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# The eve

## THE PROS OF COMICCON

BOOKS, P. 09

THE APATOVIAN RESPONSE

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BEANS OF BENEFICENCE

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FRESH TALK WITH THE MOLDY  
PEACHES' ADAM GREEN



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These visitors to ComicCon left their capes and spandex at home.  
*Books, p.09*

Photo by  
Cara Buchanan

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## LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Certain facts make me feel like I'm somehow behind in terms of impressive life accomplishments. Mendelssohn had composed 12 symphonies by 17, an age at which Mary-Kate Olsen was already worth about \$40 million. Nas came out with *Illmatic*, one of the greatest hip-hop albums of all time, when he was 19. An 18-year-old was elected mayor of a Michigan town in 2005. Oh, and Bill Gates founded Microsoft at the tender age of 20. Feeling inadequate yet?

Some of this information, should you be interested in a little intellectual masochism, can be found on a cheeky little Web site called the Museum of Conceptual Art. It features a box into which you can type your age to measure yourself against others' accomplishments—sobering, for sure, but manageable. "So John Stuart Mill had mastered Greek by the age of 7," you say to yourself. "I could learn Greek if I wanted to. Not that big a deal."

I heard something this week, though, that blew Mendelssohn, Mill, and even Mary-Kate out of the water.

Miley Cyrus is slated to write a memoir. Disney-Hyperion Books will be releasing it in spring 2009. She's getting seven figures for it, which is more money than I will likely ever see in one place in my whole life.

She's also 15. At least Britney Spears had the decency to wait until she was 19 to write *Britney Spears' Heart to Heart* and to enlist her mom's help. (I've been doing

a lot of Wikipedia research for this column, guys.)

What bothers me most about Miley's memoir—and there are lots of things about it that bother me—is that, at 15, how much could Miley Cyrus really have to write about? Sure, she's already developed an über-successful career, and I don't begrudge her that. (That's a lie. I totally do. *Forbes* predicted earlier this year that she'd be a billionaire by 20.)

But she also can't even drive yet. I tend to think the genre should be reserved for those old enough to have overcome their troubled childhoods (Frank McCourt, Jeannette Walls). Or those who have had diverse enough experiences to warrant a book of essays about them (Joan Didion, David Sedaris). Or liars (everyone who has published a memoir in the last five years—for those keeping track, that's since Miley Cyrus was 10).

Thankfully, in moments of crisis like this one, it's helpful to remember that the Museum of Conceptual Art's feature goes both ways. Test out a few numbers near the higher end of the possible human lifespan, and learn a heartening thing or two: Theodor Mommsen didn't win the Nobel Prize in literature until he was 85. Jessica Tandy won her Oscar when she was 80. Breathe in, breathe out. There's hope for us yet.

—Alexandria Symonds



# Simple Pleasures

maggie astor interviews patrick mcdonnell

INTERVIEW BY MAGGIE ASTOR

PHOTO COURTESY OF PATRICK MCDONNELL

PATRICK MCDONNELL, THE CREATOR OF “Mutts,” a comic strip centered on a dog named Earl and his feline companion Mooch, is soft-spoken and modest despite winning the National Cartoonists’ Society’s highest honor, the Reuben, and having his work dubbed by Charles Schulz “one of the best comic strips of all time.” His characters, from grouchy Sourpuss to mild-mannered dog owner Ozzie, have graced everything from the Marines’ Toys for Tots holiday posters to New Jersey’s animal-friendly license plates, and he has begun to expand his artistic vision to writing children’s books. His success has also enabled him to use his comics for pro-animal causes. He serves on the board of directors for both the Humane Society and the Fund for Animals. Maggie Astor sat down with the man of few words and many ideas to share a few of each.

**Before “Mutts,” you worked as a freelance illustrator. Is being a cartoonist any less stressful with set deadlines? Is drawing a daily strip somewhat like a never-ending freelance job?**

As a freelancer I always had an opportunity to take a break between jobs if I chose. With a daily comic strip the job never ends. It takes a while to get used to it. Being a syndicated cartoonist is a unique profession. I think only other cartoonists can appreciate the workload, which makes us all feel like kindred spirits.

**Henry N. Abram Inc., a fine art publisher, released a monograph of your career (*Mutts: The Comic Art of Patrick McDonnell*) in 2003. Do you consider your work, and comic strips in general, to be a form of artwork?**

I have been a student and fan of this form for as long as I can remember. At its best, it combines poetry and great drawing. As a plus, it can even make you laugh. From my perspective it’s art.

**Who were your greatest artistic inspirations?**

Here’s the short list: George Herriman, Charles Schulz, E.C. Segar, Ernest Shepard, W.W. Denslow, Hiroshige, Monet, J.M. Basquiat.

**You and your wife, Karen O’Connell, are both vegetarians. You print “Mutts” on recycled paper. What sparked your love for animals and your commitment to the environment?**

Even as a child I always felt a connection with animals and felt that we were all family. Growing up, we shared our home with a number of cats. Later, I adopted my first dog, Earl. He has inspired me artistically and spiritually, and his joyful spirit became the heart of “Mutts.” Caring for the earth is just common sense.



Patrick McDonnell with his dog, Earl. Cute!

*“WHEN YOU DO A DAILY COMIC STRIP FOR A WHILE, ALL YOUR ‘CLEVER’ IDEAS ARE USED UP, AND YOU ARE JUST LEFT WITH YOURSELF AND A BLANK PIECE OF PAPER. THAT IS WHERE THE WORK BEGINS.”*

**Many of your comics carry an advocacy message, such as a plea to adopt animals in shelters. Did you design your comic strip with advocacy in mind, or was it something that evolved over time?**

From the start, I wanted “Mutts” to give back some of the joy I felt from reading my favorite comics. I also wanted to give a voice to animals. Creating the strip from their point of view has made me even more keenly aware of how tough they have it on this planet. “Mutts” and I seem to have evolved together.

**In recent years, you’ve published four children’s books, with a fifth, *South*, coming in fall 2008. What motivated you to start writing books? Is it strange to illustrate a work in which “Mutts” characters are sometimes absent?**

I’ve always wanted to create children’s books, but with the tight deadline of a daily comic it took a while before I could make this happen. Children’s books have a magic all their own but are similar to comics in that they rely on a combination of both art and words. I love being able to share little complete stories about my “Mutts” characters and

inventing new characters as well. After 10 years of pen and ink drawings (of usually three panels), it was liberating to play with different mediums. I have enjoyed the process tremendously and plan to continue.

**“Mutts” characters have been used frequently to back good causes. Do you feel the need to utilize your characters? Would it be different if they were used for strictly commercial purposes?**

I feel it’s OK to lend my characters to organizations that are aligned with the positive message of “Mutts.” After “Mutts” became better known, I was asked by many groups to do so, and I felt that if I could help in some way I should.

**Building off the last question: is it ever difficult to separate your advocacy from your artwork? Do you feel there is any need to, or are they one and the same?**

When you do a daily comic strip for a while, all your “clever” ideas are used up, and you are just left with yourself and a blank piece of paper. That is where the work begins. I don’t feel that I can really separate myself from my artwork, but I’m well aware that the main goal of comics is to entertain.

**How is “Mutts” different from the “Bad Baby” strips you made for *Parents Magazine* over a 10-year period? Do you ever want to go back to the strip, or wish you had done something with it? How did that experience help you fine-tune “Mutts”?**

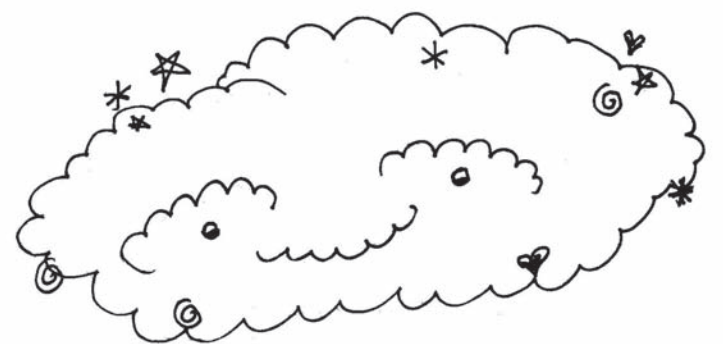
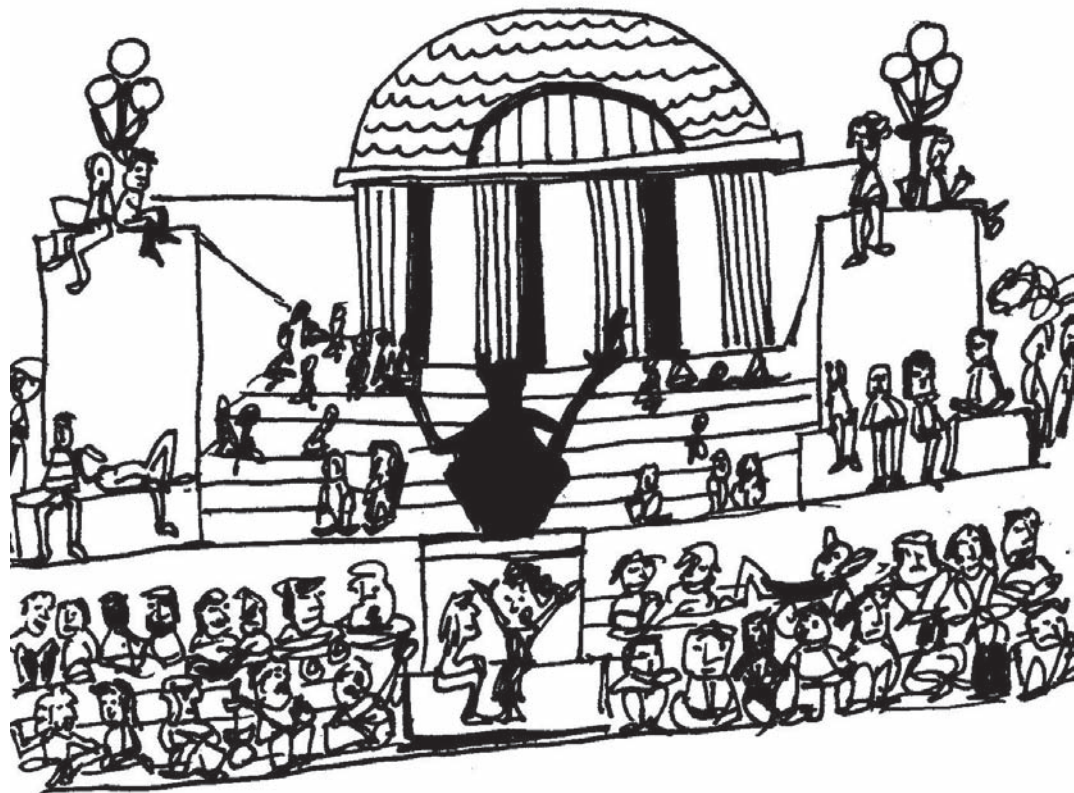
Creating a monthly strip for 10 years is equivalent to only four months of strips for a daily comic. This was a very sobering thought when I first started “Mutts.” I enjoyed drawing “Bad Baby,” and who knows, someday he may reappear, but for now “Mutts” is keeping me pretty busy. “Bad Baby” fueled my desire to go forward with a daily syndicated strip. \\\



# The Fairer Semester

columbia blooms with absurdity in the spring

ART BY RACHEL LINDSAY  
CAPTIONS BY ASHLEY JAMES

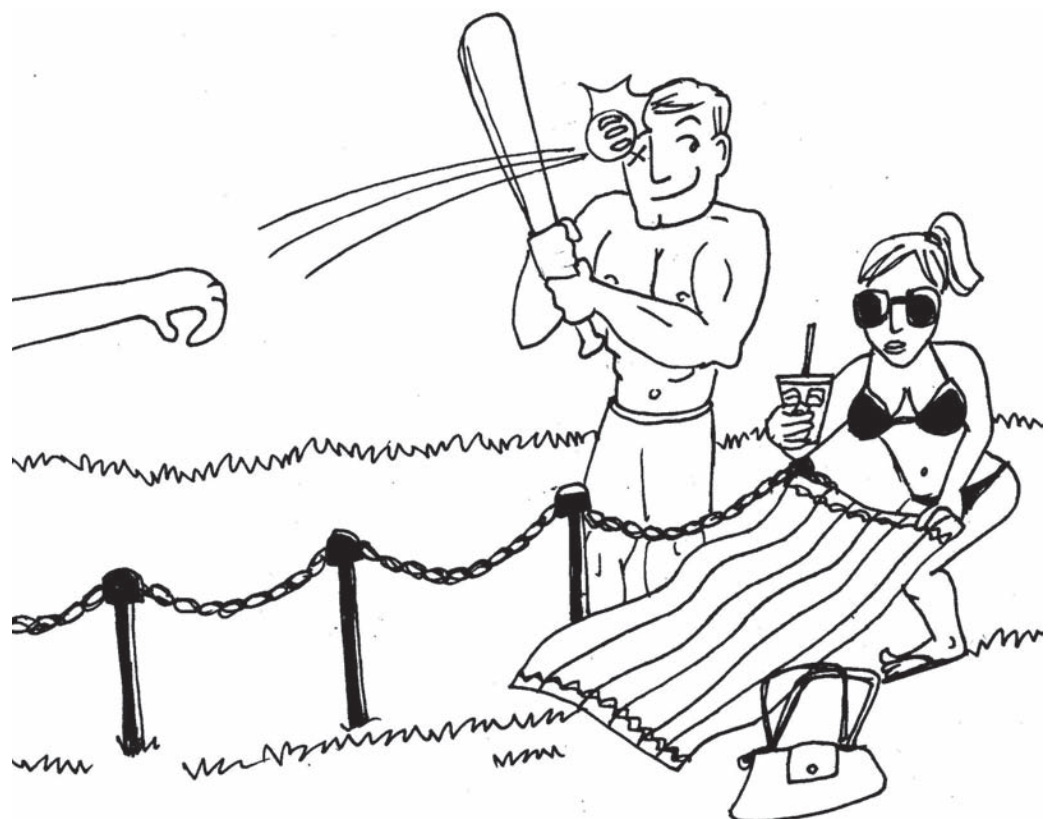


*Epic underwater adventures and safari chases aside, this picture might accurately capture the progression of last Sunday.*

*Spring is the only time when there is a community at Columbia—students sit on the steps to see and be seen.*



*Bikini season finally arrives, and Columbia decides to provide copious amounts of free barbecue for all.*



*During the spring, we all get to see what's been hiding under those North Face jackets—whether we like it or not.*

# Helping Haiti

gabrielle apollon is a woman on a (charity) mission

BY ASHLEY JAMES

PHOTO BY MOLLY CROSSIN

GABRIELLE APOLLON, CC '09, is multitasking. She is sending out e-mails while speaking with me on a Monday evening. Her mother is here from Montreal and sits at the edge of the bed. Gabrielle is sprawled out as she types. Not coincidentally, these facts all relate to the same topic—the Global Life Focus Network—and despite her other obligations for the evening, Gabrielle is eager to speak about the project.

“I’m sorry to be on my computer while you’re here,” Gabrielle says.

“But, I just had to get these written out.”

The work she is doing this evening is on behalf of the charity organization she and her mother started in 2002, the Global Life Focus Network. Organized and run by about 25 family members and friends of the Apollons, the network is a non-profit organization with the main goal of providing education for impoverished Haitian children. Gabrielle and her mother, Mary Apollon—a Haitian immigrant to Canada—feel it is their mission as the

network’s leaders to help their country.

“Originally I wanted to do some work in Africa, but God kept telling me ‘Haiti, Haiti,’” Mary says.

They sponsor the education of 35 Haitian children year-round, but the highlight of the organization is a summer program it runs in small Haitian towns. Accommodating more than

program to the efforts of Columbia student groups and the support they have shown for the Global Life Focus Network: “Everyone was so collaborative.” The InterVarsity Christian Fellowship, Blue Key Society, and Columbia College Student Council co-sponsored the event.

Columbia has aided the Global Life Focus Network in another way as well.

*“ORIGINALLY I WANTED TO DO  
SOME WORK IN AFRICA, BUT GOD  
KEPT TELLING ME ‘HAITI, HAITI.’”*

300 students per summer session, the program offers courses such as English, art, Creole, health and young adult development, and Bible study.

“The majority of them have no school, have never been to school before,” Mary says. She emphasizes the health education in particular because it teaches the children concepts “we take for granted, like the importance of brushing your teeth. They come from families where the kids have to share underwear because they are so poor.”

“We want to restore the lives of these children—physically, mentally, spiritually,” Gabrielle says.

Last year was the Summer Education Program’s inaugural year, and the expenses were met in large part through a \$10,000 grant from 100 Projects for Peace, a philanthropic initiative that provides money to selected college undergraduates for summer grassroots projects. To fund this summer’s project, Gabrielle and her mother have been applying for grants (the task the two were working on the night of my interview) as well as other fundraising.

Just this past Saturday, a fundraising event for the organization, called Voices for Haiti, was held on campus.

“A lot of people came out, and I’m really happy it turned out the way it did,” Gabrielle says.

Voices for Haiti, which took place in Wien Hall, featured performances by Uptown Vocal and Onyx. Haitian food was included in the \$3 entrance fee.

“All in all we raised about \$500, which was such a blessing,” Gabrielle says. She attributes the success of the

Nickisha Berlus, CC '08, is one Columbia student actually making the trip to Haiti this summer to help teach.

“This year there are no MCATS,” Berlus says, referring to her freed-up summer schedule. She will be attending medical school in the fall, but of this summer she says: “It is my last opportunity to do this. The experience would be outside of this world for these kids. I just want to take them out of the environment as they know it, just for a little while.”

Berlus is an immigrant from Haiti, making the experience even more close to home for her. It is an important summer for her because she wishes to return to the country.

“My dream is to someday practice medicine in Haiti. This experience will be the best exposure to what I’m going to have there and what I’m not going to have.”

The work the Apollons are doing in terms of education for some Haitian children is not the entire mission of the network, however. They hope to expand their work in Haiti by including more programs to strengthen the economic standings of the poor communities that they target. This includes reaching out more to adults.

“We would like to establish an economic base for these communities in Haiti, to have a place, a clinic for children, and also a trade school for adults,” Mary says.

“Not just a place ran by us, but a place for them to be able to do it. We want them to be able to be self-sufficient, so it can continue generations,” Gabrielle adds. \\\



Gabrielle Apollon puts her heart in Haiti.



# Strike Up the Band

nobody else but adam green

BY JENNIE ROSE HALPERIN

PHOTO COURTESY OF PIETER M. VAN HATTEN

THE RAT PACK AND JAZZ-POP ERAS are long gone. While vocalists and arrangers may have once been able to belt out a song and watch it climb the charts, the current music industry is a bit tougher on the crooners of the world.

Adam Green hearkens back to these singers by way of Calvin Johnson, combining sophisticated instrumentation and his signature velvety voice with slightly off-kilter lyrics. He and his friends, including Julian Casablancas of the Strokes and Carl Barat, formerly of the Libertines (with whom he made a hilarious German video), are a sort of rock 'n' roll Rat Pack, with Green providing the sophisticated vocal and instrumental tracks.

Green constantly surprises with unusual instrumentation, which separates him from usual singer-songwriter fare, particularly in anti-folk circles. For example, "Morning After Midnight," the lead single on Green's recently released album *Sixes and Sevens*, features a horn section and gospel singers. "I'm going to the next round, sinking huge amounts of money into ambitious recording projects that have no commercial potential," Green says. "That's what gives me a kick, you know?" The track immediately following features a string section accompanying lyrics about underwear. Here, indie rock irreverence overrides a potentially meaningful moment.

"I identify with Wes Anderson in this way," he says about these seemingly over-the-top flairs. "Like, he can make a shit movie, he can spend as much money as he wants—like on the scale of *Titanic*—and then make *The Life Aquatic*. It's beautiful."

When Green's first album *Garfield* was released, *Rolling Stone* objected to its overly explicit and often ludicrously obscene lyrics. After toning the humor down a bit and growing up a lot, Green has moved far past his former role as Kimya Dawson's 18-year-old partner-in-crime in the now defunct—but-increasingly popular Moldy Peaches.

While his song "Anyone Else But You" made it into the rock 'n' roll lexicon of a new generation after its inclusion on the *Juno* soundtrack, Green claims nothing has changed since the film was released. "Nobody's requested 'Anyone Else But You' at a concert or anything ... Me and Kimya don't play Moldy Peaches songs without each other anyway." However, he can't quite escape the song that put the

"IT'S NOT EVERY DAY THAT PEOPLE GET A WHOLE ORCHESTRA TO DO THINGS THAT ARE NOT, YOU KNOW, CELINE DION."



Adam Green, a lounge singer with a Western twist.

Moldy Peaches into America's collective mouth. His new album features a duet with his girlfriend that is continuously drawing comparisons to the slacker romance anthem.

America may not be completely ready for Adam Green—the string section and spaghetti-Western feel of much of *Sixes and Sevens* doesn't exactly seem

poised to take over the airwaves—but Europe has been far more receptive. Green is currently in Germany and has been touring Europe for four weeks. "I'm not trying to be obnoxious, but I think I've been on about 80 European tours," Greens says. "And that's not an exaggeration." He attributes this to signing with Elektra records, a London-based record label, at the tender age of 18. "My professional career was based off of London," Green says. "America's always been an outpost for them."

Green, who signed to Elektra with the Moldy Peaches, elaborates on the tenuous relationship between business and music. "Every time I release a record I get ripped for not producing a big pop hit because I've chosen to submit myself to a professional circumstance. But that's all there is to say about it. Beyond that, my music comes from love." The moments of pure love on *Sixes and Sevens* are easily recognizable. On "Exp. 1," Green employs a blues guitar over spoken, nonsensical poetry, creating a surprisingly multi-layered and charming song.

This European connection seems a bit uncharacteristic for Green, who grew up in New York City and whose father is a professor of neurology at Columbia. However, he has built a considerable following, particularly in France, where he notably hitchhiked in his pajamas across part of the country after overdosing on sleeping pills and alcohol. On this tour, he has ostensibly fared better health-wise and even managed to pick up some musicians on the way. "I picked up some gospel girls—two East London gospel girls. They're part of the band now. I think they're having fun. They've never been on tour before."

Green calls his music "Adam music," which is a sweet phrase for a man who "can't really remember [his] life before playing music." Green, who claims he "never had another hobby," is remarkably genre-defying and somehow able to navigate from a full orchestra to an acoustic guitar with remarkable ease. "I think the people that buy my records appreciate [my use of full instrumentation]. It's not every day that people get a whole orchestra to do things that are not, you know, Celine Dion."

Like other artists breaking the mainstream in the past 10 years, Green got his start through home recording and claims that the techniques he used in home recording have helped him better sculpt his solo records. He has never worked with a producer, and he recorded the new album at a "school for autistic children in New Jersey." He expounds upon his former use of a four-track before saying that now it's "a sense of self-parody using a four-track when you have garage band on your laptop."

The new album, while only partially home-recorded, took over a year to complete. Green claims that this album was the most alcohol-drenched and re-recorded, mostly because he had so much time. "I think I developed a nice artistic relationship with the record. I think I could best describe it as tears squeezed from a leather belt," he says. "I feel a little bit like Clint Eastwood. I think it's probably my most macho record."

Macho or not, the Western theme pervades *Sixes and Sevens*, and Green's songs, most notably "Broadcast Beach," feature an almost "Rhinestone Cowboy" feeling that is listenable and fun with its gospel background and lead-in piano parts.

Like a good lounge singer, Green can hook a listener through a melding of the upbeat show-stoppers and the torch-songs. His lyrics remain vaguely subversive, and his voice makes it easy to picture him singing the orchestrated numbers while swinging a microphone in a velour sport coat. He may not ever reach Rat Pack status, but he and his friends have reinvented indie-rock, at least for a little while. \\\

# The Apatow Effect

the writer/director who cracks dick jokes to critical acclaim

BY PETER LABUZA

PHOTO COURTESY OF COLUMBIA PICTURES

SINCE THE BIRTH OF CINEMA, there have always been legendary auteurs who have developed smash comedies: Charlie Chaplin, the Marx Brothers, Mel Brooks, Woody Allen, Wes Anderson. But now a new man has entered the ring: Judd Apatow. A producer, writer, and director, Judd Apatow has become one of Hollywood's hottest commodities. His films manage to be both box-office hits and critical favorites.

Apatow continues his trend into this year with four films, including last week's release of *Forgetting Sarah Marshall*, a film in which Jason Segel (who also wrote the script) finds himself in a difficult breakup with his TV-star girlfriend, played by Kristen Bell. Like the rest of Apatow's work, it seems poised to be another hit, which thus begs the question: how does Judd Apatow keep rolling in the hits?

A look at his films and his history reveals the secret behind his success. After writing for a number of TV shows and a string of film rewrites in the 1990s, Judd Apatow got his big break—his own TV series. *Freaks and Geeks* did not resemble the normal teenage high school shows of the time. Set in the 1980s, it portrayed social outcasts dealing with real issues like sex and drugs, but usually with a light-hearted, amusing tone. Although its originality garnered huge critical success, the show—unable to get the ratings it needed—disappointed its producers, who cancelled it after its first season.

Despite this setback, Apatow got a second chance in TV, this time using the college scene as his setting. *Undeclared* did for college what *Freaks and Geeks* did for high school. Its scope ranged from the serious to the humorous, poking fun at the freshman 15 and sensitively portraying intersex teenagers. But like his previous show, *Undeclared* was canceled, this time halfway through the season.

Despite the commercial failure of his two TV series (which have now gained cult status through DVD), both set the standard for Apatow's approach to film. He routinely uses the actors from the TV series, including Seth Rogen, Jay Baruchel, and Jason Segel. *Superbad* director Greg Mottola and *Walk Hard* director Jake Kasdan also had their directorial debuts on the television shows.

Apatow developed his improvisational directing style while working on the two series. He typically does several takes of the same scene, allowing the actors to improvise dialogue with each new take. The process lends his work a distinctive, spontaneous energy.

For most people, two canceled shows would be a sign to pack up and head home. For Apatow, it meant thinking bigger and better. After the flop of his two shows, Apatow saved his career by pro-

ducing 2004's *Anchorman: The Legend of Ron Burgundy*, a blockbuster hit. He also directed 2005's *The 40-Year-Old Virgin*, which brought him additional career success. His film directorial debut was considered a highly original piece of work. The film's success stems from its truthful depiction of the real awkwardness in adult relationships, achieved through the cast's improvised dialogue and the honesty of the relationship of Steve Carell and Catherine Keener, which avoids many clichés that other films use.

FOR MOST PEOPLE, TWO  
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APATOW, IT MEANT THINKING  
BIGGER AND BETTER.



Apatow has a particular knack for creating guy characters that every male can relate to. They act like real guys: making raunchy jokes and doing stupid things, reveling in a nostalgia for the male camaraderie of their childhoods. His films are sometimes called “dick flicks,” or male romantic comedies.

*The 40-Year-Old Virgin* was an unexpected success story. It did not have any major stars, yet it was able to gross over \$175 million worldwide, on a budget not even a fifth of that amount. To many, it signaled a return of the R-rated comedy. But while the makers of *Wedding Crashers*, the other successful vulgar comedy of the summer, went on to make lighter fare, Apatow decided to stay in risky territory, keeping his films naughty and offensive. And in 2007, it paid off.

Will Apatow's new stoner comedy be another smashing success?



What both *Knocked Up* and *Superbad* accomplished was the ability to create ridiculous, slightly unrealistic situations that offer insights into characters' lives through vulgar comedy. Each film features a cast of brilliant actors like Rogen, Jonah Hill, and Michael Cera, whose improvisational abilities have produced numerous quotable lines (Paul Rudd, whose character is high on mushrooms, remarks, “my hand tastes like a rainbow”). Both films feature characters confronting relatable fears, such as parenthood, separation from old friends, and avoiding the realities of life. Apatow's films are essentially about the fears of growing into maturity.

The last two films produced by Apatow—the John C. Reilly musical-biopic spoof *Walk Hard* and the Owen Wilson bully flick *Drillbit Taylor*—have done poorly at the box office. But those can be blamed on bad timing and marketing. *Walk Hard*, which was hailed by many critics as being a hilarious homage to biopics like *Walk the Line* and *Ray*, earned two Golden Globe nominations. Still, the film was released at the same time as major Oscar contenders and got lost in that holiday mix. *Drillbit Taylor*, an Owen Wilson film in which three kids hire him to be a bully as protection from other bullies, was not really the regular Apatow—it was aimed at a younger audience (the film's rating was PG-13) and did not feature any of his regular cast members.

But this spring and summer promises a return to Apatow's characteristic work. Besides *Sarah Marshall*, Apatow is producing *Step Brothers*, a sibling rivalry comedy with Will Ferrell and John C. Reilly. A film that is sure to be a success is the stoner action-comedy *Pineapple Express*, which stars Seth Rogen and *Spider-Man*'s James Franco (Franco starred in *Freaks & Geeks*). Apatow, who helped develop the story with *Superbad* writers Rogen and Evan Goldberg, brought in indie director David Gordon Green, best known for films like *George Washington* and the recent *Snow Angels* to direct. The combination of Green's brilliant sense of staging and atmosphere and Apatow's vulgar hilarity and brilliant characters seems like a winning combination.

In the past three years, Apatow has developed a truly original brand of comedy. From old virgins to unwanted pregnancies to uncomfortable breakups, Judd Apatow knows how to make the most awkward situation into a goldmine of comedy, while still creating a honest and realistic look at human relationships in the 21st century. \\\



# Got Green?

BY RAPHAEL POPE-SUSSMAN  
PHOTO BY MOLLY CROSSIN

GREEN IS SEXY. And not just on St. Patrick's Day. No, green is sexy 365 days a year. I want to make sweaty, passionate, ecologically-friendly love to green. Because green is the new pink, which was the new black before green displaced it.

What is green? Emeralds are green. Pistachio ice cream is green. Grass is green. There are so many things that are green. Yet so few of these green things are truly "green."

To be green is to be covered in solar panels. It is to recycle, to refurbish, to renew. It is to sing ballads about Mother Gaia: "Oh Mother Gaia / How I want to Buy-a / Brand new Toyota Prius / In lime green." Green is Kashi cereal. Green is coffee cups made of 10 percent recycled paper. Green is

those new Poland Spring water bottles. Look, even the label is green!

Green is any wavelength between 520 and 570 nanometers. That's a fact.

I am green with envy. I wish I could afford to pay wind farmers to offset my carbon output. What is a wind farmer? Are there wind ranchers? Wind gardeners?

I wish I had enough green to be green. Green is pricey as hell.

Al Gore is green. Tina Fey is green. Oscar the Grouch is green. I am green. Yes! I am becoming green. I am earth, I am sky, I am fire, I am water. I am the quintessence. I am green!

I am eco-rep. I am eco-friendly. I am eco-maniac. I am eco-, you fill in the suffix. I am that.



This picture of students on the lawn would be green, but we did not use color ink.

Just follow my lead, Columbia, and you will be as green as a leprechaun. Don't you want to be green? Green is not so hard. Green is easy. Flick a light switch. Toss that newspaper into the recycling bin. Take short, shallow breaths. Less oxygen in, less carbon dioxide out. That's green.

Believe me, green won't add more than two or three minutes to your day. Two or three minutes? That's a small price to pay to be green, Columbia. You can't put a price on green.

And remember, if all else fails, you can always mix yellow and blue. That's green. \\\



## How Are We Celebrating Earth Day?

BY AKIVA BAMBERGER,  
SHAINA RUBIN,  
AND LIZ PIPAL

PHOTO COURTESY  
OF SXC



- 5 Caressing trees
- 4 Symposia
- 3 Gunning down oil executives with biodegradable bullets
- 2 Covering campus with thousands of paper fliers announcing "Earth Day at Columbia"
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# A Comic Mastermind

stan lee and his cohorts invade gotham city

BY MADELEINE COMPAGNON  
PHOTOS BY CARA BUCHANAN

THIS PAST WEEKEND, New York City played host to dozens of multi-colored anime and manga characters. Poison Ivy, a few Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles, Princess Leia, the Hulk, and countless be-caped, spandex-covered femme fatales and superheroes could all be found in the flesh at ComicCon, a convention devoted completely to comics and the largest popular culture convention on the East Coast. ComicCon has a very specific costume-weapon policy for attendees—no paintball guns, crossbows, or something called “nunchaku” are allowed—and with good reason, judging by these characters’ notorious reputations.

This year’s convention, which took place last weekend, was spread out over three floors of the huge, futuristic Jacob Javits Convention Center in midtown. Getting to ComicCon was easy—Spider-Man was waiting at the 34th Street subway stop to greet attendees and lead the way to the convention. Stormtroopers, in full costume despite the 60-degree weather, took care of stopping the flow of traffic so that visitors could cross 11th Avenue safely.

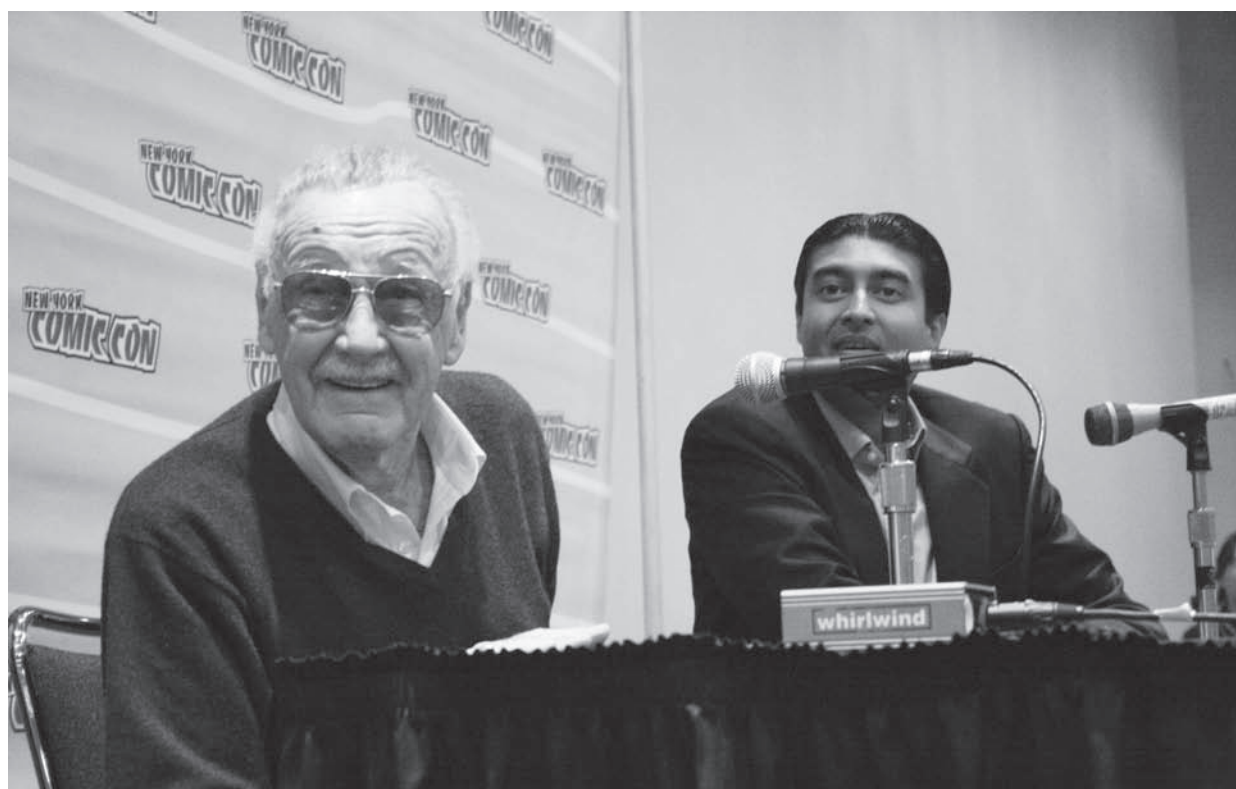
The New York ComicCon is only in its third year (it’s an offshoot of San Diego’s original convention), yet it is growing at an incredibly fast pace, as is the entire comic book universe. The sheer magnitude of ComicCon is overwhelming, and it is indicative of the vitality of the comic industry today.

The living embodiment of this vitality is Stan Lee, probably the most famous figure in comic books. A writer and editor at Marvel Comics and co-creator of some of the most well-known comic book heroes—such as the X-Men, Spider-Man, the Fantastic Four, and the Incredible Hulk—drew the largest crowd of all the featured events with his question-and-answer session. Fans ached to hear the man himself say “Excelsior!” and their wish was granted when one intrepid audience member made the request.

COMICCON HAS A VERY SPECIFIC COSTUME-WEAPON POLICY FOR ATTENDEES—NO PAINTBALL GUNS, CROSSBOWS, OR SOMETHING CALLED ‘NUNCHAKU’ ARE ALLOWED.

Even for someone unfamiliar with Lee’s catchphrase—which also happens to be the New York state motto—the enthusiasm as Lee entered the auditorium was contagious. Everyone stood to catch a glimpse of the small man, wearing his trademark aviators, as he sat down to shouts of “You’re the man, Stan!” and prolonged applause. It was then announced that, at the age of 85, Lee is going back to work with Virgin Comics as writer, editor, and art director.

Stan Lee was the creative mastermind who revolutionized comics in the 1960s and has been an im-



Spiderman-creator and all-around comic book god Stan Lee answers questions at ComicCon.

portant force in the industry ever since. At Virgin, he gets to begin all over again—except this time with money. When asked if he is excited to go back to his roots, he answered yes—mostly because Virgin owner Richard Branson is rich and can afford to hire the best artists and writers. “They’ll do the work and I’ll get the credit,” Lee said. “It’ll be great.”

He then irreverently made his way through a long-winded question put to him by the president of Virgin Comics, Suresh Seetharaman, shrugging off his excessive flattery and joking that reading comics makes people more well-adjusted.

Lee said that the comic book industry works in a series of ups and downs, and the industry is currently going through a boom. The magnitude of ComicCon bears witness to this fact. At the convention, different panels focused on every aspect of the comic in-

an impressive selection of souvenirs, including action figures, plush dolls, collectibles, stickers, pins, podcasts, and comic books.

The influence of the Internet is changing the way comics are viewed and distributed, and its presence was felt at the convention. It creates a freer forum for discussing comics that liberates writers from the constraints of the written page and editorial guidelines. They spoke with glee of the difference between sitting down with a pen and a piece of paper and sitting in front of a computer monitor, where the formatting, graphics, and color possibilities are limitless. Online, authors can handle their own Web sites and make money by self-publishing. Web comics also involve the aspect of community building by allowing for free exchange between authors and readers. Nonetheless, it is an area that must somehow be strictly monitored in order to guarantee that authors and artists are still making money. Towards this end, some have considered the possibility of creating specialized hand-held devices to distribute comics—a variation of these devices already exists in Japan.

But perhaps the clearest proof of the buoyancy and diversity of the comic book industry is the ComicCon attendees. Most make their elaborate costumes themselves, with stunning results. They’re more than happy to pose with you for a picture—although some of them stay permanently in character, which sometimes means that they can’t speak to you. It is an incredibly enthusiastic crowd, all willing to help the “outsiders,” clearly bewildered newcomers to this strange scene. These are the most devoted fans of the comic book universe, and they readily agree in unison that, though their shape, size, and scope might be changing, there will always be a need for comics. \\\



# Joe Green Columbia

## an addict's guide to conscious coffee

BY DELNA WEIL AND SHANE FERRO

PHOTO COURTESY OF VENTURA COUNTRY STAR

"WITHOUT MY MORNING COFFEE," Johann Sebastian Bach writes in his comic operetta, *Coffee Cantata*, "I'm just like a dried up piece of roast goat."

While the rest of the world may not be able to describe its addiction so poetically, the numbers suggest we feel a similar sentiment. According to the International Coffee Organization, 1.6 billion cups of coffee are consumed worldwide every day. First discovered in Ethiopia during the ninth century, coffee is now mass-produced all over the world and constitutes one of the most valuable traded commodities after oil.

Providing a social space to meet, talk, write, read, or simply pass the time, the coffeehouse is the ubiquitous center for the hip, intellectual social scene. Local purveyors of America's favorite legal drug are more popular—and more ethical—than ever. All over the city, coffee purveyors are boasting close, direct relationships with farms, a commitment to the environment, and lofty ideals for the future of coffee.

Buying ethical coffee is one of the best ways to be environmentally conscious. A cup of organic, shade-grown coffee tastes better than its flat-harvested counterpart because it has not been exposed to the harmful chemicals in pesticides, and it has been cultivated in its natural environment under the shade of taller trees. It also represents important efforts to nurture sustainable development, maintain or even increase biodiversity, minimize pollution, and provide economic security for farmers in the developing world.

Fresh roasting, expensive equipment, and expert baristas are no longer enough—coffee retailers are now using their commitment to socially and environmentally conscious farming and roasting practices to court customers. The result goes beyond a humble cup of joe—it's a delicious and artfully designed representation of economic responsibility.

Fair Trade certified coffee is bought from farmers at a minimum of \$1.26 per pound, nearly three times what the average coffee farmer receives according to Global Exchange, an organization that promotes social responsibility throughout the world. In order to provide Fair Trade certified coffee, buyers pay the Fair Trade Labelling Organizations International to police the farming practices around the world and certify farmers.

At a time when historic lows in world coffee prices have created a crisis for millions of farmers whose livelihood depends on the crop, fair trade policies not only insure that farmers gain direct access to international markets, but they also set a minimum price for their coffee. By making sound environmental practices profitable for farmers, Fair Trade partnerships create conditions for long-term sustainability.

In order to be certified as an organic producer, a farmer must abide by certain rules that typically include using minimal synthetic products, farming without chemical additives, and having farming sites inspected on a regular basis. While not all countries have organic food regulations and certifi-

cation, there are third-party organizations, such as Quality Assurance International or the Organic Crop Improvement Association, that grant certification to farmers internationally.

Among New York's numerous purveyors of Fair Trade and certified organic coffees are Gorilla, in Brooklyn (97 5th Ave. at Baltic St., Brooklyn), and Gimme! Coffee (new location at 228 Mott St. in SoHo, also at 495 Lorimer St. in Brooklyn, with five locations upstate). These new, independently operated coffee shops are the Apple to Starbucks' Micro-



Organic and Fair Trade coffee is becoming increasingly available in New York's independent coffee shops.

soft: they are user-friendly, stylish, in touch with the times, and—together with the rest of the city's independent coffee culture—a force to be reckoned with.

Gorilla has a very guerilla atmosphere to it, with old maps of central and south America hanging on the walls. The name Gorilla "connotes strength," co-owner Darlene Scherer said in an interview with WNYC in 2007. According to her, Fair Trade coffee is "essentially empowerment for the farmer," so that if something goes wrong with a crop or they have a bad season, they have something to fall back on.

All coffees that Gorilla uses are certified organic and Fair Trade. The two tend to go hand-in-hand. "That's typically a way of growing," Scherer said. "It's not just a social responsibility, but it's an environmental responsibility."

Fortunately, paying the farmers more for their business does not necessarily mean a huge hole in your wallet. Beans generally cost \$10 to \$14 per pound, which is significantly more than Maxwell House, but only a dollar or two more than you would pay for a pound of your favorite Seattle company's blend.

Just because something is not certified organic does not necessarily mean that it was produced using chemical inputs. At Gimme! Coffee, the coffee is not technically Fair Trade or organic, but it is still

morally sourced. Their coffee comes from small family farmers who may not be able to afford certifications to become Fair Trade or organic. "Our farmers probably can't afford pesticides even if they wanted them," Jennifer Bryant, a manager at Gimme!, says.

The Fair Trade label does not encompass all fairly traded coffee. "Fair Trade is a trademark term," she says. "It's a business that you have to buy into." Instead, Gimme! Coffee uses a method called "relationship coffee," or "direct-trade coffee," where they are in direct contact with the small farmers who supply their beans, cutting out the middle man.

Gimme! has a relationship with the Las Minas Project, a small group of farmers in Colombia. Gimme! sent representatives down to Colombia to meet and work with the farmers from whom they purchase their coffee beans. Through "relationship coffee," the farmer and the buyer have a relationship that improves the bottom line on both ends, while enhancing the bean's quality. "We know that we can help them improve their coffee," Bryant says.

Not only do these companies provide "moral" coffee—roasting beans that are fair trade, organic, and shade-grown—but they also provide the sort

of hip culture that trendy New Yorkers seek out. Baristas are highly trained artisans. Your milk is sure to be steamed fresh (and is probably from a local dairy), not poured from the same pitcher that's been used for every latte in the last ten minutes. The foam will not only be velvety-smooth, but might even include fancy latte art swirled on top with a flick of the wrist.

Although Starbucks may be stronger in numbers, the corporate giant has only a few organic, fair-trade options for the environmentally conscious. If you want to buy a single cup in the store, you must ask for it specially. They have tried to improve their image and have gone as far as closing all stores for an evening for a massive re-training of their staff, but they are simply too large to keep up with independently hip trends everywhere. While local retailers are providing relationship coffee and the promise of conscious trading from seed to cup, the best Starbucks can do is 10 percent off for Earth Day.

At places like Gimme! and Gorilla, with a simple \$2 cup of coffee, you will not only get a more lovingly-crafted drink, look cooler, and possibly make a new friend, but you will also be supporting farmers who are committed to the environment and helping ensure biodiversity, fair labor practices, and price stability. \\\



# The (Columbia) Sartorialist

cristina astigarraga and olivia schmid

BY SHIRLEY CHEN

PHOTOS BY MOLLY CROSSIN



📍 Cristina Astigarraga

People often underestimate the importance of length and fit, especially when it comes to denim. Designer jeans are a great investment, but only if they are appropriately tailored for your body. Fit is the most essential element of any outfit, and she nails this detail. A bold menswear inspired watch is necessary this season, and she balances this masculine accessory well with the careful feminine appliqué and beadwork on her blouse. The yellow brightens her entire outfit and makes it spring appropriate. Her metallic flats add another fresh twist and also work to lengthen her leg in a subtle way.

📍 Olivia Schmid

A leather jacket is a closet staple that will remain classic year after year. Whereas black can often look severe and a bit too downtown grunge, this soft chocolate color is casual, chic, and perfectly compliments her complexion. Well-cut, dark-wash denim high-lights the understated tangerine and gold palate of this outfit (shirt, polish, buckle, shoes). Wedges are a perfect city shoe—lending the desired height without the painful side effects—and hers are fun yet practical. Of course, before making any statements with summer footwear, ladies should follow her lead and splurge on a pedicure. My favorite aspect of this outfit may be the exotic beaded bracelet on her right wrist. While her smile is lovely and warm, this accessory gives her a mysterious edge.



## SPLURGE OR STEAL: GLADIATOR SANDALS

BY MOIRA LYNCH

Balenciaga's spring collection was influential beyond just the clothing shown. The gladiator sandals were a pivotal part of the ensembles, and they have started a trend. Gladiator sandals—granted, in less extraordinary incarnations than the woven knee high Balenciaga beauties—are huge this summer. They are all the rage this season and will probably come back in style within three years, so you should have no qualms about investing in a pair.

The full leg of straps is my favorite way to work the gladiator look. Jeffrey Campbell has made knee-high gladiator sandals every summer, and this season they come in snake-skin. Not everybody wants to make such a loud statement, though, and it is easy to find heights and designs suitable for everybody this season. Tory Burch, maker of the ubiquitous flats, has emblazoned her logo on metallic discs that line the central strap of ankle-high gladiators, and Givenchy has created the most adorable jelly gladiator for a relatively decent price. If you are not sure how long you will want to sport gladiator shoes, Urban Outfitters makes several different pairs for less than \$40.

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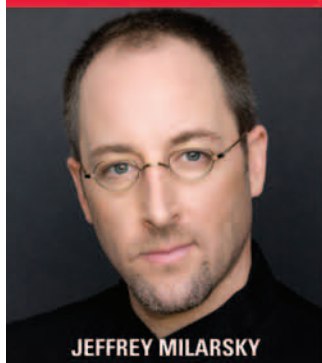
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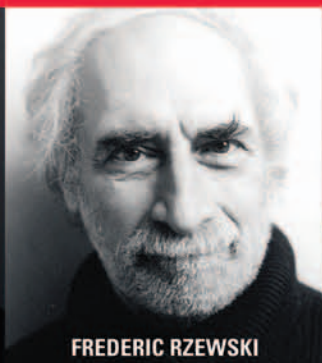
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