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AFTER OFFICE HOURS

THE TRIALS AND TABOOS OF
TA-STUDENT RELATIONSHIPS

ONE GIRL MASTERS THE GAME

JAMES SCHAMUS PROCEEDS WITH CAUTION, LUST
ALUMNI'S UP-RIGHTEOUS DEBUT

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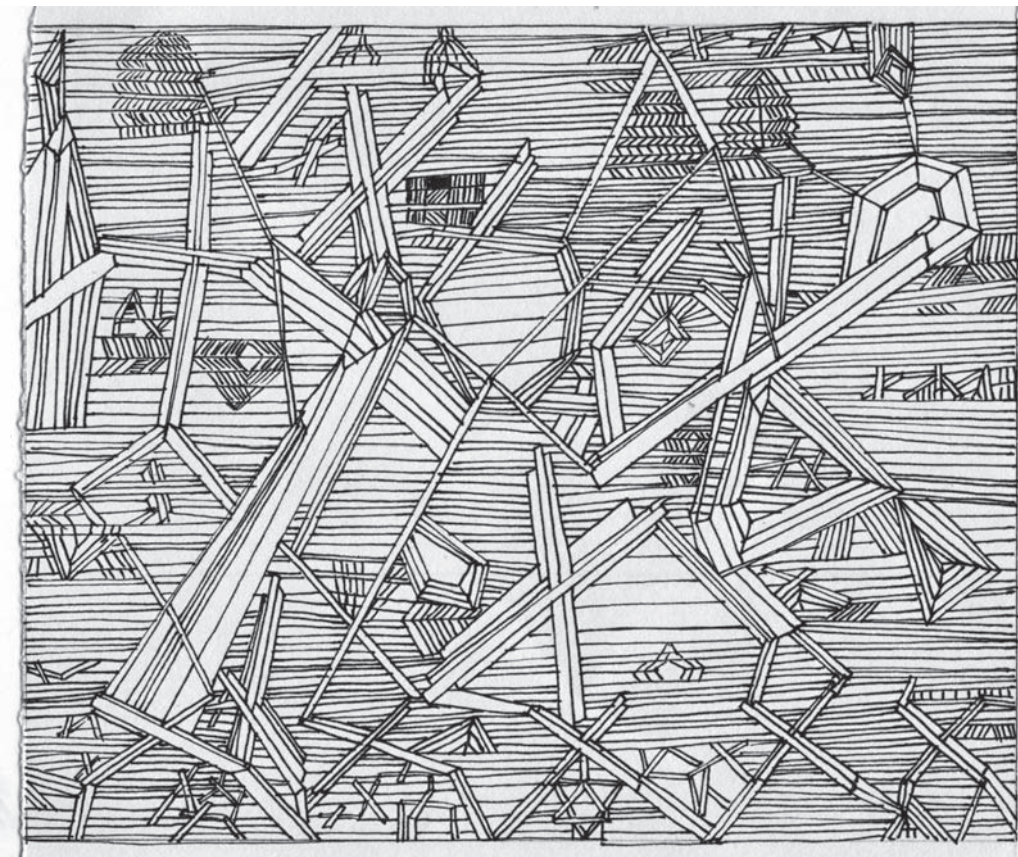
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EDITOR'S NOTE:



This is how I was feeling this week. as
illustrated by Bree Zucker, BC '08.

EYE TO EYE: SARA DAVIS INTERVIEWS RUDOLPH DELSON



RUDOLPH DELSON'S FIRST NOVEL, *Maynard & Jennica*, was released this September to delighted reviews (*The New Yorker* called it a "remarkable debut.") A certain biographical detail about the author seems to be catching many an eye: the fact that until very recently—his 30th birthday—Delson was no author at all, but rather a lawyer. But, as he tells *The Eye*, this is actually an oversimplification—he had been writing the whole time, under the guise of lawyering! Law was only a backup plan! Delson shot a few e-mails back and forth with *The Eye*, to give us some insights on his craft.

Can you tell me about your writing habits? Where do you write? On what? Do you eat or drink certain things? Do you prefer to be in public or not?

I write in my apartment, because it's the only place where I am somewhat sovereign over distraction. And I don't just mean that in my apartment I can control

the temperature (unlike in parks, which are suitable only for writing, like, short verse about imminent rain) and the music (unlike in cafes, where one barista's bad iPod can destroy an hour's work). I'm talking about decor. Bad carpeting is inimical to good prose, you know? So, at least for me, are cramped chairs, fluorescent lights, and low ceilings. Which for me rules out most libraries as writing rooms.

I have a little office in my apartment, which I've painted light blue, and which I've decorated with an umbrella plant and a map of the Bay Area. I sit there most days for six or 10 hours, picking at the dead skin on my feet, and occasionally adding a paragraph into the Microsoft Word document that's open on my iBook.

What about beverages?

Beverages, beverages. I do drink a daily glass of Tropicana "Pure Premium 100% Pure & Natural" orange juice, the

"Homestyle" variety that contains "Some Pulp," but I don't think that has anything to do with my writing. (My writing contains no pulp! Dammit!)

What kind of music?

And I did listen to Arthur Rubinstein's 1936 and 1937 recordings of Chopin's *Nocturnes* over and over again while working on *Maynard & Jennica*, but again, I don't think that has much to do with my writing.

Why the map?

As for the map: the book I'm writing now is set in the Bay Area, so I need a map of the vicinity. I took it from the glove compartment of my father's car, I think.

If you had a best friend, or a spouse, and they snooped, and read something you were writing before you were finished, how mad would you be?

Oh, not very. I am private about my drafts, but my girlfriend witnesses me in such undignified positions that I don't have much pride left with her anyway. This is a woman who knows how badly I lisp when I insert my anti-tooth-grinding mouthguard at night.

How did you pick names for your main characters?

For me, names are mostly a matter of euphony. But also, Maynard Gogarty is named for John Maynard Keynes ("In the long run, we are all dead") and Oliver Gogarty ("And what is death...? It's a beastly thing and nothing else"). And Jennica, as her parents themselves explain in the book, got her name because, in 1972, Jennifer and Jessica were both "too popular." (The bright spirit of their portmanteau seemed to me to capture perfectly the Green family spirit.)

Maybe you've had this question a lot, but do you want to say some words about your career change?

Well, I never thought of the law as a "career," exactly. More, it was my backup plan in the event of literary failure. It still is, I suppose. I worked as an attorney for about three years, in San Francisco and

Manhattan. By early 2005, I had saved up enough money that I could quit my job and survive for a year while I wrote *Maynard & Jennica*. It was frightening, quitting the job without any certainty that I'd be able to sell the book before my money ran out. A bit like deciding that instead of entering your prize-winning stallion in any more races, you're going to kill him and live off his meat.

When you quit your job, were you open about what you intended to do? Or did you feel secretive about it?

Talking about your writing life is like talking about your sex life—something is wrong with you if you refuse absolutely to do it, but something is equally wrong with you if you think anyone cares very much. So, yes, my firm, Simpson, Thacher & Bartlett, always knew what I was up to, and was always very encouraging. In fact, last week, they had me in for a reading ... and bought copies of the book to give out, free, to their attorneys.

Going to law school and all that is a very intensive backup plan! Did you think about MFA programs at all? I never thought I would be able to afford an MFA, so I never gave it serious consideration. And besides, by the time I was done with college, I'd been writing quite seriously for a decade, and I wasn't sure I would get anything out of a program that I wouldn't also get out of, say, moving to Berlin and living cheaply and writing all day. When I was 24, NYU Law gave me a scholarship that made it quite affordable for me to move to New York City and get a law degree; and since law school isn't that difficult, I figured that going to NYU Law would be like attending my own private writer's retreat.

What was the last book you read? How did you feel about it?

Today I'm halfway through *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* by Junot Diaz. He is a great artist, and has achieved something fantastic in this novel. Go buy it, everyone, is my feeling.

PHOTO COURTESY OF RUDOLPH DELSON

URBANITIES BLAZING PADDLES

BY MIKAELA BRADBURY



THE FOUNDERS OF NAKED PING-PONG, FRANCK RAHARINOSY, JONATHAN BRICKLIN AND BILL MACK (LEFT TO RIGHT).

“SO, WHO GETS IN AND WHO DOESN’T?”

I push the question hard, but it’s nowhere near being answered. It’s a Friday night and I’m interviewing Franck Raharinosy. He is the cofounder of the Naked Ping-Pong club in Manhattan and an avid ping-pong trainee for the 2012 Olympic Games. With ping-pong on the rise around the world, the club leads the way as a bustling venue for this otherwise fringe sport.

At its inception, table tennis was an after-dinner pastime for 19th-century English socialites. Today, it has expanded into both a serious sport and a trendy pastime, defying social genres. Naked Ping-Pong manages to somehow unite the two. Franck and his partners Jonathan Bricklin and Bill Mack, run the club out of their Tribeca loft. The 4,000-square-foot space is open to anyone well-placed enough to find out about the club and it draws a wide range of characters—tennis pros who use the palm-sized paddle as a handicap, flailing supermodels and ping-pong-obsessed crazies.

Indeed, the game itself is mesmerizing. Whether it’s the sheer immediacy and intensity or the chess-like strategy that a seasoned player develops, the deceptively simple game can compel you for hours.

What’s more, it’s a supplement to the endless drinking and socializing of a typical night on the town and a mediator for social interaction.

A native of the French island Réunion off the coast of Madagascar, Franck exemplifies the American dream. Cut off from his father at the age of 18, he started a lucrative business in Réunion selling croissants and other various goods out of his university’s cafeteria. With enough money in his pocket, he headed to Los Angeles for a business internship and, without a lick of English, quickly made friends. Eventually shunning the finance world, Franck moved to Manhattan where he was soon noticed as a talented photographer and filmmaker. Since then, Franck’s primary passion has been filmmaking, finally consolidating in the production company “Ridiculous Inc.,” co-owned with Jonathan and Bill. Given his success, you can see how Franck can so easily purport that “if you work hard and believe in what you do, you can achieve anything.”

Fittingly, this weekly venue will soon become a full-blown Manhattan health club (with eventual offshoots in Los Angeles, Chicago, and Moscow). Offering all-day sports facilities, a cafe, a trendy

evening spot and, of course, a ping-pong table, the club will serve as an oasis from the hubbub of the streets and another venue for eclectic nightlife. Needless to say, admittance will be limited to a select members.

So, who gets in?

When pressed on the topic of admittance, Franck refers to the members-only club Norwood, on 14th Street, which just opened last week. Unlike its forerunner, Soho House, Norwood selects their members based on creative talent—both up-and-coming artists and well-established celebrities. Franck suggests that the ping-pong club will draw a similar crowd, not defined merely by money but by talent, character, and enthusiasm.

Franck uses the term “tribalism” ambivalently, referring to the phenomenon in New York where every night is a “private party.” It is a situation that threatens what can be so provocative and rewarding about the city: its tendency to splice together seemingly disparate individuals. While the cabbie and the debutant or the businessman and the homeless guy may meet en route to an event, at the roped door, everyone parts ways. But while the rich and the famous may have their exclusive niches,

so do the chess players, the ravers, rappers, and so on and it is these exclusive, highly specialized anomalies—held together by a shared interest or hobby—that also define urban space. However, with respect to the socialite clubs of New York, the danger lies in that the uniting factor tends to be, crudely put, money and not necessarily raw talent. My question is whether this emerging club can avoid that road while also avoiding “chaos,” as Franck puts it, while maintaining a degree of exclusivity that any club inherently requires.

Perhaps to make up for this exclusivity, there will also be an accompanying social networking Web site open to anyone, intended to connect ping-pong lovers around the world and potentially even matchmake some actual lovers in the process. On this point, Franck relates the tale of a ping-pong coach and his pupil brought together by the game and now happily married. “The club might also be open to kids during the day too,” he adds.

PHOTO COURTESY OF NAKED PING-PONG

THE DATING GAME

BY ALLISON DAVIS
PHOTOS BY LAUREL FREYJA



IT'S SATURDAY NIGHT AT THE HEIGHTS, AND I FIND myself standing in front of a man wearing a tight patterned T-shirt, a puffy, pirate button-down, two diamond studs in his ears, and a persona that seems like a blend of Ryan Seacrest and Brian Littrell from the Backstreet Boys. I immediately realize that this is his avatar.

An avatar, as championed by the wildly popular dating guide *The Game: Penetrating the Secret Society of Pickup Artists*, is a flashy image or persona crafted specifically to pick up the ladies. Full disclosure: for the past eight weeks, I have been watching VH1's *The Pickup Artist*, which centers around a man who calls himself Mystery (née Neil Strauss), "master pickup artist" and author of the aforementioned guide. The show follows eight "average, frustrated chumps" as Mystery narrows them down to one Master Pickup Artist, the lone guy lucky enough to join his ranks. Essentially, Mystery teaches flirting secrets to turn losers into chick magnets. As these men learned to "kiss close" (his term for kissing), establish "Kino" (his term for physical touch), and pick up exotic dancers, I had total déjà vu.

Though few men will admit to owning the book or using Mystery's methods out in the field, the tactics are not that rare. But week after week, I simply refused to believe that women are so easy to figure out. It couldn't be true that all a person had to do was follow the formula dictated by *The Game*, use it on his first target, and take her straight to bed.

Which brings me back to my new puffy-sleeved friend, a perfect example of one of Mystery's pupils. Aside from the ridiculous outfit, he had sent his friend over to get me. The conversation was brief and uninspired (he lost me at "What's your major?"); I wanted to get back to my friends so I made excuses and disappeared.

And at first this seems to be the pattern. The outfit certainly caught my attention, but it was definitely not enough to seal the deal. Laura and Chloe, both BC '08,

share a similar story. Laura says, "Chloe and I were at the bar getting a drink and this unattractive man came up to us. He asked if he could ask us a question."

The question? "So, floss, before or after brushing?"

This is an example of one of the most common pickup tactics: the gambit, which is using a provocative opening sentence to start the conversation. Laura says, "There was a silence and then I said before and Chloe said after."

Laura and Chloe talked to the guy for a solid 10 minutes. He would go on to use another typical gambit from the show.

"He said that we weren't very good friends. We asked why. He said because good friends look at each other before answering the question and kind of telepathically agree and say the same answer, so we were either not very good friends or had just recently become friends." That was true, which made the whole meeting all the more awkward and uncomfortable.

Laura says, "We both realized that we had been talking to him for too long so we turned around and ignored him ... telepathically."

Even though he was eventually denied, he did succeed in catching and holding the attention of his two targets.

My brother, James, is a self-professed master of *The Game* (which is disturbing: nobody wants to see a sibling that way). For the sake of research, I decided to accompany him to a club. My brother, dressed in his best, quickly located a group of girls to approach. He walked up to a brunette and used the Neg, meaning he insulted her. "I came all the way to New York to find an attractive girl," he said. "Do you know where I could go to find one?"

The woman giggled, slapped his arm and said "What, are you blind?" He then refused to give her his name, boasting that he was so "baller" that women just called him God. According to my brother, "Girls just want to be shown that you are worthy. If you insult a girl she feels

like crap. They wonder why you don't like them and want to prove that you should." I'm still reluctant to accept that preying on girls' insecurities is really the best way to secure a date. Either way, he had her from there. One hour later they were making out; two days later he was still ignoring her text messages. I was in total shock.

All the more shocking is that the stories usually range from this end of the spectrum to the other. The methods are usually met either with rousing success or abject failure.

Bridget, BC '08, actually met her ex-boyfriend when he told her that her outfit—a yellow blazer with a wooden-leaf necklace—was the ugliest he had ever seen. Bridget explains, "We ended up talking for hours about how it was an ugly outfit but that he thought it was cool that I was the only one in there that kind of went out on a limb." How did the story end? "We dated for nine months."

Totally at the other end of the scale was a story described by another student, CC '08, who refused to give her name. A guy she met "was really nice at first, saying that he had meant to talk to me all night." And then he pulled out a trick: "All of a sudden he was like, 'Well, do you have any talents?' I was really thrown off, made a joke about how I was talentless and then asked if he had any. He did some weird thing with his finger and hand that was mostly baffling and not impressive. I slept with him ... just kidding. I definitely didn't."

But maybe this is just the success rate when *The Game* is applied by guys to girls. Do the methods only work one way? Guys have insecurities; why can't girls prey on them? I decided to try it out. When I told my friend Brian about the plan, he immediately shot me down, saying, "It's a one-way street. This is a book written for men to pick up chicks. It doesn't work both ways."

But Friday night rolls around, and a friend's 22nd birthday brings me to East Campus. Armed with a new arsenal of tactics (and a considerable amount of beer), I lock in on a target. I decided to go with the floss before or after method, which I immediately blunder by accidentally asking, "Do you brush your teeth or floss?" as if somehow the two are mutually exclusive. My target looked at me and retorted that he didn't get it. For five minutes we went back and forth, as I posed questions and he repeated, "Yeah, but what's the punch line?" I surrendered, and slunk off to get another beer. I decided my next approach would be the Neg.

I approached another guy with the line, "I thought Columbia boys were hot." Rather than throwing a drink on me, he recognized the line from the show, which opened up a conversation. (Success! Sort of.) We chatted for a good 15 minutes before I "negged" too far. My new friend was discussing how *The Game* could probably help elevate him from a success rate of 60 percent to about 100 percent. I retorted, "You think you're starting at 60 percent? Way to dream big, buddy." Well, after that, we were no longer friends, and I was just that mean girl at the party.

Kara Hargadon, BC '08, witness to my exploits and frequent target of others', explains her take on the situation. "It works because it's all intuitive. It's like anything else. If you're not good at something, you can use tricks to be better."

PERFORMANCE THE PURPLE BRIGADE

BY YELENA SCHUSTER
PHOTOS BY TINA GAO



COLUMBIA ALUMS HAVE GRADUATED FROM CAMPUS TO THE UPRIGHT CITIZENS BRIGADE THEATER.



VARSITY SHOW ALUMS GRACE PARRA, CC '06, and Paul Wright, CC '05, will do just about anything to perform comedy.

After graduating, Wright performed improv on the street for tourists in Times Square. Parra filmed a documentary about tasting 75 different pies.

But next Thursday, their guerilla tactics will take on a professional edge. Their sketch show, "Purple Stuff," will debut at the Upright Citizens Brigade Theatre's SPANK Night, when a sketch comedy script of 30-35 minutes—chosen every month by the theater's artistic director—is performed.

Parra and Wright met while performing together in the improv group Fruit Paunch for three years. But after graduation, comedy took second place to adjusting to post-grad life.

"The difference between college and the real world is that the opportunity to be creative is right there at your fingertips [in college]," Parra says. "It's such a nurturing environment in that sense, especially in a university like Columbia which has so many different outlets. But as soon as you get to the real world, you have to create opportunities for yourself essentially. A lot of that first year out of college is really transitioning into a totally different spectrum of life—trying to pay your bills, get a job, and all these things that you didn't think about in college—And stealing toilet paper from Bed Bath & Beyond for the first few months because you didn't want to pay for it."

Wright pursued acting his first year out of college, but quickly realized that he needed a schedule and a steady source of income. He now works as a marketing manager at Window Media, which publishes the national gay magazine *Genre*.

Parra never had any intentions of pursuing an acting career. After toiling as an NBC page for a few months (think Kenneth on

30 Rock), she landed a job as assistant to the line producer for NBC's *Late Night with Conan O'Brien*, where she now focuses on the more pragmatic aspects of the show including scripts and budgets.

"The job I have right now is perfect because I'm exposed to comedy television—it's the best environment for me to learn," Parra says. "But of course, at work, I'm not really contributing creatively, which is why this [show] is a perfect opportunity for me to call the shots in terms of writing."

"Purple Stuff" originally began as a casual excuse to experiment with other Varsity Show alums, Kate Berthold, CC '06, and Jordan Barbour, CC '05, in January. Berthold and Barbour eventually dropped out because they were pursuing performance full-time and couldn't commit to a secondary project.

"We decided we wanted to actually pursue this [show] as more than a hobby, something that we really want to do on the side, something that we could some day make a career out of. And we agreed that we could start writing together," Wright says of Parra.

When the original four were pitching ideas, Wright came up with an idea based on an old SunnyD commercial from the '80s, where kids in soccer gear come back from practice, all tired and thirsty for a drink. They open the fridge and see OJ, purple stuff, soda, and SunnyD. Of course, the kids choose SunnyD.

"I decided it'd be funny if it was a play on that commercial and rather than SunnyD, what if they actually had the purple stuff, and what if the purple stuff really fucked them up," Wright says.

This scene opens the whole sketch show, which consists of other smaller sketches, monologues, a video sketch, and even a multi-media PowerPoint presentation with parodies of everything with the color purple

ranging from the Broadway show to the lovable dinosaur, Barney.

Parra and Wright started meeting a couple of times a week in early May to start writing sketches—a task that turned out to be harder than expected for the improv veterans.

"I didn't write in college—not that I didn't like it, I was just more in the improv scene," Parra says. She took some sketch-writing classes at the People's Improv Theater after graduating just get to her feet wet.

Besides writing, Wright and Parra took responsibility for all of the production, including casting in early August. The cast include the two of them, along with other former Fruit Paunchers Caitlin Shure, CC '07, and Philippa Ainsley, CC '07.

"Since graduating, I really haven't done any comedy. That's the main thing. What I missed was the acting camaraderie, because you don't get that at work or when you're out socializing," says Ainsley, who now works as a research analyst for the Blackstone Group.

"When I go into a business meeting and I have to make a presentation, it's not me that's making a presentation," Ainsley says. "It's me playing a business woman who's making a presentation. And it works."

Shure works as a research associate for a medical publishing company, but she lives with "theater people."

"We play games all the time," Shure says. "Our lives are like pretending. We have made-up characters who come by, like Gorilla or Miss Moo."

Parra's friend from *Late Night with Conan* and Conan's personal assistant, Todd Blass, is directing, and his roommate Seth Kirschner rounds out the cast.

"We had done a couple of shows at the UCB in the past. We read the script and loved it. It's fun to work with new people," Blass says.

And if "Purple Stuff" fares well, it could be picked up for a run at the theater.

"We're definitely putting ourselves out there," says Parra, who after our interview was getting ready to rehearse a stripper dance.

Wright, for one, is not taking any chances.

"I'm paying my friends to laugh," he says. "I know that there will be at least three people with \$5 in their pockets who will be giggling."

But jokes aside, the limitations of the professional comedy circuit—even at this early point in the game—are palpable.

"It's difficult to pursue a career in comedy. A lot of it is just getting to the point where you feel confident enough in your own stuff to go to writing agents, and say ... 'I am a writer, I am a comedian'—I don't think I'm there yet," Parra says.

"You will be though," Wright says.

"Right, we're getting there. That's the goal," Parra says.

"And this is a fantastic first step," Wright says. "Doing the show."

"Purple Stuff"

Written by Grace Parra & Paul Wright

Directed by Todd Blass

Upright Citizens Brigade Theatre

<http://www.ucbtheatre.com/ny/>

Wed., Oct. 10, 2007

9:30 p.m.

\$5 (with "Defective Clones")

Featuring Philippa Ainsley, Seth Kirschner, Grace Parra, Caitlin Shure, and Paul Wright



AFTER OFFICE HOURS

BY ALLISON DAVIS

PHOTOS BY TINA GAO & JOEY SHEMUEL

“It started out as more of a joke than anything,” Meghan Williams*, CC ’08, recalls. “It was sophomore year. My bio TA, Raymond Goldman*, would come up and sort of poke fun at me, and I’d tease him back. I didn’t pursue him too obviously—except for maybe not wearing a bra to class sometimes.”

Given that Goldman was a handsome pre-med with a knack for whipping up chocolate soufflé, their flirtations advanced quickly. “We used to hook up in classrooms. I’d wait for everyone to leave so we could do naughty things in the room. I’d write notes on my quizzes—little pictures, or sometimes dirty things.”

They started meeting outside the classroom. “We’d have dinner out, or stay in and watch movies, just talking and hooking up.” He supported Williams’ work in the class, making a point to call after exams to ask how she’d done. “He’d always tell me how proud he was of me, and how well I was doing in discussion group.”

Gradually, students realized what was going on. “One girl noticed we were always making up lame excuses to leave together. We never got caught,



but people suspected. Guys saw Raymond checking me out during class.”

The relationship ended after six months, but a backlash lingered. “This one girl made comments like, ‘I hope she doesn’t hook up with the professor this semester,’” Williams recalls. Another member of the discussion section called Williams a “grade-grubbing home wrecker.”

Despite the stigma attached to Williams’ relationship with Goldman, she wouldn’t have done things differently. “It was really fun. It wasn’t about him being a TA—he was an actual person.”

Columbia’s dating scene can make students feel “like a rat going after the cheese who never fucking learns, despite getting zapped,” as Noam Harary, CC ’08, puts it. But what’s the main incentive for TA-student relationships—finding an exciting dating alternative, or boosting grades? Is your film TA’s charm linked more to his supernatural understanding of Godard and impressive vintage shirt collection, or to his grading power?

...

Williams admits that part of her initial attraction to Goldman was based on his status as leader of her discussion

group. “A TA’s in a position of power—he’s the closest thing you can get to an actual teacher. And if you’re forced to look at someone long enough, your mind starts to wander and before you know it, you’re in their bed.” She enjoyed the special attention he gave her in class. “It was fun being the extreme teacher’s pet for a while.”

Jennifer Peters, BC ’08, recognizes the appeal of TAs’ academic expertise. “They’re in the position we want to be in eventually, and that’s attractive. You want to pump them for information. I think a lot of girls have a thing for authority figures.”

Not everyone agrees—Ada Egloff, BC ’08, questions the allure of fulfilling authority figure fantasies with TAs. “Who wants to date nerdy intellectuals on a power trip?”

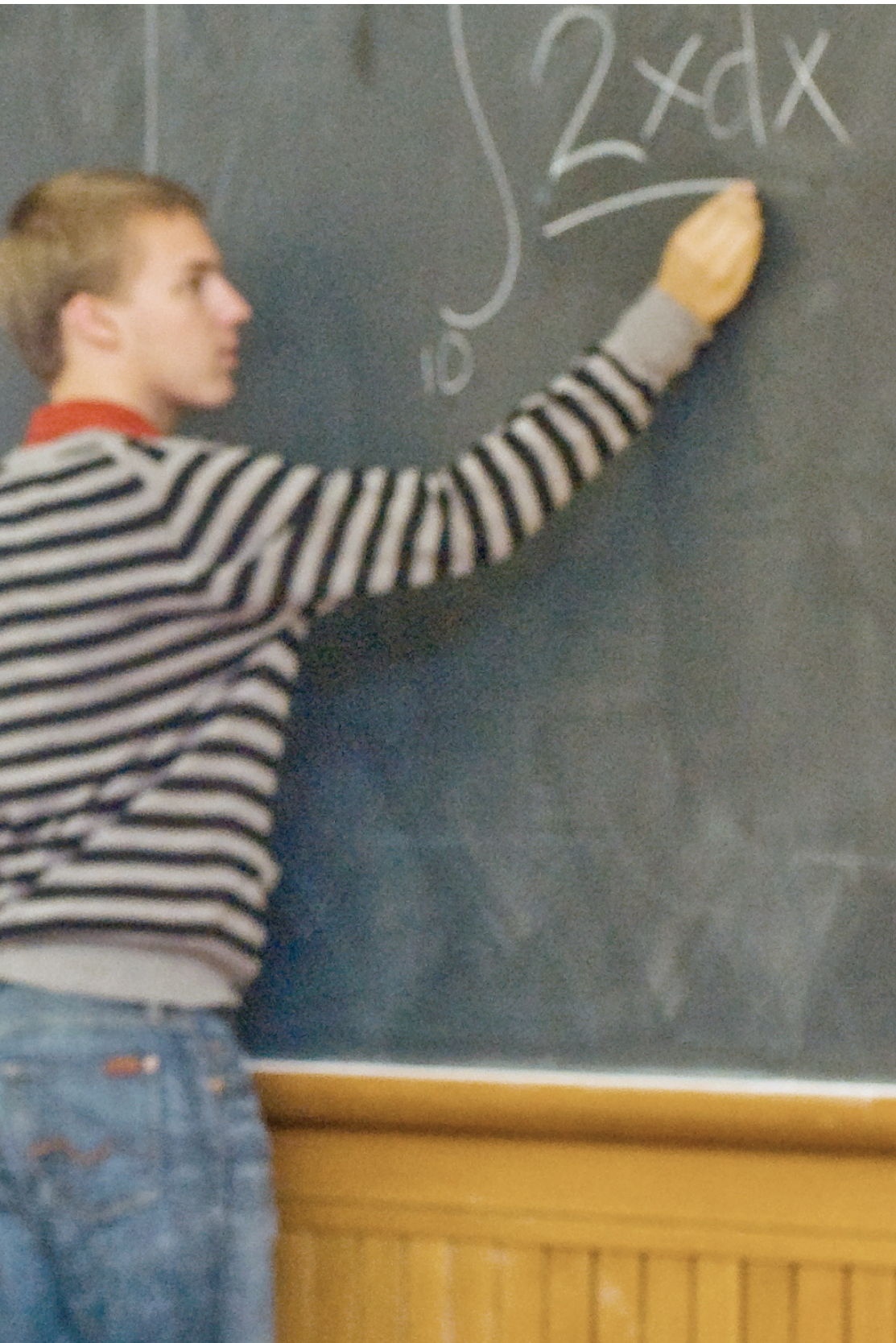
University policy allows professors and TAs to enter sexual relationships with students, although it advises against them. Columbia’s Romantic Relationship Advisory states in the 2007 edition of Facts About Columbia Essential To Students, “A faculty or staff member involved in a consensual relationship with a student is expected to remove him/herself from academic or professional decisions concerning the student.” The Advisory justifies this

expect: “The relationship may impair, or may be perceived as impairing, a faculty or staff member’s ability to make objective judgments about that student.”

FACETS also addresses the potential for a power imbalance in romantic relationships between students and faculty. “Consensual, romantic relationships between faculty and other employees and students are generally not considered sexual harassment ... [but] are susceptible to being characterized as nonconsensual, and even coercive, if there is an inherent power differential between the parties,” states the Equal Educational Opportunity and Student Nondiscrimination Policies and Procedures on Discrimination and Harassment.

Still, TAs are legally permitted to have sex with students providing they’re of age. Jonathon Barbee, CC ’08, doesn’t consider TA-student relationships an ethical breach. “I don’t have a problem with it, as long as my TA isn’t trying to feel someone up in class.” He can relate to the desire to date a TA: “Given the chance, I can think of a couple TAs I would have dated, so I can’t really criticize anybody else for doing it.”

Sherrie Hui, BC ’08 and a writer for *The Eye*, agrees,



but only if grades are removed from the equation. “It’s kosher if they aren’t grading you. They’re just normal undergraduate or graduate students. It’s actually kind of cool—you get strong ties to a mentor. As long as you don’t mess up the curve, it’s fine.”

Neal Howard*, CC ’08, has given in to the temptation. He admits to using his “awkward charm,” as he puts it, to get an advantage in classes. The semester’s barely underway, and already Howard is playfully ribbing his TA and lingering after class for chats. He confesses, “I’ve hit on her [his TA] hard. I hit on most TAs. I hit on professors, too.”

Howard does have a certain easy flirtatiousness—even as we sit talking, he casually hits on first-years, getting instant reactions. He knows how to use his “sexual prowess,” as he calls it. “I know full well it will benefit me.” He also claims he’s not alone: “There are a lot of people who would sleep with a TA—love, lust, or nothing—just to get grades. They are using their charm and good looks to beat out the opposition.” Still, Howard stresses that he’d only date a TA if she were attractive, citing grade increases as a bonus.

Howard says it’s surprisingly easy for students to overcome a TA’s authority figure status. “TAs are usually students, too, and there’s only a 5-year age difference at max.” Repeated interactions in discussion sections make it possible to build connections without much effort. “If you are seeing someone 1-2 hours a week, you eventually build a bond. From there it’s easy to start to flirt.”

Although Howard doesn’t think his “sexual prowess” has helped his grades, he’s sure it has won him numerous extensions on papers. “I know that I was given leniency that the rest of the class was not.”

Howard has never dated a TA or professor. He believes his flirting has given him enough of a leg up. “There’s a teacher I had first year. Whenever she sees me on campus, she asks me to be in her class—that’s all I’m saying.”

...

Students are not alone in considering TA status and grading power an advantage in romantic relationships. As Jonathon Barbee, CC ’08, puts it, “TAs are looking for easy prey” in students. Howard explains, “What are TAs gaining by going after students? Sex by means of academic power—they don’t even have to buy you a drink. And

it’s less sleazy than trying to get a girl drunk in a bar.”

Still, Charles Mitchell*, an Astronomy TA, says, “I’d never date someone I was personally grading.” The department frowns upon the practice, he says, and he “personally find[s] it unethical.” Monica Miller, an English professor, thinks TAs should wait until the end of the semester before entering a romantic relationship with a student. “Obviously, a relationship compromises both the position of a student and of a teacher. If it can be helped, these relationships should start after the class has ended.”

Miller points out that relationships deemed inappropriate are a significant taboo and can have social consequences for those involved. “It was the case at Harvard, when I was a grad student. Other grad students didn’t like it, especially the women, because most often, it’s a male TA, female undergrad situation.”

Despite the risk of earning peers’ disapproval, some TAs don’t wait for the end of the term to make their move. Jennifer Peterson*, BC ’08, recalls her experience with an overly friendly film TA her sophomore year.

One Saturday, Peterson ran into the TA at 1020, a popular campus bar. They chatted, and he asked for her number. She complied, not wanting to insult him. After that, her TA tried to start seeing her outside class. “He would call me a lot and text me, I’d decline politely,” she remembers. “On my birthday, he kept asking if he could make me chicken. It was kind of weird.”

Peterson continued to reject her TA’s advances, so he tried a new tactic. He offered her an inside connection with other TAs in the department, inviting her to parties where “there would be a lot of other TAs present.” Although his offers seemed harmless at first, Peterson gradually began to feel uncomfortable. “My roommate at the time thought it was fishy that he would invite me to parties where I could ‘get to know a lot of TAs,’” she explains. “The more he kept pushing, the more I really felt like he was using his status to force me to date him.”

Peterson was aware of his attraction to her in the classroom. “I could feel him checking me out or favoring me during class,” she says. After repeated rejections, he eventually stopped calling. But the semester was still in session, and things remained uncomfortable in the classroom. “It got super awkward after that. I wouldn’t ever raise my hand, and he wouldn’t call on me or look at me.”

Luckily for Peterson, the TA’s frustrated attempts at a romance didn’t affect his grading decisions. “My grades didn’t change—they were what I deserved, and consistent with what I’d been getting all semester. But I wonder, if I had given in, would it have made a difference?”

Peterson admits that she’d not be opposed to dating a TA, even if the relationship were to artificially inflate her grades. “I would date a TA—just not that one. In regards to ethics, I still can’t say that I wouldn’t, because it wouldn’t be fair.”

...

Are all TA-student relationships based on the TA’s unethical use of power to attract younger students, or the student’s Machiavellian ploy to secure an A or an extension? In the case of Williams and Goldman, it was about the romance, not the grades.

Still, Egloff doubts that a TA can grade a student’s work objectively if the two are intimately involved. “I just don’t think people can separate their feelings that easily. Even if there’s no bias—which is impossible—the possibility exists, and that’s not fair. I am not okay with it—if I had strong enough evidence, I would definitely say something.” But what if the attraction is strong enough to overcome the stigma? Professor Miller cites a friend, a female graduate student who married an undergraduate from a class for which she was a TA.

A TA’s authority status will inevitably figure into the relationship. Lauren Schmitz, CC ’06, is not one to knock a love of authority or judge those who feel the same. “It’s the TA’s responsibility not to blur the lines,” she says. “If the student gets some ass out of it, good for the student. If they get a good grade, even better. I know a girl who tries to sleep with TAs left and right. More power to her.”

**Names have been changed*

FILM NO LONGER THE SAME OLD SONG

BY NATALIE GUEVARA



JOHN C. REILLY (LEFT) STARS IN THE BIOPIC PARODY *WALK HARD*. CHRISTIAN BALE IS ONE OF SIX BOB DYLANs IN *I'M NOT THERE*, AND A DEAD BIRD IS A VISUAL IN THE KURT COBAIN-NARRATED *ABOUT A SON*.

AT 8:30 TONIGHT, TODD HAYNES' widely hyped Bob Dylan art-house film, *I'm Not There*, will screen at the 45th New York Film Festival.

Those worried that no entertainer, Oscar winner or otherwise, could possibly fill the Minnesota man's shoes should brace themselves, because not one, not two, but six actors will be tackling some version of the folk hero. It seems a move designed to both placate and annoy Dylan fans—but at least it's something different.

No stranger to experimental takes on music legends, Haynes is a filmmaker obsessed with the trappings of fame. The director's explorations of this theme range from bizarre riffs on false idols (1987's *Superstar*, in which Karen Carpenter is played by a Barbie doll) to psychedelic musings on a time when performers were so mythical they bordered on the otherworldly (1997's *Velvet Goldmine*, a thinly veiled portrait of David Bowie).

In *I'm Not There*, Haynes tackles the issue of identity, arguing that every person is as much a mystery to himself as he is to everyone else—a fact compounded when the subject in question is a celebrity with a penchant for reinvention. As a result, different aspects of Bob Dylan are examined, from his childhood as a blues-guitar prodigy (Marcus Carl Franklin) to his religious phase as a protest songwriter (Christian Bale). Throw in a gender-bending Cate Blanchett as the folk singer in his prime, and you have a film that navigates uncharted waters in a genre notorious for overblown plots involving some combination of sex, drugs, and self-destruction.

Indeed, the lives of influential musicians—at times sordid, other times triumphant, but always entertaining—make for compelling narratives that tread familiar ground: the rags-to-riches story, the American Dream, the superstar who falls victim to his own success.

Columbia professor Maura Spiegel,

who currently teaches a class on American film genres, likens the biopic phenomenon to "our era's musical," while also noting its deep roots in cinema culture.

"I can say that it is a very old genre, and you might consider that the first sound picture 'talkie' was *The Jazz Singer* (1927), a fictionalized version of the life of its star, Al Jolson," she says, adding that a traditional biopic about the actor-singer entitled *The Jolson Story* was made later, in 1946.

The popularity of such films can be attributed partly to audiences who connect with stories with which they are already somewhat familiar, be it through VH1's *Behind the Music* or *Rolling Stone* cover stories. Howard Paar, music supervisor for *What We Do Is Secret* (a new movie about seminal Los Angeles punk band The Germs), says one major appeal of the biopic lies in the curiosity audiences have about an artist who personifies a specific era.

"With *What We Do Is Secret*, the goal was to make viewers feel like they were in Los Angeles in the late '70s, in that small punk-rock community—to capture the spirit of that time," Paar says.

In turn, movie executives thrive on this interest and hope for a synergistic movement—soundtracks, music videos, biographies, and retrospective CD compilations—that can transform their films from regular releases into pop-culture moments.

Following the box-office and award-show success of films such as *Ray* (2004) and *Walk the Line* (2005), Hollywood studios are looking to cash in on music biopics more than ever. Before anyone could say "Janis Joplin," actresses were already lining up to play the rock goddess (Zoëy Deschanel is attached to the upcoming *Gospel According to Janis*, while Renee Zellweger is in talks to do *Piece of My Heart*). Similar projects on Jimi Hendrix,

Bob Marley, and Debbie Harry—rumored to be starring André 3000, Jamie Foxx, and Kirsten Dunst, respectively—are also being shopped around.

And though semi-fictionalized versions of life stories have proven to be a risky business—*Glitter*, the Mariah Carey vehicle, was a notorious bomb—when they work—as in the case of *8 Mile*, which earned rave reviews for Eminem's performance as well as an Academy Award for Best Original Song—they are stunning collisions of truth and legend.

The key to a satisfying biopic, then, seems to be in the approach. While Spiegel notes that biopics are "great star vehicles"—Reese Witherspoon, for instance, won an Oscar for her portrayal of June Carter in *Walk the Line*—actors are faced with many obstacles in bringing their subjects to life. Aside from pleasing the artist's fan base, the actor must make a crucial decision: to lip-sync or not to lip-sync? Whereas *Ray* had Foxx singing along with Charles' blues recordings and mimicking the soul man's every mannerism, Joaquin Phoenix, as Johnny Cash, opted to do his own singing and playing to invoke the essence of the Man in Black instead.

Filmmakers who tackle biopics also run the risk of constructing "vanity projects," concerned more with their vision of the subject than with the subject himself. In 1984, Milos Forman raised eyebrows when he delivered an atypical rendition of Mozart's life in *Amadeus*. In 2005, Gus Van Sant's *Last Days*, a trippy rendition of Kurt Cobain's suicide, was criticized by those close to the Nirvana singer for having no substantial root in reality.

Then there are films which, while generally enjoyable, rely on a formulaic story line that follows the icon through humble beginnings, rapid ascendancy into stardom, drug use and/or failed relationships, and a choice of either a second shot at success (*Dreamgirls*, loosely based on

Diana Ross and the Supremes) or a tragic, untimely death (*The Doors*, along with every Elvis biopic ever made). Such patterns, Paar contends, are unavoidable.

"There is an inherent difficulty within the film-writing structure that makes it difficult to craft an authentic film and still make it interesting to the viewer," he says.

Paar adds, however, that "if you can get visionary filmmakers with a deep love and respect for their subject, it is possible to play around with structure and still make a compelling film." By that token, biopics such as Alex Cox's *Sid and Nancy* (1986) and *Bird* (1988), Clint Eastwood's tribute to bebop pioneer Charlie Parker, trade contrived story arcs for freewheeling vignettes that, while dramatized, offer more honest glimpses into the lives of their protagonists.

Following their lead, this year's biopic offerings experiment with narrative and presentation, raising the issue of what it means to authentically capture a life. Going straight to the source, *About a Son*, out this week, walks a thin line between biopic, rock doc, and "nonfiction film," as it features Cobain, through the use of archival recordings, narrating his own story. *Control* (2007), the Anton Corbijn drama about Joy Division-singer Ian Curtis, is shot entirely in black and white, and later this year, the genre even receives its very own parody in the form of *Walk Hard: The Dewey Cox Story*, a send-up of the birth of rock and roll.

The ultimate irony about music biopics—one that might even go unnoticed by a parody—is that despite their thematic fixation with the necessity to create art, perils of fame be damned, they rarely feature any insight on the music-making process itself.

Audiences don't seem to mind, however, as long as there's a juicy tale involved. All aboard—*Rehab: The Amy Winehouse Story*, in theaters 2009.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF COLUMBIA PICTURES, WEINSTEIN COMPANY, AND BALCONY RELEASING

JAMES SCHAMUS, IN FOCUS

BY JENNIFER RICE



TANG WEI (LEFT) STARS IN THE EROTICALLY CHARGED *LUST, CAUTION*, WHICH WAS WRITTEN AND PRODUCED BY COLUMBIA'S OWN JAMES SCHAMUS.

IF YOU THINK THAT BOW-TIED, WELL-TRAVELED, adventurous professors only exist in the movies, you've clearly never had a film class with James Schamus.

As co-founder of Focus Features, the award-winning producer and screenwriter has Indiana Jones beat on everything but the bullwhip.

A fixture in Dodge for nearly two decades, Schamus is a professor in film theory and, in the past, B movies.

"One thing that I really admire about him is his incredible work ethic," says Zoe Tobier, one of his current teaching assistants. "He has so much on his plate, and he handles it all in stride and with good humor. He also seems to really value being part of the academic community here at Columbia."

Off campus, Schamus has an equally long-standing partnership with director Ang Lee—a collaboration that has lasted 17 years and yielded 10 films and a handful of Oscars. *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* (2000) grossed over \$120 million, shattering all industry expectations for how foreign films could perform at the box office. *Brokeback Mountain* created another important cultural moment that continues to make headlines—Schamus seems pleased with rumors that a *Brokeback* opera adaptation is in development.

"Well, there would be singing cowboys," he says. "Always my favorites."

Lee and Schamus's latest film together is the daring *Lust, Caution*. Set in Shanghai during World War II, the story follows a group of student actors who get increasingly tangled in a plot to assassinate a powerful politician. It's a heavy 157-minute meditation on war, identity, and sex, and the film will certainly linger in the audience's consciousness.

As with other Lee/Schamus collaborations, *Lust, Caution* represents a collision of mood, imagery, and character. Most of the film's press, however, has been about its NC-17 rating. And

unlike *Boys Don't Cry* or *Requiem for a Dream*—other sexually explicit movies that were originally tagged NC-17—*Lust, Caution* is being released without trimming down to an R rating.

Schamus concedes, though, that *Lust, Caution* is a movie for adults.

"We didn't protest it," he says. "It's an NC-17 movie, what can I tell you? I'm at peace with the fact that we made a movie that's for grown-ups, and so children shouldn't probably see the movie," he says. "On the other hand, while the grown-ups are at the theater, their kids are probably online downloading porn," he says. "So there's a little bit of that."

An NC-17 rating is traditionally an enormous obstacle as it severely narrows the demographic appeal of a movie and limits the screens willing to play it. "The thing that I'm not 100 percent fine with yet is that there are certain theater chains that have yet to book NC-17. There's a lot of hassle about that," he says. "And if that policy continues, yeah, I'll take that as censorship. You see screens where they're showing movies like *Saw*, *Saw II*. There's this insane graphic violence—which is entertaining, I'm not against those movies—but why wouldn't you show Ang Lee, an Academy Award-winning director's work on the same screen?"

Working as both writer and producer on the film, Schamus approaches his craft with a great deal of balance.

"I'll write a screenplay [but] then say, 'This is too long. Let's cut this, let's cut that.' I put on the producer hat and I try to forget that I wrote it," he says.

His objectivity is certainly startling in a writer—he's a terrific example of the advice often attributed to Faulkner: that writers must always be prepared to kill their darlings.

"I've had this down for about two decades, writing on the Chinese language films with Ang," Schamus says. "I'm really used to completely BS-ing my way through a culture with a

5000-year history."

In addition to Schamus's non-native status, one of the greatest challenges for the film was casting the female lead. They needed an actress who would be capable of singing, comfortable with full-frontal nudity, and able to turn in a very skilled performance.

"A lot of the actresses who were wonderful were just very contemporary looking," Schamus says. They eventually discovered Tang Wei, an unknown who had never acted in a film before. "Completely from another world," he says of her. "[She] really looks like she just stepped out of a 1930s Shanghai soap ad."

Lust, Caution recently claimed the top prize at the Venice Film Festival this year and has received a phenomenal welcome in Asia.

"It's pretty much the biggest cultural moment in Chinese culture in maybe years, or a long, long time," Schamus says, though his expectations for American audiences are comparatively modest. The film opens here to a number of obstacles: a foreign language, the NC-17 rating, and an altogether slower pace to which Americans aren't accustomed.

"It's a very Chinese film—it's longer than a standard American movie," he says. "It takes its time getting to where it's going. But the film works spectacularly well at that length and we didn't want to mess with it."

Although he may be responsible for developing many respected and beloved films, Schamus is hesitant to romanticize his lifestyle. Unlike other notable screenwriters, such as Paul Haggis and Stephen Gaghan, he's not campaigning for his own celebrity cameo on HBO's *Entourage*. "I'm not a colorful enough figure," he says. "I think, judging by what I see from some of those industry walk-ons, I'm way down on the totem pole."

PHOTO COURTESY OF FOCUS FEATURES

MUSIC FLAUTING WHAT SHE'S GOT BY ALISON BUMKE

FOR ALICIA KRAVITZ, CC '06 AND A FLUTIST AT Manhattan School of Music, "How do you get to Carnegie Hall?" isn't a rhetorical question. Kravitz has been preparing for her solo debut at Carnegie's Weill Recital Hall this Sunday since winning the Artists International Presentation, an annual competition, in April. Over snacks at the West Way Cafe, she talks to The Eye about making the flute accessible to audiences, incorporating Lit Hum into daily conservatory life, and her post-graduation plans (hint: she's not joining a symphony orchestra).

Will the pieces you're playing appeal to someone who hasn't listened to a lot of solo flute music?

I hope so. I've focused on including pieces the audience loves to hear, not necessarily the most challenging pieces in the repertoire. This whole concept of inaccessibility is something musicians need to deal with. You don't want to get up there and play a sonata if the majority of listeners are thinking, "I don't know what to listen for."

What will you be playing?

Mostly music from the early 20th century, when there was a renaissance in flute music. Much of it's romantic or modern—some of it's jazzy, one piece is a tango. But there's also some Bach, so people can get a taste of different generations. I'm opening with "Syrinx," a Debussy piece. I love it because it tells a story and shows the whole range of the flute. It's also the only time I'm unaccompanied—the rest of the time, I'm playing with piano, guitar, or harp. One piece—a world premiere—is actually a trio for flute, harp and voice.

What's it been like to prepare a premiere?

It's been incredible. I've been working closely with the composer, who's on the faculty of Manhattan School. I've prepared contemporary music before, but when it's just you, you decide how to interpret the composer's work. In a situation like this, it's more about what the composer wants. This can be frustrating at times, but in the end, you get a combination of the composer's interpretation and your own, personal one.

Did you choose the lyrics for the voice part?

Yes. I wanted to do a translation of an ancient text—something I'd read at Columbia. I decided on the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*, but the composer wasn't sure it would work with the music. He knew something similar—a Sumerian myth of the god of fertility and the underworld, who brings spring and summer to earth for the half of the year he's

above ground. It's a dramatic story, a really moving piece. We might perform it barefoot, just for fun—haven't decided yet.

Speaking of footwear, what's your outfit for the recital?

This full-length red gown—I mean, really bright red. I figured, when will I get another chance to wear something like this?

How does Manhattan School of Music compare with Columbia?

I like to call MSM "music land"—it's a world in-and-of itself, completely focused on music. While Columbia's focused on academics, MSM's all about being a performer, being theatrical. I'm taking very few academic courses—the degree's primarily orchestra, chamber music, and private flute lessons.

Has your Columbia education been useful at MSM?

Absolutely—having gone to a non-conservatory for my undergrad degree, I'm definitely the exception there. People admire my ability to write and speak effectively—friends look to me when they need to write a press release, edit a resumé. I would not have done things differently.

Are you going to play the flute professionally when you graduate this spring?

Nope—going straight to law school. I'm almost done with my applications.

What?!

Music will find its way into my life at all points. Law will be my "regular job," while music will be my way to have fun. It's too much pressure to have to take all the music gigs you're offered, just to support yourself—it distracts you from what you love about music.

How will you end the recital?

With one of my all-time favorite pieces, "Doppler's Hungarian Pastoral Fantasy." I love it to death. It's fun and catchy, and not at all stressful. I just hope I can get there—there's an hour and 30 minutes of performing before that!

Kravitz's recital is Oct. 7 at 5:30 p.m. Tickets are \$25 and may be ordered through kravitz.alicia@gmail.com. Tickets will also be sold at the Carnegie Hall box office an hour before the program starts.



PHOTO COURTESY OF ALICIA KRAVITZ

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VIDEO KILLED THE INDIE CRED

BY REBECCA PATTIZ



PHOTOS COURTESY OF ABC AND THE CW

IF YOU'VE GOT THAT PETER BJORN AND JOHN SONG STUCK IN YOUR HEAD, YOU CAN BLAME *BIG SHOTS* (TOP) AND *GOSSIP GIRL* (BOTTOM).



THERE IS A REASON THAT YOU CAN'T GET THAT Feist song out of your head.

It doesn't matter that you don't like the song, that you would never buy the album, or that you don't even know what the Canadian singer looks like. Songs like her "1234" are part of a growing legion of viral music that follows listeners wherever they may go, from the living room to the movie theater to, ultimately, the car radio.

The idea is that one song will appear in many different forms, serving once in the background of an advertisement, then in the pilot to a TV show, and again in the opening credits to a blockbuster movie. Feist's song and video have served as the backdrop to advertisements ranging from the iPod Nano to Verizon Wireless. It matters not that the song has absolutely nothing to do with technical devices.

Perhaps the best example of this trend is Natasha Bedingfield's ubiquitous song, "Unwritten," which served first as the inspirational theme to open the MTV series *The Hills*. The song gained momentum as the soundtrack to the life of Lauren Conrad, a young woman out on the town in Los Angeles. Viewers were probably surprised to see the song reincarnated in a Pantene commercial this year.

However, rather than setting the tone for a television show, this time the song was out to make a sell. Strangely enough, the concept was not that different. In the advertisement, the song played as young women danced on their desks at work, "releasing their inhibitions" as the

song suggests.

Scottish singer KT Tunstall fell victim to this trend as well. Her best-known song, "Suddenly I See," was literally omnipresent last year, opening the hit movie *The Devil Wears Prada* and then closing the pilot of the hit series *Ugly Betty*. Apparently, it has become the anthem for shows and movies about frumpy young women who land jobs at fashion magazines.

This year's generation of infectious music is being ushered in by Peter Bjorn and John, whose song "Young Folks" appears to be in the pilot for almost every new show this TV pilot season. The producers of *Big Shots*, *Gossip Girl*, *The Big Bang Theory*, and *Dirty Sexy Money* all chose the poppy, whistle-filled song to accompany their shows.

So what is it about these songs that make them applicable to so many contexts? Graham Carney, CC '11, chalks it up to a "good beat, good rhythm, catchy words," and a certain "emotional ambiguity" that allows the song to transcend boundaries from TV show to commercial to radio.

Perhaps the most defining characteristic of these insanely popular songs is that most people find them annoying.

"They all sound exactly the same," Catharine Salmon, BC '11, says. Salmon confesses, however, to getting many of these songs caught in her head, despite the fact that she doesn't really like them.

The catchy nature of the songs, which is probably what

makes them annoying, is perfect for selling a product or TV show. By using the same song from commercial to commercial or show to show, advertisers and producers are making connections that the viewer may or may not be aware of.

"Everyone watched *The Hills*," Salmon says. "If that 'Unwritten' song became popular [because of] the show, advertisers may think it will make their product popular, too."

Kate Reggev, BC '09, agrees. "By using that song," she says, "advertisers are saying, 'If you think that the girls on *The Hills* are pretty, use our product and you can look like them.'"

Yet another appealing quality to producers is the relative anonymity of the song's performer, at least before the show, movie or commercial becomes a hit. Few in middle America had heard of Peter Bjorn and John or KT Tunstall before their songs invaded living rooms nationwide.

It is possible that the use of a Top 40 song would detract from the plot or product being showcased—but, of course, as shows and movies become popular, so do their soundtracks.

Persistent, catchy, and resilient, these songs are here to stay, whether or not you buy an album or purchase tickets to a show. "They are kind of annoying," Reggev says, "but at least they're better than 'The Song That Never Ends.'"

HUMOR

RAPHAEL INTERVIEWS C. COLUMBUS

It was 515 years ago this week that Christopher Columbus invented America. In honor of this glorious occasion, Raphael Pope-Sussman of The Eye sat down with the late great explorer.

Raphael Pope-Sussman: You died in obscurity.
Christopher Columbus: (Silence)

RPS: It's been said that you were the man who discovered that the earth is round, rather than flat. What did it feel like to make such a momentous discovery?

CC: Well, it was certainly satisfying. To paraphrase the rap artist "Young Jeezy," of whom I am a huge fan, "I'm the best of the best and the freshest of the fresh." In all honesty, I came up with the idea while hotboxing the men's bathroom at the famed Woodstock concerts of 1469. I figured I'd sail around for a bit, and at the least drown myself in an unholy amount of tail. I read somewhere that the gentler sex goes wild for that kind of stuff. "Oh, Chris, tell me about all that larvae-infested hardtack you subsisted on for eight to 12 weeks at a time. Ravage me now!" Not once did I hear that.

RPS: Fascinating stuff. Now, were you aware that Columbia University was named after you?

CC: What the fuck? Columbia is a chick's name. I'm Columbus. In high school they called me the Colum-Bus. I was a halfback, you see, and I used to run over opponents like a city bus. I killed the pilot of the Santa Maria in a pickup game. That was before "touch" football was invented. By me. I invented touch football. Also America. Suck on that.

RPS: Ahem. OK, I'll ask my editors to refer to you in future issues of this magazine as "The Colum-Bus." Speaking of Columbia, what advice do you have for

students who are studying here?

CC: Don't tell someone you have syphilis on the first date. I learned that lesson the hard way. Also don't discover a continent. I fucking discovered two continents, and I couldn't even get the Queen of Spain to massage my nuts. Study economics or forensic pathology. That's the one where you get to poke at dead bodies with a pickax, no?

RPS: This is a college newspaper—I don't know that we're going to be able to, uhh, print that.

CC: That makes me think. I have a joke. Do you prefer tapes or CDs?

RPS: I'm supposed to be asking the questions here. But I prefer CDs. Tapes are a wholly antiquated media.

CC: So, you like CDs. Why don't you SEE DEEZ NUTS?!?!?

RPS: I see that you've absorbed much of our popular culture. Very impressive stuff. But it's important to understand that the popular culture you see is part of an immense civilizational conflict, in which the forces of modernization and globalization are pitted against the forces of traditionalism and parochialism. Did you know, for example, that the shirt you're wearing was sewn by children in Laos for less than a dollar a day?

CC: Get out! Dolce & Gabbana would never stoop to such lows. Psych! Haha. Yeah, I'm aware of that. Those kids are a bunch of sucker-punks. Look at me—hell, I didn't graduate second grade and I'm crazy famous. It's like that Chappelle sketch where the Rick James character is all, "I'm Rick James, biiiiitch!" Except I'm Christopher Columbus, bitch. Not Rick James. Columbus.



ILLUSTRATION BY SHAINA RUBIN

RPS: Well. Hmm. You really are well-informed. Like the succulent burritos at Chipotle, I think it's best to wrap this baby up. Thank you for being here with us today, Chris. And one last question: How will you be celebrating Columbus Day this year?

CC: Same as always. I stand in front of a mirror, naked, and shout: "Who discovered America? Who discovered America?" That alone usually brings me to orgasm. Peace out Colum-wanna-bians.

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Here's a sample to get you started:

A dog is going through airport security. The guard stops him.

"I'm afraid I can't let you through," he says.

"Tell me the truth," says the dog, "Is it because I'm a dog?"

The guard says, "Of course it is."

—Submitted by J.D. Porter

MORE SAILOR-BASED HOLIDAYS!

WE ALL KNOW THAT IN 1492 COLUMBUS sailed the blue ocean, just before beginning the elimination of nearly all indigenous societies in the Americas. Today we call that moment **Columbus Day**. But did you know that he was just one among many intrepid explorers? Let's take a look at some of the explorer-themed holidays endorsed by the American Brotherhood of Historians (ABH).

Hernán Cortés may have died bitter and alone, but first he destroyed the Aztec civilization. ABH Holiday Suggestion: **Cortés Day**, celebrated in June by arriving on shore.

In a classic underdog story, Francisco Pizarro conquered 80,000 troops using only 200 Spaniards, treachery, and ruthless bloodshed. ABH suggestion: **Pizarro Day**, celebrated in November by committing atrocities.

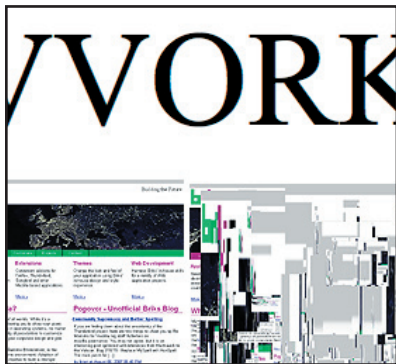
A national hero to the English, Francis Drake took a break from his state-endorsed career as a pirate to help kick off England's role in the Atlantic slave trade. ABH suggestion: **Drake Day**, celebrated in July by trafficking in sorrow.

Henry Hudson helped found New York after attempting to reach the Pacific Ocean by sailing up the Hudson River. ABH suggestion: **Hudson Day**, celebrated in February by accomplishing little.

After years of being on boats throughout the Mississippi River, Robert de LaSalle lost three out of four ships on his way to start a Louisiana colony and was murdered by his own men. The rest of his party were slaughtered by Karankawa natives. ABH suggestion: **LaSalle Day**, celebrated in March by running aground.

EDITORS' PICKS BLOGS

WORK



WORK.COM

The people behind VVork are a mystery, but they curate the raddest art blog in Europe. Now they're curating in the real world. Check it out if you're in The Hague.

ALEX GARTENFELD
EDITOR IN CHIEF

SUBTRACTION

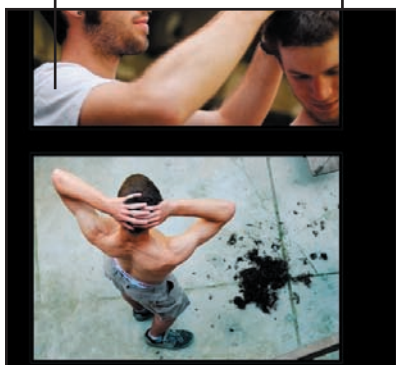


SUBTRACTION.COM

Subtraction is run by Khoi Vinh, the design director of NYTimes.com. His blog is filled with reflections on the design community and his adorable black lab, Mister President.

DANIELLA ZALCMAN
MANAGING EDITOR

CHARLOTTE GONZALE'S PHOTO BLOG

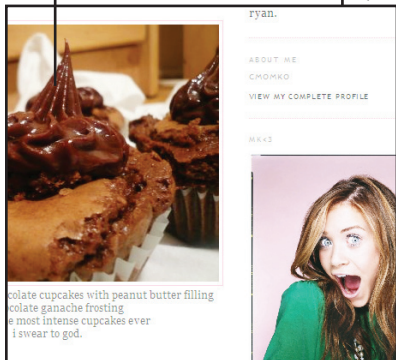


GONZALE.BLOGSPOT.COM

Gonzale is a Parisian art student whose photos of everything from riots to cats are unpretentious and have a certain je ne sais quoi that always make me smile.

TINA GAO
PHOTO

CUPCAKES, MAKING OUT, AND MARY-KATE OLSEN



CMOMKO.BLOGSPOT.COM

My roommate loves Mary-Kate Olsen, cupcakes, and her baby bunny Isabelle so much that she just has to share them with the world through this blog.

EMILY GREENLEE
PRODUCTION

LINDYS TOAST

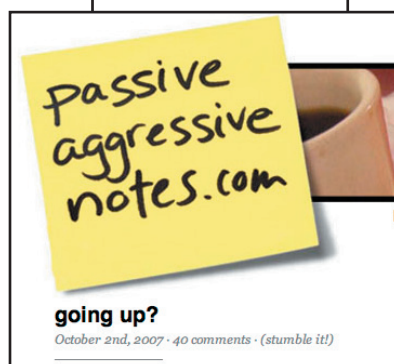


LINDYSTOAST.COM

This is a blog I like a lot—it's by a woman who lives somewhere rural (like Pennsylvania) and she makes really exciting and nice-looking foods, mainly based around the things she gets in her farm box. From what I gather, she really likes waffle-makers and eats a lot of pasta in the summer (or the winter, I forget). Someday, I will make one of the recipes from this blog. So far, I have not.

SARA DAVIS
INTERVIEW

PASSIVE AGGRESSIVE NOTES



PASSIVEAGGRESSIVENOTES.COM

They appear anywhere people are forced to share rooms, toilets, or fridges: the passive-aggressive note, confronting life's problems in the most indirect fashion possible. I love reading these, because every capslocked, misspelled, exclamation-marked, run-on sentence makes me feel like an incredibly mature person. It's kind of like PostSecret, for terrible roommates.

EMILY RAUBER
FILM

COMICS CURMUDGEON



JOSHREADS.COM

The funniest thing that bloggers have blogged. A guy named Josh reads daily newspaper comic strips, which are often terrible to the point of incoherence. For instance, in the panel shown, heroic forest ranger Mark Trail has punched a bad guy so hard that he has separated his beard from his face. Josh would humorously deride this image for us.

J.D. PORTER
HUMOR

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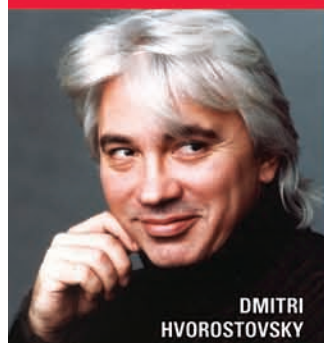
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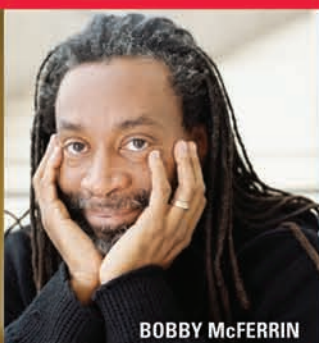
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