



the
eye

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SHAKING THE INVISIBLE HAND

jeffrey sachs sustains
world interest

RICHARD PEÑA DISCUSSES
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• THE RAVEONETTES' LUST

• SHOWTIME VS. HBO

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SHAKING THE INVISI- BLE HAND 07

Columbia’s sustainable-development hero shows no signs of slowing down. *The Eye* sits down with Jeffrey Sachs to discuss his new book.

By Gizem Orbey

Photos by Molly Crossin

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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

When I asked around the office what the subject of this week’s letter from the editor should be, Features managing editor Hayley Negrin had a suggestion. “Write about wealth,” she said simply. Our cover issue this week, on Jeffrey Sachs’ new book and his status as a public figure, is fraught with economic language (some of it pretty controversial), so the subject has never been more appropriate. As we talked, though, I realized Hayley has a very specific and interesting take on the question of wealth at Columbia, so I asked if she’d like to guest-write this week’s letter. Enjoy!

—Alexandria Symonds

My best friend at Barnard has a troubling habit of asking me blunt questions that she expects actual honest answers to.

“Do you think I’m spoiled?” she asks me.

The question not only catches me off guard, it rubs salt in a wound relating to my lower-middle-class background that has never had the chance to heal since I came to Columbia.

So I did what I always do whenever my college friends talk about anything related to their comfortable financial backgrounds—I lie. “No! Of course not!” I say. How could I tell her the truth and admit how much I’m bothered by the fact that she lives her life in happy ignorance, with no idea what it’s like for the majority of people in America who, like my parents, live from paycheck to paycheck?

Since my first day on campus, when my roommate drove up to the curb in the Mercedes sports car her

parents had given her for her 16th birthday, I’ve been continuously in awe of the languid wealth that pervades Columbia.

Being wealthy at Columbia is an unspoken yet blatantly obvious operation. Everyone wears opulent brand names (to me, with my penny-pinching background, this means Northface and Banana Republic)—but then, if the conversation comes to financial status, everyone works very hard to emphasize the fact that their family is “money conscious.” Yeah, I’m really sure your family is “money conscious” when your purse is worth more than what the Negrin family budgets yearly for groceries.

It’s not the fact that the majority of my friends are wealthy that bothers me. It’s the fact that they refuse to own up to the fact that they are wealthy and pretend to understand what it’s like to struggle financially because they’ve volunteered at a soup kitchen or spent a summer building houses in Honduras.

What’s particularly amusing to me is that I consider my background to be an extremely privileged one even though I know my friends don’t think so. Because in spite of the fact that my parents are constantly struggling financially, I’ve always had the essentials, which is more than a lot of Americans can say. And even if I grew up in a public school system where I had to make friends with the omnipresent in-house police team so I wouldn’t get searched, I found a way to get to Barnard, didn’t I?

—Hayley Negrin

The Strawberry Lover

melanie jones interviews jess klein

INTERVIEW BY MELANIE JONES
PHOTO COURTESY OF BLACK HEART PR

AFTER JUST SEVEN YEARS UNDER RYKODISC PRODUCTIONS, Jess Klein has released three critically acclaimed acoustic-folk albums, had single “Strawberry Lover” debut as the number one most-added album on an adult alternative radio station, and launched a worldwide tour, including a sold-out appearance at the Fuji Rock Festival in Tokyo. Her latest, “City Garden,” earned a perfect rating by *MOJO*, Britain’s leading music magazine, and caused the *Boston Globe* to dub her “quite simply one of the most gifted performers.” Yet if not for an audition attended on a whim in her late teens, this extraordinary singer-songwriter would never have entered the music business. Through some extensive e-mailing, Jess Klein let Melanie Jones in on the secrets of fame, her musical inspirations, and why subtlety speaks volumes.

You were living in Kingston, Jamaica when you were “discovered” in your late teens. Had you ever considered a career in music before then?

I sort of stumbled into songwriting—I was living in Jamaica and had just recently learned from a friend of mine back at school how to play a couple of guitar chords, so I talked my dad into letting me dust off his old classical guitar and brought it to Kingston with me. I really just thought it was cool that I knew a few Indigo Girls songs—I hadn’t written any on my own yet. But I’d always loved writing short stories when I was growing up. Somehow, being outside of my snowy upstate NY world opened a door in my mind, so I started writing songs about homesickness, culture shock, and also the warmth of the people I was meeting. Jamaican language sounds musical, whether people are speaking patois or English. Also people think of music more as a part of daily life, I think. It’s not only famous people who sing. Loads of people play guitar for fun. I think all these things shook me loose, and I had the guitar around and a lot of time on my hands, so I just went for it.

How do you get inspiration for your songs?

Almost always I hear a melody or bass line first. I don’t know what it is about the bass line, but I really lock into that part. It’s grounding. I separate the bass line a lot in my guitar playing too. It’s helpful when I play solo because it can be percussive and it adds depth. This is why I love the blues so much—rhythm and low notes topped by someone wailing—they’re free to go off because the bass grounds them. If I hear a melody first, which happens a lot, sometimes that’s trickier, because then I have to figure out the chords to go under it. But that’s still freer to me than trying to write a melody over a guitar part, even though I do that sometimes too. No rule, really.

The song “Flirting,” based on your experiences working in a New Jersey deli, is a great anthem for young women to stand up for themselves. Do you always try to bring a message to your songs?

I only try to bring messages to my work that are so clear, at least to me, that they can’t be mistaken for self-righteousness. I’m saddled with a huge ego, and music is the place where I get to lose it. I just try to speak from the



Jess Klein lets down her guard in front of both live audiences and shubbery.

deepest part of me, whatever she has to say. She’s usually smarter than my ego. My ego would be like, “Make him like me! Make everyone like me!” But my soul knew better. Lots of women have had those experiences of course. We’re all so powerful. It blows my mind the knots we get tied in.

Who are your biggest musical influences?

First it was the Police, because that’s what my stepsister was into. Then mostly Motown because my mom listened to a lot of the Temptations, Smokey Robinson, the Four Tops. When I was in high school I got more into classic rock—my best friend had a tattoo of the Rolling Stones’ lips on his backside. I didn’t go that far, but they’re one of my all-time favorites. I never get tired of “Street Fighting Man.” I also got into Sex Pistols, U2, Tom Petty, the Pretenders. Eventually Dylan. More recently I went back and listened to more ’60s-era Chicago blues—Buddy Guy, Magic Sam, Junior Wells, Howlin’ Wolf. Those albums mean so much to me, words can’t describe.

The music industry is cutthroat. How hard is it to keep your confidence up and stay true to your artistic vision? You made me laugh at one of your recent performances. Do you use your humor to help you cope?

I had to struggle to get to a place where I feel that no one can take my career from me. I went through what a lot of artists did when the industry started to change completely—all the people who’d known and loved me at my first label were gone, and the new group had no interest in me. I remember my manager saying, “One thing I love most about you is your car.” So I just went and drove myself around the U.S. and U.K. (different car there) and got myself to the shows and played for 20 people a night until they told their friends, etc. It’s the only way to build something no one can take away—to sing for people live. Being a musician can be hard work—you’re never home, you sleep in a different motel every night, you’re never anywhere for more than a couple days—so you have to need to do it. I need

to do it. Unveiling my soul for an audience is my way of serving the world.

“Strawberry Lover” was voted one of *US Daily News*’ “Top 10 Sexy Songs of the Moment,” along with Fifty Cent’s far more graphic “Candy Shop” and Destiny’s Child’s “Soldier.” “Soda Water” is another very sensual song but with lyrics that rely heavily on innuendo. Do you find that songs are sexier when they’re subtle? Is it ever difficult to perform more sensual songs live?

I feel safe when I perform songs that reveal my sensuality and vulnerability. It took some time to realize, but there’s no point in hiding on stage. It’s safe, so I feel I can be the most soulful part of myself. I do tend to find subtlety sexier than brashness, but I like to play with both sometimes, depending on the situation.

Your style is very pure and emotive, with an almost spiritual intensity. Has that sound always been with you?

It’s always been with me, though it’s gotten covered up from time to time by fear. When I feel connected to that line of energy though, it feels indisputable. I don’t care if anyone likes it on some level, because it’s true to me, and it feels much larger than me at the same time.

How do you feel about where you and the music industry in general are right now? Where do you hope to be in the future? Is there something you’d like to see changed about the business?

I love to write. I’m writing now—I mean, songs, not just this interview. I hope always to be writing. I’m moving to Austin in a couple months. I’m looking forward to picking up some great musicians there to play with. I think music is always with us—people naturally respond to the vibration of sound. I hope our mainstream culture becomes more re-attuned to that. I think it’s gonna happen. \\\

Klein continues a national tour April 25 at the Knitting Factory on Leonard Street. Tickets are \$15 in advance, \$17 at the door.

Philosophy on the 'Fly

group introspection with columbia's philosophy magazine

BY ASHLEY JAMES

PHOTO BY MOLLY CROSSIN

BY THE END OF HIS FIRST YEAR HERE, Mike Roberto, CC '09, couldn't help thinking something was missing from his undergraduate experience. And though "fun" might be an informed guess (this is Columbia, after all), Roberto's deficiency was of a slightly different nature.

In fact, it was the nature of things.

"Aside from the Philosophy Forum, there was nowhere to get involved with philosophy outside of the major as an undergrad," Roberto says, recounting what he perceived as a dearth in opportunities for philosophical discourse outside the classroom.

In the fall of 2006, he confronted these concerns and, along with similarly philosophically-inclined Sonia Tycko, CC '09, planned a meeting to discuss the possibilities of a campus philosophy publication. To ensure significant attendance, Roberto solicited any and every student he felt might be interested in the subject.

"I asked around," Roberto recalls.

This first attempt at getting Sisyphus' ball rolling was largely successful, and after a few more Hamilton summits, *The Gadfly* was hatched.

The sole undergraduate philosophy magazine is published about three times a year and is divided into three types of writing—interviews, reviews, and essay-type features. Though this format may make organization a breeze, the publication's unique philosophical focus forces the content side



Vice President Sonia Tycko knows her Sartre.

to be a tad more complex.

"Content has really been an interesting thing," says Roberto, president and editor in chief of *The Gadfly*. "We are still thinking about it, but defining philosophy is of course difficult, it is a hard thing to express."

Entering into "meta" territory may seem daunting, but *The Gadfly* editorial board has managed to formulate reasonable guidelines for what they expect from potential submissions.

"In the end, an article needs to have to do with some basic philosophical area. Not directly, but it needs to at least appeal to that kind of reason," Roberto says.

A good example of this preferred approach to philosophical writing is a past article written by Stephanie Wu, CC '10. In the piece, titled "An Encomium of the Tourist Photo," Wu questions the ubiquitous acceptance of the candid snapshot as the ideal form of photographic realism.

"We are trying to deal with everyday issues," Wu says. "Photography is not necessarily philosophical, but it's about how it's analyzed."

Tycko feels that this inclusive perspective is useful in that it can accommodate a multiplicity of majors, particularly non-philosophy students. Yet, she also believes it compliments what she considers the true nature of philosophy.

Wu's piece "is a reflection of the field of philosophy. It's about applying this specific type of thinking to one's own field," Tycko says.

THOUGH PHILOSOPHICAL COLLOQUIA MIGHT APPEAR INTIMIDATING TO COLUMBIA STUDENTS, ESPECIALLY THE MANY WHO LIKELY SPARKNOTED SOPHOCLES, MEMBERS OF THE GADFLY ARE DETERMINED TO SHAKE THE MAGAZINE'S WINGS OF ANY ALIENATING PRETENSION.

Though philosophical colloquia might appear intimidating to Columbia students, especially the many who likely sparknoted Sophocles, members of *The Gadfly* are determined to shake the magazine's wings of any alienating pretension.

"We have made it personally informal so someone not too serious can get involved as well," Roberto says. "The basic premise is for all undergrads, and we try to stay loyal to that."

The board likewise reflects a varied student body. While Roberto is a philosophy major, Tycko is a history major, and the breadth of majors represented on the board ranges from computer science to visual art.

While academic diversity is prized by this publication, in dealing with such a complex topic it is expected that the board members would need to

have a fairly firm knowledge of the field.

have a fairly firm knowledge of the field.

"We do rely on the board's knowledge of philosophy," Roberto admits. And as of yet, he has not found there to be an issue with such an arrangement.

"For something like a book review, at least one of us on the board will have read the book in order to edit it properly," Tycko says, citing one example of the board's way of ensuring an article remains philosophically sound.

"I think the tone and level each piece gets into allows us to research and fact check. You don't have to be a philosophical expert," Roberto adds.

And this is precisely true in the case of Julia



Editors Julia Alekseyeva and Mike Roberto ponder their philosophical work.

Alekseyeva, CC '10, and current co-assistant editor of the magazine.

"For someone with no philosophy classes outside of CC, it was difficult at first," Alekseyeva says of her initial induction to the publication. "But, you realize that it's not a journal. We are not here to put out papers on the topic."

Despite the board's modesty, however, from even a brief encounter with these *Gadfly*-ers, it becomes evident that these Bentham buffs are deeply committed to their characteristically inquisitive cause.

Wu recounts how board meetings, which are initially business-based, often digress into debates about their this favored topic.

"All our meetings end up turning into philosophical chat sessions," Wu says laughing.

So perhaps it wouldn't hurt to sharpen up a little on your Schopenhauer. \\\

Nordic Warriors

the raveonettes invade and conquer

BY SASHA DE VOGEL

PHOTO COURTESY OF SOREN SOLKAER STARBIRD

FLASHBACK TO 2002: A fleet of meticulously coiffed, '60s-inspired, often-uniformed musicians hailing from wintry Scandinavian lands invaded the United States, topped our musical charts, graced the covers of our magazines, and prompted our critics to wonder if the future of rock music lay a little east of New York.

Present Day: Most members of the Scandinavian wave have failed to deliver. As popular interest wanes, the gimmick wore off, and most bands lacked staying power. Sophomore efforts failed to take off and press coverage dwindled to little more than brief blurbs. Almost alone among these Nordic conquerors, those who still stand as bastions of musical success are two Danes: the wiry Sune Rose Wagner and the blisteringly blonde Sharin Foo, both of the Raveonettes.

Currently touring in support of their third full-length release, *Lust Lust Lust*, the Raveonettes have outlasted many of the bands that conquered the charts six years ago. After forming in 2001, they recorded their first studio album *Whip It On* and performed at Denmark's SPOT festival. In the audience was *Rolling Stone* editor David Fricke, who was so impressed

distortion that critics have likened to The Jesus and Mary Chain's *Psychocandy*.

"This album is minimal and darker," Foo says. "There's space in the music. It's atmospheric." But their classic pop affection still stands. "It's still the same music that we love, but we don't like to repeat ourselves. You change where you are at the moment, but our influences haven't changed," she says.

While The Raveonettes have never shied away from themes of sex and drugs, *Lust Lust Lust* truly brings this focus to the forefront. For example, the video for the single "You Want the Candy" features both go-go dancers and allusions to some white powders that aren't sugar. "It's about primitive urges," Foo says, reluctant to comment on the album's bold title and therefore sway the listener's experience. To her, lust refers to "a debate about how you find a

stores and vintage stores and restaurants we like."

Wagner, who writes the songs and does much of the production, has said that he regularly rises at the decidedly undebauched hour of 7 a.m. and promptly composes three or four songs. He reportedly amassed well over one hundred candidates for this album alone. While writing, Wagner typically imposes some

restraint on himself—*Chain Gang of Love* featured songs exclusively in the key of B flat major, while their current release features carefully

restrained percussion, and songs rarely last longer than the three-minute mark. One of *Lust Lust Lust*'s standout tracks, "Aly Walk With Me," is about a girl Wagner met on MySpace, with whom he developed a meaningful, platonic relationship confined to the Internet—hardly typical rockstar behavior.

Lust Lust Lust also marks the band's transition from Columbia Records to Vice Records. Though Foo insists Columbia provided a good working relationship, Wagner has criticized them in the past for failing to support *Pretty in Black* and releasing only one single from the album. When their contract with Columbia expired, the duo sought an independent label that suited their less-than-mainstream sound. "We are a pretty alternative band," Foo says, "and when it comes down to it, at a lot of major labels there is not a lot of room for alternative bands that aren't commercial."

Accordingly, their tour made a stop in Austin, Texas for South by Southwest, the annual convention of "pretty alternative bands." The Raveonettes played twelve grueling showcases, including one, more unusual event: a party hosted by the Food Network's Rachael Ray, alongside Holy Fuck, The Stills, and Ray's husband's band, The Cringe. In response to the predictably outraged reaction from the music blog community, Ray said that she loves music and heard The Raveonettes while listening to satellite radio. With the celebrity chef unexpectedly declaring herself a fan, perhaps the band's audience is broader than Foo expected. The Raveonettes attracted dozens of hipsters and music buffs alike to the unusual event, and by all accounts even the most capricious bloggers were swayed by their performance—and by some of Ray's apparently delicious sammies. Post-SXSW exhaustion resulted in the cancellation of the Detroit date of their tour, but The Raveonettes are looking forward to playing Montreal and New York and are showing no signs of settling down in Denmark any time soon. \\\



with the duo he set off a major label bidding war. Their full-length debut, *Chain Gang of Love*, was released in 2003 to strong reviews that celebrated their grimy, melodic sound, strongly inspired by 1960s pop acts. They polished their production for *Pretty in Black*, which featured guest appearances from Maureen Tucker of The Velvet Underground and Ronnie Spector of The Ronettes. The Ronettes, the iconic girl group, along with Buddy Holly's "Rave On" inspired the duo's name. *Lust Lust Lust* features a return to their signature grit and noise, with an added dose of

balance" of "the choice you make in relation to people and yourself." Lyrically, the album plunges the depths of self-indulgence without ever losing sight of the ultimate emptiness of excess. Perhaps it is this maturation that has earned The Raveonettes staying power.

Despite what their racy lyrics might suggest, Wagner and Foo are anything but decadent rock stars. Their life on tour sounds positively pleasant. "It's fun to come back because we get to know the cities," Foo says of getting back on tour. "We get to revisit place we've been before. We get to go back to the book-

Dessert Done Right

secrets behind your favorite course

BY SHANE FERRO

PHOTO COURTESY OF DANIEL YEOW

THE APPLE SORBET ACTUALLY tastes like green apples—real, ripe, crunchy apples made into frozen deliciousness and carefully spooned into a gourmet quenelle upon a pristine serving dish.

It doesn't stop at green apple, either. The Lever House Restaurant's pastry kitchen is home to no fewer than 12 seasonal creams and sorbets, all freshly spun every weekday morning by the opening pastry cook. Among the other stand-out flavors are mulled wine (though don't try ordering it—it is already a casualty of a winter passed), lemon curd, and peanut, which has a flavor so distinct it could never be mistaken for peanut butter.

The freezer drawer containing ice cream is just one small component of a larger pastry kitchen full of cookies, cakes, sauces, spices, and sugars. An artfully created quenelle of ice cream, scooped out with a serving spoon rather than an ice cream scoop, is just a side compliment to a full-plated last course at Lever House. The secret behind their amazing *mélange* of dessert offerings is the dedication and talent of a handful of people that make up the pastry team.

On the cold Saturday afternoon that I visited, the pastry cook on duty, Julian Plyter, welcomed me from the back entrance of the restaurant on 54th Street, wearing a white chef's smock and a bright red bandana. Plyter is one of three pastry cooks, along with a sous chef, under head pastry chef Rachel Binder (formerly of Savoy).

Over the course of the next three hours before the restaurant opens for business, it is his job to create a foundation, a *mise en place* (a chef's term, literally, "set in place"), to allow for quick and professional plating of any of about eight rotating desserts on the menu once the dining room fills up.

"Most of our stuff is done ahead of time," Plyter says as he begins taking out rolls of cookie dough, cutting them into individual pieces, and placing them on a baking sheet, ready for the oven. "There is a very specific, extensive *mise en place*. You have to have all of the components there so they are ready to go." By the end of the conversation, the cookies are already in the oven, beginning to fill the kitchen with their warm smells.

But before beginning his shift, Plyter takes a minute to sit down with me in the private dining room that overlooks the main dining area of the restaurant. I looked through the room's large window into the softly lit, cushy dining room below. The setting is futuristic, with architecture that may have come out of Star Trek. The bright white of the furniture and walls is subtly muted by the soft lighting.

The Lever House Restaurant, situated in the historic Lever House building on Park Avenue at 53rd Street (entrance is on 53rd between Park and Madison), is one of those signature New York restaurants that should be saved for a visit from the parents or a very special date. Reservations are recommended and the clientele reflects the foreboding office



THE FREEZER DRAWER CONTAINING ICE CREAM IS JUST ONE SMALL COMPONENT OF THE LARGER PASTRY KITCHEN FULL OF COOKIES, CAKES, SAUCES, SPICES, AND SUGARS.

buildings that dominate the area—it's a suit-and-tie kind of place. As Plyter puts it, "We do a lot of fancy stuff here."

New American cuisine dominates the menu, changing with the seasons and reflecting the freshest ingredients around. "We don't do out-of-season fruit," Plyter says. This is important because most of the dessert menu is fruit-based, with the necessary chocolate dish or two.

Much of what is used is bought locally, not just because it is environmentally friendly, but also because, according to Plyter, "It just tastes better." That sort of food ethos is one that Binder and her

staff share.

The fruit that Plyter and the other cooks use in the kitchen is at its ripest because of the local focus. "When you ship something, if it is hard enough to survive shipping, it is too hard to be picked," he says of the ripeness of fruit from out of state.

The menu changed from the day I visited the kitchen to my memorable dinner in one of the semi-private, raised booths along the wall of the dining room two weeks later. My favorite, the ginger stout cake with frozen cream cheese soufflé and candied kumquats was gone, as was the chestnut crepe with pear butter and mulled wine ice cream.

Lever House desserts are served with a variety of sorbets and ice creams created daily from seasonal fresh fruit.

However, the apple crême brûlée with apple fritters and green-apple sorbet was still available, along with a blood-orange cake with lemon curd gelato and the chocolate caramel tart and peanut ice cream.

"It's nice to change just a little bit at a time," Plyter says. "That's the hallmark to me of a New American cuisine—you find that you have to change your menu. American cuisine is still a young thing, so the rules are slightly different," especially when compared to a classical French cuisine where, according to Plyter, the rules are set in stone.

Plyter's job goes beyond cutting cookie dough, scooping out ice cream, and sharing his passion for fresh fruit. Cakes, tarts, cookies, and soufflés all have to be prepped with enough time to ensure that they don't run out, but in small enough batches to ensure little waste. Things like cookie dough can be prepped a few days in advance, but cakes have to be baked and become stale within a day or two.

Once a batch of something starts to go stale, the pastry cooks have to either throw it out or "staff it," meaning it ends up gracing the personal kitchens of the restaurant staff. The pastry chefs put a lot of energy into making sure that their desserts are top notch. "It is more work to do small batches, but it is better to have to make more than to have to throw things out," Plyter says.

Working in a high-end pastry kitchen like the Lever House takes a bit more effort than practicing in grandma's kitchen (though that never hurts). Plyter spent six months in culinary school at the International Culinary Institute and spent some time working in the pastry kitchen at Le Bernardin before beginning at Lever House last September.

Pastry is a passion that followed him through life, and he finally gave into it two years ago and went to culinary school, though he had a degree in music and a steady job. As with most chefs that I have met, the culinary world is an obsession to live for. "I love to cook, but I live to bake," he says.

Maybe that's why my apple sorbet was so damn good. \\\

A photograph of Jeffrey Sachs, a man with dark hair, wearing a dark suit, light blue shirt, and red tie. He is seated at a round wooden table, looking down at a book titled 'COMMON WEALTH' by Jeffrey Sachs. On the table is a green wooden tray filled with various fruits, including green pears and dark red apples. A pair of glasses and a small white object are also on the table. The background is a wooden bookshelf filled with books and binders, including one labeled 'FOREIGN OPERATIONS'.

SHAKING THE INVISIBLE HAND

jeffrey sachs sustains
world interest

BY GIZEM ORBEY
PHOTOS BY MOLLY CROSSIN

Jeffrey Sachs thinks it's about time the study of economics—and the U.S. government, for that matter—gets a makeover. “I’ve been trying to suggest that economics itself needs to expand its vision considerably if it’s going to be useful,” he explained when he sat down with *The Eye* to discuss the ultimately hopeful message of his new book, *Common Wealth: Economics for a Crowded Planet*. Though the book looks to the future, it can also help us deconstruct misconceptions of the past—not just about our approach to sustainable development but about the man behind the term.

Sachs’ well-received first book, *The End of Poverty: Economic Possibilities for Our Time*, was called a “landmark” by *Publishers Weekly* and focused on the one billion people left behind by the market forces that make the rest of the world go ’round. The 2005 release featured a foreword by Bono and outlined nine economic and political steps developed by Sachs, in conjunction with Kofi Annan and the United Nations, to help the world’s poorest countries out of this “poverty trap.” In contrast, *Common Wealth* focuses more on the general issues that profit-driven market forces leave behind—such as the development of sustainable technologies and environmental conservation—and proves once again how startlingly little rich countries such as the U.S. would have to invest to look after the environmental and humanitarian problems that we all share and that the invisible hand can’t fix on its own.

For those craving a shotgun ride through Africa with Sachs at the wheel, *Common Wealth* will be a bit of a disappointment. Stylistically, it is more pragmatic than *The End of Poverty*, bereft of the vivid descriptions of his fieldwork in places like Malawi that illuminated the first book. But what it lacks anecdotally, *Common Wealth* more than makes up for with unrelenting, eloquent prose that analyzes the U.S.’s current state of affairs—this time without the polite regard for political correctness you might expect from Sachs—and bold, clearly delineated arguments. At 345 pages, 50 fewer than *The End of Poverty*, it also has a more digestible length. In short, *Common Wealth* is less Literature Humanities, more Contemporary Civilization. Indeed, it is impossible to read this remarkably comprehensive book without comparing Sachs to the likes of Adam Smith, whom Sachs admires as “the first champion of economics literature.” The influence of Smith’s *Wealth of Nations* is strongly felt throughout the text.

“That is what literature really means, great literature,” Sachs says, considering Smith’s work. It is 8 a.m. on a Monday, and Sachs’ office at the Earth Institute is already buzzing with energy, a belly of activity in the great slumbering beast that is Low Library. To Columbia students, Sachs is more than a professor—from this veritable Fortress of Solitude, he is our superhero-in-residence, an economics nerd with stage presence, just as adept at drawing up financial solutions to the world’s problems as he is at fielding questions about whether he keeps a pad of paper and a pen on his nightstand in case he comes up with “The Answer” in his sleep (he does). But although it is his key role as a mouthpiece for sustainable development that partners him with celebrities and tends to get more press, he is first and foremost an economist, and as an



author, the complex and sometimes seemingly contradictory economic problems of our society are what he wants his readers to understand.

“The world is facing enormous ecological and environmental problems,” he writes in *Common Wealth*. “But running out of natural resources is not the right way to describe the threat.” His book explains, for example, the economics of why the gap between the rich and the poor is growing—even as humanity is getting richer in terms of income per person—in a trend called “convergence.” Most important, where it goes furthest out on a limb, *Common Wealth* manages more successfully than other works have to convince the reader that humanity shares a “common fate on a crowded planet.” In outlining the progress of nations over time, Sachs makes a strong argument

that we are entering a new global stage of history. He makes it seem not unrealistic that just as certain industrializing nations collapsed in the 19th century, depending on how soon they “began to understand that they could not simply leave their own poor to wallow in deprivation, disease, and hunger without courting crime, instability, and disease for all,” we could all fail, together, if we do not mobilize our resources to save each other.

The book’s signature assertion is that the “activist philosophy, which holds that the self-organizing forces of a market economy should be guided by overarching principles of social justice and environmental stewardship, has not yet been extended robustly to a global society.” *Common Wealth* is a pioneer in making that crucial extension—and in this respect,

reading it feels kind of like doing your CC homework, except that the issues are current. They are the defining issues our generation will face, and in that respect you'll know you can do more with what you learn from *Common Wealth* than impress someone at a cocktail party. Before you read it, though, Sachs wants to clarify something about its title. "Remember that my main theme here is not redistribution," he says. "In fact, I don't talk too much about rich countries redistributing income to middle-income countries or even to poor countries, I talk about how to invest effectively in the future."

"I'm not an egalitarian," he stresses. "I believe we should help the poor. I believe that we don't need to have in our society poor people the way that we do."

On March 11, Zhang Weiqing, China's minister of the State Population and Family Planning Commission, reported to the *New York Times* that China would not be reversing its one-child policy for at least another decade, ending recent speculation that adjustments would be made in response to the AP-reported "forced abortions, sterilizations, and dangerously imbalanced sex ratio" resulting from the legislation. Sachs' attitude toward these claims is that China did what it had to do. "A tremendous decline in fertility rates was very important for China," he says. "But the whole two chapters [in *Common Wealth*] on demography emphasize that this kind of fertility reduction can be achieved voluntarily, I believe." Indeed, of the three parts that compose the middle bulk of *Common Wealth*—"Environmental Sustainability," "The Demographic Challenge," and "Prosperity for All," characterizing the three problems at hand—the section on demography is the best expounded, the most revolutionary, and will likely be the most inter-

esting to readers already familiar with the sections on the environment and poverty. "I felt that it was important to lay out the problems, give the scale of the challenge that our generation sees and then talk about how foreign policy, global cooperation, and individual action can address these things," Sachs says, referring to the structure of the book. Prescriptive writing is mostly reserved for part five, "Global Problem Solving." "There are hints of solutions along the way, or more than hints," he says, recognizing a possible frustration readers might feel. "But I tried to put all the pieces together towards the end." After a pause, he laughs, "I hope people get there."

Even if they don't, the diagnostic middle portions of the book are fundamental. Population control is paramount according to Sachs, but he clarifies that if it is going to be achieved safely and voluntarily, as he maintains, it can only be done through "a lot of focus and public policy."

"That's really what I'm advocating everywhere," he says. "That we take this up, stop hiding it. Our government doesn't even talk about it anymore because of its politics, and that is a huge mistake." He adds, "This issue needs to come to the fore again."

Though he doesn't express explicit support for any one presidential candidate when he addresses the mistakes of our government in *Common Wealth*, Sachs' repeated allusions to the successes of John F. Kennedy—in particular his quoting of Kennedy's famous Peace Address at American University in 1963—makes one thing clear: as Americans, we need a paradigm shift. We need "to

believe in the very possibility of cooperation with a seemingly implacable enemy," and we need a president who will lead the way in this respect, much as Kennedy helped diffuse an impending catastrophe in the U.S.'s relations with the Soviet Union. With the timing of *Common Wealth*'s release, Sachs in a sense capitalizes on his own historical context—after all, in the swing of the presidential primaries, when we have a woman and a black man as two of the leading candidates, can there be a better time to advocate for hopeful change? In a section called "Six Trends That Will Shape This Century," Sachs writes in a confident, almost prophetic tone. The first trend, "The Age of Convergence," highlights the need for effective communication between cultures, which even further necessitates the nomination of the right sort of political leaders. It is "when markets don't effectively address" the problems of society, Sachs explains, that we need to explore "what can be done in terms of public policy."

Unlike Adam Smith, Sachs can do more than write about the changes he thinks our government needs—he can actually affect change in his position as a political advisor, and this is exactly what he does. "One of the things that I'll strongly recommend to the candidates is a new department for international sustainable development," he says. "It's not enough to have a presidential science advi-

***Common Wealth* manages more successfully than other works have to convince the reader that humanity shares a "common fate on a crowded planet."**

sor." Sachs feels that while in the future candidates should "certainly have some more knowledge of science and engineering," and that "even some formal training would be helpful," he thinks the main solution lies in "reorganizing our government."

"I've written a report on that recently, when I was a member of a Congressional commission on our development aid," Sachs says. "I said that we need a whole new department which brings together expertise and which is able to absorb this kind of information, because we don't have that right now." Just as *Common Wealth* doesn't hold back on its critique of the government, Sachs in person is blunt. "I see our government acting blindly," he says. "It has very little sense of other societies and the challenges that they're facing. It can't grapple with problem-solving in the areas of demography and climate change and so on, not only because the will isn't there, but also because the means simply are not there right now."

Sachs is no stranger to finding himself on the receiving end of critique. Though *Time* has twice named him one of its "Top 100 Most Influential People," and Angelina Jolie probably has one of those "Jeff Sachs is My Homeboy" PoverTees in her closet, plenty of sources have voiced opposition to Sachs' methods and beliefs. The *New York Times* literary supplement called *The End of Poverty*'s financial solutions "single-minded," and Sachs' number-one critic is an economist himself—William Easterly of New York University, currently on sabbatical at the Brookings Institution in Washington, D.C. Easterly included an extensive critique of Sachs

in his 2006 book *The White Man's Burden: Why the West's Efforts to Aid the Rest Have Done So Much Ill and So Little Good*. In the book, Easterly argues that "nobody can fully grasp the complexity of the political, social, technological, ecological and economic systems that underlie poverty" and draws attention to what he calls the "arrogance that 'we' know how to fix 'them.'" Most specifically, Easterly argues that "large-scale crash programs, especially by outsiders, often produce unintended consequences," and, citing Sachs' apparent dearth of strategies for accountability, claims that often "simple dreams at the top run afoul of insufficient knowledge of the complex realities at the bottom."

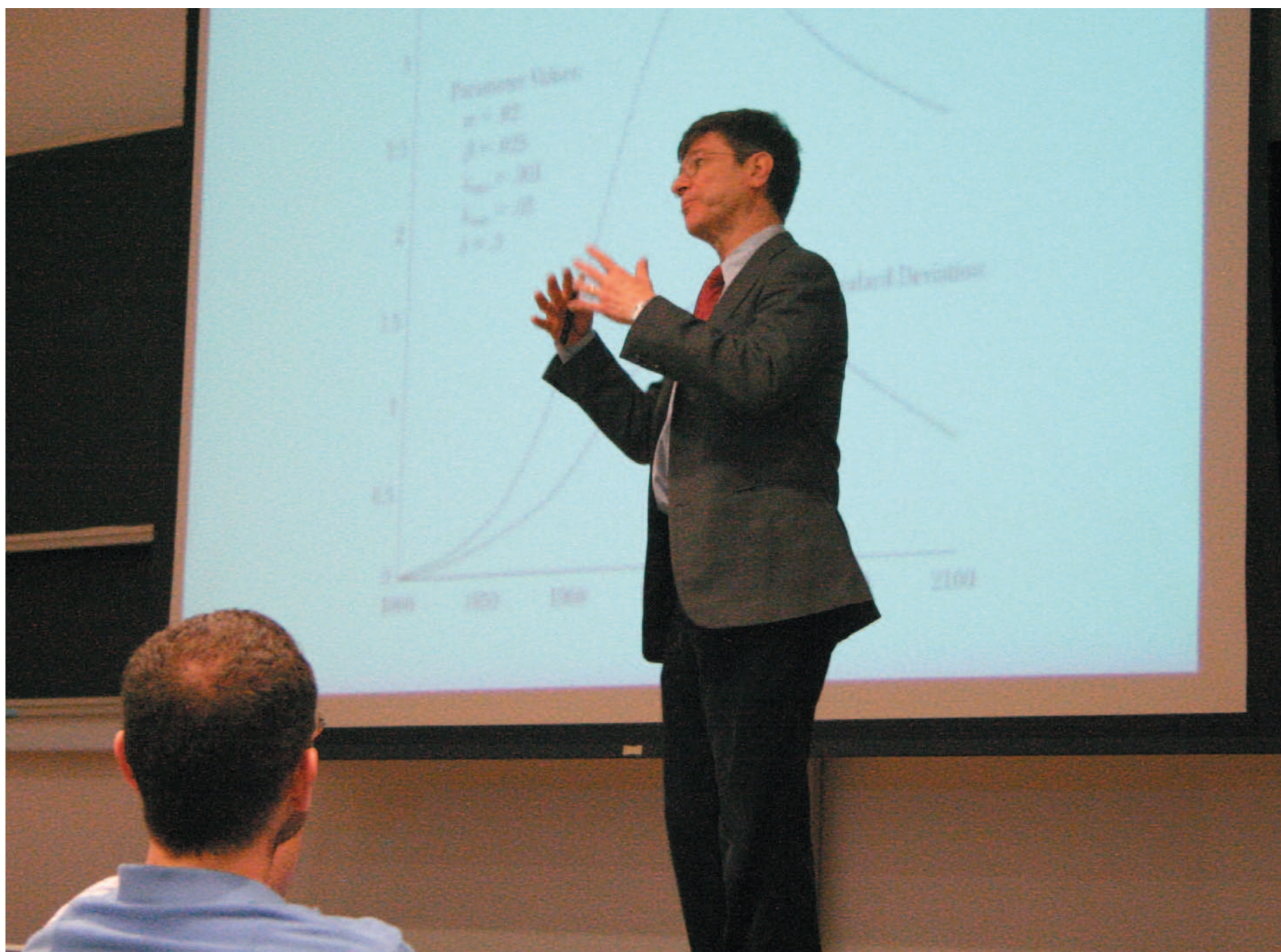
In a recent e-mail responding to *The Eye*'s question about which issues he hoped Sachs' new book would resolve, Easterly writes: "I read the new book. I was disappointed that Sachs seems to be moving even further away from common sense and good economics." While he felt that Sachs' 2005 solution to poverty was "an ineffective plan by the ineffective U.N., and lots of money [was] spent without anyone being held accountable," Easterly writes that with *Common Wealth*, Sachs "applies the same approach to all the world's remaining problems ... while he restates unchanged his failed approach to global poverty."

When it comes to the issue of accountability, responses to various aspects of Sachs' Millennium Villages project have swung back and forth like an

ugly game of snap. In the January issue of *Scientific American* magazine, right below Sachs' running column titled "Sustainable Developments," an editorial by a young aid worker named Eva Kaplan argued for more accountability in the campaign to supply bed nets to combat malaria in sub-Saha-

ran Africa, claiming, "There is anecdotal evidence that some people have employed the nets as wedding veils or fishing aids." Meanwhile, Mark Grabowsky's Feb. 28 cover story in the journal *Nature* provided data that supports the Millennium Villages project, saying that the "new tools and strategies made possible by the substantial increase in resources over the past ten years" mean "hope is arriving in Africa." In response to Kaplan's piece, Sachs says that "the article was all wrong in my view, and seriously deficient in information. The fact of the matter is we're on the verge of a tremendous breakthrough in malaria control. It's already showing up in many places and it's exactly based on the kind of approach that I've been advocating for nearly a decade now." Sachs speaks of the campaign against malaria with a giddiness that reveals how much the project means to him. "It's going to be scaled up even faster now, and it's going to be hugely successful," he says.

Easterly is correct in suggesting that Sachs follows a similar path in *Common Wealth* to the one in his first book. But the criticisms that paint Sachs as a sort of indiscriminate benefactor or denigrate his primarily financial approach to global problems seem to miss a key point. It is important to remember that, appearances and celebrity endorsements aside, Sachs is not a superhero after all—he is an economist, and we should ask ourselves to what extent we can expect him to come up with the plans to finance solutions, implement them, and then also analyze the plans himself. Furthermore, his primarily financial approach to global problems can be



thought of as a pragmatic first-things-first stragem. Just as a willingness to help other countries, even if it were to be found in our current administration, would do little good so long as we lack the means to understand how we can help in the first place, all the accountability plans in the world can have no effect so long as the initial funding to supply the means to implement solutions is missing. “I’m an economist,” Sachs says, “so I suppose that my role in all this is to try to understand as best I can what the other disciplines are telling us about these challenges” and to “come up with practical financing approaches.” He explains, “My professional training allows me to add specifically one key part of this, and that is resource mobilization.”

In this sense, the holistic approach of *Common Wealth* doesn’t compromise Sachs’ role as an economist. Rather, it calls for “a new clinical approach to sustainable development”—much like a doctor considers the health of the whole body in properly diagnosing a disease although the treatment options remain the same. Financing is Sachs’ usual prescription, along with “new methods of training the next generation of development leaders”—us. Indeed, Sachs’ awareness of the need to mitigate boundaries between “reductionist” and “integrative” science is apparent in the work he does here at Columbia. “Because a lot of the specialty training is the norm at a university,” he says, “what I’ve been trying to do here with colleagues is actually mainly introduce the interdisciplinary training at Columbia.” Toward this end, a sustainable development undergraduate major and a Ph.D. program have both been

developed for the University. Sachs and his colleagues are now “looking to introduce a Master’s degree” in the discipline as well. The new student journal on sustainable development, *Consilience*, launched just before spring break. For interested students who don’t have time to take classes in the department, the Earth Institute also sponsors several interdisciplinary events each week and has hosted speakers such as Cornell agriculturalist John Duxbury and Human Genome Project director Francis Collins. This upcoming weekend it will hold a symposium in the Low Rotunda titled, “Neurosciences and Free Will.”

On Jan. 28, many students skipped their evening classes to attend an over-registered Earth Institute event called Show Me: The Poverty Action Tour featuring Sachs and crooner-turned-Show-Me-Campaign-founder John Legend. At the event, one undergraduate stepped up to the microphone to ask Legend why we should care about helping the poor in the first place—and elicited what was probably not the hoped-for response. Legend gave a pragmatic justification—citing our common fate and the problems that will wind up on our own doorsteps some day—not a moral one. When pressed for information on whether or not he believes in a universal moral law himself, Sachs gives a similar answer. “I don’t believe it’s easy to claim a universal moral law in a way that everybody is going to accept that law, and find the same meaning of such a law from a proof of moral theory or from a single religious tradition,” he says. Instead, he offers, “This kind of practical approach is helpful, actually—because it doesn’t assert that these moral laws come from out-

side commandments. It asserts that if we think hard about our place in the world, what we would like for our children, what we would like for ourselves in fair play, we can reach a lot of agreement, and people can locate that agreement in their own cultural traditions but not insist that that’s the origin of them.”

This practical, open-minded approach, which hinges on keeping a positive outlook about the prospect of global cooperation, is what Sachs advocates above all. And in that way, he shows how each of us, regardless of our majors, can contribute to a sustainable future starting today. In *Common Wealth*, quoting Kennedy, he insists that our progress will depend “not on a sudden revolution in human nature but on a gradual evolution in human institutions.”

“We should be taxing ourselves more and spending more on education, health, and other forms of social protection,” he says. “I think that the evidence that I present in the book is quite overwhelming: that we would have a very productive society and a far safer and fairer society if we did that.” The key, he maintains, is “not to give up our market economy, not to give up our innovation—but also not to believe that we have to have massive amounts of poor people as the cost of progress in America.”

“It’s a widespread belief in this country, and I don’t believe in it at all,” he says. “One of the chapters [of *Common Wealth*] is wholly devoted to showing that that is not the case.” Whether *Common Wealth* will be read a century from now as a nation’s swan song or as a harbinger of positive social change is up to us. \\\

Pay Per Feud

is showtime the new HBO?

BY MELANIE JONES

PHOTOS COURTESY OF HBO AND SHOWTIME

SHOWTIME MAY SOON have its moment in the spotlight. After decades of falling short to cable rival HBO, the network is the closest it's ever been to matching its competitor in buzz and quality programming—and it's looking to translate this into a substantial boost in subscriptions.

Before 2005, Showtime was viewed, if at all, as a second-rate version of HBO. Two shows, *Queer As Folk* and *Soul Food*, garnered critical acclaim and substantial fan bases, but weren't enough to sustain

the court of Henry VIII, has garnered multiple nominations and has a rapidly growing audience. *The L Word* is ending, but the captivating subject matter of *Dexter*—which is about a serial killer who only targets other murderers—has made it both controversial and addictive. The show has even made the transition to network television, where its content—albeit toned down—and talented cast continue to draw in viewers.

HBO still holds twice as many subscribers as Showtime and can afford to coast on its past successes. *Band*

It is up to Showtime to push their advantage while they have the chance—and they plan to. In September, CBS offered a “free preview” weekend that made Showtime temporarily available to 54 million homes. Now providers like DirecTV are offering reduced rates for the first three months of subscription. Dan Hartman, a vice president at DirecTV, is very optimistic about the push. As he said in an interview with the *New York Post*, “One big factor that leads people to subscribe during free previews is buzz, and Showtime is really giving the competition a run for its money.”

To continue its favorable trend, Showtime has also begun securing more A-listers to populate its casts, some of them graduates from HBO's own studios. Billie Piper, of BBC's *Doctor Who* fame, will play protagonist Hannah in *Secret Diary of a Call Girl*, a look at London's upper-class sex industry. Peter O'Toole has donned Pope Paul III's robes for the second season of *The Tudors*, which premieres this Sunday, while Toni Collette will star in *The United States of Tara* as a woman with multiple personalities. Michael C. Hall, formerly David Fisher on HBO's *Six Feet Under*, will also return for his second season as the title character in *Dexter*.

No premiere will be so anticipated as that of Edie Falco in a new Showtime original. The actress, who won two Golden Globes and three Emmys as Tony Soprano's wife Carmela, agreed in February to sign



The Sopranos ushered in HBO's primetime dominance...



...but Showtime's lineup, with shows like *Dexter*, is attracting a growing fan base.

rising production costs or compete with the mega-successful HBO, to which one-third of all American households subscribed in 2003.

What Showtime needed was to invest in more original programming and, by doing so, to differentiate itself and gather a diverse audience. Executives Les Moonves and Matt Blank opened 2005 by shifting the network's limited funds from made-for-television movies to more efficient, commercially successful venues. It has to be “about the show,” Blank said to the *New York Times*, “how compelling the drama is.” One series, *The L Word*, already had potential. It had the daring of *Queer as Folk*, but with more characters and plot lines to work with, it also established a broad commercial appeal. Showtime “used to try and be bold,” Moonves said in the same interview. Now it had to be “bold and commercial,” to balance diverse fare and avoid becoming a niche network, as HBO did with *Sex and the City* and *The Sopranos*.

The past few years have seen a significant rise in Showtime's popularity. *Weeds*, starring Mary-Louise Parker as a drug-dealing housewife, took the Best Actress Golden Globe this year and has a dedicated fan base, while newcomer *The Tudors*, which dramatizes

of Brothers, *Sex and the City*, and *Rome* have almost 100 combined awards to their names, while *The Sopranos* remains the most financially successful cable series in history. Showtime executives, though, see blood in the water. Their rival's polygamist drama *Big*

WHILE THE SOPRANOS REMAINS THE MOST FINANCIALLY SUCCESSFUL CABLE SERIES IN HISTORY, SHOWTIME EXECUTIVES SEE BLOOD IN THE WATER.

Love and recently concluded, intellectual cop show *The Wire* have loyal fan bases and considerable acclaim, but HBO has yet to duplicate its past triumphs.

There have been a few recent bright spots for HBO, though. *In Treatment*, centered on a psychiatrist's inner turmoil, has possibilities despite its rather lukewarm reception, and the summer series *Flight of the Conchords*, about a New Zealand digi-folk band transplanted to New York City, already has a strong cult following. Talks are also in session for a follow-up to *Band of Brothers*, this time set in the Pacific Theatre of Operations.

on to an unnamed dark comedy. Falco, who in a Showtime press release called her character and the writing “truly thrilling,” will be playing a nurse with a special calling who “won't hesitate to take matters into her own hands.” And while Falco is happy,

Robert Greenblatt, president of entertainment for Showtime, was speechless. “To bring Edie Falco to Showtime,” Greenblatt said in a press release, “... ‘Bada bing’ is all I can say!”

If they continue to match their newly aggressive tactics with critical and commercial success, HBO may indeed see the formerly inferior channel become a serious contender. But executives, for the moment, remain coy. After all, Showtime's current position looks excellent mainly in retrospect—it will be a long time before the network can establish the clout their rival holds. “We expect there may be an impact in our participation level,” Matt Blank told the *Post*. “But we won't be able to gauge the long-term effects.” Maybe so, but it's enough to make Showtime, the perpetual runner-up, a network to keep your eye on. \\\



The Balloons Are Flying

hou hsiao-hsien shoots in paris

BY LEARNED FOOTE
PHOTO COURTESY OF IFC FILMS

I REMEMBER WATCHING HITCHCOCK FILMS at the age of 11 and never truly grasping that I was watching an artifact from the '50s. All of the cultural context—fedoras, pencil skirts, Jimmy Stewart's ridiculous accent—bounced off my young head. I thought these characters inhabited my world—I had no sense of history. I applied similar reasoning to any movie I saw. In Westerns, for example, I saw that cowboys wore jeans. Their jeans, I assumed, probably didn't differ much from the Gap Kids jeans I wore. At that age, the fashion styles of the world could be reduced to one variable: the length of the inseam. But as we grow older, we develop a cultural vocabulary, we learn to spot skinny jeans and duly mock them.

As our analytical power grows, we

learn not to understand. We develop the memory and skills to identify a scene in a film—America during the 1950s—and at the same time, we become aware of the distance between our grandparents and ourselves. The more we learn about their world, the more alien it seems. We begin to appreciate the gaps between perspectives, the limits of shared understanding.

My first experience with film director Hou Hsiao-hsien was quite the exercise in misunderstanding. On the advice of a crotchety old film critic, I rented *Flowers in Shanghai* some years ago. The style alone intimidates: the entire movie consists of a series of fades to black, punctuated by lengthy shots featuring slow pans back and forth, with nary a zoom. Critical character development occurs over the space of several minutes, and Hou rarely advertises which moments lend key insight into the plot and characters.

While revisiting some of Hou's films

in preparation to watch his latest feature, *Flight of the Red Balloon*, I asked Richard Peña, professor in the film division of the School of the Arts and program director for the prestigious New York Film Festival, whether the average Columbia student could relate to the films of Hou Hsiao-hsien. "Let's just say," he replied in an e-mail, "that in general Americans (the vast majority of Columbia students) aren't really predisposed to anything that doesn't resemble American cultural products. So Hou's work might be off-putting anyway, but his style also goes against the quick-paced, music video style that dominates so much of American visual culture." Peña also thinks, mind you, that Hou Hsiao-hsien is the greatest living film director.

But how accessible will Hou's films be to audiences in general, aside from those who dedicate their lives to un-

raveling cinematic nuance? As it turns out, *Flowers of Shanghai* represents a sort of alienation for Hou himself: it was his first film not set in Taiwan, the country where he grew up. Moreover, the film takes place in Chinese brothels of the late 19th century, where behavior is governed by a strict and very confusing set of social customs. When I first saw *Flowers of Shanghai*, I spent several minutes trying to figure out a variation of "Rock, Paper, Scissors" that the characters played over their drinks. It never fully made sense to me, even after I watched it a dozen times.

This theme of cultural alienation continues over the course of Hou's career. In 2003, Hou Hsiao-hsien released *Café Lumière*, his first movie set in Japan.

"Before making *Café Lumière*, I'd never imagined I could make a film abroad," the director said in an inter-

Above: The eponymous red balloon of Hou Hsiao-hsien's most recent film flies above the streets of Paris. The movie, filmed in France, represents a departure from Hsiao-hsien's Asia-centric precedent.

view while promoting his latest film. “I didn’t feel I knew well enough how people lived in other countries and other cultures.” Yet *Café Lumière* succeeds, despite—or perhaps because of—this initial alienation.

Perhaps the director is particularly open to those moments that transcend cultural context. In one scene of the film, a young pregnant woman tells a male friend about a dream she’s had, in which a mother is sad because her baby has a prematurely wrinkled face. “It’s a goblin story, it comes from Europe,” her friend tells her. “There are many European stories like that.” He proceeds to find her a book that exactly matches her dream. Why should separate cultures share these dreams? For that matter, why should two people have anything in common at all?

In the films of Hou Hsiao-hsien, characters fade in and out of common understanding—cultural, generational, and artistic. In one especially provocative scene of *Café Lumière*, the same two characters stare at a piece of computer graphic art that the guy has created. All starts well: she exclaims over his work, and he beams contentedly. As the shot continues (a full four minutes long), she begins to offer interpretations of his work, most of which he immediately discounts as irrelevant to his artistic vision. “Why are they different lengths?” she asks, referring to a series of trains. “No reason,” he curtly replies. She has more success when she asks about a splash of crimson, which he eagerly says represents blood. Suddenly the two characters laugh as if breaking an awkward tension, both having hit on the same view of his art.



In Hou Hsiao-hsien’s *The Flight of the Red Balloon*, the childlike sense of wonder and lack of self-censorship is portrayed in new ways.

“HOU’S CHARACTERS CREATE THEIR OWN COUNTRIES.”

This fumbling communication occurs throughout *Café Lumière*, itself the story of a girl fundamentally separated from her conservative parents. Sometimes these gaps are bridged, and sometimes they are not.

This feeling of separation is especially emphasized in Hou’s latest film, *The Flight of the Red Balloon*. The film is Hou’s first to be set in France—the cast of characters includes a young boy, his tense mother, his filmmaker babysitter, and a red balloon that mysteriously follows him throughout the city of Paris. Many characters in the film are artists, and—as in *Café Lumière*—their relation to art simultaneously provokes misunderstanding and understanding. When the mother sits down to talk with the filmmaker about a movie the latter has made, she spends most of the conversation remembering her own past rather than discussing the filmmaker’s intentions.

Similarly, the mother is a puppeteer, and she has just put together a French production of a famous Chinese puppet show. “She narrates the story,” Hou says, “and her own domestic situation is analogous” to the art she creates.

“But this is a French movie,” he continues, “and so I had to find a way to integrate a Chinese puppet-theater story into a French narrative.” This integration never feels seamless. There are several scenes of translation between characters (much as my quotes from the various films and the interview with Hou have been translated), and there are awkward moments where the babysitter, a foreign exchange student from Taiwan, makes mistakes while responding to the mother’s rapid-fire French. “Hou’s characters create their own countries,” Richard Peña says. “Dislocation in Hou is the natural state of affairs.”

The young boy, however, rarely picks up on this sense of alienation—cultural, generational, or artistic. He hasn’t yet developed the blindness we develop as adults: the knowledge of separation between two individuals. Near the end of the film, the boy steps

into a museum with his class, and the children begin discussing a painting of a child and two adults. Some offer absurd analyses, but some strike close to the heart of the painting. When asked whether the painting is happy or sad, one child replies that it is both, for the child is in the sunlight, and the parents are in the dark. The same parallel applies, of course, to *Flight of the Red Balloon*, with its contrast between childlike innocence and the devolving life of a single mother. And thus several metaphors coalesce in one single scene, as children try to figure out a painting, never realizing how closely it imitates the life they have yet to experience.

In considering these movies, maybe it would have been best to follow the children’s example, not allowing

my education to cloud my view. The kids weren’t agitated by the complex perspective of the painting, which depicted the adults on one plane and the children on another. Unconcerned, they offered their interpretations—some faulty and some insightful. Likewise, Richard Peña gently corrected some of my misconceptions and assumptions as I struggled with Hou’s cultural distance and stylistic complexity. For Hou’s films, and especially for *Flight of the Red Balloon*—a tale of children and foreign-exchange students—I needed some blindness, some naiveté. “I don’t think a deep understanding is needed,” Richard Peña says of Hou’s filmography, “I just think what’s needed is an openness to other ways of telling stories on screen.”

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One Swift Blow

BY AKIVA BAMBERGER

PHOTO COURTESY OF CALL ME ENTERTAINMENT



Taylor Swift, like, totally gets our pain, you know? At least she's holding that dandelion like she totally gets our pain.

From: pinkmermaid11@hotmail.com
Subject: TEARDROPS ON MY GUITAR ! <3
Date: March 26, 7:24:33 PM EDT
To: info@Taylorswift.com

dear TAYLOR SWIFT! best singer of universe,

this is an essay. here is my introduction. i will be talking about the mortgage crisis. this crisis is the crisis that makes economies hurt. when i heard about this crisis, i wuz sad. but when the economy started doing better, i was sure everything would be going up! but then it went down again, because the triple-A rated securities were less of a sure bet than all the investment banks led us to believe. i cried all of a sudden. i cried, again, like is my wont. my rofl has quickly turned to a wtf.

sooooo sad! where has all the money gone, i asked? michelle, my fav bff, said it never existed. i cried! speculation, u hav made my eyes all red with tears and every time i think about u, i say, "be strong, pinkmermaid11, speculation has hurt ur economy b4 and it haz recovered."

the fed's installments have all disappeared. i hav tryed to understand how the situation has become so bad, but it is hard, and i still do not know wat subprime or mortgage mean, though i understand that credit

derivatives and other swaps have played a biiiiiig part in the crisis. i love chad michael murray and i will marry him. he will fall in love with me, cuz i am a mermaid.

mortgage dorktage. boyz boyz boyz! in conclusion, the mortgage crisis is severe, and i wud like to help solve it, but no solution wud get me invited to marissa pomtomkpin's slumber party! you wud no exactly wat to say about this boyz problem and this mortgage crisis. these are only two problems i need you to fix, one less than three (<3 !!!) it is times like these that i must remember my motto, TAYLOR SWIFT 4EVA ~TEARDROPS ON MY GUITAR! <3.

this song is the song that got me through the tough times. when my friend who i was crushing on for soo long who i thought loved me all of a sudden got a girl-friend! i cried for sooo long and this song is now my fav song. everytime i c him i wanna cry but i know it waz meant to be.

it is so hard to be in middle school and c cute boyz and think, "oh, that boy is cute" and when he doesn't look at me think, "oh, that boy is so mean!!!!!" but anyway TAYLOR SWIFT 4EVA ~TEARDROPS ON MY GUITAR! <3 <3 <3

--pinkmermaid11

how to avoid looking like a tourist in new york

BY RAPHAEL POPE-SUSSMAN AND LIZ PIPAL

1. Wear an "I Love New York" shirt, but write "ironically" on it in tiny, tiny letters. Real New Yorkers will recognize your terrific wit.

2. Leave fanny pack, visor, and Statue of Liberty crown at home. Instead, wear some disgusting accessory from a decade you don't remember and inform people that you "are totally bringing back the ___."

3. Place seven decoy wallets on your person to fool the pickpockets. Keep all your money in a wad in your shoe. This is how real New Yorkers do it.

4. When you pass a restaurant, loudly remark to your friends, "This is the best place in town" and a spot for "great, cheap eats." You must do this, even if the restaurant is a Chili's charging \$23 for a crappy rack of ribs.

5. Under no circumstances should you board a double-decker bus.

The New American Alphabet

style a to zoe aspires to fashion-bible status

BY DARYL KING

PHOTO COURTESY OF STYLE.BLOGS

WHAT IS AN APPROPRIATE DOG-WALKING OUTFIT? Stylist Rachel Zoe prescribes Kara Walker sunglasses, layered tank tops, black patent-leather leggings, a “vintage style” Chanel handbag, the latest animal print Louboutin peep-toe pumps, and a hat.

To many fashionistas, Zoe’s style is cluttered, cliché, and a bit too Hollywood—and you would expect Zoe’s style guide to be much the same. But as you open the golden pages of *Style A to Zoe*, the first photo is that of handsome American designer Roy Halston Frowick. Famously minimalist, Halston was a fashion icon of the ’70s, and apparently Zoe’s official source of inspiration. Ironic, considering Zoe’s own pretentious and remarkably not-easygoing style.

This is not the last of her contradictions—later on in the guide, Zoe boldly proclaims, “You are better off with a quality classic than a logo-splattered imitation.” Perhaps she should start following her own advice?

Enough cattiness. Much of Zoe’s book draws upon the magnetism of the childhood fantasy and the dream of living the jet-set life of celebrities and socialites. She charms with stories of being inspired by “the petite lady living next door who appears larger than life, a kind of Diana Vreeland figure, draped in incredible caftans and laughing that gregarious laugh.”

Zoe’s career started off dressing the mega teen stars that made guys, girls, and Chris Crocker gush and sob: The Backstreet Boys, Britney Spears, and Jessica Simpson. Zoe has since upgraded to the likes of Keira Knightley, Lindsay Lohan, Jennifer Garner, Mischa Barton, Selma Hayek, Anne Hathaway, Joy Bryant, Cameron Diaz, Demi Moore, and Kate Beckinsale. Impressive list, non?

And if this doesn’t speak for itself, Zoe is quick to make sure you understand her importance. She includes an endorsement from Valentino Garavani (the maser couturier who recently retired, leaving 90 percent of the Upper East Side looking for a new saint), in which Garavani praises her understanding of modernity, timeless style, and women.

Roll your eyes all you want, but you have to concede that Zoe has made some of the greatest moments in Hollywood. When people ask, “Why glamour?” Rachel responds, “Why not?” She also affirms that “great style begins with knowing your self and your personality.” She writes, “It’s best to focus on what you like about yourself and what is working for you. Remember, a good stylist is a master of illusion.”

Zoe also covers the basic style facts. “Another detail to never be overlooked is comfort. Comfort nurtures confidence. With my marvelous clients, I strive for clothes, accessories, and jewelry that let them feel their most comfortable. Glamour should be effortless, or at least look like it.”

Zoe even manages to throw in a couple of surprises, such as her belief that “In all likelihood, you don’t need a diet; you just need a different silhouette, not size.” Quite shocking to read such words, especially considering that the very slight weights of some of Zoe’s clients scandalize the covers of gossip rags throughout the world.

Ultimately, what separates Zoe’s book from the millions of other style guides and blogs that dictate what the modern woman should wear is her unapologetic embrace of glamour and fabulous things. She writes, “There is nothing fun or interesting, or glamorous in playing it subtle.” Zoe’s way of life is certainly fun: it includes front-row attendance at the hottest fashion shows, walking red carpets around the world in haute couture, entertaining just as royally as Marie Antoinette, and jetting all over the world to exotic locales.

Yet Zoe constantly reminds her readers that her life is attainable: “Eyes closed or open, just dream.” Zoe’s basic items that lead to having and living the good life are probably owned by most women today. The best part is that they are all under \$50:

“red lipstick, black eyeliner (always with mascara!), great heels (the higher the better), faux fur shrug (even second hand), and a metallic clutch (Does a Leiber given on your birthday count?).”

Sifting through the gilded pages of Zoe’s book, you actually find many useful principles, such as how one should prepare one’s toilette. Zoe’s blunt remarks about how a girl should carry herself when she isn’t stomping through New York City nightlife in her heels will snap all sloppy mademoiselles into des femmes. “A day off is no excuse to be a slob,” she writes. “I won’t do the cropped tank top, jeans, and Ugg boots look. No one wants to see your belly button at the Coffee Bean. My New Year’s Resolution last year was not to leave the luxury or the nice things in my closet for special occasions, but to enjoy them on the days that I am slumming it.”

In the end, no matter how you manage to stick to Zoe’s principles (and whether by means of your own money or another’s), remember her ultimate principle: “The meaning of life is living it.”



Rachel Zoe at her book release.

SPLURGE OR STEAL: FLORALS

BY MOIRA LYNCH

Florals, in the forms of prints and accessory decoration, were rampant on the spring runways this year. The most innovative uses of flowers avoided overly retro or girly territories. Pieces that introduced modern twists were the most notable, ranging from Ghesquiere’s subversive tailoring at Balenciaga to the demented flower fairies at Prada. Of course, achieving the looks from either of those extremely influential collections would require actually buying pieces, as runway fashion has evolved past the point of direct imitation of trends. And who can actually pull off the structured jacket with a slit skirt over short shorts—except models and Jennifer Connelly, the star of Balenciaga’s spring ad campaign? The accessories at Prada, which fortunately do not require a model physique to pull off, were the decisive tour de force, especially the shoes. The crazy, colorful waved bodies on top of the delicate heels look like lacquered blossoms, and they are the most lustworthy designer accessory this spring.

Less recognizable retail looks will be wearable for quite a bit longer than what was on the runways. The one item that every girl should have this spring is a great floral dress. The box-pleated Diane von Furstenberg tiger-lily printed dress is very wearable and pretty, yet it still has a modern design. And Jovovich-Hawk did a wrap dress for under \$40 that I will be living in once the weather gets warmer. One warning, however: an overly accessorized floral dress can make you feel like an extra from *The Stepford Wives*, so keep the jewelry edgy and the makeup casual.



<< Diane von Furstenberg sheer shirt dress \$345
net-a-porter.com



Prada Waves flower pumps \$790
<<

saksfifthavenue.com



<< Jovovich-Hawk wrap dress \$34.95
target.com

Kimchi & Blue pieced chiffon blouse \$58.00 >>
urbanoutfitters.com



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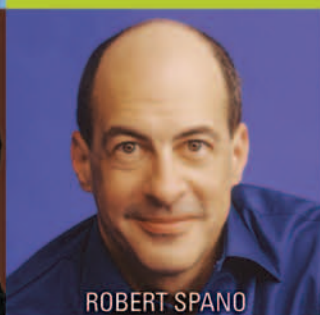
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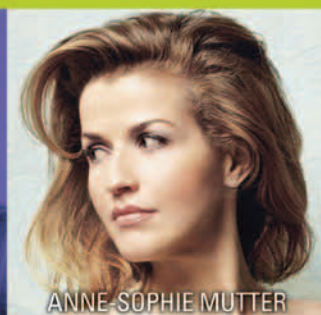
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eighth blackbird
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