

the
eye

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WHERE THE SIDEWALK BEGINS

STREET VENDORS HAVE SOMETHING TO TEACH

COLUMBIA STUDENTS

AMERICA'S NEXT TOP JOKE

NEVER TOO MANY DJs

JUDE LAW'S CAINE COMPLEX



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EDITOR'S NOTE:

This week in the Urbanities section, Rahel Aima, CC '10, gauges the potential for radicalism at Columbia ("Out of Left Field" page 4). It's the second time that *The Eye* has taken on the potential for extreme alternative (the first, Jennie Morgan, "The No-Win Zone," 01/25/07, examined Columbia after the Minutemen debates). The question was also tackled by *New York Magazine*, which followed various leftist groups at meetings around campus, and measured their radicalism in terms of the aggressiveness of their demeanor and sympathy for Palestine.

Aima was photographed for the *New York* piece for her role in Students for a Democratic Society. She looked great—clear skin; open, empathetic eyes; sophisticated bangs. A shock for Ann Coulter: all of the liberal students looked great—striking and earnest, and nary a blackhead in sight. And then in the opposite corner, Chris Kulawik, CC '08, president of the College Republicans: the lighting unflattering; the photo cropped too tightly.

The message was clear: *New York Magazine*, subscriber circulation almost 500,000, likes radicals. It likes radicals who share its staff of twenty-somethings' faith in youth and civic left-oriented activism; it likes radicals who are well-coiffed and styled,

and who have cultivated a rhetorical style appropriate for local council meetings.

Extremist activism wasn't always so palatable. Radicalism shares its Latin stem with the radish; that is to say, it deals with roots, and it's unpleasant to the senses.

But there's a long tradition of established classes appropriating the radical impulse. Thomas Wolfe termed "Radical Chic" in his essay, "Radical Chic and Mau Mauing the Flak Catchers," which took as its prime example a meeting of the Black Panthers held at Leonard Bernstein's Park Avenue duplex.

When *New York Magazine* puts the yardstick to leftist politics, that is—what then?—radical mediocrity? You don't have to be Slavoj Žižek to understand that political counter-culturalism and economic skepticism have been incorporated into the broader marketplace. Rejecting normative values, or adopting the rhetoric of doing so, is a rite of passage to becoming a productive, left-of-center, golf-playing adult.

It's telling that radicalism is still tempting, even as it's been institutionalized. Perhaps that's because the prevailing logic, one that presumes that the reality of our political foundation is not so far from the most frightening aspects of radicalism, and that our cultural frameworks aren't as effective at

mollifying our anxieties as they might seem. Radicalism is generally perceived as the domain of the left (if not, it's terrorism). It's a cliché to say that the regime under which we live is the real radicalism. But what are the results of current events, the relocation of massive numbers of people due to war, the deployment of torture, but radical?

What we have on our hands is a self-perpetuating erratic system that presumes itself completely rational, but ritually aspires to abnormality.

In our lead story, Mikaela Bradbury, CC '08, speaks with the street vendors on Broadway. Though the vendors might not hash revolutionary plots, they are embarking on a project outside the normative bonds of exchange. Along the way, Bradbury uses techniques of reportage to examine the contacts made between people and to re-establish the human elements of buying and selling.

The Eye is not radical, although we are on the side of youth, and we advise you keep well-coiffed. For nothing gets the blood flowing, or let, like the energies of youth. As William Wordsworth wrote on the eve of the French Revolution, "Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive, but to be young was very heaven."

—Alex Gartenfeld

CORRECTIONS: Last week Yelena Shuster contributed to "The Purple Brigade." Unphased by our misspelling, she contributes again this week. "The Purple Brigade" misattributed a quotation "And stealing toilet paper from Bed Bath & Beyond for the first few months because you didn't want to pay for it," to Grace Para. It was in fact said by Paul Wright. They perform at the Upright Citizens Brigade tonight.

EYE TO EYE: SARA DAVIS INTERVIEWS PETER BEARMAN PHOTO BY TINA GAO



COLUMBIA PROFESSOR PETER BEARMAN is currently director of the Institute for Social and Economic Research and Policy, the Cole Professor of Social Science, chair of the Statistics Department, and co-director of the Health and Society Scholars Program. Recently, yet another laurel was thrown Bearman's way by the National Institute of Health, which awarded him its prestigious Pioneer Award for 2007. In the past, Bearman has investigated topics as diverse as disease transmission, adolescent sexuality, and the English Civil War. In 2005, he published an ethnography of Manhattan's doormen (*Doormen*, University of Chicago), featured in the *New Yorker* by Nick Paumgarten, who called the book a "marvel" for anyone who wants to understand the "theoretical underpinnings of awkward awning encounters."

So what are you doing now?
Now we're interviewing funeral home directors.

Oh, I saw the flier for that. It sounded really cool.
Yeah, it'll be pretty cool. I mean, the funeral directors are just the beginning.

Oh?
So the idea is, well, I don't want to do doormen again, you know, I did that...

Right, understandably.
So the idea is to follow the body from the morgue through the funeral directors, the hairdressers that come in and do the hair, and the cosmetologists ... the processing of the body through the cemetery.

How long have you been teaching at Columbia?
Since 1999, so eight years.

How do you like it?
What a funny question. It's a complex question—it's a complex university. From a faculty point of view, it's extremely interesting, because we all live around here, so there's this intellectual density that's very unusual. It really feels like an active intellectual environment. You don't find that at a lot of places. Also, the University is open to innovation, so if you've got ideas you can really be effective here. All those are great things. But, you know, has it got a series of ridiculous pathologies? Yeah.

Oh yeah? Like what?
You just have to look at the last big incident here to recognize a

serious pathology of this University, which is the desire to somehow be in the public eye for no particular reason other than the desire to be noticed. And then ... well, that's sufficient.

Was a lot of your decision to come here about New York City?
Strangely, it wasn't. I didn't think I would like New York City.

But you do?
I love it.

I was reading on the Internet that Judith Martin reviewed your book, *Doormen*?
Yeah, I don't know how that happened.

Does Judith Martin normally review books?
No, she doesn't ... I don't know ... so that was a trip.

Were you excited? Were you a Miss Manners fan?
Yeah, I was a Miss Manners fan when I was growing up, and ... she almost liked it, I thought. She didn't quite get it.

Well, Miss Manners is never really very enthusiastic.
Yeah, she's laconic. Exactly.

Where are you from?
I was born in Washington, D.C., I grew up in Virginia, I went to college in Providence.

So when people ask you where you're from, you say...?

It's complex. I don't really think of myself as from Virginia or Washington.

I did notice that the *New Yorker* described you as a "wry, boyish Virginian."
Yeah, that was funny too.

What was your major [at Brown]?
I majored in sociology. It was the easiest major. It had no requirements. I don't think I learned much sociology.

What did you do when you graduated?
I worked at Yale Psychiatric Institute. I thought I wanted to be a clinical social psychologist. So I worked with schizophrenics, and I almost became one, just by sheer contact. So in the nick of time, I escaped the hospital.

And the goal was just to study them [the schizophrenics] or to help them?
That was my dilemma. I think I wanted to study them, but the people who actually succeed in working in those populations want to help them. So through that year I discovered that I really didn't want to help them.

Because you didn't like them?
Because helping is not part of my ... I don't have the helping ... it's not part of who I am. So then I planted trees in the Cascades.

Do they pay you to do that?
They do pay you.

Oh. Why?
Because it's hard to plant trees there; you have to carry them up mountains.

Did you have any special skills for that job?
No, you don't need any special skills! You need to put a tree on your back and walk up a hill. And then I thought, I need to do something. And I had been a sociology major by accident—or by convenience—so I applied to the sociology department at Harvard.

Do you enjoy teaching Columbia students?
Yes, I wish I taught them more.

What's standing in your way?
Well, I run this Institute, I'm chair of Statistics at the moment, for a while I was chair of Sociology. I have gobs of graduate students ... just the multivalence of being a college professor, you just have so many demands on your time.

Did you do any extracurricular activities as an undergrad?
No.

None at all?

No. You're really pushing me. I don't think so.

Do you do any extracurricular activities now?
What do you mean by extracurricular?

You know, like playing the piano...
Oh, do I have any skills?

Or hobbies—that you're not particularly skillful at...
Gee, I hate to be so boring...

Well, I understand you're very busy.
Well, I have three kids, so I spend some time with kids.

Sports?
Yeah, I used to play squash, but then my body fell apart. I'm doing yoga. Or, well, I'm in a yoga class. I've been doing it for a year and I'm beginning to approximate positions. So like, I can see from the mirror that I'm like 80 percent in a yoga position. So that's somewhat satisfying.

Do you ever read your reviews on CULPA?
I did initially. When I was chair, I would read everybody's reviews.

How did that make you feel?
I get bimodal reviews. I think some people like what I do and a lot of people think that it's ridiculous. If more people wrote to CULPA it would be better. Every instructor should be able to find one person that likes them.

Do you think most professors read CULPA? Do you think they read other professors' reviews on CULPA?
I'm sure they do! If they read CULPA, they read other people's reviews.

That could be so awkward, if one person has all really bad reviews.
Yeah, that's true. I think if they have really bad reviews they're probably not reading CULPA, because they don't care.

If you were going to take a class at Columbia, who would you want to take a class with?
I have no idea what Shelley Pollock does, intellectually...

Me neither. Who's that?
He teaches in MEALAC. But he just looks like such a deep, penetrating guy.

What does he look like?
He looks like a very organized Santa Claus. But he's not large. He has white hair and a really nice kind of white beard. It's long, but it's neat.

URBANITIES OUT OF LEFT FIELD BY RAHEL AIMA



PROTEST, 1968

THE YEAR WAS 1968. IT WAS THE YEAR OF TUMULTUOUS student and worker strikes, the civil rights movement, an unpopular war, and national upheaval. And as you might already know, Columbia was witness to much of it. It felt like student radicalism and activism could, and perhaps actually did, change the world. How has that spirit of radicalism changed on campus?

Today, like in '68, the radical organizations on campus are divided—fighting for different causes, different identities, and different politics. Although they are trying to work together, there is no common front. And although some try to rally back the “spirit of '68,” others see it as the cause for Columbia’s apathy today. Either way, it still permeates the activist culture.

To look a bit more closely, nearly four decades have passed, but the similarities between the two eras seem eerily parallel: the '60s had the Vietnam war, the “IDA six” (the six Columbia anti-war protesters put on probation), and Columbia’s plan to build a gymnasium in Morningside Park on a plot reserved for a Harlem housing project. Now there are Iraq, Iran, and Afghanistan, the Jena Six, and continuing plans by the University to expand into West Harlem.

A recent upsurge in activism on campus has begun to quickly re-cement Columbia’s radical reputation. Here at Bill O’Reilly’s “University Of Havana-North,” the past year has seen protested visits from the Minutemen and President of Iran Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, anti-war and anti-racist walkouts, teach-ins, and even a labor rights sit-in at Saigon Grill. Accordingly, mass student activism appears to be on the rise again, but did it ever leave in the first place? Do we still define ourselves by our radical tradition?

David Judd, SEAS '08, a radical-about-campus and

member of the Columbia Coalition Against the War and the International Socialist Organization, says, “I think it never left. Is it growing in strength? I think so, I hope so.” Fellow coalition member Kristin Wall, BC '08, agrees, noting an increased sense of urgency. She says, “More people are listening, and getting involved than when I first got here.”

While it is debatable whether this newfound participation has led to a surge in radicalism, the past couple of years have seen the birth and rebirth, respectively, of the explicitly radical Lucha and Students for a Democratic Society.

The Asian American Alliance recently escalated its tactics from teach-ins and sidewalk picketing to include the more confrontational option of a sit-in.

Yet the word “radical” itself carries certain stigmatic connotations of extremity and irrelevance, troubling many would-be radicals into choosing to identify as progressives instead. Christina Chen, CC '09, of Students Promoting Empowerment and Knowledge and the AAA, says it can be alienating “in that lots of groups operate within campus norms and they cater to the mainstream.” She adds, “The AAA, Black Students Organization and Student Organization of Latinos are all supposed to be representative of the populations of the people of color on campus and ... To identify yourself as radical, it wouldn’t really align with this mission of trying to represent as broad of a constituency as possible.” The fear, as Christina put it, is losing a lot of potentially interested people simply by using the term.

Bryan Mercer, CC '07, of the Black Students Organization, SPEaK, and the Student Coalition on Expansion and Gentrification, cautions that the word implies “people talking about something that they feel is extreme.” But he points to what’s going on in the world—and those strange

'68 parallels—as the explanation. “I think in actuality, people are pissed—as they should be—and they’re showing that. And I wouldn’t call that radical or extreme; I would call that proper, to respond to these times.”

Misconceptions aside, then, what actually makes a radical?

Given its spanning of a fairly broad base of political traditions, it can be taken simply as an awareness and commitment to a certain set of values. Bryan interprets the term in its Latin sense, meaning “the roots.” He explains that “To get at the root of things, is to want to get to the root causes of oppression and exploitation and to be grounded, to be rooted, and to build a movement.” He goes on, “So I believe radical work is work that addresses the root causes, as opposed to say, service work, which addresses the symptoms but not the causes.”

The United Students of Color Council’s Ryan Fukumori, CC '09, similarly understands the idea, defining it as the recognition that “the underlying base of society is what needs to change.” He applies the thought to racism, which he says “is not only people’s sentiments, but rather, deeply ingrained into our system and material relations and the way structures are set up toward people of color.”

On the other hand, Francisco Salas, CC '11, of SDS and Lucha, prefers a more personal approach. For him, radicalism “has a really special meaning to a lot of kids. And it’s not just political but the way you choose to live daily, the way you choose to do things, and the way you choose to relate to people.”

And here another parallel arises: the lack of race and privilege consciousness is slowly factionalizing and driving the campus activist community apart—not unlike the way in which the New Left imploded at the close of the '60s.

From afar, intergroup ties may seem like they have never been better. Ahmadinejad's recent visit brought together clubs as disparate as Hillel, ACLU, and GendeRevolution in a widely attended protest.

Yet the community remains divided on several fronts even on that issue, the most visible of which being Israel-Palestine.

Another rift is caused by sectarianism and a general propensity toward red-baiting. This contributes towards a pervasive climate of ideological distrust, as evidenced by the mutual antagonism between the College Democrats and CCAW.

building a gym in Morningside Park. Aside from the encroachment on the neighborhood, the gym itself would have been segregated, with different entrances and different facilities for the (mostly white) students and for the (mostly black) Harlem residents.

And today, Columbia's activist community mostly organizes based on either identity (be it race, religion, or sexuality) or political structure, focusing on capitalism, class, or the electoral system. It is the same line of color and gender privilege that divides the two—placing people of color and LGBTQ groups in the former camp, and

While the activist community shares a general fluency in the language of class analysis, the difficulty lies in recognizing internalized levels of oppression. This divergence inevitably leads to hostility, as one camp can often end up dismissing the other as being mired in identity politics. This can feel like a personal affront and results in very emotionally charged situations. Christina fears that groups largely “don't notice the intersection between identities, and this idea of approaching things from the class perspective somehow mitigates the importance of race. It is form of white privilege”.



MINUTEMAN PROTEST, FALL 2006



AHMADINEJAD PROTEST, FALL 2007

Toward this end, Sarah Leonard, CC '10 and lead activist for the Dems, says, “The people in the two groups cover a wide range of political philosophies, and those can be hard to reconcile. I think we believe in different methods of change. The Dems necessarily look at these issues through the lens of national politics.”

The common criticisms, however, are careerism and lack of commitment.

Samantha Stanton, CC '09, of SOL and SPEaK, cites the Dems' disregard for the community and lack of involvement and representation of people of color. The common perception of the Dems as a “preprofessional group” also engenders suspicion. Despite a commitment to working together, she feels that “they'll occasionally show up to meetings and talk, but it's like they can betray you at any moment.”

This isn't just limited to the Dems. Kristin Wall also cites the common hostile undercurrent of “How authentic are you? Are you not down with the organic struggle enough if you're doing anti-war work versus community-based stuff?” At the same time, Christina Chen acknowledges SPEaK's problems of inaccessibility, over-intellectualizing and especially “self-alienation, that process of making ourselves so insular and creating this bubble. One of the traps of being an activist is that you can't shut yourself off from what the rest of the world thinks.”

Just as in the '60s, however, the most deeply divisive issue remains that of race and privilege. During the '68 “Gym Crow” protests, black students took over Hamilton Hall and stated that white students were not welcome. The split was based around the issue that the white protesters, oblivious to their privilege, could not fully comprehend all the implications of

groups that tend to be mostly white (like the ISO, Dems, Revolution Club, and CCAW) in the other.

Bryan Mercer points out that the identity approach allows people to connect to their work on a very personal basis, while the structural approach affords a view of the bigger picture.

“Still,” he says that although the latter “has that structural critique, there is a certain privilege in that. You've already got to feel like you should have some say in the university and state, and what happens in big business, to feel like you can challenge issues starting on that level.” Being able to take a wider systemic approach to organizing is in itself a hallmark of privilege. Oppressed minorities, on the other hand, still essentially have to struggle just to break the surface.

Mercer notes the tremendously complex problem that continues to surround race. “For a white activist engaged in work against the state or the University, about the war or about globalization, it would be really difficult to question how white skin privilege is solely connected to these very systems that you're fighting against.” It necessitates the very difficult recognition of privilege and a re-evaluation of roles, of being a supportive ally, without pretensions of actually being in the struggle itself.

Samantha Stanton also emphasizes the importance of self-determination, saying, “If white people are leading all our struggles, then you're really just perpetuating the same hierarchy.” She likens it to the gay-straight alliance: “If you're straight, then you're not gay and you're not in the struggle. And you can support it and you can sympathize with people, but you can't include yourself as a part of that struggle.”

Today's race issues, like the Jena Six or, more locally, the racist graffiti in SIPA and the hate crime at Teacher's College, galvanize and force people “to think about their identities in very politicized ways,” Christina says. “And events like the Minutemen reveal the disconnect between different groups and the superficiality of our relationships with each other.”

As Mal Rehberger, CC '10 and a member of SDS, notes, complications are especially prevalent in the transgender community, where it literally becomes “a matter of which identity you identify with.” Conversely, in structural-based politics, there is no vested interest—a person can essentially choose whether to be a Democrat or a communist.

But, as Kristin concludes, “We all have to be engaged, to see these issues as all connected and work together. At the end of the day, I don't care what people call themselves if they are out on the streets with me.”

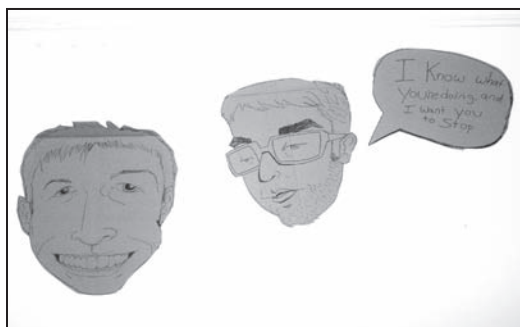
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LIBRARY AND THE COLUMBIA DAILY SPECTATOR

STYLE

A ROOM OF ONE'S OWN

TEXT AND PHOTOS BY COURTNEY CHIN

It's not too late to dispose of those tired posters and white walls in favor of something new. Five dorm-savvy Columbia students share their secrets.



For the comic book fiend or the young at heart, consider recruiting an artsy friend for some animated inspiration. Alexander Slotnick, CC '10, and Daniel Spiro, CC '10, asked Marc Rios, CC '10, to draw caricatures of Slotnick and Spiro on scavenged cardboard boxes. The thick, black cartoon cut-outs are about as personal as it gets.

Aaron Hsieh, CC '09, adds an Old-European flair to his room with pieces directly from or inspired by Italy. On his walls are framed collotypes of some of his favorite works of art from Florence and Vatican City, including a vintage map, as well as glazed paper-mache masks from Venice. The most eye-catching piece, however, is his 31-inch clock, which he actually purchased right here in Manhattan. Consider tying all these neutrals together with something a bit darker and more vibrant, which Hsieh does with deep-red curtains.



Though Casey Hayes, CC '10, fills her room with eclectic antiques such as a retro alarm clock/radio and a treasure-trove wooden chest, going vintage doesn't have to mean a dark and gloomy atmosphere. Hayes manipulates the otherwise poor lighting in her room with a bronze-framed mirror (an antique from her mother), which reflects the light from her glass-crystal desk lamp.

Turn your dorm's boring window-sill into a cozy reading nook. Sue Yang, CC '10, pads the space with comfortable throw pillows and ties it all together with a set of breezy white gauze curtains hung from a spare shower rod.



Gabi D'Addario and Tessa Rapaczynski, both CC '10, turn a dingy McBain shaft into a warm, sultry space through some serious color coordination: bright red walls and plenty of lighting perfectly complement Middle Eastern and Indian trinkets like wooden statues, a purple cross ash tray, and a string of beaded elephants, all picked up from flea markets and outdoor bazaars.



WHERE THE SIDEWALK BEGINS

TEXT:
MIKAELA
BRADBURY

PHOTOS:
TINA GAO

It's a surprisingly hot day in October and the bookseller stationed across from Milano Market is in no mood to talk. Intrigued by his lengthy interaction with a man requesting literature on black cowboys, I mention that I am from the *Spectator* and would like to ask him a few questions about his work. Bad move. "No no no," he begins, edging away from me. "Absolutely not."

He goes on to explain his rather contentious relationship with the *Spectator*. In late September he was incorrectly identified as the victim of a street brawl, causing his mother to call him from Florida, worried he was in the hospital. He almost hired a lawyer.

Despite this vehement reluctance, Ed* nonetheless discloses bits of information—his career as a freelance writer, the scam of college text books—all the while insisting that he absolutely refuses to have anything to do with



the newspaper. Eventually, I have no choice but to concede and make my way further down the block.

In the process of eliciting stories from people, journalists accumulate information and incorporate it into a narrative. I am on par with the booksellers themselves, as they too recuperate disregarded and seemingly obsolete material for sale. In a pro-active response to mainstream capitalism hell-bent on the new, these booksellers collect and recycle the old.

Every day, Columbia students pass the row of tables on Broadway between 110th and 114th streets, faithfully manned by a set of familiar neighborhood faces. To some, these figures are close friends, known for their writing, art, and entrepreneurship; to others, they are a reliable place to get a good deal on books of all kinds

or, better yet, those impossible to find. Perhaps to most, they are just another series of unnoticeable sidewalk vendors in Manhattan. In any case, spend a moment standing around a table and you will witness people of all ages stopping by to say hello or check up on their latest request. And, time and time again, each bookseller remembers the name and need of each person—Danny* looking for a good Serbian-English dictionary, Mary* hunting for old editions of Faulkner.

Here, the self-service shopping of Barnes and Noble or Amazon makes way for a personalized interaction, something which the aforementioned companies no doubt still strive to emulate. What's more, the tables are known by their particular vendor or selection, as opposed to a brand or store name. Your book is handpicked like a choice tomato at the farmers' market. And even if the fun merely lies in the banter and bar-

gaining, the purchase is often inseparable from the face-to-face encounter with its seller.

Furthermore, the book tables differ from any old vintage store in their sidewalk locations, and circumvent the unaffordable rent of Manhattan real estate. Indeed, each table has its particular favorites. The first table I peruse features a wide variety of philosophy and literature, always a stack of Herman Hesse and some Lit Hum classics. The next one down tends to favor lesser-known authors of history and politics, while the final stand is replete with outdated textbooks on world history.

On this point, our reluctant informant says the books aren't actually that outdated but just lack superficial alteration, like new introductory paragraphs added to create obsolescence. In any case, the books are inextricable from the man who sells them to you; they are his loot and livelihood. They begin to take on the feeling of a gift—handpicked and particular, albeit given in exchange for a negotiable price.

In many ways, this sidewalk bazaar seems out of place on the streets near Columbia. But somewhat akin to indispensable spots like the Hungarian Pastry Shop and these sidewalk vendors, Columbia manages to maintain homegrown alternatives to Starbucks, PinkBerry, and American Apparel.

Fortunately, the next set of book vendors, better known for their interminable chess playing, bear no particular grudge against the *Spectator* and are more willing to talk. I learn Rod* is a practicing artist, evidenced by his poetic parries and the figure painting exhibited with the accompanying book table. Chess, however, seems to be the duo's unifying passion for the past 20 years. Though Morningside residents frequently attempt to take on these virtuosos, the result is almost always defeat.

Despite disclosure of basic information, the two men playfully deflect my questions—"What do people tend to look for? Where do you get your books?"—each slips by unanswered. "You know, I'm not really a talker," the taller chess player says with a smile. "You should talk to Dave* down the block." "Yeah, yeah," the other says, "take the indirect approach ... ask the restaurants what they think of us." All the while, he is absorbed in a chess game with an older man, teasingly referred to as "Professor." "Your degree isn't getting you out of this one, Prof," he says, triumphantly setting a knight down. I gather that the "Professor" taught at Columbia some time ago and owns a plantation in the West Indies (or was this a joke?). But beyond that, I am getting no answers.

Having realized that invoking the *Spectator's* name won't facilitate conversation, I decide not to even mention the newspaper and just chat about the books instead. "So, you mostly carry books on world history," I begin.

"Well, yes. What are you interested in? You know, now it's called 'global history,' what with the Internet and everything making things less Eurocentric." Karl* is eager to talk. Unlike the previous interviewees, he willingly offers his biography, his view on America and how he ended up selling books on Broadway.

He begins with a discussion of Thomas Friedman, author of *The World is Flat*, and Thomas Kiyosaki of *Rich Dad Poor Dad*, among others, to flesh out his argument on the pitfalls of globalization and the accompanying outsourcing and downsizing. In sum, Karl laments the way in which the average working class citizen is deprived of “entitlements,” like basic health insurance and decent pensions, as large companies try to compensate for their competitors in China and India. To name one example, Karl tells of the recent arbitration deal that cut New York City police rookies’ pay to just \$25,100 in exchange for a 10.25 percent retroactive pay raise for current officers. As Karl says, “Who is going to take a bullet for \$25,000?!”

Karl also tells of the recent controversy over returning Iraq soldiers, “coincidentally” encouraged to sign up for 729 days of service, just one day short of the 730 day requirement to receive their GI Bill. Karl holds a somewhat apocalyptic vision of our world’s future, with forecasts of bankrupting Health Insurance companies, 65-year-old retirees having to return to work, and Iraq veterans coming home without adequate benefits or care. Yet, it is one to which Columbia students seem partially oblivious. “I’ve never taught students that are so much in a bubble as they are right now,” one of my professors said at the beginning of this semester. Some, including the recent *New York Times* college essay contest winner, would respond that our generation has just taken our activism indoors to the world of blogging and YouTube exposés. In any case, this certainly differs from the face-to-face outdoor conversations that tend to surface around these sidewalk tables.

Karl relies on donations from others to feed his business. A young man in a sports jacket and long ponytail approaches. He brings with him a duffel bag full of *National Geographic* magazines from the ’60s and ’70s to donate. They are beautiful—filled with incredible photographs and spines that read, “Zulus Octopus China Gems St. Peters Phillipine Tribe,” in one breath. Karl and I get to work making a display of them and I pick out a few for myself. Karl tells the donor to come by for anything he ever needs. Karl’s attitude is inspiring, matter-of-fact, and proactive yet humble. Contrasting himself to what he sees as problematic African-American figures like Jesse Jackson, who “doesn’t want to run anything but his mouth,” and the infamously experience-light Barack Obama, he says, “I’m not going to try to start at the top. I’m going to work my way up, one step at a time. Its never too late.”

Art Hum students have all seen the 19th-century painting, “The Gleaners” by Jean-Francois Millet, of bulky peasant women collecting left-over crops in the golden dusk of the day’s harvest. Contemporary gleaners, such as urban dumpster-divers and these very sidewalk enterprises, are far less easily aestheticized, and celebrated.

In her 2000 documentary *The Gleaners and I*, acclaimed New Wave filmmaker Agnès Varda explores these modern-day forms of gleaning, as well as their earlier incarnations. Varda documents gleaners ranging from Provencal peasants trying to support their families to well-off urban



activists, motivated by the purely ethical justifications of gleaning. Whether it is in the cryptic, self-satisfied retorts of the chess players or Karl’s rhetoric of self-determination and entrepreneurship, the gleaners demonstrate a high degree of agency and self-awareness in their practices.

In her film, Varda lays bare another, equally salient, side of gleaning: that of herself as a filmmaker in relation to her subject matter, “the gleaners.” In this case, Varda is a gleaner herself, collecting anecdotes for the film.

As an artist or critic of any sort, it’s impossible to avoid the process of gathering and re-working disparate stories to suit a constructed narrative. As Columbia students, I expect we are all more familiar with this form of intellectual gleaning, whether we recognize it or not. However, the way that it is done can make or break a story and, as evidenced by the first disgruntled

bookseller, leave bad rapport in its wake. In part, it has to do with only taking up those subjects that offer themselves to you freely and, in turn, realizing when to leave alone those that don’t. For both the intellectual and material gleaner, this is what will hopefully prevent you from being a menacing scavenge and allow for the social and intellectual play possible in gleaning.

Not all has to be gleaned—some is freely given. Near the end of my conversation with Karl, an old woman approaches. A frequent patron, she hails from “The Planet Earth,” she defiantly tells me in a thick accent I can’t quite place. “But I’m in New York right now,” she adds. “And that’s all that matters.”

Karl hands her a gift of several old, brown, hardcover public speaking books, which she accepts with a sudden flash of bashfulness. “She likes public speaking,” Karl explains, smiling.

**Names have been changed.*

MUSIC COLUMBIA'S OTHER DJ TANNERS

BY ANDREW KIM
PHOTO BY TINA GAO



IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO STOP BY CARMAN 1007 on a school night without hearing the latest remix or original creation by Jon Tanners, CC '11. The beats he produces are organic, progressive, and really catchy—at least according to his floormates, who get a chance to listen to them before anyone else. Tanners certainly has enough material to re-imagine: he boasts a library of 50,000 songs, which equates to more music than will fit onto even the latest 160GB iPod. Still not impressed? The industrious freshman is also the founder and CEO of Invent Horizons, a record label he started right before his senior year in high school. The Eye talked to Tanners about his record label, how Stevie Wonder saved pop music, and the one Columbia music class that everyone should take.

Why did you create Invent Horizons?

I wanted a way to get my music out, and I realized that I wouldn't be able to do it as a producer sending beat tapes out and working with random artists. I would have to somehow force my foot in the door, so to speak. So I decided the best way to [do] that would be to start my own record label—not really knowing what that meant or what that entailed, and learning very slowly and very “costfully” what that would mean.

So what is Invent Horizons?

Invent Horizons is a record company and clothing company. We have already released a T-shirt and a remix CD. My ultimate goal, in my delusional mind, is to turn Invent Horizons into a lifestyle brand where we do different kinds of clothing with more of a focus on the entertainment side. Today we are a record label—tomorrow, who the hell knows.

How did you come up with the name for your record label?

Like all great things that happen, it was an accident of sorts. The original name was unusable for legal reasons. ... I was sitting around the whole summer and one day I was looking online at the movie *Event Horizon*, which is this horrendous horror movie starring Laurence Fishburne. It was one of those things where you say something in your head and you mispronounce it, and in my head I said, “Invent Horizons ... That sounds kinda good.”

Does the name have any significance?

It makes sense because what I'm trying to do with this record label is push the music somewhere it's not right now already. That is the founding idea behind Invent Horizons. Everyone who is working with it is trying to push their boundaries, trying to push themselves beyond where they are already. It's like a corny self-help tape kind of thing, but that's the whole idea. The idea grew out of the name, but the idea supports the name.

How would you describe the music you make?

I do a lot of sampling with old soul songs, but I like to think that I have a unique sound. I love dissonance and crazy, weird noises. What I want to do is blend this world of aesthetically pleasing music with music that is more difficult, so that you have to think about it a little more. The closest thing I can compare it to is if Timbaland smoked crack. I like to make really weird beats and then come back and make them more “user-friendly,” so to speak.

Who are your musical influences and favorite musicians?

Stevie Wonder is the greatest thing to happen to American music. I often look to him—not for musical things, but for structural elements. The structure of his music has always fascinated me, and that's something I try to bring into my music. One of my big theories is that rap and pop music have grown stagnant, and it's because of the chorus-verse-chorus-hook that is so static. Nothing is different. Every song sounds the same. Every song has a pattern. I think one of the beautiful things about Stevie Wonder's music is that you have verses and choruses, but then you'll have this breakdown of him just playing this keyboard or a gospel chorus coming in. It's so different from the pop music we have now—and it's a proven success, because Stevie Wonder won four straight Grammys. And he wasn't doing

[it] with this rote formula. Kanye West is a stylistic influence. The Wu-Tang Clan is my biggest musical influence. The producer, the RZA, is the greatest producer in the history of hip-hop. They ride this fine line between accessibility and dissonance where you have these weird sounds coming, but you have this recognizable soul loop or these drums that you know you've heard before. Everything is slammed together. It's this big, funky, jazz, dark hip-hop stew.

How has being on a college campus helped Invent Horizons grow?

The first couple weeks I met kids who rapped or sang or produced. It got me to thinking, “Why not take advantage of the talented kids here?” These kids are from all different places. They are aware of a larger world around them. By the end of the year, I hope we can create something that is really top-notch.

What are you listening to right now?

I am listening to this remix of a Lil' Wayne song called “Bring it Back.” I am also listening to “Stereo” by John Legend.

What is your favorite class at Columbia?

I was just browsing the music classes, and there was one called Listening to Hip-Hop. I think this class is incredible because it's done more to open up my mind to the way you can break down a hip-hop song or lyrics. Sitting in this class, we pick apart the different elements of songs—the way the rapper is rapping, the words he's saying, how the words are meshing with the beat. If I had tried to discover this on my own, I never would have. My own listening isn't guided, but now I know what to look for.

Invent Horizons can be found online at myspace.com/inventhorizons.

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OF MALTHUS AND MYSPACE

BY ANDREW MARTIN



THE CAPSTAN SHAFTS



LYNDONVILLE, VERMONT, A TOWN NEAR THE Canadian border, has 1,227 people in it. One of those people, Dean Wells, has recorded 17 albums that the other 1,226 don't know a thing about.

This is probably due to the fact that Wells, who records under the name Capstan Shafts, had never played a show in his life until this week. He's a woodworker in a factory in town and crafts his songs on a four track in his house, playing guitar, bass, and drums himself.

"I was waiting for you to call," Wells says from a phone at the factory. "I don't know that I have much of interest to say." This is his first phone interview. "I've spoken to the guy at the label, and I've had some e-mail contact with people, but this is like the third time I've spoken out loud to someone about my music, so ..."

Wells' recordings bear the unmistakable influence of Guided by Voices in their prime. His songs are almost exclusively under two minutes long and combine a buzzy, lo-fi aesthetic with sharp melodies and inscrutable and idiosyncratic lyrics.

"Guided by Voices and the whole '90s lo-fi thing was the big epiphany moment for me," Wells says. "That was like the punk rock moment for me, that you could actually do it yourself. And do it in a way that was fun and not really worry about the different aspects of it."

The newest Capstan Shafts album, *Environ Maiden*, covers both topical and personal issues, appropriate for an artist who describe himself as a "political junkie." Much of the album is influenced by the national discourse on global warming, though Wells isn't exactly lining up to play Live Earth II.

"More than environmental concerns, it's about people talking about it and not doing anything about it," Wells says. "And that's why there's reference to doom-sayers, and how every generation thinks it's the end of the world. And some people want it to be just so they can feel special, like we're more important than any civilization that ever existed, because we're going to do something about it now—and then they don't do anything now."

Wells uses the word "Greenland" throughout the album as shorthand for the environmental debate because of its melting ice, and he mixes those environmentally conscious songs in with "the typical songs about lust and what have you."

Wells' lyrics can be hard to parse as a result of his sometimes obtuse vocabulary, somewhat slurred enunciation, and low production values, but that seems to garner repeat listens. The first song on the album, for example, titled "Right on the Malthus," combines a discussion of Malthusian economics with the yearning refrain, "As his surname becomes her name." In songs like this, the emotional and the intellectual intermingle perfectly.

Like his hero Robert Pollard and direct stylistic forebears Neutral Milk Hotel and The Mountain Goats, Wells delivers his dense, textured worldview with a gripping immediacy made possible by his rough recording technique, eliminating the barriers of

studio production to communicate directly with the listener. That Wells writes melodies as well as the first rank of pop singers today is only underscored by the punch of his in-the-red vocals and rudimentary instrumentation. As we reach a point where the independent music landscape seems to be getting increasingly slick and professional-sounding, Wells' reliance on the lo-fi sound pioneered in the mid-'90s is both comforting and effective.

Wells is taking some tentative-but-important steps toward a wider audience. He has been releasing records on his own for years, but it is only in the last year that he has gotten the distribution to reach an audience outside of dedicated internet trollers who came across his MySpace and the lucky few at publications who received CDs featuring Wells' handmade album art. His new record is being distributed by Rainbow Quartz, a small New York label run by Jim McGarry, a Manhattan attorney with a taste for psychedelic indie pop. Rainbow Quartz has done publicity for the album and, even more impressively, booked him to play their label showcase next Saturday night at the CMJ 2007 Music Marathon and Film Festival.

Until last Saturday night, Wells had never played live in any capacity. It seems almost unbelievable that someone so engaged in making music has never been in a band, but according to Wells the opportunity simply never arose.

"I knew some people that played in cover bands and stuff like that, but that wasn't really interesting to me," Wells says. "And then you know, once you don't do something, you continue to not do it."

His meeting with the band he is playing with at CMJ was the first time he ever played his music with other people in the same room. His show next week will also mark his first visit to New York City.

Obviously, this puts Wells under quite a bit of pressure, but for the moment at least, he seems to be handling it fairly well, worrying about the logistics as a substitute for worrying about the performance.

"It's a long way away from here and the band I'm playing with is a long way away from here, so it's almost like there's been so much worry about making sure everything works out there hasn't been much time to worry about doing it," Wells says. "Which might be a good thing, because I haven't had to think about actually standing in front of people and doing it. I have to think, 'okay, its four hours to Maine, then down to New York, and that sort of thing.'"

It's almost impossible not to get caught up in the drama of it—an unknown new talent, journeying from the far North to face down a city of rabid music consumers during the most hectic and hype-ridden festival of the year. Wells, understandably, is trying to keep his expectations for himself low in any way he can while he's at the festival.

"I'd hate to go see somebody I like and then be more intimidated," he says. "I'm under enough pressure as it is. So it almost would be better to go see somebody really bad, and then I'd feel better about myself." Hopefully, it won't come to that.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE FALSE 45TH.BLOGSPOT AND CAPSTAN SHAFTS

FILM

JUDE LAW'S LATEST OBSESSSION

BY ALEXANDRIA SYMONDS



MICHAEL CAINE AND JUDE LAW JOIN FORCES FOR A REMAKE OF THE 1972 FILM *SLEUTH*, IN WHICH CAINE ORIGINALLY PLAYED THE LEAD ROLE.

IF YOU DIDN'T KNOW BETTER, YOU MIGHT THINK JUDE Law had some kind of Michael Caine complex. Law reprised Caine's role in 2004's dismal Alfie, and now once again in the much more promising Sleuth. The film is the epitome of a character-driven drama—it has only three characters and doesn't leave the scope of one house. Law plays the role of Milo Tindle, (originally played by Caine in the 1972 version) and, in an interesting twist, Caine plays the other lead in the new version. And it doesn't hurt that those other venerable British drama fiends, Kenneth Branagh and Harold Pinter, directed and wrote the movie. In a press day last week, Law, Caine, and Branagh chatted about the film and, of course, talked about Pinter behind his back.

At what point did you know that you were going to play Milo?

JUDE LAW: I didn't assume it. My first role was producer. Once I'd had lunch with Harold and he'd agreed that he liked the idea, he liked the premise: two men fight over a woman you never meet. My role really, then, was to serve him as a producer and support his process and guide him when he wanted guiding and read it when he wanted it read, and that went on for nearly two and a half years. ... It's not that I didn't have a notion that I would be in it, it's just that my concentration, my focus, was on looking at it objectively as a whole. I think as soon as it was finished, and once Michael agreed to be on board, it was largely because of Harold involved and the fact that he felt that with Harold involved, it was a very new take and a fresh voice.

How was Kenneth's approach to directing?

JL: I think we all knew when we went into the rehearsal room that we didn't have to sit around and break the piece down and work out beat for beat what was going on. I think we all knew and had discussed it one on one with Ken before we went into the rehearsal room. We covered most of the queries, the story questions. He's got a great sense of get-up-and-go, Ken, he wants to put everything on its feet immediately. He also has the amazing ability, because he's a fine, fine actor, to give you wonderful suggestions of where and how far you can tell a character's shading. If he'll see you going somewhere with a line, he'll recognize it and say, "Go further, further, further," or, "This is your quiet moment." He'll see it and explain it as an actor, which means your dialogue is very fluid.

Michael, could you talk about your relationship with Harold Pinter?

MICHAEL CAINE: I knew Harold when he was an actor called David Baron, and he decided, like a lot of actors ... to write a play. And he wrote a play called *The Room*, which was a one-act play, under his real name, which was Harold Pinter. And I did that at the Royal Court, 50 years ago, I think. And since then, Harold has been writing all this great stuff and no one has ever offered it to me again. And so Jude came to me with this and I thought, At last! A Pinter play, which is very important to me.

Pinter does a cameo in the movie—where?

KENNETH BRANAGH: On the television. I'm the one who gets slapped, and Harold's the one who says, "Shut up! Shut up!"

Was that analogous to the shooting process at all?

KB: (laughs) Pinter saying "Shut up"? No, no, he was very much the opposite.

How present was he in shooting and during rehearsals?

KB: It felt like he was around a lot, to me.

MC: He was here a lot. Usually very close to lunchtime.

For it to be funny, is it essential that we don't like either character—in order to enjoy their torture?

KB: I think it's good that it's funny, whether people like them or not. My experience with people watching it is that their allegiances shift over the course of watching it. That's a very powerful part of the experience—the power struggle, continually changing.

Because there's so much ambiguity in the characters, did you have to explain to each other what you were thinking while you were making this movie?

JL: What's amazing about Pinter's work is that we could do some terribly friendly takes and then we'd do some where we were, like, at each other's throats, we'd do others where we were flirting, we'd do others where one was aggressive and the other was submissive.

Anything we can expect for the DVD?

KB: God, there'd be another two or three movies.

MC: Yeah, you could do another movie. You want to watch the loud one, the soft one...

KB: The most memorable one, for me, was with Michael—his side of the interchange where Jude says to him, "Maggie never told me you were such a manipulator. She told me you were no good in bed, but she never told me you were such a manipulator," to which Michael's reply is "She told you I was no good in bed?" We had about seven goes: one made me want to cry; one made me want to run away, it was so scary. And he went through a sort of gamut. One was very aggressive, one had a twinkle in its eye. It was great to see how many styles the moment could take. The boys were ready to run in many different directions, so there may be a few tricks on the DVD.

Did you discuss Maggie at all, or did you leave her an unspoken presence?

JL: We discussed her a little bit. Not very much, though. ... I remember Ken, once, calling Harold about the phone calls at the end. And he says, "I'd love to ask you, what do you think Maggie's saying?" And he says, "How do you know it's Maggie? You assume it's Maggie—how do you know it's not a friend calling?" And Ken was like, "Well, is it?" and he was like, "I don't know."

So is the fight over a woman?

JL: Well, not exactly. I think that's what appealed to Harold, actually—that it's a piece about why men fight, the primal need to fight, sometimes losing sight of the goal. ... It's just about domination. And that's, again, where sexuality comes in. I know Michael and Ken discussed a treatise called morbid jealousy, which is when a man seduces his wife's lover to dominate him as opposed to killing him, and that's his revenge, to possess him. And I think the reason Harold liked the idea of putting us in this sort of aquarium-type glass box is sort of technology, man's advancements, is to highlight the fact that we're just cavemen in the middle of it, really, fighting like thugs.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF SONY PICTURE CLASSICS

REALITY CAN BE FLATTERING

BY ASHLEY JAMES



PIERCE BROSNAN (LEFT) AND RACHEL MCADAMS (RIGHT) STAR IN IRA SACHS' FILM, *MARRIED LIFE*, ABOUT AN ADULTEROUS HUSBAND WHO PLOTS TO KILL HIS WIFE.

"SHOW ME SOMETHING BREATHING—NOT SOME form, not imitation, not rehearsal," filmmaker Ira Sachs asks of his students in Columbia's graduate film division, maintaining the statement as something of a mantra.

Honesty in art, as Sachs promotes, can result in triumph—and in Sachs' case, this includes the jury prize from the 2005 Sundance Film Festival for *Forty Shades of Blue*. With the release of his most recent film, *Married Life*, at the New York Film Festival, Sachs hopes to continue to engage his audience through an adherence to authenticity, keeping his focus on that which is most true and relatable in life.

Although Sachs is currently teaching in the film division, he never attended film school himself. A graduate of Yale, he learned about filmmaking through the process of making films. That is not to say that Sachs' film skills are elementary or lacking in nuance—the praise given to his films often includes nods to his mastery of direction, among other technical commands. But this grassroots education has led Sachs to approach filmmaking with an emphasis on a purity of vision based on natural instincts and emotion.

"At the end of the day, the effect [of film] is in a visceral fashion," he says. "The best films are ones where the labor is hidden. It transcends the thought behind it. It reaches a spot unexpected. It is successful based on emotional affect."

This philosophy pervades Sachs' pedagogical approach.

"Filmmaking and teaching are not all that different," he says. "There is a bureaucratic and pedagogic structure to the film industry, but I hope to impart a different educa-

tion to my students." He feels that students should first explore what is real to them, a process that will invariably inform their own films.

As a teacher of film, though, he finds himself in a paradox.

"As a teacher, one must find what one wants to represent forcefully, but [also] understand that their approach is not the only approach. There is the positive and negative," he says. Sachs insists that instructors must have "complete conviction of one's own method," though his own philosophy on film values the individuality of each student, rather than an overarching, inflexible concept, which he refers to as the "nature of the pedagogical dogmatic."

Individual complexity is certainly an idea that resonates with Sachs—when asked if he sees in himself the type of complexities his characters tend to possess, he answers, "Certainly—on some level, even the most distant, [my films are] a form of autobiography."

And it's quite a biography: Sachs is Jewish, gay, and was born and raised in Memphis, Tenn.—he's no stranger to the concept of multiple identities. However, while his own background may have been particularly complex, he finds that these layers exist in everyone, no matter the person.

"Recognizing it in others is a matter of how well, how deeply you see other people," he says. He maintains a quote of Thilo of Alexandria as indicative to how he views others as well as how he approaches each film he works on: "Be kind, for everyone you meet is fighting a great battle."

This philosophy applies to Sachs' latest film, *Married Life*. Unlike his previous critical successes, *The Del-*

ta and *Forty Shades of Blue*—both contemporary, realistic films—*Married Life* is a genre piece, a murder mystery set in the 1950s. Despite the divergence in style, Sachs says he approached this movie just like any of his others.

"No matter the genre, [each film] demands honesty," he says. "Does it feel authentic? Does it feel true?"

Though there are certain aspects of life Sachs finds immutable, he is certainly not afraid of change—in fact, it tends to propel him. As he grows older and his experiences mount, he expects his films to reflect the same growth. His time at Columbia is one such experience.

"I hadn't been on a college campus in 21 years," he says. "New questions rose ... [and] the questions will never stop." There is always room for change, he maintains, saying matter-of-factly, "If not, you're dead."

If Sachs appears serious, it may be because, quite simply, he is—it's mostly a result of dedication to his philosophy of good filmmaking, one in which it is imperative to reflect real life. Though he does remain invested in the idea of his art, his films—*Married Life* in particular—are inextricably linked to the reality of his own experiences. And it is in this sense that Sachs cannot help but remain grounded, especially to certain elements of his background.

Asked about the reception following his New York Film Festival screening, he says, "I was most satisfied with the nice little Jewish ladies who told me what a nice 'pickcha' I had. As a nice Jewish middle-aged man, that's really all I want."

PHOTO COURTESY OF SONY PICTURE CLASSICS

HUMOR JOKE CONTEST RESULTS

The annual *Eye* joke contest received a record one response this year, which came with the following e-mail preface:

“Greetings, As a spoken and written word activist I go by the name of RAGS, who comes from a not-so-fictional community called Homelesstown USA (HTOWN USA). Addressing U.S. poverty, waste, addiction, the power of the mass media, and whatever else I feel like—and with a little bit of humor—I never use my real name.

The following is from a blog I started only last month, at theragsshow.blogspot.com. I hope you can use it in *The Eye*.”

Rags also included a really long joke. Three hours later, he sent in this revised version, which was in all caps.

Several women with children are gathered on some shelter beds. It's a baby shower for one of the women. All attention is on her as she looks over some gifts. There is much laughter, hugging, and gratitude.

Suddenly, the face of the penniless mother-to-be becomes somber. The other women notice and the joyous sounds and activity quickly cease. All attention stays on the woman as she thoroughly checks out the label on the gift she is holding. Then, with a serious face, she looks up and says, "Hey, I can't use this, it says for household use only!"

Suddenly she bursts out in laughter. And as the others catch on ... and realize she's joking ... they all begin laughing.

—RAGS

After reviewing all the candidates, we've decided that this year's winner is Margret Eby, whose friend told me the following joke on her behalf:

THE WINNER

*Q: Why did the physicist have to take the bus?
A: He knew the exact momentum of his car keys.*

The spirit of Heisenberg lives on in our hearts. And now, please enjoy these highlights from the previous year of *The Eye* humor page.



ILLUSTRATION BY SHAINA RUBIN

FREUDIAN SLIP

How did a young Sigmund Freud get into nightclubs?

He used his fake Id.

—Raphael Pope-Sussman

AN OLD CLASSIC

Fashionable Conversation. “Miss, do you love sugar?” “Yes.” “Well next time I come to see you, I’ll bring you a great gobber.”

—*Southern Literary Messenger*, June 1840

TO THE END

He was a dying old man, but whatever he lacked in youthful vigor, he more than made up for in ghastly, morbid witheredness.

—Will Storie

YOU CAN'T GO BACK

Years from now, I bet the elk will look out the window in his office, see the forest, and think, “I wonder if I made the right decision.”

—J.D.

WISDOM

I don’t claim to be a wise man. Usually I claim to be a tall man and then make vague threats toward those who disagree.

—J.D. Porter

UNCLE ROBERT

Johnny’s Uncle Robert is a lawyer. One day Johnny comes home and finds Uncle Robert having sex with his mommy. Johnny cries, but he eventually accepts it.

—Shaina Rubin

KNOW YOUR ALPHABET

Most S-Like Letters of the Alphabet:

5. K
4. F
3. S
2. Z
1. S

—RPS

THINGS ARE GOING GREAT

Things are going great. Just yesterday I won a sweepstakes. Free stamps for life, they told me. Looks like I’m halfway to that dream of getting a letter in the *New York Post*.

—J.D.

DUCK JOKE CYCLE

I was watching ducks in the park, so I came up with a Duck Joke Cycle. It’s like the *Oedipus Cycle*, but with less fucking of your mother and more jokes about ducks.

1. Who do the ducks call when a crime is committed?
Duck Tracy.
2. When they get sick of the left and right coasts, where do ducks migrate?
The Duckotas, of course.
3. How does a duck get past a barbed wire fence?
He flies over the fence.
4. What did the doctor say to the duck who was allergic to his own feathers?
“You have down syndrome.”
5. Why are ducks good dinner guests?
Because they are always quacking jokes.

—RPS

HAPPY TIDINGS

What happens when you dip the gingerbread man in milk?

I don’t know- why don’t you ask *wrongfully accused prisoners of Guantanamo*?

—WS

SMOKE

After the smoke had metaphorically cleared from the arson trial, I drove that old car as far as I could and abandoned it, realizing only too late that I could have let it coast to a stop at least.

—J.D.

PLAY BALL!

One day the children asked their old grandfather the secret to his success on the baseball field, and he answered: “segregation.”

—WS

PERFORMANCE

JASON FUCHS' NEXT STAGE

BY YELENA SHUSTER



JASON FUCHS, CC '08, HAS NOT DONE HOMEWORK for the past two weeks.

In between attending morning classes and 11-hour tech rehearsals, he's also been shaving every day in order to resemble a 16-year-old. Like many Columbia students, Fuchs is self-deprecating, has a love-hate relationship with the core, and laments his anti-social tendencies. But as of last week, he's also an Off-Broadway star.

Though he never formally honed his debate skills in high school, he'll be faking it for his first Off-Broadway starring role in the Roundabout Theater's production of Stephen Karam's *Speech and Debate*.

The show is an engaging dramedy directed by Jason Moore that explores teenage sexuality and repression, all the while poking fun at the awkwardness of youth. When a sex scandal is discovered in a Salem high school, three quirky characters—each with a secret—push the limits of friendship, betrayal, and sexual expression in a new speech and debate team. As AIM messages in PowerPoint replace actual dialogue, multimedia presentations elevate the show to a whole new kind of theater.

Fuchs plays Solomon, a fast-talking, polo-wearing reporter for the school paper who would rather discuss a controversial story on abortion than his own sexuality. Solomon undergoes a process of self-discovery in the play, but Fuchs jokes his personality hasn't changed that much since he was a child.

"I feel like I was in peak maturity at six or seven and I've essentially leveled out since then," he says.

Even when Fuchs was auditioning for the play, he had a special appreciation of the character.

"Even before I got it, I loved the play," he says. "The part of Solomon is such a great part. He's very real and a lot of times when you do a comedy it's rare that you get a part that's a genuine mix of both, where you get to have very serious gut-wrenching scenes one minute and very big, fun, ridiculous comic-dance-number type stuff going on the next."

He is co-starring with Sarah Steele, CC '11, and he says he's never worked with a more talented actress.

Fuchs, who now has a habit of speaking mainly in punch lines, was drawn to acting at the age of three.

"I just watched movies and TV constantly," he says. "And I wasn't really able to articulate that I wanted to be

in show business—I just knew that I wanted to be in the TV." After begging his mom, she took him to a manager. But he was taught never to speak to strangers and didn't leave the manager very impressed. At the age of seven, however, he got over his fear of strangers and started getting child roles in various New York productions. "I've been in mostly bad movies," he says in characteristic self-deprecating fashion.

To hear him describe his past roles is an exercise in self-awareness. He played Jonathan ("the turkey boy") in Madison Square Garden's musical production of *A Christmas Carol*, Marvin in the film *Flipper* ("People who saw it thought I was autistic. And I wasn't, I was just shy."), and Yuri in *Spooky House* ("It was like the worst thing ever created by man—it was like a staged reading of the Holocaust. It was horrible."). He has also had guest stints on *All My Children* and *The Sopranos*, received Young Artist Award nominations for his role Young Vincenzo Cortino in *Mafia!* and for a part in *Law & Order: SVU*.

"The nomination sounds a lot more exciting than it actually is, I promise," he says. "My consolation prize was a XX Large Agent Cody Banks/Frankie Muniz T-shirt, which is literally still so big on me I could wear it as a nightgown."

To balance his show-business aspirations, Fuchs chose to attend Columbia as a film studies major because he wanted to stay in New York.

"I wasn't an overachiever," he says. "I could always get good grades, but it was never easy. I did well on the SATs, but I was never one of those kids who finished the test first. I picked college like real estate: it was all location."

He caught his big break with *Pitch* in 2006, a short film he wrote, produced, and starred in while taking a break from college his sophomore year.

"I knew I wanted to write and I couldn't write and be in school at the same time. My friends weren't surprised because they know I'm not a big fan of school. I have a particular degree of ire for academia," he says. *Pitch* is a meta comedy that explores the hijinks of two young, eager filmmakers trying to catch a break. It debuted in the Short Film Corner in Cannes and won Best Short Film in the 2006 Big Apple Film Festival.

He started writing two years ago when he started get-

ting ideas for movies—with the added perk of writing roles for himself. "With *Pitch*, I wanted to do something I could do myself. And when you do a short film, you have the benefit of total creative control. I wrote, acted in it, and produced it. It was a wonderful experience. It got into 40 film festivals in the short film genre, including Cannes. And it was really good to have 20 minutes of comedy stuff. I also wrote a script called *The Last First Time* late last summer. It's a romantic comedy that will shoot next summer in New Mexico. Jonathan Lynn (*The Whole Nine Yards*, *My Cousin Vinny*) will direct. *Pitch* was a big reason why he believed in me to play the lead in that."

He's back from his one-year hiatus from school mainly because of his mother's wishes.

"The reason I came back and am still in school is largely because of my mom. I would love a degree from Columbia, but it doesn't really help in my business. No one looks at you and goes 'Well, I don't like the script, but he does go to Columbia'. I mean, I'm not anti-education. I think it's important to know a lot of stuff outside of your field," he says. "I was really just calibrating the risk analysis: how much less stress would I have if I wasn't at school but my mom was suicidal? My mom's not suicidal, but you know, that was my decision process. What's important to me is that I pass everything. Getting great grades totally does not matter. I don't plan to go to grad school."

Fuchs happens to be a campus character who is barely on campus. He doesn't really talk to anyone in his classes and most of his friends are not from Columbia.

"I don't spend a lot of time on campus because it reminds me that I have academic obligations," he says, "so it's kind of stressful to be in the Morningside Heights area. So I avoid it as much as possible, which I guess puts a damper on a lot of Columbia-based friendships."

Nor does he participate at all in the campus theater scene.

"It doesn't appeal to me not because I don't respect it and think it's great," he says. "It's a practical thing—I don't have time. I like the freedom of creating my own projects. And I don't feel like I'm missing out on stuff, because I just love what I'm doing in life right now. I'm just having way too much fun working on my projects."

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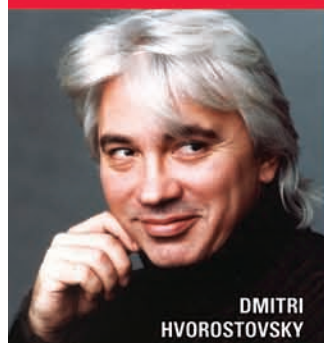
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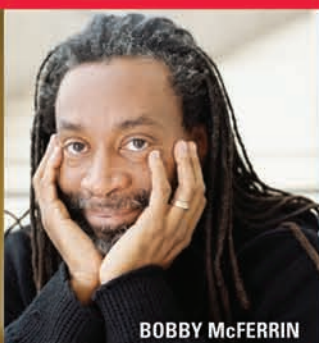
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