

the
eye

AFTER THE LIGHTS GO OUT

A REPORT ON COLUMBIA SECURITY



A MANNEQUIN JUST MISSES
DEAN'S LIST •
SLEEP DEPRIVATION
• CHICK FLICKS FOR DICKS

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John Davisson
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Contact Us:
eye@columbiaspectator.com
eye.columbiaspectator.com
Editorial: 212 854 9547
Advertising: 212 854 9558

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SECURITY BREACH 07-10

FEATURES

- TARA DEPORTE** Mikaela Bradbury 3
DON'T LOSE SLEEP OVER IT Rahel Aima 4
BABYSITTERS' CLUB Allison Davis 5
EDITORS' PICKS The Eye Staff Editors 6
HUMOR J.D. Porter and Raphael Pope-Sussman 11

ARTS

- MEAN ZINE FIGHTING MACHINE** Jennie Rose Halperin 12
BLOGS' TOP DOGS Justin Gonçalves 13
THE INCREDIBLE SHRINKING VIOLETS Natalie Guevara 14
INTO THE WILD Natalie Guevara 15

EDITOR'S NOTE:

In journalism, transitions are the architecture of a story. In a medium that is intended to transmit—that is, move through, information—the transitions aren't just the doorway, so to speak. They are what they utter: the movement that is the news.

Even the lede is a transition, as it has to compare with all of the other information on a full page of newsprint. There can be no independent theme in the lede or the conclusion, so the ability to communicate the information in a styled, smooth way is a reconciliation with content. Form becomes very much the information itself.

When compared to temporal and spatial transitioning, the analogy is troubling. We make allowances for ourselves. We live in a society of structures. They're neglected. You block your schedule time so that classes end at 2:40 p.m. and begin again at 2:55 p.m. What ever happens? Where does it go?

The scholar Victor Turner calls this gap "between & betwixt," fixed structures in his seminal 1969 work "Comunitas." Turner

calls homeless people "Liminals." That's a frightening proposition.

But the scenario is not so different from that of a college student. Look only at Britney Spears' recent foibles to prove the biological conundrum of "Not a Girl, Not Yet a Woman." Besides, what is tertiary school but the acquisition of skills and a delayed entrance into the workforce? And if you have an internship or a job, you don't even have a primary title. There's a reason they call it an occupation: taking time to commit to an activity is tantamount to an admission of stability.

And there's little potential for sustained nesting in your dormitory, and its impersonal, institutional furniture. First-years have pre-planned rituals that allow them to pre-empt what Turner would call their "invisibility." Upperclassmen, no such luck.

You don't even have your classes chosen. And if you're in a lecture, you're, as Turner would term you, "structurally, if not physically, 'invisible.'"

Think to Luis Bunuel's *Discreet Charms of the Bourgeoisie*, where the cultivated lifestyle is represented as a series of house parties. Even the hosts are strangers in their own home. No one eats, because like Persephone of myth, to eat would be to tie you permanently

Here I hope *The Eye* can help you. What is more of a stabilizing activity than to open the newspaper, to spend Sunday (or Thursday) reading it, cover to cover?

Ultimately, though, the Bourgeois' charming dream ends: the four couples walk silently, purposeless on a road toward a mysterious destination.

Alex Gartenfeld

CORRECTIONS: Last week we neglected to credit Sherrie Hui as Associate Style Editor. Sherrie compiled and edited capsule reviews throughout the week. Fashion week would not have happened without her.

EYE TO EYE: MIKAELA BRADBURY INTERVIEWS TARA DEPORTE



Tara DePonte is a prolific environmental activist and artist. She currently sits on the Board of Directors at the Lower East Side Ecology Center. As an undergraduate at the University of Virginia and a graduate student pursuing her Masters in Climate and Society at Columbia University, the bulk of DePonte's academic scholarship and subsequent work (with the United Nations Development Programme, among other organizations) has focused on allocation of water resources, particularly in developing countries. Today, she focuses her efforts on the urban environment, spearheading a number of environmental initiatives in Manhattan, one of which is composting. The Eye met with her to discuss her composting initiatives.

How did you zero in on composting as your main targeting area?

Well, our organization is 20 years old ... The directors of the organization were living in the East Village and started composting in our community garden at Seventh between B and C and started some wind rows—big long half-circle piles that you put compost in. We had a massive space then. Since then we've started working with the Department of Park and Recreation and have started doing large-scale composting with them. And it's just continued to grow from there and now we work with the Department of Sanitation and are the official head of the Manhattan Compost Project and Urban Compost Project. Every other borough does it through their botanical gardens.

Are there movements towards a large citywide composting system?

There are a lot of people that would support that, but as far as I know, that's not on the city agenda ... but I'm hoping it will be possible. Sustainability is on everyone's minds.

Are a lot of your participants residents, or are you mostly working with larger urban groups?

The urban project is about being an information source—a localized borough information source on composting with a lot focused on education and outreach—but our own composting facilities don't have anything to do with that project anymore. Rather, we have a drop-off in Union Square at the farmers market.

Do you see composting as a niche field? What do you see as the barrier to citywide composting?

A lot of the same issues as recycling translate over to composting. Education is massive—people don't know what they can put in and a lot of buildings will get frustrated because they will separate their recycling but then the staff will go and contaminate it. A few years ago, I visited some facilities and they literally had people handpicking stuff out.

On a larger scale, what do you think the breaking point is for people to start changing their habits? Some think that we need to reach a certain level of so-called “risk society,” or that environmentalism needs to go hand-in-hand with capitalism, become profitable, and then it will become mainstream. What are your views on this?

Personally, whenever I'm talking about taking action on environmental issues I try to appeal to people's personal lives. We all have things in our life that take priority—your personal

well-being, family, friends, things that are closest to you that triumph. So instead of deep-ecology philosophy, I appeal to, like: you have kids. Well, we have some of the highest asthma rates in the city. And what is some of the major trucking going on? Garbage trucks. So trying to not frame it as “environmental,” which is often thought of as “other” ... trying to make it so...

It's more practical, matter-of-fact?

Yeah, realize who you're talking to and that it's hard to change your habits. We as environmentalists have to be adaptable and give a variety of options.

How does this apply to developing countries? I know you've done work in Brazil. So, how do you weigh on the debate around developing countries and their right to industrialize at the expense of the environment?

Well, that's a really difficult question. I believe more in showing the well-roundedness of the options. Environmentalism doesn't have to be about that. It can be about economic incentives and a lot of major corporations are showing that. The hard part is that a lot of time when it's developing countries versus industrialized ones, we have massive amounts of raw natural resources and then you have processing and extraction coming from other countries. I like to focus on what we can do in our own lives before we go on to what other people can do in their lives. If you tell someone what to do, they probably won't do it.

I definitely agree. I know recycling has a lot of controversies around energy use during processing. Does composting have any of the same controversies?

Well, on a citywide scale, energy is used in trucking, design, location ... you don't have white rich people next to facilities. And composting can release some anaerobic bacteria, but just like anything else, you can have systems to capture that. Composting is basically rotting like anything else—it depends on whether you are capturing it and using the finished product. You can actually have more control. It's especially important in NYC, where we need better soil and in order to make better soil you add good organic materials. I'm sure people could find other issues with it.

You made me think of William McDonough's work *Cradle to Cradle*, and the creation of industrial products that can be processes like organic material...

He was my Professor at UVA!

So what do you think of the role of technology versus going back to the past?

I shy away from going back to the past and idealizing indigenous communities because there is great stereotype with those type of things.

How do you recommend a college student become involved in your work?

We have tons of programs. For one, we can start with composting. Our workshops are free. Since it's Columbia and you are in Manhattan, it's perfect. We can set up workshops to get students to get more worm bins in their dorm rooms. They're only \$10 each. And then there's the drop off in Union Square. There are also tons of stewardship programs, climate change programs, internships, environmental leadership programs, a lot of volunteer days in the park and recycling events—electronics recycling ... I know someone contacted us about that. It's strange, you teach a composting workshop and there is so much passion.

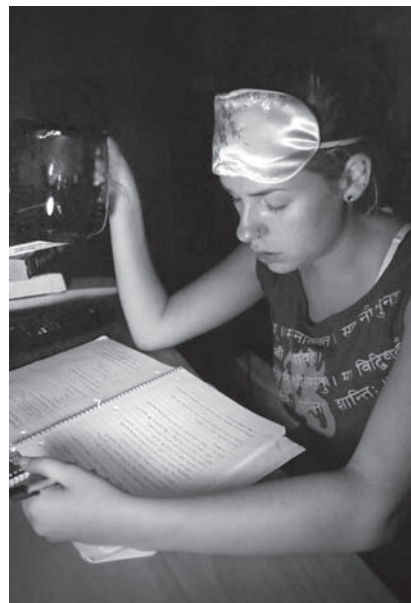
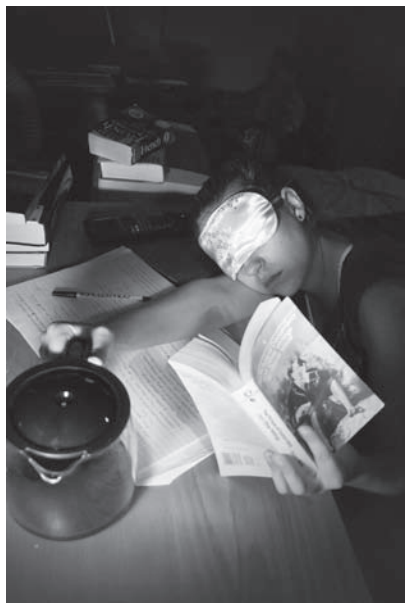
Perhaps because it's a nexus of so many issues.

Yeah, there are so many symbols of what it can mean. Tons of people in boroughs used to compost growing up. Now, all our classes are full. I feel like a lot of people are starting to do it and starting to care.

PHOTO COURTESY: TARA DEPORTE

URBANITIES DON'T LOSE SLEEP OVER IT

BY LAURA HEDLI
PHOTOS BY TINA GAO



HOW MANY HOURS CAN YOU GO before you collapse?

At the New York Presbyterian Hospital/Cornell Weill Medical Center, researchers in the Department of Chronobiology, Scott Campbell, Ph.D. and Patricia Murphy, Ph.D., hypothesize that the effects of sleep deprivation may last weeks, not days.

“If you’re sleep deprived for one or two nights, sleep will recover after maybe one or two more nights. It will look just like it did at baseline before sleep deprivation,” Murphy says. “But there’s growing evidence that cognitive performance won’t recover that quickly.”

Based upon the results from their pilot studies, they say that one all-nighter could cost you up to five or six days of reduced cognitive performance. And as residents of the city that never sleeps, we may be facing consequences graver than previously imagined.

“As it turns out, people are much better at assessing how affected they are by alcohol than by sleep deprivation,” Campbell says.

People may claim they’re fine, or that they’ve recovered “just like when they’re intoxicated,” Murphy says, “but their objective performance doesn’t match that.”

The scientific duo is preparing to begin a study in December that they hope will further clarify these cognitive impairments. They are recruiting healthy adults ages 18 to 40, who will spend 11 days in temporal, but not social, isolation at their sleep lab in White Plains, New York. All subjects will be sleep deprived for a full 24 hours, and then, depending on which group they are assigned to, they will spend the next 10 days sleeping for periods of up to three, six, or nine hours per day. During wakefulness, subjects will be asked to complete a computer-based battery of tests aimed to objectively measure their cognitive-motor abilities.

The brain waves of all subjects will be monitored, as will their core body temperatures. Both measures help to high-

light the two driving components of sleep regulation: homeostatic mechanisms and circadian rhythms, respectively.

“The homeostatic component governs the pressure to sleep,” Murphy explains. Current research points to slow wave sleep as the force behind the homeostatic component. If you have a SWS debt from chronic sleep deprivation, you’ll continue doing that head-bobbing thing in lecture until your body once again falls into the stages of deep sleep.

“The circadian component governs the timing of sleep, so we have a clock in our heads that gets trained to the 24-hour day,” Campbell says. “Our brain tends to like to sleep on the declining point of temperature, and it tends to like to wake up a couple hours after the temperature minimum,” which, in a normal young adult, occurs between 5 a.m. and 6 a.m.

The two components interact to give you what many have dubbed a second wind.

“If you are sleep deprived for 48 hours, you get sleepier and sleepier due to the homeostatic component,” Murphy says. “But because of the circadian component you get really tired around the time of the temperature minimum. Once you’ve passed that, [even though your sleep debt continues to accumulate] you’ll feel more awake.”

Unfortunately, when that second wind runs out, many are forced to catch a few Zs in some unconventional places—for Columbia students, it may be in the stacks in Butler. For investment bankers on Wall Street, it may be under a desk or against a bathroom stall.

In fact, the CEO of MetroNaps, Arshad Chowdhury, found himself in a similar predicament when he worked for Deutsche Bank. His experience sparked an interest in napping and soon a business in sleep became his career.

Chowdhury and his executive partner, Christopher Lindholst, an alumnus of Columbia Business School, are the founders

of MetroNaps—the only company of its kind in New York City where people can come to take a nap. Located on the 22nd floor of the Empire State Building are six of MetroNaps’ patented EnergyPods. And amid some books on sleep and a few delightful T-shirts, 20-minute and 40-minute naps are MetroNaps’ hottest selling items.

In a room bathed in darkness and blanketed by the sounds of white noise, there are six EnergyPods that look as if they belong in a sci-fi movie. There is a timer on the side of the chair which counts down the minutes you have left to nap; when it runs out, a light vibration wakes you up. In addition to the blanket and visor that provide extra comfort and privacy, there is a remote control that allows you to adjust the position of the chair.

“It takes you back so that you are closer to what they call a zero gravity position,” MetroNaps Representative, Janet Rhew says. “We’ve designed the curve of the pod specifically because it’s made for people to nap in during the day.”

The design is such that your knees are about level with your heart, and your back is held on what is roughly a 45 degree angle. “Whether you need to return to an office, or a classroom, or to whatever it is that you came from, that position restricts you from rolling around,” she says.

“There’s no evidence in the literature to indicate that napping disturbs nighttime sleep,” Campbell says. “And there’s certainly no question that a nap can help cognitive performance.” Still, Americans are trained to believe that more is better and that time equals money.

“That’s probably one of our biggest challenges,” Rhew says. “The workforce in America has a kind of macho go-go-go credo. If you don’t sleep and you can just work, then that makes you a bigger, better employee.”

Napping is often seen as taboo because humans are often thought to be “something of a phylogenetic anomaly,” Campbell

says, “We tend to think of ourselves as monophasic sleepers.” In fact, our bodies are programmed to necessitate more than one sleep period throughout the day. Serving as an expert in the field of biological time, Campbell insists that every other mammalian species studied to date has shown polyphasic sleep, and “given the opportunity, we’re going to be polyphasic.”

But all see a change in ideology, albeit gradual, on the horizon. Campbell believes that “napping is making inroads into certain industries. This MetroNaps thing—you couldn’t have sold that concept 10 years ago,” he says, laughing.

MetroNaps, which opened in New York in 2003, now offers a student monthly rate of \$39 and a standard monthly rate of \$65, the regular price of one 20-minute nap being \$14.00.

Currently, the company has offices in Australia, Denmark, the U.K., and Germany. In addition to marketing the MetroNaps’ EnergyPods to employers and hospitals, the business is “always working to expand to add more companies and territories,” Rhew says. Even colleges are taking the initiative, as technicians recently upgraded four MetroNaps’ EnergyPods at the student center of The Savannah College of Arts and Design. New models were also installed at Carnegie Mellon University, where Chowdhury received his M.B.A.

But here on Broadway, the ground floor of Lerner remains pod-less, and Columbia students are still feeling the crunch of sleep deprivation.

“People are always trying to validate why they’re here,” Andrea Bachofen BC ’09, says. “We perpetuate the cycle of staying up late, trying to beat each other out.”

Genia Iartchouk, BC ’09, finds the status of “tired” to be the norm. “We’re at an Ivy League School, in the middle of New York City. You pray that you’re going to catch up on sleep on the weekends, but then you realize, everything’s open till 4 a.m.”

BABYSITTERS' CLUB

BY ALLISON DAVIS
PHOTO BY TINA GAO



“Upper West Side Mother seeks student to watch two adorable boys, ages 5 and 8. Good wages, flexible hours, 2-3 days a week.”

For the student looking to score quick cash with minimal commitment, this type of ad is a dream. Campus services like the Barnard Babysitting Agency and Temp Time are among the most popular on campus, offering students listings and contacts for babysitting jobs in the area, ranging from sporadic to routine.

But listen to someone with experience. Caroline*, BC '06, was a babysitter from sophomore through senior year. One day she noticed an ad on the site: “It said very high-profile celebrity, only for the weekend. It was pretty discreet. It had a number but no name.”

Next thing she knew, she had an appointment with the personal assistant. “I met her and the dogs at the apartment... She was an enormous snob, and thought this job was the be-all and end-all. She didn’t tell me it was Katie Couric, even though there were pictures of her everywhere with various dignitaries. We mostly talked about this really expensive oriental rug that was her dead husband’s great-grandparents’, which the dogs were by no means to go anywhere near. [The job] didn’t pay very well, \$350 a weekend, but I said, whatever—it’s a funny story. I’ll do it for a few weeks.”

First, she got a call saying she was chosen. Then another call saying there was a miscommunication and they were only paying \$300 for the weekend. “So I called and said no thanks. Then I reported her to Gawker. The girl at the service flipped out. The ironic thing was the timing. Katie was changing her job and her salary was thrown around a lot. It was ironic that just at the time that was happening, she wanted to gyp the babysitter 50 bucks.”

Katie Couric and priceless oriental rugs aside, stories like this are not totally uncommon. Unlike demanding, competitive internships, campus babysitting services offer high-paying jobs with very few requirements. Barnard Babysitting requires a brief orientation, leaving the screening process up to the discretion of both the sitters and the families who need them. The opportunities are also plentiful; sitters are in high demand, “Parents want educated, responsible, college-aged sitters,” Jean Frazer, BC '08, manager of the Babysitting Agency says. As a result there are more jobs than students and families will often engage in price negotiations to have their jobs filled.

“This is the best way to make extra money, especially because it’s tax-free,” Frazer says. The wages are steadily increasing as well. In 2004, the average wage was \$10 an hour; this semester the average sitter is pulling in \$13-\$14 dollars an hour. Lucrative pay for what could potentially be hanging out in a nice, Upper West Side apartment while a child sleeps.

However, many student sitters find these jobs are often more rigorous than just making some Easy Mac and turning on Hannah Montana. Frazer says, “You’re basically being paid to be a parent.” The more routine jobs certainly reflect these demands, especially when taking jobs that involve being “vacation sitters,” as many often do.

These commitments involve long hours, demanding children and parents, miscommunications—and the occasional confrontation. A Barnard junior, who wishes to

remain anonymous, has been a sitter since her first year. She routinely babysits for families through the agency and often feels the stress of being a substitute parent.

“I took care of one little girl whose mother insisted the child not take naps during the day,” recalls the sitter. “[But then] she would be upset when the child was tired at the end of the day, and left me several notes complaining about the situation.”

In this case, the sitter was expected to keep the child awake while ensuring that both the little girl and herself were still alert by the end of the day. “It’s a problem asking one person to care for your child for eight hours a day without a nap. It isn’t healthy for the child and it isn’t ethical to expect someone to work straight through,” she says, “but they expect you to take care of their child, their way.”

A problem of boundaries arises. When the sitter is the one caring for the child eight hours a day, shouldn’t she have input on nap times, snacks, and daily activities? Where is the line between mother’s helper and mother?

Another sitter, Renee*, BC '08, recalls giving trail mix to one of her charges. The trail mix happened to contain nuts. The child had no allergy, but “the next day, her mother confronted me ... citing potential allergy development as an excuse,” Renee says. “She freaked out over a small amount of nuts.”

Although motherhood is a full-time job, it is often the mothers without jobs who are the most demanding, observes a former Barnard student, who babysat throughout her college career. They are often the ones who seem to rely on sitters the most. “I know one mother who is never alone with her child without an ice cream cone and a Toys ‘R’ Us bag, but sitters aren’t supposed to use the same tactics.”

Sitters may not have the right to choose snacks, but they are often given other duties that blur the line between caregiver and housemaid. Although the contract at the agency expressly stipulates “No Housework,” many students find themselves being asked to do laundry, run errands, cook family dinner, and even pack for family vacations.

“I do laundry sometimes, I also do errands and cleaning,” Renee says. “I don’t really mind, sometimes it gives me a break from having to hang out with the kids.” The role of the sitter who moonlights as a chef who moonlights as a maid is often hard to break. The same former student—who is now a teacher—recalls how difficult it was to cut ties. “I would go visit the families and the mother would say, ‘The children seem fine, could you just go tidy that drawer?’ People are funny about boundaries.”

Fuzzy boundaries certainly cause their fair share of problems among sitter-parent relationships. But that gray area doesn’t always lead to negative experiences. While interviewing Renee, the father of the child she babysits enters the coffee shop. They exchange pleasantries and what I suspect is an inside joke—Renee beams upon hearing the news of the child’s new bike.

“For the most part my experiences have been positive,” Renee says. “It’s nice to have a family away from your own.”

* names have been changed

EDITORS' PICKS

CURRENT READS

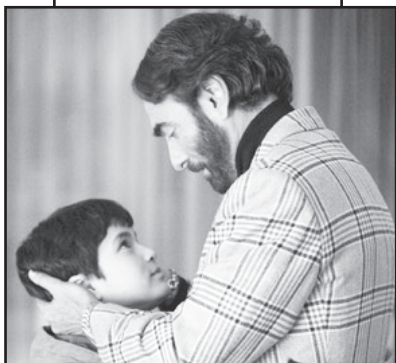
OUT STEALING HORSES, PER PETTERSON



The Swedish Petterson writes tight, spare prose. A good lesson for any editor, methinks.

ALEX GARTENFELD
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

KITE RUNNER, KHALED HOSSEINI



I suspect I may be the only person in the world who has yet to read this book. After hearing rave reviews from everybody and his brother, I figured I'd better read *Kite Runner* soon, before the movie comes out. I'm just a few chapters in, but so far I'm glad that I jumped on the bandwagon.

EMILY GREENLEE
PRODUCTION

THE LYNNE TRUSS TREASURY, LYNNE TRUSS



This second book by Lynne Truss, author of grammar bible *Eats, Shoots, & Leaves*, contains a selection of more comedic works that range from fictitious columns on gardening to her life-long goal to make her cat laugh.

DANIELLA ZALCMAN
MANAGING EDITOR

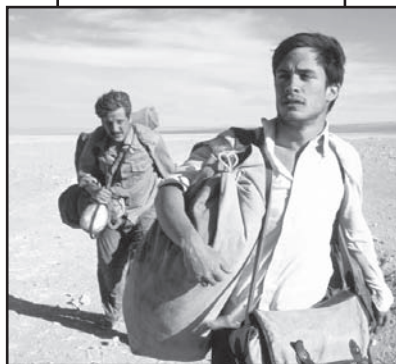
THE MAN WITHOUT QUALITIES, ROBERT MUSIL



It's probably not accurate to say that I'm reading Robert Musil's *The Man Without Qualities*, but that is what I'm saying. The truth is more complicated. I was reading it, and then I was reading it less, and then when classes started, I pretty much just stopped. It's now hidden under a pile of books, so I don't have to look it in the face.

MEDAYA OCHER
URBANITIES

THE MOTORCYCLE DIARIES, ERNESTO GUEVARA



This is actually the only non-school related book currently in my room. I've been reading it off and on for about two years—not sure why I've never finished it. Someday, it will happen. And yes, I did get it after seeing the movie.

EMILY RAUBER
FILM

THE DEAD FATHER, DONALD BARTHELME



I'm reading *The Dead Father* in the sense that I have it in my room. It's about people dragging a gigantic dead father across the land. Hilarious.

J.D. PORTER
HUMOR

AFTER THE LIGHTS GO OUT

BY KATE LINTHICUM

PHOTOS BY JOEY SHEMUEL & DANIELLA ZALCMAN

THE TWO COLUMBIA STUDENTS STROLLING HOME IN THE COOL, EARLY MORNING of Sept. 2 had a lot to talk about. Reunited after a summer apart, the women were days away from starting their senior year. They had spent the evening reconnecting with friends—visiting local bars 1020 and The Heights, then sliding into booths at Tom’s Restaurant for a fluorescent-lit, late-night snack. “We were doing the Columbia thing,” one of the women says. “We felt like we owned the place.”

It was about 3:40 a.m., and they were walking alone on 115th Street between Broadway and Riverside Drive. Woodbridge, the dorm on Riverside where they share a two-person suite, was just a couple of minutes away. They were chatting about guy problems when one woman turned to the other. “I told her, ‘I had so much fun tonight,’” she remembers. “That’s when it happened.”

The woman heard a few loud footsteps pound the pavement behind her. Someone pushed her roughly. She whipped around, expecting to see a drunken frat boy. Instead, she faced a man wearing a blue bandana around his face. He was pointing a knife at her ribs. “Shut up,” he told them under his breath. “Don’t say anything.”

The women flashed back to last April, when the campus was paralyzed by news that a student at the Columbia School of Journalism had been raped and tortured in her Hamilton Heights apartment. But all this man wanted was their purses. They tossed him their bags and he fled down 115th Street into the darkness of Riverside Park. “I wanted to scream, but I couldn’t,” the woman, who asked to remain anonymous, remembers. “I was terrified.”

Afterward, the two couldn’t believe they had been robbed. They thought they had done everything right, choosing to walk as a pair on a well-lit street lined with Columbia-affiliated buildings. But later they learned something that might have made them take extra precautions: Theirs was one of four robberies involving female students reported in a 15-day period at the beginning of the 2007-2008 school year.

The spurt of crime—which in two cases left the victim injured—has some people thinking twice about their personal security. But campus safety officials insist the recent cluster of muggings does not indicate a larger trend toward crime.

Still, officials are stepping up their efforts. Columbia Public Safety has added another vehicle to its neighborhood nighttime patrol. Now, four Columbia cars patrol the streets, paying special attention to areas where muggings have occurred. The NYPD has also responded. The 26th Precinct, which oversees Morningside Heights, has flooded the area with extra patrol cars, according to William Plackenmeyer, director of Public Safety at Barnard. Plackenmeyer says police—who couldn’t be reached for comment—have also targeted the Columbia area with a plainclothes anti-crime unit.

But the two women mugged on 115th Street want to see officials do more to secure the area for students. “The fact that this could happen to us is like a wake-up call,” one of the women says. Her friend agrees. “They address this as, ‘It happens,’” she says. “But no, it shouldn’t happen.”

* * *

Deep in the bowels of Low Library, James McShane spends his days concocting strategies to keep Columbia students safe. His high-ceilinged office is decorated with mementos he collected before coming to Columbia as Vice President for Columbia Public Safety three-and-a-half years ago. There’s a photo of him grinning with Bill Clinton, taken during his days as a student at Harvard’s John F. Kennedy School of Government. Next to it are pictures of him and his two daughters, one of whom is enrolled at Columbia. Below, a certificate commends him for his work on 9/11. McShane, a former NYPD deputy chief, was at Ground Zero when the World Trade Towers collapsed. Ever since, he’s had a cough and bad acid reflux he can’t seem to shake.

McShane loves New York, and he’s quick to remind people that crime rates are lower here than in most of the country’s big cities. “We’re in one of the safest precincts in one of the safest cities in America,” he says. Indeed, the police consistently rank the 26th among the 10 safest precincts in the city.

According to NYPD statistics, crime in the area has steadily declined over the last two





decades. In 1990, 786 robberies were reported in the precinct, which is bounded by 110th Street on the south and 138th street on the north. In 2006, there were only 247 robberies reported—a decrease of 68.5 percent.

The area around campus is even safer, McShane says. To back up his claims, he points to a 2005 report that named Columbia as having the lowest rates of violent crime among top urban universities. Harvard had the highest. Released by the Boston-based Student-Alumni Committee on Institutional Security, the report defined violent crimes as all reported murders, forcible sex offenses, robberies, and armed assaults that occurred on or just off campus.

McShane says the latest robberies stand out precisely because Columbia has such a stellar safety record. “For an area as safe as Columbia, four incidents in a two-week period is a spike,” he says, noting that crime often increases in September. His hypothesis: Area criminals know there’s a new batch of students on campus each fall.

Columbia and Barnard Public Safety work closely with the police to solve crimes that occur near campus. McShane has met with NYPD officers several times to discuss the recent robberies.

The first robbery took place on Aug. 26 near Broadway and 120th Street. The victim, a student at the Manhattan School of Music, was walking down the street a little before 11 p.m. A woman she didn’t know approached her, striking up a conversation. A few seconds later a male accomplice sprang from the darkness, punched the victim until she fell to the ground, and stole her property. The pair fled.

On Sept. 2 around 3:20 a.m., two female Columbia students were mugged while walking on 118th Street. Neither woman was hurt. Just 20 minutes later, the women walking to Woodbridge were robbed on 115th Street.

The last reported robbery occurred on Sept. 8, to a woman walking in the vicinity of Broadway and LaSalle Street. A man punched her several times in the head before stealing her purse.

Despite the similarities among the robberies, Columbia public safety officials and the NYPD believe they were not committed by the same criminal. But McShane says the patterns are telling. “Three of the four were late at night,” he

points out, and all of the victims were women.

* * *

While Columbia and Barnard Public Safety post robbery alerts on their Web site and in dorms and campus buildings, only Barnard has a policy of e-mailing safety alerts to students. Stephanie Davidson, CC ’08, a leader of the annual “Take Back the Night” march against sexual violence, supports Columbia’s decision to keep students in the dark. “Hearing about them [the robberies] is a scary thing for a lot of people,” she explains.

Maintaining an illusion of safety can be “as important as the reality,” says Greg Smithsimon, an assistant professor in Barnard’s Urban Studies program. “It means you have the tools to be a good student, participate in your community and everything else.”

But the girls who were robbed on 115th Street say that they wish Columbia officials had told them there was an increased threat. “They need to tell people about these things,” one of the woman says. “If we had known, we would have been more cautious.”

Barnard students say e-mail notifications of recent robberies are appreciated, if unpleasant. “Sometimes I think it’s overdone,” Felecia Jinwala, BC ’08, says. “But it’s just to keep people informed.” Jinwala, who lives at Barnard’s Cathedral Gardens on 110th Street and Manhattan Ave., says she was as cautious before the robberies as she is now. “I don’t really trust the area,” she says. “I had to defend living here to my family.”

Smithsimon says studies show that street crime can be reduced when all community members make a habit of watching out for one another. He cites urban studies scholar Jane Jacobs, who argues that “eyes on the street” make a city safe. “The crimes in this neighborhood tend to be in places and at times where there are not eyes on the street,” he says.

McShane supports this kind of approach. “We all need to work together to keep this community safe,” he says.

* * *

On the Monday after the fourth robbery, William Plackemeyer strode out into the lobby of Barnard Hall to debrief his safety officers. The men stood with hands resting on the wide belts slung around their hips, listening to the details of the assault two days before. Plackemeyer told them that the

mugging had been captured by a closed circuit video camera, and asked them to watch the footage so they’d be able to keep an eye out for the robber.

Plackemeyer, who speaks in a slow drawl, asked the men for updates on safety conditions around campus. One officer, addressing Plackemeyer as “boss,” mentioned that a street-light near Broadway and 120th—the corner where one of the robberies occurred—was still out. Plackemeyer, who attends weekly Buddhist meditation classes and has an even keel to match, got visibly upset. “If they’re not fixed, holy hell’s gonna be raised,” he says, shaking his head.

Plackemeyer started his job in public safety as an undercover cop with the NYPD in 1966. His first task was to infiltrate a Neo-Nazi gang. He lived with them for two years, and the experience taught him how criminals think.

“Perps tend to stay away from people who are looking very alert,” he says. “You can’t walk the streets as if you’re not paying attention and not fully aware.”

Plackemeyer thinks crime could be curbed if people walking at night got off their cell phones, turned off their iPods and listened to their instincts. He defines instincts as “that little voice” inside.

“A lot of safety depends on it [that voice],” he says. “You should listen to it.”

Plackemeyer is passionate about safety and loves an opportunity to give advice. Barnard Security, like its counterpart across Broadway, gives every incoming first-year a mandatory safety orientation. Officers distribute rape whistles and literature packed with safety tips, but Plackemeyer fears that some of the advice goes unheeded.

“Once, a long time ago, I was your age,” he says, smiling. “I remember the feeling of invincibility.” But now that Plackemeyer is a father and a grandfather, his perspective has changed. “There’s a part of us that looks at our students here as our kids,” he says. “I know it sounds corny, but it’s true.”

Plackemeyer says Morningside Heights is lucky because it has officers from five separate security forces patrolling the area. The NYPD, Columbia, Barnard, St. Luke’s Hospital, and the Morningside Alliance all have uniformed officers on the streets. Columbia Public Safety employs 150 people. Barnard employs 54.



“It conveys a sense of omnipresence,” he says. “Its one of the things that keeps this precinct safe over time.”

At 9:30 p.m., Dean Guidice turns the steering wheel and glides onto Broadway. As he joins the river of taillights heading downtown, his eyes sweep across the sidewalks, looking for anything suspicious. For the past seven years, Guidice has spent most of his nights cruising the streets of Morningside Heights as a member of Barnard’s Public Safety team. He does most of his job from the comfort of a Public Safety van. “I can listen to music, I can listen to baseball,” Guidice, a die-hard Yankees fan, says. “I enjoy coming to work.”

Mostly Guidice gives rides to students who don’t feel comfortable walking. Barnard and Columbia offer escort services, and hundreds of students use them each week. The University also offers a walking escort service and several bus routes. The Morningside Heights Shuttle Bus circles the Morningside Campus every half-hour, and the Intercampus Shuttle Bus takes students between the Morningside campus, the Medical Center campus, and Harlem Hospital.

The University has also organized a “safe haven” network of local businesses to cut down on crime. Dozens of businesses near the Morningside and Medical Center campuses have agreed to help Columbia students if they feel uneasy about a situation on the street. Businesses with “safe haven” posters in their windows promise to help the students phone Columbia Public Safety or the police and give them a safe place to wait while they respond.

There are other options for students who feel frightened off campus. The streets near Columbia are peppered with blue emergency call boxes and there is a guard booth staffed with security personnel every few blocks. There are also often security guards patrolling on foot.

But the two women who were robbed on 115th Street say they don’t think there is enough of a Public Safety presence off campus. They asked Columbia to install a guard booth on 115th Street west of Broadway because there are so many students there at night. “If there’s any block that deserves extra patrol, it’s that one,” one of the women says. “They should put a car or booth there immediately.”

But McShane says it’s not so simple to choose where guard booths should go. “Every time there’s a crime you could say it’s a natural place,” he says. McShane said Public Safety is upgrading two guard booths near Morningside Park with video cameras, a move he hopes will decrease crime on the east side of campus. Barnard and Columbia’s campuses are constantly being monitored by dozens of closed circuit video cameras. The streets near Morningside Park are especially attractive for criminals because the park provides an easy escape route, according to McShane.

McShane says Barnard and Columbia Public Safety officers sometimes have a tricky task. They’re expected to keep an eye on people who look suspicious, but they cannot legally detain them or ask them to leave. “We are an unsworn and unarmed department,” McShane says, noting that his officers don’t have any more jurisdiction than other citizens. “It’s a thin line between proactive and profiling.”

So most officers just try to keep their eyes open.

When Guidice isn’t busy ferrying students across campus, he cuts through the less populated streets of Morningside Heights. After dropping off a student at Cathedral Gardens, he drives up Riverside Drive and through the darkened streets north of Barnard. He turns onto 120th Street to check out the corner where the Manhattan School of Music student was beaten and robbed and noted that the streetlight had been repaired. When Plackenmeyer hears about this tomorrow, he’ll

be happy.

Guidice turns north and stops to buy a coffee at the Dunkin’ Donuts on 125th Street. Bits of chatter and a brisk wind blew in through the open windows. Fall is on its way, and Guidice knows his job will get busier when the seasons change. “The colder it gets, the more calls you get,” he says, laughing. It’s not that crime goes up—it’s that people just want rides.

Though Guidice has never helped to stop a robbery, he and other Public Safety officers are always on the lookout for suspects in past crimes. Two nights after the women were robbed on 115th Street, a Barnard Security officer spotted a man who met the description of the robber. He followed the man to a residence on 109th Street, and alerted the police.

That man will be at the 26th Precinct this week and the victims will have a chance to view him in a lineup. If they pick him out of the crowd, he’ll be charged with the crime.

Meanwhile, the pair is trying to get over what happened to them. They spoke about it recently over dinner in their Woodbridge suite. Hung with art and filled with comfortable chairs, the place is clean and cozy. But one of the women says she’s felt uncomfortable there since the robbery, during which her room key was stolen.

One woman’s mother flew across the country to comfort her daughter. “She was feeling a little vulnerable ... She needed to have her mother around,” the parent explains in a phone interview. She thinks her daughter is street smart and mindful, and was simply the victim of a random crime. “These things happen anywhere, any time,” she says. “This could have just as easily taken place on Fifth Avenue, Park Avenue, or in a small town in the Midwest.” But after the crime, she asked her daughter to avoid walking home after dark. “It’s just asking for trouble to be out on the street that late at night,” she says. “Most people at that time are up to no good.”

HUMOR

A B.A. IN ANTHROPOLOGIE

URBAN OUTFITTERS MANNEQUIN EARNS BARNARD DEGREE

TEXT AND GRAPHIC BY J.D. PORTER

ONLY DAYS AFTER THE RUMORS BEGAN, THE Barnard College Department of Anthropology has confirmed that its current senior class does contain an Urban Outfitters mannequin.

“After careful consideration, we have determined that a mannequin from a popular apparel chain has completed every requirement for a degree,” department chair Brian Larkin says in a rare press conference. “As a result, we will allow her to graduate with her peers.”

For three years the mannequin blended seamlessly with her Barnard classmates, and even after the departmental announcement many could not identify her, despite her presence next to Larkin as he spoke to the press. She only aroused suspicion a few days ago, when African dance instructor Maguette Camara noticed that she had an especially stilted sense of rhythm.

“We do expect a bare minimum of rhythmic movement,” Camara says. “After a few weeks, the difference between her and the other students just became too pronounced.”

Camara spoke to Professor Larkin, who at first could not figure out what was wrong.

“There were no red flags on her record, and she had a GPA of 3.3, so I wasn’t sure what the problem was,” Larkin says. “Then it hit me: she’s a mannequin.”

So far professors have reacted with shock, noting that the mannequin held her own in class discussions. Despite her lack of a brain, she frequently managed to discuss “gender politics in liminal spaces.” She even earned an A-plus in the course Emergence of Identity in the Modern Imagination, writing a paper that professor Jean Weil

described as “comparatively innovative.”

“She knew the literature as well as anyone,” Associate Professor Shawn Willen says. “Assuming I’m thinking of the right person.”

In many ways a model student, the mannequin was never absent and was rarely late to class. According to classmates, it was not unusual to walk into a room and see her already there, casually attired in taupe shirtdress, black leggings and leather foldover boots, with a scarf and cable-knit beret as accessories.

“I remember wondering how she did it for those 9 a.m. classes,” Julie Pescher, BC ’08, says. “I guess we all know the answer to that one now.”

Enrolled in the fall of 2004, the mannequin began to focus on anthropology after earning an unexpected A-minus in The Interpretation of Culture. Her closest brush with discovery likely came in the spring of 2006, when she nearly failed The Human Species: Its Place in Nature.

“I noticed that, despite doing poorly in the course, she wasn’t trying to talk to me after class, or visiting me in tears during my office hours,” Professor Jill Shapiro says. “Fortunately for her this is the only scientific course in anthropology, so the curve really helped her out.”

All the mannequin needs now is a passing grade in her senior seminar and a convincing research project, and she will have earned a full degree.

“This is one research project I’m looking forward to reading,” Larkin says.



SAUSAGE FEST LITERALLY A SAUSAGE FEST

TEXT AND PHOTO BY RAPHAEL POPE-SUSSMAN

DESPITE NUMEROUS PROMISES TO THE CONTRARY BY THE BROTHERS OF ALPHA Epsilon Pi Fraternity, the First Annual Sausage Fest was in fact a complete sausage fest.

The “Fest,” which ran from 2-4 p.m. Sunday on the Van Am Quad, was intended to celebrate this city’s proud heritage of sausage ingestion. Richard H. Worthington III, CC ’08, president of the Columbia Chapter of AEPi, explained the origins of the contest. “This is not Columbia University in Biloxi, Mississippi. It’s Columbia University in the City of New York—the home of the Nathan’s Hot Dog Eating Contest. It’s simply preposterous that the hot-dog-eating subculture has not been previously represented on campus.”

Event organizers promised participants, “All the sausage [they] could eat [and] copious nubile [and] buxom” broads.” Yet according to those in attendance, while the sausage flowed freely, only a handful of females bothered to show up.

Umar Agha, CC ’11, was outraged at the gender imbalance of the event. “They said there would be chicks there, man. Then I show up and it’s just a bunch of bros scarfing sausage. What is the meaning of this?”

While the all-female student body of Barnard College considerably skews the guy-girl ratio at Columbia, the sausage fest is nothing new to the University. In fact, prior to 1889, social life at Columbia was pretty much one big circle jerk.

President Worthington declined to comment on the total lack of mackable ladies at the contest.



MUSIC MEAN ZINE FIGHTING MACHINE

BY JENNIE ROSE HALPERIN



WHAT'S PINK, DIY, AND PUNK ALL OVER?

If your answer is the Riot Grrrl movement, you win the prize, which—unsurprisingly—is a zine about the perils of the feminine hygiene industry.

If Riot Grrrl reached its peak in the mid-1990s, why do we still care about it? For one, this punk movement left behind a prolific body of work in the form of zines—self-published pieces that include the art, music, and personal ramblings of a generation of females and genderqueer people who felt disenfranchised by both the Religious Right and cultural portrayals of women as fetish objects. Railing against sizeism, ageism, sexism, and homophobia, riot grrrl zines connect the personal and the political, American culture and chaos.

The beginnings of the Riot Grrrl movement can be traced to punk-rock DIY of the early-1990s, in particular the bands Bikini Kill and Bratmobile. The women in these bands, though they refuse credit for starting the movement, encouraged women learn to play instruments and take back “the scene” so violent, patriarchal punk would lose its foothold.

Co-opting popular pamphlets and zine ideas from other punk bands, zines quickly became a women’s movement through Riot Grrrl. Girl became “grrrl” and “women” became “womyn.” Encouraging punk rock, leftist politics, guerrilla art, and “grrrl love” through zines, riot grrrl was able to spread its second-wave feminist agenda across the country like wildfire.

“Riot Grrrl was sparked by women feeling at best like second-class citizens in punk rock and at worst, doormats or appendages,” Jenna Freedman, Barnard’s zine librarian, says.

The Barnard Lehman Library Web site defines a zine as a “self-publication, motivated by a desire for self-expression, not for profit.” Freedman began the zine collection in 2005 in order to catalog this art form, which she calls “outsider art.” A zinester herself, Freedman was not a “riot grrrl,” even though the movement is one of the foci of Barnard’s collection. A basic search of CLIO will bring up hundreds of zines with the keyword.

I spent the entire summer reading these zines, listening to the music (some good, some terrible,) and learning about the movement through the art it produced. What I found was that girls—from middle school to adulthood—found solace in each other, in the movement, and in the music. Most Riot Grrrl zines, often cut-and-paste, collaged, and xeroxed, include writings by young girls who did not fit into the mainstream. Rejected by their peers, they often wrote about size oppression, the politics of high school, their musicconcert and zine reviews, and their sexuality—interspersing pro-feminist quotes throughout. Riot Grrrl seemed to be the first place women who were victims of sexual assault or abuse could turn.

Connected through the mail, riot grrrls sent letters to each other in a pre-Internet age and often told their pen pals and zine readers their most intimate secrets. Ann Magnuson of Bongwater writes in the collection *A Girl’s Guide to Tak-*

ing over the World: Writings from the Girl Zine Revolution, “When I think of how much benefit my teenage self could have gained from the multitude of zines that have proliferated over the past decade, I weep for all the lost potential. Except for Joan of Arc and Anne Frank, the thoughts of teenage girls have rarely been taken seriously.”

Riot Grrrl is often criticized as exclusively white and upper middle class, though this is vehemently denied by the girls who wrote their zines.

“I don’t think that anyone expected Riot Grrrl to become racist,” Freedman says. “Riot Grrrl was the first part of second-wave feminism to acknowledge its own racism.”

Corin Tucker of Sleater-Kinney and Heavens to Betsy considers the movement in retrospect. “the whole point of riot grrrl was that we were able to rewrite feminism for the 21st century,” she says. “Feminism was a concept that our mothers and that generation had, but for teenagers there wasn’t any kind of real access to feminism. It was written in a language that was academic, that was inaccessible to young women. And we took those ideas and re-wrote them in our own vernacular.”

Around 1994, riot grrrl became a commercial sensation, which had the unfortunate effect of diluting the movement. Magazines such as *Sassy*, founded in 1988 by Jane Pratt—considered a seminal figure by the movement—no longer represented the feminist, political roots that Bikini Kill and Bratmobile tried to reinforce. “Alternative” music skyrocketed into the mainstream and non-political bands like Hole, Veruca Salt, PJ Harvey, and No Doubt were mistaken for riot grrrls by the mainstream press. Even Tori Amos has sometimes fallen under the Riot Grrl umbrella.

“People, I suppose, can consider themselves anything within a movement,” Freedman says. “Tori, though, was not really a riot grrrl, though people considered her to be one.” The media co-opted the movement, she says, as they became “more interested in what the girls were wearing, in how cute they were, not in the feminist roots of the movement.”

Even as the movement died, people outside of riot grrrl still wrote zines about it, and up until 2001, riot grrrl zines from all over the country were still being published. This includes zines by New Yorker Lauren Martin, the prolific riot grrrl collector who donated her collection to the Barnard Library.

“I still read zines where women feel better giving their feminism a name,” Freedman says. “It’s an empowering phrase, it’s creative, it’s fun.”

Ladyfest—the riot grrrl gathering of the 1990s, immortalized by zinesters—still happens, but The music has faded and become more mellow. Sarah Mc Laughlin scored a few hits in riot grrrl’s wake, as did Paula Cole. Letters were preempted by e-mails and zines by blogs, silencing many a riot grrrls’ voice. The world became less personal, cleaned up its act, and punk died, but it lives on through the collection of art it produced.

PHOTO COURTESY OF BARNARD LEHMAN LIBRARY

BLOGS' TOP DOGS

BY JUSTIN GONÇALVES



IN THE PAST TWO YEARS, MUSIC BLOGS HAVE moved from alternative news source to definitive source for all forms of independent music.

I could say that bloggers are just normal music fans with no credibility, or that the blog-band hype that has (hopefully) subsided in recent months is nothing short of disastrous for long-term music production, but that would be too easy. In fact, amidst the sea of self-proclaimed experts who feel the desire to share their views with the world, there are a few music blogs that have distinguished themselves by providing some truly exceptional and original content.

Both Daytrotter (<http://www.daytrotter.com>) and La Blogothèque (<http://www.blogothèque.net>) showcase live performances of some of indie rock's finest talents, albeit with two very different philosophies.

Launched in August 2006, Daytrotter has built an archive of exclusive in-studio performances by bands like Dirty Projectors, the National, Bonnie Prince Billy, and Of Montreal.

But how does Daytrotter's Futureappletree Studio 1 in downtown Rock Island, Ill., get some of the scene's biggest names to take time out of their schedule to make it into the studio? It's nothing more than serendipitous touring circumstances and a relative lack of anything to do when you start to

get that far west.

Another part of the appeal is Daytrotter's stated goal, which can be found on its website.

"What Daytrotter is attempting to do is to not kid around with you, and tell you that we found something that you never knew existed. We are going to contribute to the musical landscape, not just toss it around like a used book, or a stolen pick-up line. We're going to give you something that you truly have never heard. We are not giving you songs from someone you love's record album, thereby stealing from someone you love. We're giving you exclusive, re-worked, alternate versions of old songs and unreleased tracks by some of your favorite bands, and by a lot of your next favorite bands."

Such has been the case when bands like Grizzly Bear are featured at Futureappletree Studio 1. Besides recording the previously released tracks "Little Brother" and "Shift," from *Yellow House* and *Horn of Plenty*, respectively, the quartet recorded a previously unreleased, gender-bending cover of the 1962 song "He Hit Me," written by Gerry Goffin and Carole King, and recorded by the Crystals under the guidance of producer Phil Spector.

While Daytrotter's more professional philosophy is manifest in the overall quality of its musical production and

recording techniques, La Blogothèque thrives on its guerilla-concert aesthetic. Blogothèque has amassed a high-profile line-up of some very exceptional musicians. Featured performers include Jens Lekman, Okkervil River, Islands, Arcade Fire, the National, and the Shins, among many others. Never, however, does one see the act in its element. Instead, due to the very nature of "Concert a Emporteur," bands are forced to readapt their songs to both an unconventional and acoustic setting.

Watching the Shins perform an unplugged rendition of "Turn A Square" on a Parisian street corner as they stand in front of Pizza Florenza and crowd around the drummer's lone snare drum, the song takes on something wonderfully foreign yet familiar. It's upon this freshness that La Blogothèque thrives.

Whether it's Andrew Bird walking down a street accompanied only by the faint strumming of a violin, Grizzly Bear performing an a cappella version of their Beach Boys-esque "Knife," or Dirty Projectors' choice to perform "Depression" (from their new record of Black Flag-inspired tunes, *Rise Above*) in a Greenwich Village McDonald's, "Concert a Emporteur" gives both the musicians performing and the fans watching the opportunity to see something thoroughly original.

One might expect that Daytrotter and Blogothèque, being similar in terms of philosophy and originality, would be affiliated in some way. Appropriately enough, you can find countless links from one site to the other—La Blogothèque, in fact, even lists Daytrotter as a partner. This should come as no surprise, especially when glancing at the archived performances for each blog. There are about seven bands that have performed for both publications, each creating a new, original musical artifact courtesy of these enterprising internet pioneers.

So next time you think about insulting a band for being just another "blogger-band," think about Daytrotter and La Blogothèque. Maybe being a blog favorite isn't as bad as its cracked up to be.

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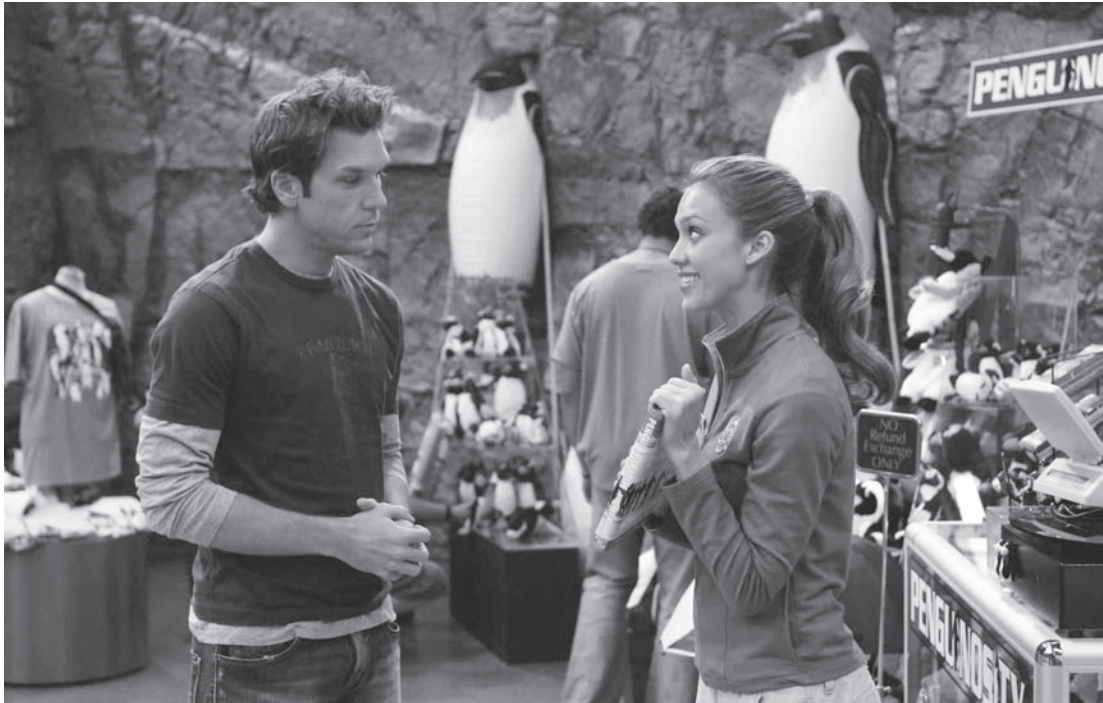
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FILM THE INCREDIBLE SHRINKING VIOLETS BY NATALIE GUEVARA



IN *THE HOLIDAY*, (2006), THERE IS A scene in which a veteran Hollywood screenwriter, played by Eli Wallach, uses romantic-comedy stock characters to break down the unlucky-in-love status of an English woman portrayed by Kate Winslet.

“Iris, in the movies we have leading ladies and we have the best friend,” he explains to her. “You, I can tell, are a leading lady, but for some reason you are behaving like the best friend.” So what does Iris do to claim her rightful leading-lady title? Does she use Katharine Hepburn’s sheer bravado, Bette Davis’s admirable pluck, or Audrey Hepburn’s innocent charms? Nope. Instead, the third act of the film sees Iris patiently waiting for the object of her affection (Jack Black) to notice her unflappable loyalty and finally ask her out.

Females have been making some strides in film lately. Last weekend saw the opening of *Across the Universe*, director Julie Taymor’s kaleidoscopic Beatles musical starring celebrated-“It girl” Evan Rachel Wood. And on Oct. 12, Cate Blanchett revives her star-making role as Elizabeth I in *Elizabeth: The Golden Age*. Her androgynous take on Bob Dylan in Todd Haynes’ upcoming *I’m Not There* is already getting considerable buzz as well.

However, these may be anomalies in a changing cinematic world. In her recent *New York Times* piece, Sharon Waxman, BC ’85, notes the departures of some of the industry’s leading female suits, including Nina Jacobson of Disney, Gail Berman of Paramount, and Stacey Snider of Universal. The number of female studio executives has diminished on a whole, according to San Diego State University professor Martha Lauzen, from 19

percent in 2001 to 15 percent in 2007. And while Waxman ultimately states the impact of those personnel shifts on the studio’s decisions is “debatable,” her article does acknowledge that the female market has been underserved in both the quantity and quality of films geared towards women and girls.

It is possible that the decrease in strong female figures may be attributed to the dumbing down of the films themselves—particularly in the traditionally female-centric realm of romantic comedies. Compare writer-director Nancy Meyers’ last offering, the previously mentioned *Holiday*, to her 2004 hit *Something’s Gotta Give*, an equally sappy but arguably wittier portrayal of a woman caught in the throes of romantic disappointment.

Diane Keaton’s Erica Barry, a professionally fulfilled but emotionally wrecked playwright, is as self-assured as she is dizzyingly neurotic, a great contrast to Winslet’s lovely-but-backboneless Iris. Although Erica spends the entire film verbally sparring with her romantic counterpart, Harry (Jack Nicholson), she eventually realizes she must challenge her preconceptions about herself and humbly accept love from him. Iris, on the other hand, has no self-awareness to speak of—her self-image is shaped entirely by how others perceive her. The moment in which she falls for the Jack Black character, a film composer, happens when he demonstrates what she would sound like if she were a movie theme.

Something’s Gotta Give illustrates film critic David Denby’s theory that well-crafted screwball comedies are about the “fight waged between equals”—particularly equals in spirit. *The Holiday* asserts the view that a woman

may be accomplished, intelligent, and kind, but can only come to believe this about herself if someone else, usually a man, clues her in.

Another aspect of this recent trend is the recent influx of male-dominated rom-coms, jokingly referred to as “bromances.” Films like the Adam Sandler vehicle *I Now Pronounce You Chuck and Larry* and the slapstick teen-romp *Superbad*—both of which opened in first place at the box office—are performing better than stale chick-flick fare. *No Reservations* debuted at number five to a meager \$11.7 million, and *The Nanny Diaries* opened at number six to poor critical reception. While *Chuck and Larry* and *Superbad* have stirred controversy over their portrayal of women (in the former, Jessica Biel plays a lawyer who’s all T&A; in the latter, high-school girls are reduced to nubile sex objects), the selling point of both films is that they seemingly nix female character development in favor of exploring male relationships.

One Hollywood player in particular has garnered praise for revitalizing romantic comedies: writer-director-producer Judd Apatow, the unofficial president of the new “boys’ club” that has infiltrated the genre. Like Gary Marshall (*Pretty Woman*) and Rob Reiner (*When Harry Met Sally*) before him, Apatow is a gifted storyteller, imbuing his characters with just the right amount of warmth and keeping plotlines hysterical but firmly grounded in reality. *Knocked Up*, his follow-up to 2005’s critically acclaimed *40-Year-Old Virgin*, is Apatow’s latest attempt at exploring men’s sensitive yearnings. When Ben, a twenty-something burnout played by Seth Rogen, accidentally impregnates his one-night stand,

an ambitious TV presenter played by Katherine Heigl, it throws him for a loop, forcing him out of the slacker pack and into the real world.

A noble effort, *Knocked Up* delivers crowd-pleasing comedy along with a healthy serving of genuine emotion. The film’s only major problem is that most of the laughs come from its male characters, particularly our hero, the bumbling Ben. Heigl’s Alison, while beautiful and driven, is completely lacking in the charming nuances that form the crux of her onscreen love interest. Her personality seems programmed to operate at two levels, blandly pleasant or psychotically hormonal, and for all her smarts, she has no real moment of insight or wit. Thankfully, Leslie Mann is funny as her much feistier sister. Had Apatow written a lead female part with a little more charisma, the love story between Ben and Alison would have been a highlight rather than the least exciting thing in the movie.

As for the ever-troubled realm of romantic comedy, Jessica Alba, for one, seems hopeful. In a recent phone interview promoting the actress’ latest film, *Good Luck Chuck* (opening tomorrow), she stressed the importance of soulful, dynamic female characters with their own imperfections and idiosyncrasies.

“I think it’s boring to watch a girl unlucky with love who finds this rich guy who sweeps her off her feet,” she says. “But if you can get real-life stories and quirky little things that feel like a girlfriend of yours, or a circumstance you might be in ... to me, that’s the better story.”

Of course, Alba has yet to establish herself as a feminist rather than a pin-up, but in the era of *Chuck and Larry*, the right anatomy has to count for something.

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THE WILD ONE

BY NATALIE GUEVARA

WHEN EMILE HIRSCH ARRIVED AT LAST WEEK'S roundtable interview to promote his latest film, Into the Wild—directed by Sean Penn and set for limited release tomorrow—he looked nothing like the scraggly drifter he plays on-screen. Gone was the gaunt boy sporting torn clothes and a scruffy beard—in his place was a dapper young man on the brink of Hollywood stardom. Hirsch sat down to discuss the intense filmmaking process and the real life inspiration for the movie.

I thought this was more demanding than other films you've done. It seems like it almost killed you.

Emile Hirsch: It was definitely the most challenging—not only part that I'd ever played before—but the most challenging period of my life that I've ever had to go through.

How so?

Because of a combination of physical and mental demands. You know, Chris McCandless was a character that really required me to look at the world in a much different way. When you spend a lot of time growing up in L.A.—especially in your late teens, early 20s—there's a lot of negative bullshit that the city almost tries to inundate you with. It was great because it was almost like stripping all that stuff away, layer by layer, until you start to feel like a real person again, and that was one of the things I loved the most about it. You know, I came back to Los Angeles and I looked around and me and Sean [Penn] had this joke because we were at the airport, and we were looking around at everybody and I looked at him and went, “civilians.”

How much was needed to fit yourself into Chris' world, to get him right?

As much as I could ... it was really fueled by talking with [his] friends and family. Carine [McCandless, Chris' younger sister] was an immense help to me, and Walt and Billie, Chris' parents. Talking to Wayne Westerberg, who still calls him “Alex” because that's how he knew him in South Dakota, and reading the books that

Chris was reading—they kind of fueled Chris' philosophical background—was all really helpful. You know, Jack London, Thoreau... *Walden* was really a fantastic kind of glimpse into the mind of Chris.

Have you heard from the real McCandless family at all, and what did they have to say after seeing this movie?

Sean has talked to Walt and Billie, who have a continuing reaction. Their reaction will never be one thing because it's such a big part of their lives, because this was a son that they lost. One moment they will be happy, the other sad, another angry, another joyful. I don't think that will ever stop, you know, particularly with Walt and Billie, given the nature of their story. I just talked to Carine two days ago, right before I started all the press for this film. I was flying to Chicago from L.A. and I called her, and she was just so happy that what she wanted—which was something to honor her brother's memory—was made.

This movie was really heavy to watch. I'm sure it took an emotional toll on a lot of people, but was there anyone who lightened the mood on the set?

Vince Vaughn, of course, was so much fun to work and spend time with. He is hilarious and we had a fantastic time. There's a really funny story, actually. I'm on the ultra-mega diet at this point, in South Dakota. And I'm going into Vince Vaughn's trailer and he had, like, 20 protein bars that for some reason they put in his trailer. I'm sitting there and he's like, “You know, it's Hollywood, you gotta eat, man. This is a movie. Don't worry about it. Just have a protein bar. Don't worry about it so much, come on!” And I was like, “You know, you're right.” So I opened up a protein bar and ate it and he was like, “Yeah, see, screw it! Do what you want, you know. You're working hard!” (*Laughs*) And I'm like, “Yeah,” and I'm opening up the second one and I'm eating it, and then I'm opening up the third one, and then I'm on my sixth one and he goes, “No, no, no. What are you doing, dude?” And I go, “You said I could have protein bars!” And he

goes, “Yeah, yeah, but you're on, like, a crack binge right now. It's unbelievable. I'm not watching someone eat food, I'm watching someone overdose.” ... He didn't quite get why there was this quarantine of food on the set and everyone was like, “Don't give him food, don't show him food.” He saw the crazy, wild beast of hunger come out in me and, you know, he turned into the biggest one of them all. “You don't need that. Not six protein bars!”

Your films, from *The Dangerous Lives of Altar Boys* (2002) and *The Mudge Boy* (2003) to this and *Speed Racer* (2008), are all so different in terms of roles.

How do you go about choosing them?

Sean says you gotta work to be in the game and I believe that. I don't think if there's anything that inspires you at the time you should take 10 years off just because you don't feel like doing it, you know? But this particular project really came out of nowhere for me. Sean called me directly. There were no agents or managers or anything. He just called my cell phone one day and said, “Hey, this is Sean Penn,” and I thought, Wow. We got together and he told me to read the book, which I immediately did, and over a period of four months we were just getting together. He would pose these kind of vague statements to me but I knew exactly what he meant—“You know, this is really a big commitment and you've got to lose a lot of weight. I just want you to think about it.” We both knew it'd be a big deal, but he would present it so casually, so I would think about it and come back and say, “Okay, I thought about it—I want to do this.”

Even though the idealism of Chris McCandless attracted you to the role, you knew he was a very polarizing character going in. What do you have to say to Chris McCandless' detractors, to those who think he basically committed suicide by going into the wild with low provisions?

Do I agree with Chris McCandless? Well, my answer to that is, I don't agree with where Chris McCandless started on his journey, and what he believed in. But I agree with where he ended up.



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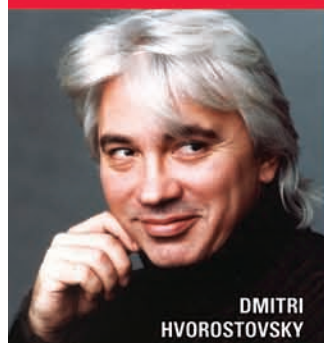
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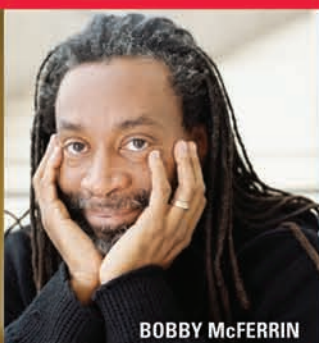
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