to re-edit *Birth of a Nation* any way he wishes because the copyright has expired, those remixing

words Raizel Liebler illustration Zack Giallongo

more contemporary work, such as the Phantom Editor, face a host of legal entanglements.

Fan-created film remixes allow individuals to have control when previously they could only be passive participants in their fandom — now they can remix their fandom into “perfection.” After all, what really makes film remixes different from adaptations — except that remixes are not always “authorized”?

Even more than video sampling, music sampling has become a ubiquitous part of our culture, but not without its own legal consequences. When the Beastie Boys’ *Paul’s Boutique* was released in 1989, it was considered a masterpiece of sampling, including over an estimated 200 samples. However, it took the Beastie Boys twelve years after the release of *Check Your Head* in 1992 to clear a six-second three-note sample of jazz flutist James Newton’s composition “Choir” used in “Pass the Mic.”

Once a composer of a song authorizes a recording, anyone can then record the same song — US copyright law does allow for “covering” an entire song. This is how Orgy was able to cover New Order’s “Blue Monday” in 1998. This is also why the profoundly creepy Kidz Bop CDs have all of your favorite adult-oriented and sexually suggestive songs sung by children, lyrics intact, such as Britney Spears’ “Toxic,” and Maroon 5’s “This Love” (“I tried my best to feed her appetite/Keep her coming every night/So hard to keep her satisfied” and “My pressure on your hips/Sinking my fingertips/Into every inch of you Cause I know that’s what you want me to do”). What this means is if Joe Blow’s punk band records a whole album of MC5 covers, the music publisher is required to give them clearance — as long as the band pays for it.

This leaves artists in the peculiar position of seeing their entire compositions redone by others without their permission, but still able to keep others from using small parts of the whole. While sampling has become accepted as a form of cultural remixing (if the right people are paid), mash-ups have become controversial.

The latest form of sampling, mash-ups, layer or twine two different songs, often of differing genres, together. Mash-ups are different from traditional sampling because they often layer two or more complete songs, rather than using small portions of a song. Most mash-ups are not legal; however, mash-ups are all over peer-to-peer networks and remix websites. Fans and DJs have created these new songs for a variety of reasons, but originally there was no commercial potential due to potential copyright issues.

Fear of lawsuits did not keep an unauthorized mash-up of Nelly’s *Work It* and AC/DC’s *Back in Black* from being played extensively on several radio stations. DJ Danger Mouse created a well-publicized mash-up, *The Grey Album*, from Jay-Z’s *The Black Album* and the Beatles’ *White Album*. In response to being threatened by the Beatles’ record label, on February 24, 2004, (aka “Grey Tuesday”) over four hundred websites hosted MP3s of *The Grey Album*.

There has recently been a wave of authorized mash-ups, with more mainstream artists finding the commercial value in using this new art form. At the Brit Awards 2002 (UK version of the Grammy Awards), Kylie Minogue performed “Can’t Get Blue Monday Out of My Head,” combining the lyrics of her song “Can’t Get You Out of My Head” with the music to New Order’s “Blue Monday.” After the positive reaction to this performance by an artist loved by remixers, the music industry abandoned its resistance of this new musical form. On this side of the Atlantic, MTV recently announced the creation of a new show — “MTV Ultimate Mash-up.” The first product of this show is a Jay-Z Linkin Park collaboration — including a mash-up of Linkin Park’s *Numb* and Jay-Z’s *Jigga What*

An art form that was originally created by fans and DJs can now be used by corporations who have the money to clear any music that was used, but still leaves many of the non-corporate mash-ups in limbo. Like early jazz, rock, and rap artists, the innovators are not the ones who will be benefiting primarily from this new art form. While corporations will use the innovative artistic techniques and art forms created by others, when corporations own creative work, they are not as free with sharing.

Art is built on the past, but the present realities of copyright law often stand in the way of using the creative output of others in new ways. While music traditions including folk and gospel have allowed artists to copy and retell the songs of others, contemporary artists are expected to obscure how they use previous art to create their own. Directly using the work of another runs the risk of landing in court.

When a political parody web animation, JibJab, rewrote the lyrics and used the music the song, “This Land is Your Land,” by Woody Guthrie, to poke fun at the presidential election, a company claimed ownership of the song’s copyright.

While it turned out that the copyright had expired, the idea that “This Land is Your Land” could not be used for remixing is antithetical to the way in which the song itself was created. “This Land is Your Land” was created within the folk music tradition where artists borrowed freely from each other and earlier artists, sampling and copying considered to be part of what makes music work. According to the Electronic Freedom Foundation’s website, which includes musical samples, “Woody Guthrie lifted the melody of ‘This Land Is Your Land’ essentially note-for-note from ‘When the World’s on Fire,’ a song recorded by country/bluegrass legends the Carter Family ten years before Guthrie wrote his classic song.” It is difficult for the law

to fit situations like this where long-term collaboration leads to the production of music — and other creative works.

Based on the idea that new art is intrinsically linked to existing art, in late 2002 and early 2003, *Stay Free Magazine* hosted a unique art exhibit, “Illegal Art,” in New York and

Chicago, composed of remixed culture. As stated in the exhibit’s materials, “Borrowing from another artwork — as jazz musicians did in the 1930s and Looney Tunes illustrators did in 1940s — will now land you in court. If the current copyright laws had been in effect back in the day, whole genres such as collage, hip-hop, and Pop Art might have never have existed.” This exhibit shows the vitality of remixed art, not through direct copying, but through incorporating elements from previously created art.

Culture builds upon past culture regardless of copyright law or threats of lawsuits. The latest examples of remix culture are part of a tradition that builds upon previous culture the same way that folk music, gospel music, and storytelling does. “Remixing is not destroying the original,” says DJ Spooky. It is like Lego blocks, [allowing us] to build upon and reinterpret. “Another world is possible, remixing helps us see it.” ☆

*Raizel Liebler is a law librarian in Chicago. She blogs at the Library-Law blog, <http://blog.librarylaw.com>.*

**Fan-created film remixes allow individuals to have control when previously they could only be passive participants in their fandom — now they can remix their fandom into “perfection.”**



# PROGRAMMING INDEPENDENCE

talking video games with developer Seth Robinson

by Christina Hoheisel and Alex Kerfoot



Akiko and Seth Robinson and screenshots of Robinson Technologies games *Dink Smallwood*, *Funeral Quest*, *Tarzan*, and *Teenage Lawnmower*

In a mere 35 years, video games have gone from a basement hobby to a multi-billion dollar industry that reaches millions of people worldwide. Despite their large appeal, mainstream media outlets still portray video games, in the best case, as mindless, valueless entertainment, and in the worst, a cause of violent behavior. In independent media, they are rarely discussed at all.

Robinson Technologies, comprised of husband and wife team Seth and Akiko Robinson, have been developing independent games for the past fifteen years. Their games, such as *Teenage Lawnmower*, often deal with serious social issues like domestic violence and alcoholism, and are available for sale and for free from their website, [www.rtsoft.com](http://www.rtsoft.com).

While attending the 2004 Independent Games Festival, a part of the larger Game Developers Conference, we were able to ask Seth a few questions about how an independent developer survives in an industry where large corporations are the norm and dominate the market, as well as the advantages of remaining an independent developer.

*Clamor: Are you an independent game developer by choice or are you here looking for a publisher for your game?*

Seth: Definitely by choice. My independent games have been published before, such as *Dink Smallwood*. Most of my stuff isn't suitable for publishing so I don't even try, and that's fine. I like to sell it on my own or through affiliates, as we call them — other sites that take a percentage and sell it for you.

*What do you mean by "not suitable"?*

The content is not mainstream in many cases; it's too violent or socially unacceptable. With issues like pregnancy and violent domestic abuse, it's those things that I get a lot of email about. Although, most of it is actually positive.

*Obviously there is a lot of senseless violence in many mainstream games. So why is it a more serious issue when the violence in the game is part of a larger social issue, rather than the basis of the gameplay?*

What I try to do is give the player more choices. In most games, you have to kill these 50 people to get to the next level. In my games, for instance, *Dink Smallwood* (a "Legend of Zelda"-type RPG game), there is an Aunt who you are staying with, and you come out of the bedroom and witness her husband hitting her,

and they have an argument. From there you have a choice. You can accept this and go along with it, don't cause any problems; or you can talk to the uncle, say "Don't touch her, don't do this," and you can actually stop the abuse. Some people saw that and said, "I can't believe you show an animated character hitting a woman in a game and then have him force her to clean up the blood." It's pretty realistic. But other people said, "My family was like that and I thought it was really interesting how I could stop that and correct the problem." It was really the player's choice. It's about choices. If you don't have choices, you're not playing a game; you're just reading a story. The more choices, the better.

*Do you feel that being an independent developer grants you more freedom with your games?*

It definitely does, but it depends on my mindset at the time I am designing it; if I really want to make money or not. If I have enough money in the bank and I don't feel pressured about that, then I am one hundred percent free to do what I want, which is really a great feeling. But if I need cash, I will stay away from controversial issues, because financially it's not good.

*Are you able to make a decent living from them?*

I could live on them. In the past I have done extremely well. About fifteen years ago, I had

an independent hit game, Legend of the Red Dragon. Recently I've been doing okay, but I'm definitely not getting rich on it, so it's a tough call. If I can just accept that level of income — which right now I can't because I'm trying to buy a house, so I am doing extra work that isn't easy — I'd really love to just do what I want. I hope someday I can do that with no limits, but right now I do that in spurts.

*How do you get the games that you have done published?*

A publisher will come to me and say, "I saw this game, and I'll give you this much upfront." There's a minimum that I need before I'll consider it, or it's not worth the time to figure out the contract. Usually it gets published in some Third World country. American publishers are not often interested in my stuff. The majority of money comes from affiliates, like the online portal Real Areade. They have a huge customer base and my game Dungeon Scroll is on there. That's kind of like an online publisher. They own the "shelf" of the Internet. There are four big ones, Microsoft, Yahoo, etc.; and Real is one of them. If you get on there, you instantly get 100,000 players to download your game, so it's another version of publishing.

*So even though the internet is available to everyone, are the sales of online video games controlled by larger companies?*

More and more everyday. It's sad because if you really want to be independent, you can't use these guys. They control the content, and you have to meet their standards. They'll tell you what to change, and they're not shy about that. If you can get your own customer base, you don't need them. I'm kind of in both areas. I have customers, but I make such a variety of games that my customer base is confused. They think, "I bought this 3-D game, but I don't want to buy this casual word game. Why can't you just make another role-playing game like the one I liked?" I've done as much as possible to confuse and screw up all customer relations. Even though it's slow and painful to build your own customer base, in theory it's worth it, because then you own that mind share. When another portal does it, they don't give you the contact information for the people who bought your game and they won't even let you link your own website. They don't want the customer to know the individual developer; they want him to keep coming to their portal.

*That's common even in mainstream store-bought games, where the game will have a big publisher logo on it, but not a logo of the small studio that developed it*

Exactly. Most of the games, especially the smaller ones, were developed by a company you have never even heard of. I have developed a ton of games that I barely get credit for. You have to look deep, "who was the real programmer?" It was me, but my name's surely not on the box.

*Neil Young from Electronic Arts (the largest game software developer and publisher) claimed that in the future he thinks that innovation in video games is going to be coming from larger publishers because they have money to spend on more risky projects. Do you agree with that?*

I haven't seen that. No large publisher will spend money on risky projects. I guess it depends on the customers. If the customers stop buying the current crop of games and say "We want something new," then I think publishers will be a lot more interested in stealing ideas from small developers, which they already do. A really smart publisher is able to take in a new idea and figure out which ones will be successful and which ones won't, because a lot of experimental ideas will be financial disasters. Even though they are interesting and further the medium, you can't sell them at Toys R Us. It's just a stepping stone to the next thing. I wouldn't count on large publishers to do much except make money, which is what they have to do to survive.

*What made you choose to become a game developer?*

When I was twelve I started writing text games, and I just loved the whole idea. I loved the concept of being able to create something once and duplicate it innumerable times. There is just something that's so great about that concept — to share your idea with an unlimited number of people, with so many people. I just never stopped. So regardless of whether I got paid or published, I'd probably still be making my own thing.

*Do you feel that video games are a viable medium for spreading information and ideas and addressing social and political issues?*

I think so. I think we all do it, consciously or not. I don't know of anyone who specifically tries to put in his values and creates a game for the purpose of educating some social value, but I guess it's certainly possible. I guess even I do that, mostly subconsciously. I'm just hoping it's a positive influence overall, but who knows. It all depends on the person. If they play my game, they might choose to do everything evil, and then maybe it's a negative influence on their life. Or maybe they get to work it out in their brain and see what

really happened. It's complicated, but I think so.

*When you are giving them the choice, it's not as if the game is influencing them as much as they are influencing the outcome of the game.*

Yeah, it just magnifies what they wanted to do.

*But I think it's also valuable in that it can give people experiences that they wouldn't necessarily have in real life. Like if someone was too afraid to confront domestic violence.*

That's true, and I think one of the points of gaming is to put yourself into a new situation that you would never have experienced normally. Right now, it seems like all the situations that you get put in when you buy games today are kind of similar. You've been there, you've done that. I think the more kinds of situations the better. I really like simulators, all kinds — train simulators, running a school simulators — because it's a new experience.

*I really like your idea of giving players experiences that they haven't had. I see video games as a huge and prevalent industry, where children and adults and people of all ages and sexes play them. They are everywhere and I think it is interesting to integrate a social issue into something that is so mainstream in our society and reaches so many people.*

Yeah, I agree and I really feel that is true as I get older and more mature. When I look back on my old stuff, I really see that as I change, my games change. I am hoping that in thirty years I will have real wisdom to put in my games, so that younger kids who play will learn something, without meaning to. Maybe even about life.

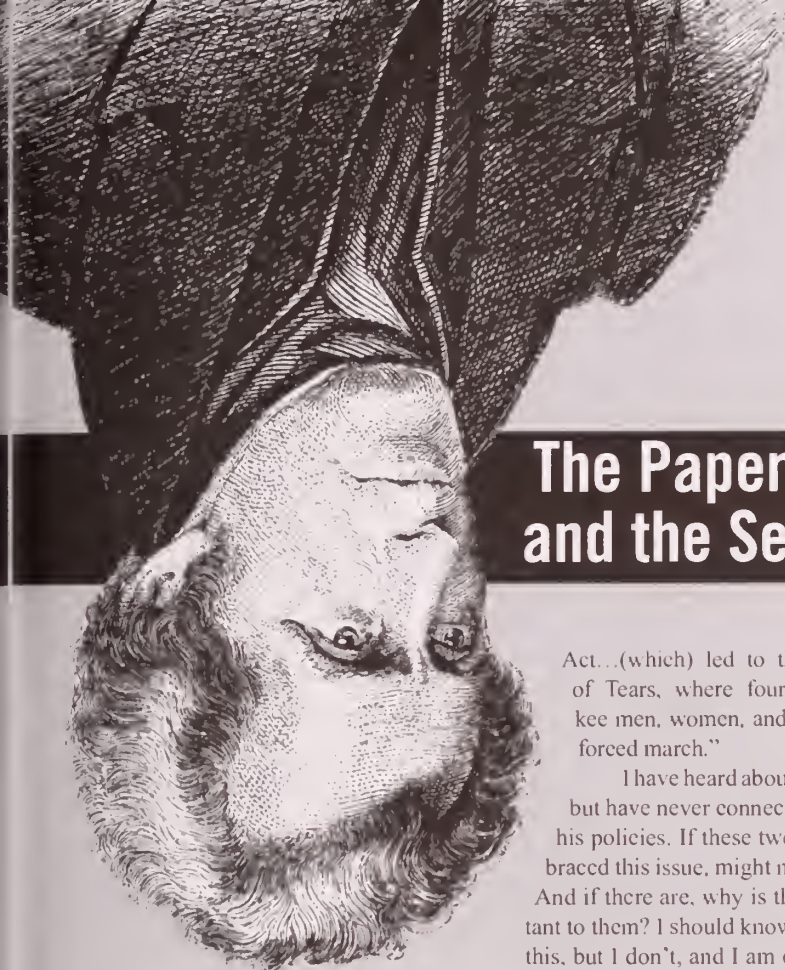
*I think that's great and I have always wondered whether that is possible to do in a video game. You seem to have done that to some degree.*

Yeah, I have gotten reactions. I've gotten a lot of emails. To me, that is sort of success. If you can make an impact one way or another that means you have spoken loudly. That's good enough for me. ☆

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## The Paper Street Space Monkeys and the Search for Anger by Ben Tanzer

**M**y plan seems simple enough at the time. I am working on a piece about MoveOn.org's "Bush in 30 Seconds" contest and I decide to interview some of the participants. One group calls themselves the "Paper Street Space Monkeys." After some research I am able to locate them through their website [www.20dissidents.com](http://www.20dissidents.com), where I learn that the "20 dissidents" moniker was derived from their desire to see Andrew Jackson removed from the 20-dollar bill.

I will admit that I know little about American history and that I know even less about Jackson's presidency. I am intrigued, however, and read on. The Space Monkeys write, "We...believed that if enough people were made aware of Andrew Jackson's legacy of deceit and genocide, and those same people signed a petition to remove his face from the \$20 bill, then the government might consider our proposition."

I have no idea why Jackson's legacy might be considered one of "deceit and genocide," and so I write a note to myself to learn more about Jackson's time in office. Two weeks pass and Martin Luther King, Jr., day rolls around. That day, I read an op-ed piece from the San Francisco Chronicle entitled "Put King on the 20," and in it the authors discuss why they feel Jackson should be replaced on the twenty-dollar bill with MLK Jr.

Jackson's presidency, they write, "is marked by the barbarous Indian Removal

Act...(which) led to the infamous Trail of Tears, where four thousand Cherokee men, women, and children died in a forced march."

I have heard about the Trail of Tears, but have never connected it to Jackson or his policies. If these two groups have embraced this issue, might not there be others? And if there are, why is this issue so important to them? I should know more about all of this, but I don't, and I am embarrassed about that. It's time to learn more.

I go to Google and type in "remove Andrew Jackson from the twenty dollar bill," and I am deluged with pages of links, everything from a petition calling for Jackson's removal to rants about the twenty-dollar bill on the blogs. There are clearly a lot of people out there who have strong feelings about Jackson's presidency. I decide to pay some of them a visit.

Minister Gary Kowalski is a graduate of Harvard Divinity School and pastor at the First Unitarian Universalist Society of Burlington, Vermont. In an October, 2003, "Pulpit Editorial" he writes: "Andrew Jackson's picture should be in the National Hall of Shame, not on the twenty dollar bill. And I like to imagine acts of grassroots resistance to his presence on our currency. What if people wrote the word 'genocide' across his face on every bill that passed through their hands? Or what if they simply refused to accept twenties..."

"The response has been overwhelmingly positive," he says in response to an e-mail inquiry. "Many people had been unaware of Jackson's crimes. Some dropped their twenties into the church collection plate that day — our receipts were much bigger than usual."

I also ask him whom he would suggest as Jackson's replacement. "Martin Luther King, Jr. Rosa Parks. Eleanor Roosevelt and Franklin Roosevelt. Benjamin Franklin. Thurgood Marshall." A short time later Minister Kowalski writes back to say, "Ben, Whoops, guess old Ben Franklin is already on the \$100 bill.

How about Frederick Douglass for the \$20?"

As I digest Minister Kowalski's responses, I am reminded that there are people out there committed to righteous causes and that they have a vision for how things might be. They also have role models they admire who guide their actions and principles. I begin to wonder whether I am one of those people, and if not, what is it I can do to change this?

My next stop is a visit with John Knouse, who advocates for Jackson's removal from the twenty-dollar bill on his personal website [www.jaknouse.athens.oh.us](http://www.jaknouse.athens.oh.us). He writes, "Join me in an effort to have Andrew Jackson replaced by Eleanor Roosevelt on the US \$20 Bill." And why should we do this he asks? Because among other things, while "Jackson was...responsible for creating an atmosphere of extreme political partisanship that has persisted until today," Eleanor Roosevelt "championed civil rights and other important issues even at frank risks to her own life." Knouse describes himself as "a middle-aged white male, living in southeastern Ohio (in one of the very few genuinely liberal areas of a right wing state)."

The response to Knouse's essay has so far been "very sparse. In fact, you're perhaps the third person who's ever responded. One person was an extreme apologist for Andrew Jackson, saying that he needed to be judged 'in the context of his times.' What I know is that there were plenty of people in the United States at the time who were sensitive to the issue of Native American removal and killing and were horrified by it... Jackson's ignorance was no excuse."

I'm struck by a couple of things, the first of which is the use of the word "context." People like to talk about context, whether they are discussing Jackson then or Bush today. The President decides to invade Iraq and calls those unpatriotic who question the evidence presented to rationalize the invasion. We are told that we are at war, and it is within this context that the decisions made by the President should be judged, regardless

of how ultimately destructive his policies have been.

With this in mind, I turn back to the Paper Street Space Monkeys and back to where my journey first began. I ask a member of the Space Monkeys what has influenced their interest in such a cause. "There is nothing specific to our backgrounds that lent itself to our political or social views. Both of us have always been disposed to question authority. Every teenager does, I suppose, but a lot of us lose that inquisitive and rebellious nature as the realities of adulthood set in. For whatever reason, both of us still feel very strongly that change is crucial, and more importantly, possible. We also believe that even if our movements ultimately fail on their face, the very

fact that people united for such a movement is a victory unto itself."

The Space Monkeys' response deeply resonates with me. I am angry, but disconnected, and I am unsure what to do about it. Those calling for Jackson's removal from the twenty-dollar bill have reminded me that a righteous anger exists in the minds of everyday people, and that the challenge is not whether I can find a means to connect with something larger than myself, but will I, and can I, and what more will it take to do so?

I prioritize everything but activism. I tell myself that there is work to go to, the baby's diapers to change, book readings to attend, and articles I want to write. I tell myself I'm too busy to do anything more than I do. I want

to believe this, but with four more years of the Bush administration ahead of us, the time to settle for anything less than taking action is long since past.

*Ben is a social worker and writer who lives in Chicago with his wife and young son. Ben has had work published in a variety of magazines and journals including Midnight Mind, Rated Rookie, Punk Planet, Abroad View, Chicago Parent, Windy City Sports, and The Heartlands. Ben can be contacted at [bendbmyles@ren.com](mailto:bendbmyles@ren.com)*

## When a Whisper Becomes a Shout: Beyondmedia Education

Media provides the threads of a web that interconnect a community. Stories are shared, opinions are heard, and people are given the chance to hear perspectives that they may otherwise never know about. Making alternative media is crucial when so many relevant stories are pushed into the ground. Beyondmedia Education allows some of those stories to emerge from the earth.

Filmmaker Salome Chasnoff founded the organization in 1996 after producing a documentary about the 1995 United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, China. Chasnoff emerged from the conference inspired and equally frustrated at the lack of media control women had. "There was a really strong need for young women to have increased media access and media skills, and also to have a different kind of education," Chasnoff says. "An education that not only delivers skills, but also supports them as developing women."

Beyondmedia's programs provide in-depth groundwork for each participant to learn and grow from. "[We have] year-long workshops in which girls and young women of diverse backgrounds learn to decipher the messages of dominant media and alternative media, and they create a wide range of their own media, including video, web design, digital imaging, audio recording, creative writing, photography and performance. Then they develop and distribute a group project."

The girls select a topic to work with, one that holds meaning and what they want to explore, many times ranging from race to sexual orientation to class issues. Says Chasnoff, "We talk about the topic through the many months and develop ideas about who the audience is, how we want to communicate the issues, and we create a project. They distribute it — they have public screenings and they package it, and they get out there with it."

The organization works with women in communities most in need of media education and services because of economic and or so-

cial exclusion. Beyondmedia has partnered with over 90 community-based organizations and schools to produce media arts on subjects ranging from girls' activism to women's incarceration.

In the *Women and Prison* project, incarcerated women and girls, former prisoners and their families use media arts to voice their stories, promoting public dialogue and community organizing. An upcoming online project, *Women and Prison: A Site for Resistance* will feature essays, personal narratives, creative writing, links to reports, studies, and other resources on women's incarceration.

Beyondmedia recently facilitated a media workshop with a group of young woman with multiple disabilities. The group eventually produced their own video, *Beyond Disability: The Fe Fe Stories*. "After facilitating a support group for girls with disabilities for six years, I guess the most stunning and transformative thing that we ever did was to hook up with Beyondmedia," says Susan Nussbaum, founder and coordinator of the group. "Disabled girls are never presented with these kinds of opportunities by the systems that rule their lives. It's only natural that when they are given a challenge, they rise to the occasion."

Besides media literacy and production skills, these girls also gain personal empowerment. Self-esteem, self-confidence and social consciousness are able to surface more freely, as well as a sense of personal power. "They become more aware of how their personal issues, their lives, and the community they build within a group become part of a larger society," says Chasnoff.

What perhaps the most important thing Beyondmedia provides is guidance, that gentle nudge to get one to do what they are fully capable of doing. Every woman as it in them, but it's difficult, Chasnoff says, to do it on your own, especially living in a society where women are marginalized in a male-dominated world. "Girls are more often prone to invisibility, and the inability to have an impact. They're more often voiceless; they more often accept that role. And a lot of them see their only opportunity is through their relationships with men. It's important that women shape public thinking, shape public dialogue, shape public policy."

-Alison Parker



Nikki Thompson, one of the Tech37 apprentices with Beyondmedia

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## Experimental Media for Feminist Trespass!!!

Imagine a three story media production studio that appears for one weekend and brings hundreds of queer and feminist independent media producers together for the video-taping and staging of their own “television shows,” talk shows, historical reenactments and skill-sharing workshops. Imagine activists working on each other’s productions, sharing facilities and equipment, eating community meals and collaborating on set design for fictional news shows. In October, Pilot TV did just this by creating a unique space for collaboration, asking questions and building community in a wonderful and experimental temporary autonomous television studio.

### **A conversation between Emily Forman and Daniel Tucker about building a temporary autonomous TV studio**

Daniel: How did the idea for Pilot arise?

Emily: In initial conversations, another organizer, James Tsang, and I kept throwing around this word, this idea of “Transfeminism.” We were excited that it had no set definition and thought it might have some possibility in terms of encompassing a wide variety of new feminist concerns (and old concerns as well, like the idea that biology shouldn’t control your destiny...).<sup>1</sup> Our conversations about defining transfeminism quickly multiplied into all these other slogans and exclamations of our desires for “Body Flight!” and “Feminist Trespass!” against biopolitical control and capitalism. Our basic idea was that we

should work out these questions with our peers in a productive, performative, open-ended space. It eventually was settled that we would call people from across the continent to come and take part in a weekend of collaborations producing feminist television “pilots,” which would then be edited, compiled, and redistributed back to all participants so they could distribute them on their local public access channels, schools, or microcinemas wherever they live. This would also have the effect of building a new network of anticapitalist transsexuals, queers, and feminist media producers for possible future action.

Daniel: Can you mention some of the models, other events and projects that inspired Pilot?

Emily: Pilot was moved to build a horizontal production space that could feed into, and in some ways differ from, the incredible horizontal distribution networks created by the global Indymedia movement. We were inspired by projects like DIVA TV, Deep Dish and Paper Tiger, as well as lesser-known histories of queer, feminist, and collective media activism such as the Videofreex and Raindance Corporation. In addition to those influences, we decided that Pilot should take the best aspects of a protest convergence center and a Hollywood TV studio.

Daniel: There were more than 35 different “shows” that were taped during the weekend including a talk show called “Feeling Good About Feeling Bad” which focused on the experience of political depression, a performative lecture by the Society for Biological Insurgents, and a genderqueer erotic remake of the 1925 Eisenstein film *Battleship Potemkin*. Considering all of the kinds of shows that happened during the weekend, what were people trying to figure out?

Emily: We were trying to educate each other about the incredibly rich history of feminist media activism, and some of the early utopian proposals for what video and television might be. The popular meaning of feminism has been whittled down to these very narrow clichés, but in fact, it is a set of essential tools for ethical social practice and resistance to patriarchy, hierarchy, and capitalism. As far as transfeminism relating to media democratization, we didn’t privilege either one as a

*opposite (clockwise from top left): Danimal and Tess shoot a gay soap; Latham acting in his group’s improvised soap opera; Emily in front of Pilotwood hills.*

# QUEER MEDIA TIMELINE

**1870:** The first gay periodical, *Urnings*, is published in Germany, but lasts only one issue.

**1947:** *Vice Versa*, with the tagline "America's Gayest Magazine," is first distributed and lasts nine issues.

**1953:** *ONE* magazine, printed by members of Los Angeles chapter of Mattachine Society is deemed obscene and illegal by federal court decisions in 1956, but the Supreme Court reverses the decision in 1958. Published until 1972.

**1955:** *Mattachine Review*, a more conservative publication by the San Francisco chapter of the society, starts printing and goes until 1966.

**1956:** *Ladder*, published by Daughters of Bilitis, focuses on lesbian poetry, fiction, and writing, until breaking apart in 1970.

**1967:** *The Advocate* starts in L.A. as a local newspaper, before expanding to a national news magazine.

**1969:** *Washington Blade* begins publishing as "The Gay Blade," a newsletter for DC area lesbians and gays.

**1971:** *Faggots and Faggotry*, the first known zine with queer content is put out by Ralph Hall in NYC and includes homoerotic drawing, political essays, and poetry.

**1971:** *The Bay Area Reporter* in San Francisco starts and is still publishing today.

**1972:** The newsletter *The Bisexual Expression*, starts, often presumed to be the first of its kind.

**1974:** The academic *Journal of Homosexuality* begins publication.

**1974:** *Lesbian Connection*, a quarterly newsletter in Michigan, starts circulating through the underground lesbian circle.

**1975:** *Lesbian News*, a monthly magazine, begins publishing in California and now claims to be the nation's number one magazine for lesbians of all colors and viewpoints.

**1976:** *Sinister Wisdom*, a quarterly creative "Journal for Lesbians," starts in Berkeley and still publishes today.

concern. We saw them as coextensive and interdependent struggles. I guess it is on this level that feminism most strongly informs anticapitalist movements today. Our concern during the weekend was about doing activism from the level of the body up. Starting with how we meet our basic needs for food or healthcare, up to things like how we resist oppressions based on race, citizenship, gender, or sexuality, our position as laborers and consumers in the global economy, the importance of feelings, the bodies made up by our families, communities, and cities.

One of the problems we encountered at Pilot was that there just wasn't enough set up and breakdown time for people to shoot 9 TV shows a day, even with the three sets we had. Because of this, there



Jocelyn taping "A Food Revival," an organic cooking show in the Pilot kitchen

wasn't enough time for the education of people with less technical expertise, so hierarchies of knowledge were set up due to a sped-up production schedule. Some of the problems at Pilot can be worked out in future events. And there did seem to be a big interest on the part of participants at making that happen. Maybe it will turn into a more permanent studio, or possibly a mobile production house like the soviet cinema trains.

Daniel: And in the end?

Emily: Pilot proved that it is possible build a TV studio without ANY money whatsoever, that with self-organization and collective resource sharing we can build alternative infrastructures that are equally as fantastic and sustainable as anything made in the capitalist economy! All in all, the weekend was an incredibly packed and complex experience. It was marked by lots of improvisation, pleasure, dialogue, public sex, failure, creative television production, skill sharing, and countless new relationships. I can't speak for the rest of the Pilot participants, but I know I experienced community the way I would like it to be everyday: queer as fuck and experimenting together for all the trespassing to come. ☆

Please see [www.pilotchicago.org](http://www.pilotchicago.org) for more information or to get involved in the post-production efforts.

"By 'transfeminism' we generally meant "...working across different forms of feminism, and in the same breath, we also want to recognize that trans genderqueer people are daily trespassing in the gendered spaces of capitalism. Spaces, which try to determine us biologically, which seek to confine us to recognizable markets, binary restrooms, and social roles. Being gender-queer means not only 'crossing-over' back and forth (female to male, male to female) but is a radical refusal of the gender-border altogether!"

*Emily Forman was one of 25 Pilot co-plotters and has been deeply involved in collaborations and other organizing efforts ranging from the Department of Space and Land Reclamation campaigns to the Autonomous Territories of Chicago. She is always down to work on projects that sound excessive and impossible! Reach her at [emily@counterproductiveindustries.com](mailto:emily@counterproductiveindustries.com)*

*Damel Tucker is an artist and activist living in Chicago who is generally interested in art that happens in streets. He was one of over 100 participants in the Pilot TV project last October. Tucker is also initiating an independent research project about "self organized" group process and organizational structures. Reach him at [damel@counterproductiveindustries.com](mailto:damel@counterproductiveindustries.com)*

# Living Proof:

James Monteleone

challenging stereotypes and presumptions of urban homosexuality through theatre.

For gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, and questioning (GLBTQ) youth across the country, a skewed portrait of the “homosexual” character in media has fostered stereotypes and led teens into a misrepresenting identity. “You don’t ever see urban GLBTQ youth in the media, on TV, or anywhere that is all that visible,” said Davies. “There isn’t really a voice out there for urban GLBTQ youth in the media, or in any accessible form, so that’s what I’m trying to do with this project.”

With mainstream media establishments editing or censoring many alternative culture ideas, young people often make decisions based on the biased media images they receive. For youth in the GLBTQ community those experiences are most often negative, rooted in grim statistics, and degrading stereotypes of promiscuity and depression.

In Baltimore, fourteen GLBTQ youth are experiencing something positive in a theatre project called “Living Proof.” The play, written and performed by the group, is based on their own life experiences, facing the difficulty of coming out and succeeding in their aspirations.

“Living Proof summed up our lives,” said Avia Brown, who played “Dawn” and “Felicia’s mom.” Brown, who came out to her grandmother two days before the play’s opening, affirms, “I am living proof that even if your family doesn’t like what you do, you can still do you no matter what.”

“It’s so much more than just a play, more than just what everybody sees on the outside, it’s like everything that goes into it. It’s our actual lives,” said Jenell Hall, who played “Alysse” in the project. Hall affirms, “I am living proof that strength is the essence of will.”

Erin Davies, 25, produced and directed the project. Like her writers and actors, Davies also came out in high school and is familiar with the hardships the teens face. She is familiar with the negative feedback from parents and friends. “All of these kids have gone through a lot in coming out at such a young age, but they are still standing and have weathered the storm.”

According to Davies, Living Proof is trying to replace negative representations with more positive images and more positive messages. “These kids

didn’t represent suicide, depression, isolation, they represented the other side of the statistics, the resilience, the strength, and it’s an important message for other kids to see — you can be gay and turn out okay.”

The need for a positive message is important for teens, who do not have any positive role models according to Davies. Living Proof offers the teens that alternative. “The purpose of Living Proof is to foster positive self-images among GLBTQ teenagers through the creative arts,” Davies said.

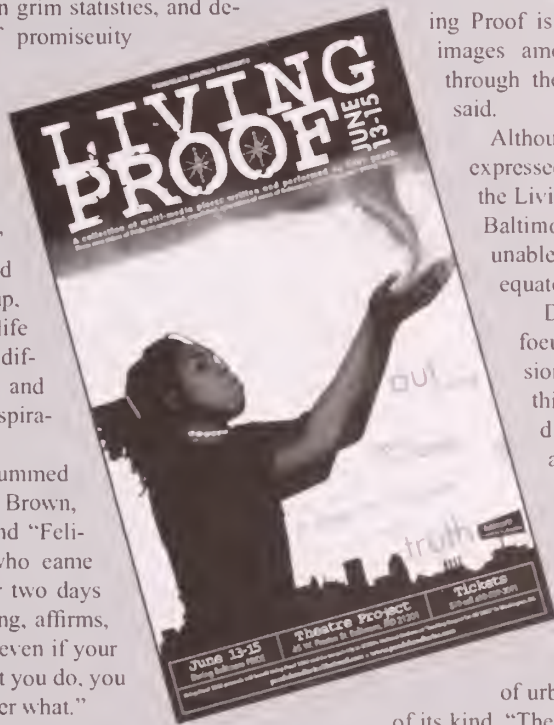
Although other theatres have expressed interest in producing the Living Proof project after its Baltimore run, the play has been unable to tour because of inadequate funding.

Davies has shifted her focus to a documentary version of Living Proof. She thinks that a nationally distributed documentary about the play could express the message much more successfully than more localized productions of the play. Davies feels her documentary, focusing on the positive sides

of urban gay youth, is the first of its kind. “There was a very deep commitment made by all the participants so the documentary follows a very in-depth process as well as a clear vision of their lives and what happened through doing this project,” Davies said.

For Erin Davies, the impact of the project has been profound. “It’s probably the most important thing I’ve ever done in my life, or may ever do.” ☆

James Monteleone is a journalism student at the University of Illinois Chicago. Reach him at [jmonte12@uic.edu](mailto:jmonte12@uic.edu)



**1976:** *Christopher Street*, aka “the gay New Yorker,” focusing on fiction and essays, starts publishing and continues until 1997.

**1979:** The Tiffany Club in Boston begins publishing the house newsletter, *Tapestry*, which later becomes affiliated with the International Foundation for Gender Education (1987) and is renamed *Transgender Tapestry*, the leading periodical on transgender issues.

**1984:** *On Our Backs*, the first sex magazine both by and for lesbians, begins publishing.

**1986:** GB Jones and Bruce La Bruce in Toronto start the underground zine *J.D.’s* which kicks off queercore, as both a music movement and set of political writings.

**1988:** *HOMOCORE*, written by and for queer punks and other anti-assimilationists, starts in San Francisco by Tom Jennings and publishes until 1991.

**1988:** Donna Dresch puts out the fanzine *Chainsaw* in Olympia and her writings help kick off Pacific Northwest riotgrrl music scene.

**1989:** Larry-bob publishes the first issue of the zine *Holy Titclamps*, which later starts to include the insert *Queer Zine Explosion*, a catalog that reviews other queer zines.

**1990:** The National Lesbian and Gay Journalists Association (NLGJA) is founded.

**1991:** The lesbian magazine *De-neuve* begins publishing. Named because of the founder’s love for the French actress, it was renamed *Curve* in 1995 because of a trademark lawsuit.

**1991:** *Anything That Moves*, the first glossy national magazine on bisexual issues and life, begins publishing. It stops in 2004.

**1994:** *POZ Magazine*, the first glossy devoted to chronicling the HIV epidemic exclusively, begins publishing.

**1997:** Window Media LLC begins acquiring, operating, and consolidating existing newspapers to become the nation’s largest LESBIGY newspaper publisher. It currently owns *Washington Blade*, *New York Blade*, *Southern Voice*, *Express Gay News*, and *Houston Voice*.

Compiled by Raymond Johnson

## BrokenDollz

www.brokendollz.com

For those familiar with the world of fetish, specifically the Creation Books cult classic *City Of Broken Dolls* by Romain Slocombe (Someone please bring it back into print!), the name "BrokenDollz" will bring to mind images of women in bandages and casts, despite the contemporary spelling. You know, damaged goods. And perhaps that's what this site unintentionally delivers.

BrokenDollz is a punk rock girl porn site in the vein of the groundbreaking *SuicideGirls*. According to the "About" page, a broken doll in this context is a "girl who is secure in herself and does as she pleases. She is unrestricted by the rules and regulations of the world around her." "Doing as she pleases" can translate, on this site, into humping graves (as Meira does in a video) or masturbating behind a barn at a family reunion (which is Zoe's video contribution).

Right up front, BrokenDollz lets you know what kind of site this is. The model on the first page — a red-dreaded, pierced, heavily tattooed girl with in a new, Hot Topic-y Creepshow t-shirt — clearly announces that this is an alternative porn site. "Alternative" meaning that it offers a refreshing sanctuary for those who are tired of the silicone and Photoshop gloss.

The rest of the site, however, seems to still be in its infancy, providing little non-member content to entice joining up. In the News section, a single message, posted in October of 2004, informs the viewer that the site is still being developed. The rest of the content is made up of a couple of reviews (a vibrator, a *Fantomas* album and the last Descendents record), some love letters, and a handful of videos of varying degrees of sensuality. (It gets embarrassing for everyone involved when the girls try to act, though. And on a personal note: please, stop the whole treating the dildo like it's a cock and it turns you on schtick when you're orally prepping it. You're not fooling anyone.)

A few cams, some photo galleries, and an auction link to eBay with no current auctions round out what should make up a majority of the content here. The site also offers a merchandise section which is linked out to a second party despite promising they are only going to bring you the "top of the line" quality merchandise they have sought out and researched. Evidently Phallix Glass is as good as it gets in the BrokenDollz world.

As for community, there are message boards where the most recent post is over a month old.

Finally, the site is abundant in one dubious area — typos. Sex workers or not, there's no excuse for sloppy composition. What are you teaching the kids?

Basically, BrokenDollz is a site to watch. Should they start posting some content, it will help clarify if the site is abandoned or just incomplete. Everyone loves a tattooed girl. Especially one

armed with a vibrator. So here's hoping BrokenDollz gets it's act together. Right now though, it's a site in casts and bandages.

-Benn Ray

## Dominatrix Waitrix:

a sci-fi queer romp video by Edith Edit  
www.dominatrixwaitrix.com, 2004

The plot? A scheming scientist identified as "the dispatcher" creates a doppelganger whose purpose is to substitute harassed waiters and waitresses for a day, relieving the oppressed of their duties — and supposedly their will. The dispatcher's more sinister objective is to possess and ultimately dominate the service providers — perhaps by allowing his (?) minion to divide (their legs) and conquer.

Eve Minax plays "Client #1," the first lucky waitress. The *Dominatrix Waitrix* (Sache, who also plays the dispatcher) comes to give her a day off — but not before getting her off in a charming scene of mild S&M with a peppermill. The grateful client becomes obsessed with her savior/conqueror and makes a deal with the dispatcher to assume the roles of DW's future waitpersons-cum-partners. Subsequent scenes depict brief sex scenarios played out by various pairs of actors/actresses, who are — in unreality — Client #1 and the DW. Eventually, the two leads reunite as themselves on the stage of a sex club. But the tables have turned. Client #1, taking control, seals the submissive DM in a chastity belt. Wow. This ironic and TOTALLY UNEXPECTED TWIST somehow inspires the club patrons to engage in all sorts of sexual contortions to their *seeming* satisfaction. (According to the filmmaker, *DW* is *smart* porn, which presumably means no "money shots" are caught on camera.) The concluding orgy results in a less than tender, but no less than happy ending.

The only actor who comes out of this film half unscathed is Minax, who plays the busty and beleaguered Client #1. Though far from perfect, she does have presence. Under a more seasoned director, she might be able to give a full-bodied performance that matches her physicality. Sache, however, plays neither of her roles well. Whether donning absurd eyelashes as the DW or Fu Manchu facial hair as the dispatcher, it is hard to believe she is the object of anyone's desire. Unfortunately, not much of the supporting cast has either the acting skills or attractiveness to outshine her.

At 44 minutes, *Dominatrix Waitrix* could have benefited from another ten minutes or so of continuity. What might have worked as a piece of performance art in front of a live, sympathetic audience doesn't really succeed on film. To be sure, it does echo some of the requisites of mainstream porn, including bad acting, absurd dialogue, and plenty of big breasts.

But Edith E. probably had something higher in mind. Perhaps the peppermill thrust into Client

#1 represents both pleasure and pain, emotions that DW claims are "all we ever need." Making a point about the fine line between those who dominate and those who submit, however, is nothing new. And yet...even if the viewer doesn't find the actors alluring or believable, the writing provocative, or the sex satisfying, s/he just might get off on this "romp." With the makeshift sets, amateurish direction, and cross-dressed cast, there is something to be had here. Perhaps the filmmaker aspires to be the Ed Wood of performance porn. And just like that somehow unforgotten auteur, Edit may have accomplished just what she set out to do: turn pain into unintentional pleasure — or something to that effect.

-Stephen Ryan

## Grassroots: A Field Guide for Feminist Activism

by Jennifer Baumgardner  
Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2005

From time to time the mainstream media likes to announce the death of feminism, as did *Time Magazine* in their cover story on June 23, 1998. Clearly the authors of such unfounded obituaries haven't read the work of Jennifer Baumgardner or Amy Richards, two of the most outspoken leaders of the third wave.

Their new book, *Grassroots: A Field Guide for Feminist Activism*, is a testament to the vital movement being led by young feminists. Baumgardner and Richards use case studies to illustrate how flexible and fun activism can be. Many of their examples are what you would expect: high schooler Allison Sparkuhl from Santa Barbara started a feminist club and Barnard students advocated for a sexual misconduct policy. But Baumgardner and Richards also deliberately include examples enacted in spaces not previously thought of as subversive, even, gasp, corporate America. It is their wise conviction that activism should be organic. If you are spending all day, as one of my good friend's says, "making sweet love to the copy machine," then this is as good a place as any to start saving the world—one stolen protest flyer at a time.

Baumgardner and Richards write: "When people express confusion about feminism or discomfort with the label, it is because feminism is presented as a concept or a theory (what books we have read or classes we have taken) and not action or experience (what we have done that affects the status of women or changed our own lives.)" To their credit, this pair has gracefully fused the two in this important new tome for young radicals.

-Courtney Martin



## Women Against Wars, Wars Against Women

Directed, with brief introductions by Lydia Sargent  
Z Video Productions, 2004  
www.zmag.org

The international anti-war movement proves that any view of the United States as savior of the world is widely unpopular. The Left stringently critiques US unilateral "foreign policy" but largely ignores the harmful effects of war on the women of Iraq and Afghanistan. Organizations like Feminist Majority have linked gender and war, but most Western feminists speak for rather than with their counterparts in the "East." Gender oppression in the "Third World" is usually discussed only in the context of religious and ideological beliefs, without any consideration of how violence and a global "war against terror" might affect women.

*Women against Wars, Wars against Women* is an important corrective to stereotypical perceptions about women in the Third World/Global South. The DVD features four prominent and outspoken public figures at the 2004 World Social Forum in Mumbai, India.

They include Nawal el Saddawi (novelist), the Arundhati Roy (writer), Saher Saba (head of RAWA, Revolutionary Association of Women of Afghanistan), and Irene Khan (International Secretary General of Amnesty International). Each woman questions a new global economic order that reinforces gender inequality. Their speeches reminded me that the terminologies and conceptual frameworks of anti-war and pro-feminist movements are not global or universal.

Nawal el Saddawi criticizes Parisian Muslim women who marched for their right to wear the veil while wearing makeup, which she calls a "postmodern veil" manufactured by multinational corporations. Sadawi's points are provocative and unsettling and they complicate the connections we make between the freedom to "choose" consumer goods and our rights as citizens.

Arundhati Roy discusses the changes in gender relations among Adivasis of India, whose tribe has historically valued women as much as men. However, when the government buys their land, they give the money only to the men, creating a new economic and gendered hierarchy.

Saher Saba reminds us of the real history of Afghanistan, where oppression began with the Soviet invasion of 1979 and continues with the US support of the Taliban and the Northern Alliance, even though both groups brutalize women.

Irene Khan argues that feminists in the West cannot be complacent about their freedom: domestic violence is the leading cause of death of Western women aged 16-44.

This is a useful video, but I do have some concerns. The editing seems to merge sentences; I wonder if this created unintended meanings. The session's presenter provides an excellent overview of the issues, but remains unnamed. All four women are reductively identified as their countries' representatives, but they are in fact internationally known professionals affiliated with organizations like Amnesty. I'd recommend this DVD for classes or discussion groups, but only if accompanied by the writings of these accomplished women.

-Yasmin Nair

In the summer of 2002, I suffered many trips to segregation for standing up for my own and others' rights. Soon after, I started *Tenacious*. My hope was to create a zine that would connect women and people on both sides of the fence.

My sister and I were arrested in May 1995 for two second-degree robberies. Under Oregon's mandatory minimum law, Measure 11, we were sentenced to 140 months even though it was our first offense. Under Measure 11, we must do day for day, no good time or time cuts. Under the old sentencing guidelines, we would have received 12 to 24 months' probation.

My sister and I both had toddlers who witnessed our arrest. Police burst through our apartment door with guns drawn, ordering everyone onto the ground, including our handicapped mother. We were very lucky to have family members step in to take our children before Protective Services could be called by the police.

We entered Oregon's prison system in October 1995. In October 1996, my sister and I, along with 76 other women, were transferred to a for-profit prison, Corrections Corporation of America (CCA) in Arizona. While at CCA, we were all subjected to sexual assault, harassment, and rape by prison officials. As this was going on, I became acquainted with people who were (and still are) active in protests concerning women's issues throughout the world. One of those individuals was Anthony Rayson of South Chicago ABC Zine Distro. Anthony encouraged me to write articles and to think about starting a zine dealing with women's issues in prison.

In February 2000, Oregon DOC officials classified me as "Security Threat Group" (gang enforcement) as an anarchist because I corresponded with Anthony, Rob Los Ricos, and other strong individuals, both inside and out, who stood up for their rights and the rights of others. I am no longer able to have contact with these brave people. Prison has included one injustice after another, all of which have just made me angrier than when I was first committed.

When I started "Tenacious," my goal was to unite women prisoners and get their stories to people in the outside world. I wanted the voices of women in prison — who are also mothers, daughters, grandmothers, aunts, and nieces — to be heard. With the help of a small group of women on the outside, we have put out three issues of *Tenacious* — These issues have exposed the harassment and abuse of women prisoners across the country and taught people on the outside how they can help. The fourth issue will be out soon. In addition, to recognize the fact that 80 percent of women in prison are mothers, we plan to complete a Mother's Day issue.

-Barrilee Gispert Bannister

*In 1996, Barrilee Bannister was a plaintiff in a class-action lawsuit against the Corrections Corporation of America, which resulted in an apology for the sexual abuse in its prison, the payment of attorney fees, and the firing of three dozen guards. She has less than 800 days left on her sentence, at the end of which she hopes to reunite with her daughter. If you write to her, do not mention the words ANARCHIST, ANARCHISM, or ANARCHY.*

Barrilee Bannister, #11309597

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Granted, many people want their sex toys to be body parts, or to come in sparkly blue squishy material. But sometimes, it seems like a good idea to fuck with art objects, and this is where glass sex toys come in. Taken from their silly, faux scientific and occasionally creepy packaging, glass sex toys are amazing looking. They are hard. They are inflexible. They are unlike flesh. And they are great.

When you look at the picture of **cherry** online, it resembles the "ethnic" martini glasses that used to cover the shelves of every store that sold glassware in 1999. Luckily, when you get it in your pretty little hands, it's beautiful. The glass stripes around the shaft of the cock-shaped glass are evenly distributed and unumpy; there's a nice divot in the shaft, and a cute and not distracting picture of two cherries inlaid into the tip of the dildo. The stripes are sizable enough that you can feel them if you have your hand in a person's butt and the dildo in their vulva (or vice versa), which is fun for the person wielding the dildo. **Cherry** is 6.5 x 1.5 inches, so it's a pretty serious level of penetration, particularly for butts — since glass is hard, there's not the squish that help larger toys fit in smaller holes. However, because glass is slippery as heck, particularly with silicone lube, things may fit in places you'd never expect. Because it's made of glass, it's possible (in a well-lit scenario) to see inside of the person that you're fucking, which could be fun for all of you who watch documentaries on PBS. I had to go out and buy an o-ring for my harness that was super tight around the bottom of **cherry**, and I still felt nervous fucking someone with a harness, but I am a person who breaks everything, so your mileage may vary. Either way, if you're looking for a glass dildo, you could hardly go wrong with this one.

But what if you want to put glass in someone's ass, and they are not into major penetration? Ah, then the **bubble wand** is the thing you want. It's a curved stick of graduated blobs of glass. The glass is clear, and I think even more beautiful than glass toys that use colored glass. (I have a Bauhaus approach to sex toys.) You could leave it in plain view without many double takes from strangers. Like all borosilicate (a.k.a. Pyrex) glass sex toys, it can be *gently* warmed in the microwave or cooled in a bowl of cold water and ice cubes for sensation play. If the

idea of a hot or cold hard thing slipping into you or someone you play with sounds swell, I'd suggest you invest, pronto. The **bubble wand** is long enough to be able to penetrate someone else or yourself without ending up a slippery pile of lube and mess, which I really appreciate. It can be used for rubbing on the inside or the outside of the vulva, and it did an okay job of g-spot stimulation with a little wiggling, and thus was found to be the most versatile toy in this sample.

But what if you want a toy designed (from what I can tell) for g-spot stimulation? Then the **archer wand** is the one. It looks like a curved barbell, made of glass. The two balls on the end are 1.5 inches in diameter, and the bar that connects them is .75 inches in diameter and about 6 or 7 inches long. This toy is the sparsest and, thus, the most beautiful of all. It's possible to stimulate one's own or someone else's g-spot with this toy, and going down on someone while using this toy in a vulva is a little complicated, but possible. I'm not sure if this toy is recommended for butt play, but since a willing ass was available to the testing team, this toy was found to be quite intense for butt play, but possibly good for those who like major stimulation. This toy is also great for sensation play and looks even more like an art object for those who don't like to put their toys away but also don't like other people to know they have toys.

It's worth saying that glass sex toys are pricey. Admittedly, it's a risk to buy something that offers such a specific kind of sensation — but honestly, they are so much fun. They look so nice. There are so many options about how to play with them. They are completely sterilizable (for germ-phobes, neat freaks, or people with multiple partners). They match with every fathomable lube. They are insanely slippery. They are worth the risk.

All the toys I tried are from Toys in Babeland ([www.babeland.com](http://www.babeland.com)), who have welcoming and non-creepy stores in Manhattan, Seattle, and on-line. NOTE: Glass toys don't break unless you drop them really hard against a really hard floor — so caution is necessary. In our tests, they took a lot of stress without any discernable damage. If one cracks, throw it away immediately.

-Laura Mintz

## Cherries, Bubble Wands, and Archers: The Beauty of Glass Toys



# Mutiny

## Rum Rebellion

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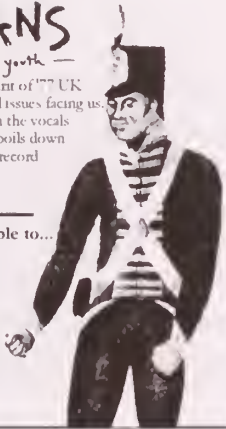
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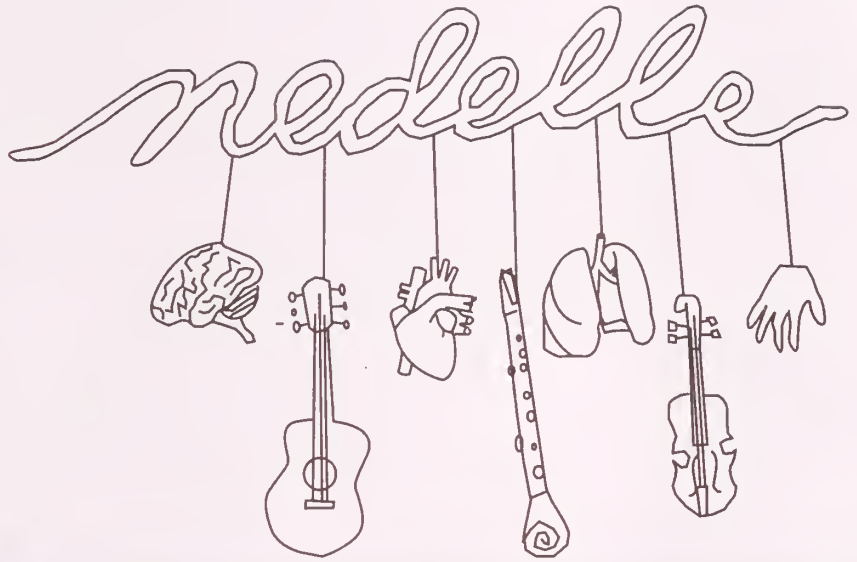
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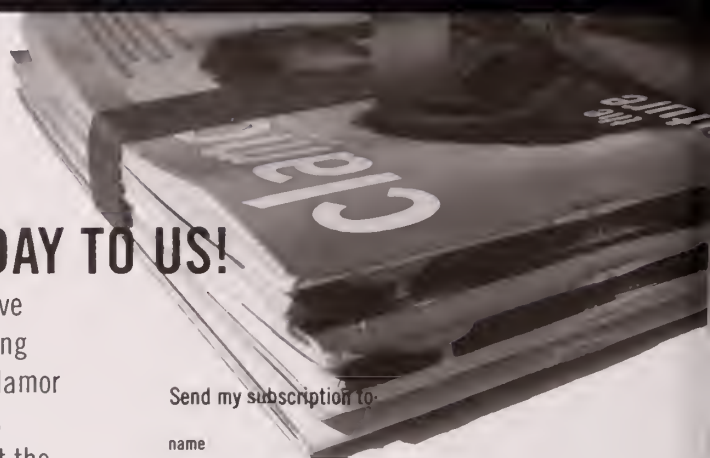


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# murmurs

what we're talking about

## [PRINT]

### Glass House

Margaret Morton  
Pennsylvania State University Press, 2004  
[www.psupress.org](http://www.psupress.org)

Margaret Morton's *Glass House* is one of the very few books written specifically about squatting on New York's Lower East Side. It is the only one about Glass House, a glass factory on the corner of Avenue D and East 10th Street that was abandoned in 1973 and reclaimed by squatters in 1992.

Although primarily a photography book of the squatters and their home, *Glass House* is also a record of individual histories. Some of these stories, like that of Merlin, who spent his last years occupying the corner outside the Con Edison power plant on East 6th Street and Avenue A, might have been lost had Morton not taken the time to record them.

*Glass House* includes not only the personal histories of the residents she photographed, but also stories of the neighborhood itself—of the nearby Foetus squat, which burned in 1992, and of the abandoned glass factory, which was to become Glass House. These small details of the

Lower East Side are often overlooked and might also have been lost had Morton not taken the time to include them in her book.

However, *Glass House* fails to capture the sense of empowerment and resistance found in the act of squatting. Instead, many of the individual histories place squatting not as a deliberate act of resistance against the city's real estate politics, but rather one of adolescent rebellion that will eventually be outgrown. Morton ends the oral history of a younger resident with the statement: "The novelty has worn off. I think I need to do something more. It was necessary, I did it, I'm doing it, and now I'm done with it. Now it's time for me to move on." For one older resident, squatting seems to be a way to avoid both work and adult responsibilities: "I get up when I want. I go to bed when I want. I'm mercifully, happily unemployed."

Although Morton photographed and documented some of the building's older residents, she states that "most [of the group were] between seventeen and twenty-one." Morton refers to the squatters as "young people," ignoring the fact that several of the building's residents whom she both interviewed and photographed were in their thirties and forties. However, even their oral histories focus more on their childhoods and adolescences—their sense of not belonging among their peers, distant or abusive parents, and their search for acceptance

— thus making them conform to the stereotype of a squatter as a young punk.

Their stories provide little social or political context—virtually no one talks about the city's real estate politics or their underlying political beliefs that have either emerged from squatting or coexist with their current lifestyles. Instead, squatting is seen as a temporary solution, a waystation in the process of growing up.

Two of the individual histories touch on some of the political happenings of the neighborhood. However, they are simply snippets of something bigger that neither Morton nor her subjects explore the outside environment and its effects in any depth.

For instance, there is no mention of the volatile 1993 Community Board meeting about the future of Glass House in which the Board chairman had not only squatters but sympathetic Community Board members arrested. Neither Morton nor her subjects acknowledge that Glass House's eviction was politically motivated: that the building was sought by Pueblo Nuevo, a housing organization affiliated with the neighborhood's conservative City Councilmember Antonio Pagan; that Pueblo Nuevo sought to build a hospice for AIDS patients on that site and ignored the fact that many of the Glass House residents were HIV positive; that Pueblo Nuevo and Pagan supporters opposed a proposed project by Housing Works to build

supportive housing for People with AIDS only a few blocks away, arguing that such housing would adversely affect the neighborhood. Including these facts would have placed Glass House — and its squatters — in a larger political and historical context. Instead, Morton ignores them, placing the building in a social and political bubble.

Despite these shortcomings, Morton's book is one of too few written about the squats on the Lower East Side. Her photographs—both of the building's residents and its spaces—are the first to be made widely available to the general public.

-Victoria Law

## The No-Nonsense Guide to Global Media

Peter Steven

New Internationalist/Verso, 2004

www.newint.org, www.versobooks.com

Consider this: most of what we know about the world beyond our immediate lives comes from "the media." Newspapers, magazines, TV, radio and the Internet overflow with a never-ending deluge of information. While we cannot, as Peter Steven asserts in the *No-Nonsense Guide to Global Media* (one in a series of excellent No-Nonsense Guides from New Internationalist/Verso) locate a monolithic Media, we can observe the vast and varied networks and outlets issuing us all the news they find fit to print. Since information is a nutrient alleged to be vital to the health of a democratic society, it seems essential to our civic well being that all members of this society be given unhindered access to the most information possible. Whether or not this occurs is something Steven methodically explores in his work. He writes to illuminate the massive scope and power of what he terms the "dominant media," as well as smaller international media outlets.

From content to impact, economics to technology, Steven explores the many segments and influences of media. It would be convenient for the author to couch his analysis in a leftist theoretical critique, but Steven instead chooses to examine the media through a broad lens. He writes from various standpoints, though always skeptically. This lends a sturdy element of objectivity, though he would readily acknowledge his biases.

Where the book succeeds most is in its consideration of media outside the prominent corporate-run U.S. "cultural industries." We learn about the power of the telenovelas of Brazil, the importance of singer Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan in India and the subversive potential of cheap video

films on Nigerian society. Too often the Western world forgets that there is more to media than Rupert Murdoch and Hollywood. This isn't to underestimate their power or downplay their global significance, as Steven believes that one of the U.S.'s prime exports is its media product.

Steven emphasizes the power of commerce over the production of media product and discusses the role of hegemony as transmitted and maintained by the media conglomerates. But the heart of the matter is each one of our responses to what we see, hear and read. In *The No-Nonsense Guide to Global Media*, Peter Steven reminds us that we need to become critical media consumers and work towards building more democratic media alternatives.

-Casey Boland

(ed. note: *Jeremy Seabrooks' The No-Nonsense Guide to World Poverty was reviewed in Clamor #30 (Jan/Feb 2004) and a review of The No-Nonsense Guide to Woman's Rights appears on the next page).*

## On Subbing: The First Four Years

Dave

Microcosm, 2004

www.microcosmpublishing.com

This is a collection from the first four years of a zine called *On Subbing*. It's a day-by-day from Dave, a substitute Education Assistant. Being a substitute teacher is a funny life, and I've had a lot of fun sharing my own stories of subbing with friends — some of them completely unbelievable — and was pleased to read that Dave was running into similar situations. He is mostly in special education classes, which adds to the drama and there's an element of hilarity but also sadness as about these aspects of the education system and how these people are treated. I must also say that I have never been kicked in the crotch, or puked on, or told I look like Steve Urkel. He has it kind of rough, but it's really nice to go through the process and see him begin to really enjoy it.

Because he is assigned to all different age groups and schools, his experiences are never limited. He also goes to some of the same classrooms where the students know him already and a relationship starts. And Dave takes a great approach to his job, taking it seriously enough to please the administration, but knowing that school can suck for kids.

He recommends that this book be read in intervals, and I can see why. It can become a little

redundant if read straight through. It is a journal of his job though, what do you expect? I'm still excited to pick it up when I'm coming back to it — I'm sorry, but a kick in the crotch never really gets old, or the excitement of reading about one.

I wish his students knew how cool Dave is. His writing is witty and sarcastic, but still kind of sensitive. A kind of a pathetic character at times, he's like the brilliant kid in school that couldn't impress people with sports or social skills, but had an amazing sense of the world, and a humor to deflect anything.

-Eric Ayotte

## Under The Perfect Sun

Mike Davis, Kelly Mayhew, and Jim Miller

The New Press, 2003

www.thenewpress.com

Google San Diego and what do you find? The world famous zoo, hotels, the convention center and a general sense of bright, positive vibes. You might have to dig a few pages deeper to discover anything remotely dystopian. This is exactly what Mike Davis, Jim Miller, and Kelly Mayhew have done in *Under the Perfect Sun: The San Diego Tourists Never See*. They've gone a few pages deeper.

Divided into three sections, *Under the Perfect Sun* races past the boosterific image of a sun-soaked promised land to illuminate the real San Diego, the city where people actually live and work.

Mike Davis begins the book with an ironically restrained examination of San Diego's private governments. In his account, a lengthy procession of weak, often corrupt, city governments allowed unelected robber barons like Spreckels, Scripps, Smith and Spanos to gain control over the levers of power. Simultaneously, the ubiquitous military-industrial presence created an environment where city leaders, both official and unofficial, decried government interference while manically feeding at the public trough.

In the next section, Jim Miller excavates the underground history of San Diego's labor movement. As would be expected, the private governments described in Davis' chapters were relentlessly opposed to any hint of dissent, suppressing the I.W.W. with the efficiency of a South American dictatorship. Later, the National Steel and Shipbuilding Company would use less violent, but equally ruthless, strategies to dismantle their unions. Miller also highlights a particularly amusing episode, in which anarchists conquer Tijuana, only to be co-opted by San Diego boosters and betrayed by incompetent leadership.





*Under the Perfect Sun* finishes with Kelly Mayhew's enlightening series of interviews with students, teachers, immigrants and community and labor activists. These discussions reveal the large segment of San Diego's population for whom the region's prosperity is a cruel and unrelenting joke. Their goals are lofty, yet modest: affordable housing; non-toxic air and water; a living wage; social justice. Ultimately, Mayhew's chapters give a voice to those who had been disenfranchised by the people described by Davis and Miller.

Despite its intensity, *Under the Perfect Sun* is an accessible, often moving, account of tragicomic events in a surreal city. For those who visit a tourist destination like San Diego and wonder 'what it's really like to live there,' this is your ticket.

-Joshua Baxt

### The Philadelphia Independent #20

Matthias Schwatz, Editor & Publisher  
Independent Newspaper, 2004  
www.philadelphiaindependent.net

To anyone who has worked in independent media, the *Philadelphia Independent* is a pretty impressive creature — a full-size plus newspaper chock full of insight, smart and informed writing that has made it to a 20th issue. While the *Independent* fills many of the roles of a traditional weekly 'culture' rag that every metro has (and seemingly does so respectably — it's tough for a Toledoan to know), it also does a yeoman's job of covering the left side of the Philly metropole. This issue is the first after the cataclysmic failure of democracy know as the 2004 general election and much time is dedicated to a wailing and gnashing of teeth appropriate to the occasion, but it is the stories of local interest that shine. Coverage of an indie paper created in response to a small-community newspaper's purchase by the Knight-Ritter multinational reminds us that people, even bourgie suburban types, can capture media space from the Man to positive ends. I'm not gonna lie and say that the *Philadelphia Independent's* writing always appealed to me (too much *Baffler* damage) but it is well done, committed, and pretty engaging. Go to the website and check it out yourself — just because I'm a jaded jerk doesn't mean you shouldn't dig it.

-Keith McCrea

### The No-Nonsense Guide to Women's Rights

Nikki van der Gaag  
New Internationalist/Verso, 2004  
www.newint.org, www.versobooks.com

### Secrets & Confidences: The Complicated Truth About Women's Friendships

Karen Eng, ed.  
Seal Press, 2004  
www.sealpress.com

Both of these books challenge us to examine women's relationships to one another and to the world. Eng and van der Gaag have deliberately tackled issues that are not sufficiently discussed in mainstream media and give us much to consider.

It is often hard to nail down concrete facts and statistics, especially about under-the-radar issues like women's rights. In *The No-Nonsense Guide to Women's Rights*, the latest in New Internationalist/Verso's excellent 'No Nonsense' series, Nikki van der Gaag provides a surprisingly satisfying amount of coverage for a compact book including sections on "Woman as global consumer," "Women and the environment," and "Literacy and learning: make education your husband." Interesting tables, graphs, and anecdotes break up the reading, and van der Gaag's fearlessly, feminist stance is energizing.

In *Secrets & Confidences*, Karen Eng collected first hand accounts that convey the love, jealousy, loyalty, and heartbreak of women's friendships. The writers, essayists, professors, and cartoonists reveal their own experiences with wit and honesty. Instead of being warm and fuzzy, this collection that attempts to grasp the reality of women's complex relationships. The anthology includes stories featuring the controlling, attention-stealing girlfriend and the one that disappears when we have kids. It was refreshing to read these stories, the sweet and the sad, that examine women's strong bonds to one another.

Taken together these books challenge us to create a more holistic view of women's place in their worlds, both political and personal and, as feminism has taught us, the interstices of those are where the real work of improving lives is done.

-Michelle Alletto

### Ideas in Pictures #4

P.O. Box 510214  
Milwaukee, WI 53203  
www.ideasinpictures.org  
Artist Colin Matthes combines edgy illustrations and live and direct social commentary in this graphically exhilarating zine. Mostly portraits, the illustrations jump out of the page in bold black and white lines, splashes and cross-hatchings. Matthes takes care and deliberation in the design of *Ideas in Pictures* and graphics and text are well placed visually. The zine comes wrapped in a used manila folder with a two color illustration on the front and back covers. Issue #4 focuses on a strike against Tyson Foods in Jefferson, WI by Local 538 workers while delving into the relationship between agribusiness and animal suffering. Matthes' decision to concentrate on a single theme in each issue should allow for more exploration both intellectually and visually.

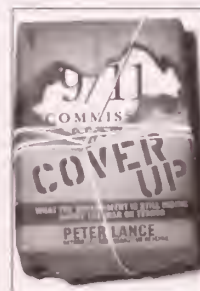
-Renoir Gaither

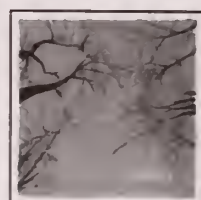
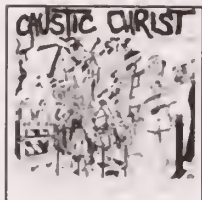
### Cover-Up: What the Government is Still Hiding about the War on Terror

Peter Lance  
Regan Books, 2004  
www.reganbooks.com

The recent embarrassing collapse of Bernard Kerick's nomination as Homeland Security chief provides an opportunity to remind ourselves that, in their shameless rush to exploit the death of 3,000 people for political gain, the Bush Administration has proven itself totally full of shit about the 9/11 attacks. In *Cover-Up*, Emmy-award winning investigative reporter Peter Lance offers a reasonably up-to-date inventory of the lies, prevarications, and obfuscations of our lame-chimp president and his fellow Mafiosi.

Lance's book takes two approaches. First, he continues the work he began in his 2002 book *1000 Years of Revenge* by examining the failure of our intelligence agencies to effectively analyze clues leading up to the 9/11 attacks (the second attack on the World Trade Center by Islamist radicals) Here he examines a small mountain of evidence that pointed to attacks by Islamist radicals using planes as bombs. Lance cites a refusal of FBI personnel to take seriously a jail-house informant who had spoken extensively to Ramzi Yousef, dubbed the 'mastermind of the 9/11 attacks' by the 9/11 Commission and the nephew of ranking al-Qaeda leader Khalid Shaik Mohammed. In the





second part of the book, Lance makes an effort to make up for the failures of the 9/11 report. While Lance acknowledges the 9/11 Commission faced an uphill battle against a secretive and lying-assed administration, he takes pains to bring to light evidence the commission either missed or ignored, especially regarding the breakdown of U.S. air defenses.

This book will leave you frustrated and exhausted thanks to the persuasiveness of his arguments and his tireless research, as if the re-election of Bush didn't leave you frustrated or exhausted enough. *Cover-Up* is a valuable addition to the growing literature examining what really happened on 9/11/2001.

-Keith McCrea

### Baby Bloc Zine

Triggs family  
babybloc@yahoo.com

*Baby Bloc* promises to be one of the most interesting activist publications you ever come across. The front page of each zine says it all; this is "for activist 'In a Family Way'."

*Baby Bloc* is created for the activist-minded parent who takes their children to civil-disobedience demonstrations, marches, parades, and such. They are filled with pictures of both mothers and fathers at various events — all with children in tow. Its presentation is crude, three or four letter-sized colored sheets of paper folded in half with two staples. Handwritten amendments are added wherever a sentence or two was missing. It looks like the kind of zine someone would hand you in a dark alley and tell you to 'pass it on.' Once you open the zine and begin to read the material, however, the presentation really doesn't weigh in much. Between the straight-talk on some controversial issues to the book reviews of literature most likely banned from your public library, the content is excellent. One article in particular, "Mercury In Tuna: Endangering Low-income Moms," gave me some new solid facts on a national ecological issue, and a fresh point of view I never thought of.

Even if you don't agree with everything you read, or the methodologies suggested, you have to give it to them for being strong enough in their convictions to share them with such zeal. The *Baby Bloc* staff focus on national social issues that are normally neglected airtime in the mainstream media. Fun little drawings and bizarre pictures will keep you turning the pages of this zine, making it a quick and easy read.

-Yolanda Best

## [AUDIO]

### At The Drive-In

Re-issue of all their shit...  
Fearless Records, 2004  
www.fearlessrecords.com

An At the Drive-In re-issue? Just seven years removed from their debut full-length release and four years since their final release? Oh, a re-issue ... not a box set, so, hell yeah! It's hard to believe that it has been seven years since ATDI exploded out of El Paso, Texas and that it has been nearly five years since the final ATDI full length.

Fearless Records, the label that released ATDI's breakthrough *in/CASINO/OUT*, as well as the outstanding follow-up *Vaya* has re-issued the previously out of print *Acrobatic Tenement*, *in/CASINO/OUT*, *Vaya*, and *Relationship of Command*, which was originally released on Grand Royal Records. This is important because neither Grand Royal nor Flipside, the original label for the debut *Acrobatic Tenement* are really in the business of releasing records any longer.

The four re-issues span approximately four years and represent all but a handful of singles and some splits that ATDI made during that time. *Acrobatic Tenement* ATDI's first full length originally recorded in the summer of 1996 for Flipside Records is a great first effort and glimpses of what direction the band was heading can be heard in songs like Schaffino, Initiation, and Communication Drive-In.

*In/CASINO/OUT*, the first full length for Fearless Records and the breakthrough album for ATDI defies categorization, other than a must have. Eleven songs of energy and emotion bound together by afros and atomic tattoos. *Vaya* was the last Fearless Records effort for ATDI and may be the crown jewel of not only ATDI, but also the label. This album captures a very special band at their best. The rampant energy and power of earlier releases is now more focused and pointed on songs like "Heliotrope" and "198d."

*Relationship of Command*, At The Drive-In's final album and also one of Grand Royal's final releases has been included in the re-issues and also contains two previously unreleased songs, "Extracumular" and "Catacombs." With songs like "arcarsenal" and "one-armed scissor," this is another great effort from ATDI before the break-up.

Now all we need is Fearless Records to somehow re-issue an At The Drive-In live show, or maybe a box set with accompanying DVD of interviews, tour footage, and some of their live shows . . . it's been five years!

-Dennis Kopic

### Battles

B EP  
Dim Mak, 2004  
www.dimmak.com

If you're going to nix the vox, you'd better be able to play those instruments. That may seem a trivial request, yet so few instrumental bands sound capable of following it. Battles ooze prowess and ingenuity. They use the basic tools to construct an evocative piece of aural art: guitar, drums, keyboard, whatever other noise-creators in the arsenal - All this, without relying on voice or words. Your casual music consumer would be hard-pressed not to consider this band's pedigree: Don Caballero (their most detectable ancestor, thanks to guitarist Ian Williams's unmistakable style and tone), Tomahawk, Helmet, and Storm and Stress. Though they have big shoes to fill, the band ease right in and stomp over nostalgists. Listen to the opening track "SZ2," to the way the song utilizes repeated guitar lines over a syncopated drum pattern that then dramatically shifts into an entirely different section. It's abrupt yet somehow hangs together, with guitar riffs sticking long after they've ended. "Dance" boasts a cacophonous blend of electronics into the demented guitar/drums mix. It's crazed and creative. "BTTS" is either genius or masturbation. The choice is yours, depending on whether or not you enjoy twelve minutes and twenty one seconds of minimal electronic wankery that offers no rhyme nor reason nor rhythm. Math rock? Who wants to listen to the quadratic equation? This is music for risk-takers and thrill-seekers.

-Casey Boland

### Calamalka

Shredders Dub CD  
Plug Research, 2004  
www.plugresearch.com

I'm always amazed when good things come from Canada: D.O.A., weed, Mike Myers, weed, John Candy, ice. Calamalka is from Canada as well, and while his name reminds me of Moloko Plus, his music is the polar opposite of the visual hysteria that was "A Clockwork Orange." Everything starts with the drums, you can almost hear the track being brought to life as the track ensues. And you can also hear the overt reggae and dub influence on each one of these sonic palettes. A couple clunkers stand out, not because they're bloody awful, but because there's so much possibility in each track. Fear not, devoted listeners, Calamalka delivers the Canadian goods on a number of tunes throughout. We should probably just expect the best

from a label such as Plug Research, and the best is what the rest of the album is. The electronic sounds (reminiscent of Pac-Man) at the beginning of "Bumpea" give way to the thundering kick of the drum set and miniscule production glitches that serve as the counterpoint to the rhythm. Although this is an instrumental album (as much as that applies to electronic music) there is a vocal on "Reliable 1". Just a little line about having an indefinable style, but the piece works fantastically and with the scratching that comes in towards the end, it's surely one of the more entertaining and genre leaping of the tracks on here. So, what did we learn today, class? There's stuff other than weed that comes outta British Columbia that's useful and fulfilling.

-Dave Cantor

### Caustic Christ

*Government Job 7" EP*  
Havoc Records, 2004  
www.havocrex.com

The strongest installment of burly HC yet from these Pittsburgh veterans. This is raging, thick, Midwest style 'core with a pronounced Scandinavian thrash influence. The guitars have that killer '80s midrange that we all love/need for this stuff, and the clipped, barked vocals evoke fond memories of Poison Idea. Add those Scandi-style galloping drums into the mixture and we got a winner. While many current HC outfits tend to sacrifice hooks for pure speed and power, these guys have their game down pat. This stuff is catchy, man. The shorter format works best for them, with all the songs being top notch and attention grabbing. Yet another solid release from one of the greatest labels going, and at the top of the heap of their current releases. And mine came on lovely, minty-fresh "Crest" colored vinyl. Yum.

-Chad Kelsey

### Del Cielo

*Us vs. Them CD*  
Lovitt Records  
www.lovitt.com

As we go to press with this issue, I'm lamenting the fact that my ass is going to be glued to a task chair in front of my monitor instead of running down the streets in DC to protest the gaudy inaugural fiasco. And now I'm doubly upset because I just got an email from a good friend letting me know that Del Cielo is playing a punk rock extravaganza in the nation's capitol with Anti-Flag, 1905, and Q and not U. If you haven't warmed yourself up to Del Cielo yet, you might not know that you're missing one of the best rock trios to playing out right now. In an era (can we call this an era?) when everyone's in a band, and everyone's got a label, it's virtually impossible to set yourself apart from the herd. That is, unless you play the kind of sincere, emotionally powerful, thought-provoking rock n' roll that Del Cielo brings into the fray. They'll be on tour this spring with labelmates and friends des\_ark, so check 'em out.

-Jason Kucsma

### Downtown

*Downtown*  
Coup De Grace, 2004  
coupedgrace.tv

Put this magazine down, get up, leave wherever you're at, walk to your car, or hail a cab, or catch a bus, or take a goddamn plane if need be, head over to your local record store, open the front door, walk over to the clerk, clear your throat, stare in his or her eyes, smile (it pays to be polite), demand to purchase the debut album of Downtown, when he or she gives it to you say "thanks," pay whatever the cost is, walk out, get back into your car, or cab, or bus, or plane, go to your place of residence (whether it be an apartment, house, mom's basement — like yours truly), put the album into your CD player, press play, listen to the sounds coming out of your speakers, remind yourself that you're not listening to some unreleased tracks from a Pink Floyd/Beatles/Radiohead/U2 jam session that could only exist in some bizarro place on the other side of the universe, drink in the melodies and chord changes that would make Lennon or Bryan Ferry nod in approval, close your eyes, realize that you're listening to quite possibly one of the best (if not THE best) debut album to come along in a long time, and when it's all said and done and the album has played itself through, press play once more, because tracks like "Twilight," "Thunderstorm," "Colorful Little Boxes," and "Nowhere to Hide" are what music is all about, and musicians like this duo (Robert Kaeding and Eric Brendo) are what keeps good music afloat in this sea of commercial stupidity, and when it's over, press play again, and repeat if needed.

-Mike McHone

### Medications

*s/t CDEP*  
Dischord Records, 2004  
www.dischord.com

I'm not sure if every Dischord release is recorded at Inner Ear Studio, but enough of them have been that I've noticed. And Brendan Canty of Fugazi fame and glory mixed this one down. Not being in touch with the newest of the new Dischord acts, I have to take for granted that Medications fit into that sound. Ya know the press release says so anyway. Regardless of that, there's a little Minutemen influence on the guitar, which (somehow) is sung along to almost note for note on a few tracks. Going back to the Dischord family idea; even though I was able to buy the Minor Threat discography ten years ago for the price of this cd/ep, the tracks on here all clock in at about four minutes, so at least I get twenty minutes of new music. As for the notes that come outta your stereo, most of them are good ones, occasionally the band begins to sound like Weezer, but more talented and with louder instruments. So, simultaneously that's endearing and aggravating. The cowbell rears its ugly head on "Excercise Your Futility" while the track somehow maintains the

sound of urgency that not too many groups can achieve. Departing from the frenetic pace of other tracks, "Reconcile Awake" is served with smooth drumming becoming tense without the track being overbearing. Unfortunately, someone decided to stick a clunker on at the end of this slab. "The Perfect Target" sounds similar to most average rock songs, only adding in some dissonant chords during the chorus for good measure. I don't think there's anything bad about this band or this release, but let us refrain from canonization until a full length comes out.

-Dave Cantor

### MF Doom

*MM...Food*  
Rhymesayers Entertainment, 2004  
www.rhymesayers.com

As far as traditional-styled beats go (as opposed to the Anticon/Plague Language style) no one does it better than Doom. Concept albums galore, Doom doesn't rest. *MM...Food*, technically the follow up to *Operation: Doomsday*, continues the goofiness that is much appreciated. I mean, "Hoe Cakes," what's better than that? But amidst all of the jokes, Doom really talks about relationships. In "Deep Fried Frenz" he says, "Call you when they need something/Trees for the Bluntin.'" See, Super-Villains don't like to be taken advantage of either. They have feelings. A vocal sample on "Poo-Putt Platter" says "Negro humor always escaped me," and I say that I may miss a Jesse Jackson reference every now and then, but it's amusing nonetheless. Grover, amuses me too, and it sounds as if he's talking on "Fig Leaf Bicarbonate." I would like more than a single Guinness. And as if Doom knew it, he had Angelika guest on that track. It's rare to hear good rappers and even more rare to hear good rappers that happen to be female. "How come all of you college boys wear those faggoty white shoes?" Good question. Only more entertainment follows. I have nothing all that deep to proclaim. But I do know that this slab is worth the cost of listening.

-Dave Cantor

### Lee Perry

*Panic in Babylon*  
Moll-Selekta/Damp Music Records, 2004  
www.moll-selekta.com/  
www.damp-music.com/

### Mike Brooks

*The Earth is the Fullness*  
Moll Selektta, 2004  
www.moll-selekta.com

Jamaican music is a very mysterious thing and the give and take between American and Jamaican culture has long gone under-appreciated. Originally, at the time of the islands' independence ska was born from a stew of Motown and jazz and the evolution of that music has really changed the face of the world. Regardless of what any scholar

says, rap comes from Jamaica. Nowhere on earth was anyone chanting overtop of a record before the deejays from the Jamdown. And perhaps even more importantly, the island gave fame to Bob Marley, who you should consider the most famous musician in the world (Elvis who?). While Marley is the most easily recognizable, a producer that he worked with, Lee Perry, produced innumerable tracks from his Black Ark studio and some of his earliest tracks appear here. Mike Brooks, falsetto and all, runs through twelve tracks of Jah praising material. While the lyrics are bound to seem repetitive, at least they have purpose. One lyrical standout, "Money" boasts the line, "Money buy material things/But good friend is better than pocket money". True. Amusing and scientifically inaccurate "Good Herb" borrows from Peter Tosh in an ode to the collie weed. Regardless of the lyrical shortcomings, each track on this slab serves up solid rhythms courtesy of Harry J, Lee Perry, Prince Far I and others.

All that Lee Perry has done (helping to create a genre and producing The Clash) affords him the luxury of a few decades of mediocrity. But things are looking up - Lee Perry is here and backed by a Swiss reggae trio, The White Belly Rats. "Rastafari" begins the whole affair well enough. It sounds authentic and Perry ruminates on vampires. Title tracks don't always deliver the goodness, but "Panic in Babylon" brings a most sinister horn line accompanied by Perry's off key vocals. Even in this, Perry is proclaiming himself an individual. Making forays in other genres has not diminished the sense of self that Perry possesses. The ridiculous lyrics and a return to a more conservative perspective of dub and Jamaican music, Perry proclaims his character. He no longer needs to be whispered about and joked about as a madman. He is Perry; he makes sense when the time comes, not consistently. There is a song called "I am a Psychiatrist," so I think there's an understanding of being self-reflexive. The tempo changes on "Are You Coming Home?". Textured keyboards support it all while a woman tells of a "god in bed" and Perry says it's a night "for plugging". A pleasure to listen to. Coming to an end, "Devil Dead" sounds off and Perry sounds most animated yelling about the collie weed. It's all passionate, it's not all good, it's all Perry. Founding label Moll-Selekta gives the world these slabs of roots. So far, they're one hundred percent.

-Dave Cantor

## Neutrino

s/t CD

Mush, 2004

[www.dirtyloop.com/](http://www.dirtyloop.com/)

Two men, whose names I couldn't pronounce and am not gonna type, produce some beats as smooth as jello. I don't really know what Down Tempo is, but I'm sure I've had it explained to me and no doubt heard it before, but enough with the labels. This is ostensibly hip-hop in the same way that DJ Krush or Theivery Corporation

is and sounds a little like Headset or Daedelus save for the uber-electro glitches. Upon further research, a neutrino turns out to not be a duo at all but any of three electrically neutral subatomic particles (any of various units of matter below the size of an atom, including the elementary particles and hadrons) in the lepton family. None of which explains the tasteful beats on here. Not plain, but unorchestrated, uncluttered. Each track repeats itself numerous times, but it doesn't get tired. And this really turns out to be a relaxing album. Hand drums make a casual, but integral appearance on "Mood-D." The organix and even slight psychedelics that they bring are counteracted a few tracks latter with "GP" and its' electro produced drums. Just tasty licks. Find it and pop it in.

-Dave Cantor

## Rob Sonic

Telicatessen CD

Def Jux, 2004

<http://www.definitivejux.net/>

Without question the importance of Def Jux will only be fully felt in years to come. But truthfully, label boss EI-P needs to be a little bit more particular about what is released with the labels' imprint on it. RJD2 and Cannibal Ox are not going to be equaled any time soon, but there have been a few lackluster outings from the label. Fortunately, Rob Sonic is not one of these. I refuse to say that this is groundbreaking genius, but at the same time I will say that from the instant this slab began, it was plain ol' good. While Sonic may be an intimidating white gentleman, more rhythm than melody is emblazoned across track after track, something lacking in many hip-hop offerings since the end of the daisy age. Even if the drums maintain a similar pace throughout and sound undeniably electronically produced, they make the album and Sonic himself sound close to masterful. Telicatessen touches on a number of topics, but returns consistently to the claustrophobic nature of living on an overpopulated tiny island. Electric guitar on "Strange Hammer" begins the event that is this slab and continues with some quick keyboard maneuvers on "Super Ball." Transitions on albums like this are key and a seamless shift between "Dyslexia" and "Riot Ender" is impressive. And if nothing else, the listener can revel in the fact that Mr. Sonic loves his mother.

-Dave Cantor

## Submission Hold

What Holds Back the Elephant CD

G7 Welcoming Committee, 2004

[www.g7welcomingcommittee.com](http://www.g7welcomingcommittee.com)

I always get excited when a band I like releases a new album. With most bands though, you never know what to expect: Will it be their best work to date or a horribly watered-down version of the music that you've loved for years? With a band like Submission Hold I know that everything they do

just keeps getting better and better. In the past 10 years their unique, challenging sound continues to evolve with each release. This release is no exception.

Released by the collectively-run G7 Welcoming Committee, What Holds...possesses all the intensity and beauty that we've come to expect from this Vancouver-based quartet while pushing the boundaries even further. The first track, "Final Coup of the Last Millennium" is a timely piece inspired by the first time Bush II stole an election. As G7's website explains, they express radical politics "without resorting to the embarrassingly painful and nebulous platitudes that one finds oneself continually subjected to these days."

Although I loved the concept of it, the one track that I skip over is "Sealed June 16, 1994." Accompanied by a short manifesto (in the insert) about the art of improvisation that had been hidden in a time capsule, this is itself an improvised song. And even if you can't handle Submission Hold's genre-transcending sound this album is worth picking up for the incredible artwork alone. And as always, the lyrics are printed in three different languages. This is a band that continually refuses to be irrelevant.

-Matt Dineen

## The Flaming Stars

Named and Shamed CD

Alternative Tentacles, 2004

[www.alternativetentacles.com](http://www.alternativetentacles.com)

This is the seventh album from The Flaming Stars and it's just like all of their others in terms of production and packaging: fast, up beat, and stripped down to the bare essentials, showcasing Max Decharne's thick British vocals and Joe Whitney's percussive thrashes, bashes, and hits.

Recorded at the now legendary Toe Rag Studios (where the White Stripes recorded their hit "Elephant"), the entire process took just over a week, including initial recording, overdubs, backing vocals, effects, and mastering... Yeah, a little over a week. The sound on the disc is like a professional basement mix: crystal clear, yet not losing any of that "independent" edge. They sound like Jerry Lee Lewis and Depeche Mode having a fight at a Strokes concert. Pretty fucking cool, if you ask me.

-Mike McHone

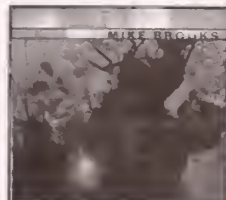
## Watchers

The Dune Phase EP

Gern Blandsten Records

[www.gernblandsten.com](http://www.gernblandsten.com)

Some tracks on this Watcher's disc could remind one of Dexy's Midnight Runners on an acid trip, and, trust me, that is meant in no disrespect at all. Following up their critically acclaimed To the Rooftops, the Watchers gives us a short, straight to the point, sock you in the jaw Extended Play that satisfies the melodic palate yet leaves one craving more and more; just like a good album should do.



The rhythms on this disc are simply astounding and conjures images of late '70s basement punk bars, mid '80s neon lit dance clubs, late '90s raves, and modern day garage offerings. To accomplish that . . . Well, it takes some talent, now doesn't it? The E.P. is seven tracks long, two of which are alternate takes, and it's well worth the price.

The Dune Phase: long may it run ... long may it run ...

-Mike McHone

### Year Future

*The Hidden Hand CD*

GSL, 2004

www.goldstandardlabs.com

A great punk rock band demands two responses: fists punching defiantly in the air and voices singing along triumphantly. In three quick salvos, Year Future achieve both. The band exude rage with thundering, tribal-like rhythms, shimmering delayed-guitar lines, and lyrics shouted like every word were the shouter's last. Imagine a modern day Birthday Party or Joy Division with Klaus Flouride on guitar. This gives Year Future a distinctive sound, which causes some to label them "goth," though no band bathed in black ever sounded this angry and focused. The lyrics are pointed and political, addressing the pharmaceutical industry, the economy, and suburban America. They can be routinely nihilistic: "It never ceases happening and nobody can challenge it." Or poetic and open-ended: "Inside monkey brains so large they seem like empty rooms." But the delivery can turn non-believers into devotees. Listen to "Police Yourself," the standout cut. The roaring bass line and the harsh guitars weave into a perfect discordant tapestry and the song's bridge pounds like the band wield jackhammers instead of instruments. Above the tempest, vocalist Sonny Kay hollers: "Now that they've bought the right to life, they've modified your right to food." It's simple, direct and relentless. Year Future prove themselves the quintessential punk band: they're fearless, snotty, angry and smart. Let's hope the coming full-length lives up to the bar they've raised stratospherically high with this release.

-Casey Boland

## [VIDEO/DVD]

### Hotel Rwanda

United Artists, 2004

Humble heroes are a modern news cliché. Yet, here is the only word to describe hotel manager Paul Rusesabagina who managed to save 1,268 people in the midst of one of the bloodiest ethnic slaughters in recent African history. Over the course of 100 days in 1994, nearly one million people were killed in Rwanda – Tutsis and moderate Hutus hacked to death by co-workers and neighbors.

*Hotel Rwanda* tells the true story of Rusesabagina – an ethnic Hutu married to a Tutsi woman – who managed to transform the luxurious Belgian-owned Hotel Mille Collines where he worked into a sanctuary, first for his family, neighbors and employees, then for a stream of refugees. The savvy businessman drew on the same mix of bribes and connections to save lives as he once used to supply Rwandan generals with imported scotch.

Rusesabagina, who has been speaking to audiences at human rights events around the county, says that he doesn't really see himself as a hero, but as a man who was doing his job, trying to create a sense of normality in the madness. "Whoever does his job is not a hero," he said, during an appearance in Seattle recently, "unless all the people who do their jobs are heroes."

*Hotel Rwanda* wasn't intended as a documentary (for that I'd recommend Frontline's chilling two-hour report *Ghosts of Rwanda*) and the use of simple sound bites and composite characters like journalist Jack Daglish (Joaquin Phoenix) may frustrate moviegoers. Northern Irish director Terry George nails the indifference of the Western media and governments to the tragedy – Canadian Gen. Romeo Dallaire, the UN commander in Rwanda and author of *Shake Hands With the Devil – The Failure of Humanity in Rwanda*, asked for 5,000 additional troops to stop the bloodshed, only to have his forces slashed to less than 300 – but overall chooses to keep the focus intensely personal with Don Cheadle's understated performance as Rusesabagina at the films center.

Very little of the mind-numbing horror we hear about appears on screen. In fact, one of the most brutal and effective scenes is left completely to the viewer's imagination. Red Cross worker Pat Archer (Cara Seymour) who had been trying to find Rusesabagina's nieces tells him how she was forced to watch helplessly as a group of orphans

are killed. The camera never leaves her face as she describes the scene. The last child, she says, begged to not to be Tutsi anymore. Filmed in South Africa, a portion of the profits from the film go to the Rwanda survivors' fund.

-Irene Svete

### Against Me!

*We're Never Going Home DVD*

Fat Wreck Chords

"I liked Against Me! more when I saw them play in the basement of a squat." "I can't believe they went on tour with Anti-Flag. That band sucks."

Those two quotes are the most overheard comments made on *We're Never Going Home*. Either way that you look at it, they are not compliments. *We're Never Going Home* chronicles a one-month span from April 1 to May 2004 on the road with Against Me!, Planes Mistaken for Stars, and No Choice. Very quickly, you realize that this is more than the documentation of a tour. This goes straight to heart, the politics of being in a band; not the Red State/Blue State politics that has inundated our lives, but the politics of being true to yourself, being true to your fans, and debating if money is worth signing your life away for.

Director Jake Burghart leads us on a fascinating journey from the D.I.Y. venues and basement shows of yore, to the sold out clubs, and angry crust kids that will sit outside of the show all night refusing to go inside and support the establishment, even though it means hurting the band they "love" to the major label fat cats that think free drinks will earn them respect.

Besides the documentary, the DVD also features performances in whole, a botched video commentary, a drinking game, and a drunken night in the back of the van with an acoustic guitar and a video camera. During the course of the documentary, Against Me! were courted by several labels, but the focus (and screen time) is hogged by Universal Group and Virgin Records. The most enlightening part of this DVD is book-ended by two very polar moments. The first is provided by the employees of their current home, Fat Wreck Chords, telling the band that what ever they do, as long as it is true to themselves, they have their love and support. The second is provided by Universal A & R man, Tom MacKaye, completely drunk, admitting to trying to steal front man Tom Gabel with a solo contract with Universal. Now, whether this was true or just good-natured ribbing, doesn't matter; it just provides the backdrop of how major labels operate, by a lot of bullshit.

-t.v.'s seth anderson

# HERE



Thomas pictured (front left) with the rest of the Strike Anywhere crew

## with Thomas Barnett of Strike Anywhere

Interview by Jason Kucsma

**COMING SOON:** future installments of "HERE" will include reports from around the world from people like you. Drop us a line at [here@clamormagazine.org](mailto:here@clamormagazine.org) and tell us about the people, places, struggles, projects, or ideas from the places you literally and metaphorically call "here"

*We're asking our readers to contribute to our "media" issue by telling us when was the first moment they realized the beauty, power, or sheer ingenuity of independent media. When was yours?*

Back in the day, in the first place would be both the zine explosion of the late eighties and early nineties with every tiny fractured facet of punk subcultures putting out a manifesto of clip art, scene stories, complaints, recipes, righteousness and polemic. It felt like everyone was finding their voice all at the same, loud and painful moment. These were always something to look forward to, whether it was drunk chaos punx with beer poetry and old flyer collections, or the brilliant hybrid political identities of such fascinating punk meccas like Minneapolis, Berkeley, the Lower East Side, Newport Wales, H8000 Belgium, or Richmond, VA. My most enduring inspiration from Independent media remains that ever inclusive, yet razor focused beautiful institution known as Slug and Lettuce. When I found my first one, when Christine was still up in Manhattan, it was at the zine table which accompanied Born Against's first tours. After reading it, I felt the feeling that Dick Lucas has had for longer than I've been alive "The whole fucking planet is a big punk rock!" I was hooked for life.

*Would you consider what y'all do with Strike to be artistic activism or media activism? Or do you not think there is a distinction between the two?*

This is a question I think more bands should ask of themselves. I don't know where the line is between art and the micro level of grassroots media: social observations from everyday life. Its better to break it down for us like this I imagine. Art 'cause its catharsis and expression from the frustrations and injustices that define the mediated helplessness of modern mainstream life; but, media in the same tradition as the substance people have always needed to express — with truths they don't see from the corporate sponsored trickle down of the hyper connected but ever-diluted. I almost cringe at the lack of humility exposed in the formation of these next thoughts, but, at our very best and most focused, I would like to think of the punk music philosophy as an anarchic descendant of the boxcar folk traditions, which has its roots in the Bardic and Griot truthseeking institutions of medieval Europe and Africa. We (not only my band, but the whole counterculture(s)) have to acknowledge the duality of our presentation and intention, but also the urgency of this energy and this direct communication.

*How has the political message of Strike evolved over the past couple years? Has the way you've communicated those messages changed as well?*

I think that our earliest songs may have slightly more personal and biographical lyrics, although there was always a political direction to the delivery and base of ideas. Our lifespan as a punk band to date has been during overwhelmingly complex and repressive time in American history, so it seems that if anything, our lyrics and worldview have had to become more aggressive, more desperate maybe. Its increasingly important to shine light on the threads of postive collective action against religious bigotry, militant nationalism, and selfish imperial economics. The relief and clarity, fighting isolation, fabricated fears and stupor, are a goddamn necessity in these messed up and deceitful times.

*We're in Ohio. Everyone's blaming us for the election, though people here have busted their asses for a long time to do everything we could to swing the election. What do you see as the biggest impact another term for Bush will have on you as an individual and/or as a band?*

My personal fears, which I share with millions of other Americans for Bush's second term, include his code speaking, parallel agendas to the religious right. The threat to women's reproductive rights, and the further distillation of homophobic social and legal culture I fear will remain this administration's domestic prerogatives. Its hard not to steel yourself with ironic self loathing in the face of how arrogant and murderous his foreign policy will continue to prove itself. I hope a grand rethinking of our electoral democracy will free itself from the rust. Also, a more fluid passage of ideas from the deep underground to the hollow mainstream might help to demystify revolutionary lifestyle and give it the great push into the palette of working class ideals. This is what could happen to counter the vacuum in American life, and act as an antibody to what the distortions of evangelical christianity have become to so many. In the battle for identity, we need to do our punk values honor and lay them at the feet of the world as a gift. I believe they will not further dilute, but instead gain a strength long deserved. Just as each of us did by briefly entering the mainstream fray - doing our best for this corrupted democracy in good faith for this last election; rocking against Bush, youth voter registration, lessening of two evils, ad nauseum. We look at it as a beginning not a loss or an end. ☆

*Strike Anywhere recently released To Live In Discontent, a collection of b-sides and outtakes from the last five years, on Jade Tree Records. For more information, visit [www.jadetree.com](http://www.jadetree.com)*

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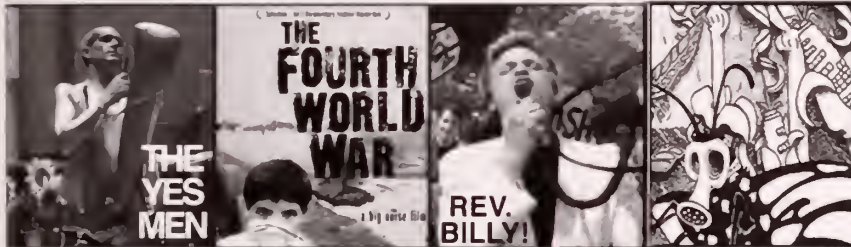
**THE WEATHER UNDERGROUND**  
w/Sam Green, Bill Siegel, Bill Ayers, Bernardine Dohrn, etc

**THE CORPORATION**  
screenings can accompany speakers dir Mark Achbar Jennifer Abbot. + Joel Bakan

**LOST FILM FEST**  
Emergency Film Tour Program. multimedia performance w/ Scott Beibin

**GUERRILLA NEWS NETWORK**  
media (re)volution tour w/ Stephen Marshall+Anthony Lappe

Evil Twin Booking workers collective helps to bring socially conscious independent films and performance artists to both small towns and large cities. We believe that art and information are for the people, and not only for the privileged. Folks get in touch with us when they want to bring any of the presentations on our roster to their town: We help them figure out how to host an event.



**THE YES MEN [LIVE!]**  
w. Mike Bonanno, Andy Bichlbaum, Patrick Licht

**FOURTH WORLD WAR**  
w. Rick Rowley and Jacqueline Soohen

**REVEREND BILLY!**  
& The Church of Stop Shopping [LIVE!]

**BEEHIVE COLLECTIVE POLLINATORS TOUR**  
multimedia presentation

Normally the task of exhibition is a difficult one for an independent mediamaker: Smaller distributors and self-distributed projects are often forced to compete against well funded studios for limited amount of space and time in metropolitan art-house theatres. At Evil Twin Booking we're trying to remedy this problem as many of the projects we deal with are politically oriented and cutting edge and need a little more push. (As subcaninophiles: we root for the underdog.)



**THE TAKE**  
dir. Naomi Klein and Avi Lewis

**TIMOTHY SPEED LEVITCH [LIVE!]**  
multimedia presentation

**WE ARE EVERYWHERE**  
multimedia presentation w. author Andrew Stern

**SETH TOBOCMAN [LIVE!]**  
multimedia presentation

After years of touring with the Lost Film Fest and numerous bands, Scott Beibin, Liz Cole and a bunch of friends applied the Do-It-Yourself ethics learned in the punk rock scene to form a collectively run organization that helps bring anti-authoritarian and underground films, performers and speakers to unexpected places.



**EVOLUTION CONTROL COMMITTEE**  
multimedia performance

**HORNS AND HALOS**  
w/ directors Michael Galinsky & Suki Hawley

**DISPATCHES FROM REBEL MEXICO**  
w. Greg Berger

**INSTITUTE FOR APPLIED AUTONOMY**  
contestational robotics

Evil Twin Booking teaches people how to circumvent the corporate owned media + allow challenging films to be shown in settings such as theaters, universities, warehouses, activist spaces and infoshops, art spaces, cultural gatherings, film festivals, concerts, squats, community centers, rooftops, union halls, street parties, churches, synagogues, mosques, caves, parks, alleyways etc: We also arrange residencies at institutions for the presenters we work with.

Wherever independent and conscious art and media is needed, we can be found.

If you would like to propose a project to us, one can submit a proposal using the online form at [www.eviltwinbooking.com](http://www.eviltwinbooking.com). Currently we are seeking projects representing people of color, women, queer and transgender issues, alternative fuels, sustainable agriculture+permaculture, natural healing and vegan diet.

Thanks! **The Evil Twin Booking Collective:**  
Liz Cole, Scott Beibin, Becky Braun, Margit Myers, Anne McMillan, John McAvoy, & Jessica Robbins

**FULL SPRING 2005 ROSTER:** Lost Film Fest (w. Scott Beibin) | The Corporation (w.dir. Mark Achbar) The Take (dir. Naomi Klein, Avi Lewis) | Reverend Billy and the Church of Stop Shopping (LIVE!) | The Yes Men (LIVE) | Beehive Collective | Fourth World War The Weather Underground (with Dir. Sam Green, Bill Siegel, and former WJO members Bill Ayers, Bernardine Dohrn, Naomi Jaffe | Mark Rudd, and Laura Whitehorn ) Timothy Speed Levitch (LIVE!) | Evolution Control Committee | Seth Tobocman (LIVE!) | We Are Everywhere (with Andrew Stern and Jennifer Whitney) | Veg The System Carbon Defense League | Institute For Applied Autonomy | Dispatches from Rebel Mexico (with Greg Berger) | Hot and Bothered | Straight Outta Hunters Point | Horns and Halos Guerrilla News Network | We Interrupt This Empire (with Jino Choi) | Black Rock +more

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