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the eye

Nothing to Wear?

the eye does halloween

the best (photos) of cmj ∞ trials of a young theater-goer ∞ simon rich charms the heck out of us

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NOTHING TO WEAR?

Too cheap (or principled) to buy from Ricky's, too nonconformist to go as Sarah Palin? *The Eye's* got you covered for last-minute costume ideas, pg. 07

photos by Molly Crossin and Tina Gao

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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

This week, our lead story should give you plenty of ideas for last-minute Halloween costumes. But if you're still at a loss, here's one more, courtesy of a 3-year-old Barack Obama.



That pretty much sums up everything that's been on my mind this week. Enjoy the break!

—Alexandria Symonds

All Hallow's Evening

BY RAPHAEL POPE-SUSSMAN

If you have been reading Eyesites in recent weeks, you have seen a running joke about my roommate's putative sexual "frustration." I put the word frustration in quotes because the purpose of said pieces was merely to poke fun at the tremendous significance we college folks place on human sexuality. I also put the words in quotes because my roommate weighs 20 to 30 pounds more than me, and he has taken to twisting my nipples so hard that I suffer significant bruising.

That clears that up. Suffice it to say that a rare day goes by when my roommate isn't pleasuring a woman, man, or beast—in new and profound ways.

But I digress. This week's critically important topic of discussion is the upcoming holiday we've all been waiting for. You know, that favorite fall holiday, when the leaves are turning gold and the air is clear, and you just want to stick your tongue out and literally lick all that crispness right off the pavement.

I love Guy Fawkes Day. When I was a kid, I often began planning for the holiday in June, just after school let out. I would remark to my mother, "Mom, I cannot wait to celebrate the capture and execution of Guy Fawkes, who planned to blow up the Parliament Building in London, Eng-a-land!"

Oh, those were the days. Every Nov. 5, I would take out my red Radio Flyer, build a life-sized mannequin of Guy Fawkes out of mud and straw,

and set out on my way.

Many people in my neighborhood would shout at me, back in those days. They would say: "Where are your parents? What the fuck are you doing ringing doorbells by yourself?"

What silly folks. "Pennies for the Guy," I would call. "Pennies for the Guy." For, as you know, on Guy Fawkes Day, one always asks for pennies for the Guy. That's just how one celebrates Guy Fawkes, who was brutally hanged for his revolutionary instincts.

Many of my friends claimed they had not heard of Guy Fawkes, but I knew that to be false because Guy Fawkes Day is every kid's favorite holiday. Think about it. If someone came up to you tomorrow and told you that they were having a big party, would you go?

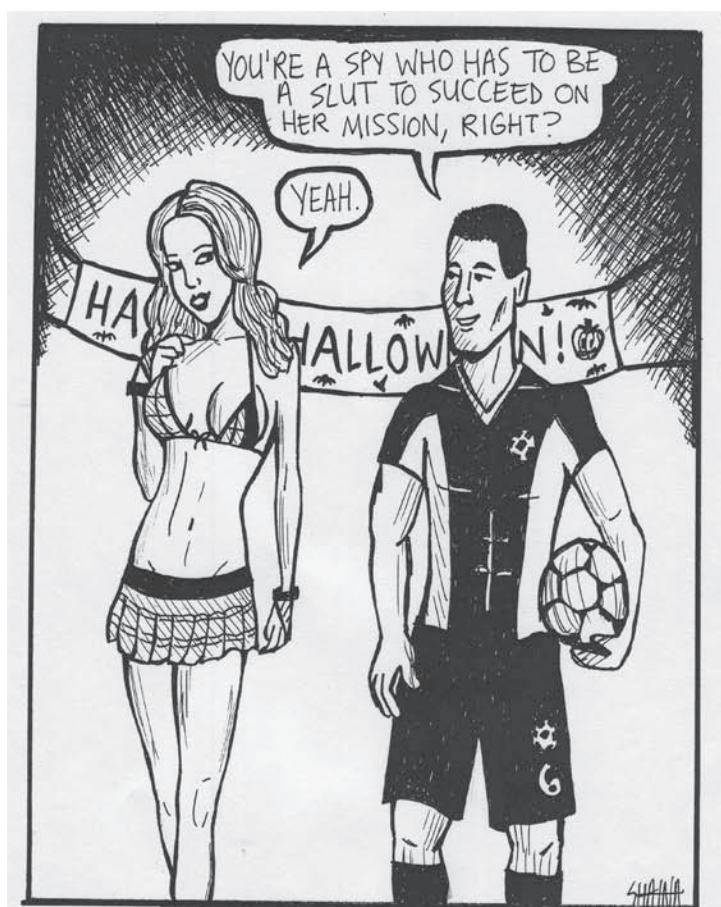
Obviously you would go. That's science. And if that party happened to be a celebration of the four-day torture of Catholic dissidents (who were subsequently drawn and quartered), surely you'd invite that cute girl you have a crush on.

I hope all my readers out there have a happy and healthy Guy Fawkes Day. Get out there, collect all the pennies you could ever dream of, and do that scheming son-of-a-bitch proud. Consider taking the time to pick up a barrel of tar, so that you can set it on fire and march through the streets.

Oh, and if you happen to see my roommate, let him know how much you venerate his libido.

Then hit him with a sock full of pennies.

That'll teach him to think twice before twisting any more nipples. ●



COMPILED BY HILLARY BUSIS
AND RAPHAEL POPE-SUSSMAN

Editors' 10

what we're into this week

1. *It's Always Sunny in Philadelphia*: "I just started watching this show, and it's seriously hilarious. It's also pretty sick—the characters make Larry David on *Curb Your Enthusiasm* seem a sympathetic guy."

—Raphael Pope-Sussman, humor editor

2. Iron and Wine's *The Shepherd's Dog*: "'Boy With a Coin' has been stuck in my head for a week, and I'm convinced it is what got me through midterms."

—Shane Ferro, food editor

3. Metro-North: "It's a super easy and relatively cheap way to visit friends from other schools, and when you leave from 125th Street, you never even have to navigate Grand Central. Plus, the people-watching is usually top-notch."

—Julia Halperin, art editor

4. P & W Sandwiches: "Like homemade, but better. It definitely beats those 'gourmet' sandwiches in Butler cafe. When I cook for myself, I'm normally too lazy and inept to attempt meat, so P & W has been fulfilling my protein needs. Its proximity to the Hungarian makes it especially convenient during midterms, allowing me to eat a meal without leaving my books."

—Lucy Tang, books editor

5. *Comic Book Tattoo* by Rantz A. Hoseley and Tori Amos:

"It illustrates stories inspired by Tori Amos' songs in comic strips by various artists. The artwork is divine, and the songs, like Tori herself, are something otherworldly."

—Laura Torre, production editor

6. My book of John Travolta postcards from 1978: "Came free with purchase of a Blossom Dearie record. Go figure."

—Jennie Rose Halperin, music editor

7. Eye drops: "When you're furiously trying to complete a paper before the sun rises, nothing is more refreshing than periodically squeezing a drop of sweet relief into each of your bleary, weary eyes. Unlike other energizing study aids, eye drops won't keep you awake—and if you're feeling sinister, they can double as fake tears for when you need to convince your TA to give you an extension."

—Hillary Busis, deputy features editor

8. The WFMU record and CD fair: "Thousands of LPs, many under \$5. The fair is also filled with hundreds of interesting audiophiles, proving that people are in fact still willing to pay for music."

—Molly Crossin, photo editor

9. The "Harvard preppie" look: "That's what's in this fall—shawls that impractically cover but one shoulder. Is your right shoulder cold? No!"

—Learned Foote, film editor

10. "Poison" by Bell Biv DeVoe: "I love to sing along and dance to this song all the time. I really miss the '90s!"

—Helen Werbe, production editor

Did You Know?

Anoka, Minn., is the Halloween capital of the world.

A *New York Times* article from 1866 described Halloween as follows: “A simple reunion of friends now marks the occasion, at which a variety of innocent exercises, including telling of ghost-stories, ‘ducking’ for apples, burning hazelnuts and prophesying fortunes generally fill up the pleasant hours of the evening.”

In Somerset, England, children celebrate “Punkie Night” at the end of October, forging jack o’lanterns from something known as a “mangel-wurzel.” We believe that’s some sort of turnip. But we are routinely confused by the British, so feel free to correct us.

Halloween by the Numbers

- 0** Available evidence to support the rumor that poisoned candy poses a risk to children on Halloween.
- 5** Years in a row (1995–1999), in which students at Park Slope school PS 321 were warned not to wear watches on Halloween because, according to Assistant Principal Richard Goldstein, “If you wear a watch, someone will ask you what time it is, and then when you look at your watch, they will SLASH you.”
- 0** Number of slashings that occurred in Park Slope on Halloween. It’s unclear whether this statistic was correlated with the number of watches worn on the holiday.

Eye Spy

Aghast Barnard student at Debora Spar’s inauguration: “Oh my God, that’s so tacky. Why is she wearing hot pink robes? Does she think that she’s better than everyone else in blue and black?”

—*Claremont street fair in celebration of Barnard’s seventh president and unbelievably complicated medieval academic regalia.*



One Stop on the 1

PHOTO AND TEXT BY GISELLE LEON

There’s nothing quite like spending Halloween near the 1 train’s Christopher Street station. On this night, anything goes—two years ago, the *Girls Gone Wild* crew was on 4th Street begging girls to, well, get wild, a fight broke out between two guys who didn’t really know what they were fighting about, and then my friend got some tattoos—all in the course of 10 minutes.

A ride on the 1 down to Christopher Street tomorrow night will land you in the middle of the chaos. A cautionary note: getting out of the train station could be an adventure in itself. The street’s sure to be mobbed with people trying to get a glimpse of the famed annual Village Halloween Parade. If you want to see the parade yourself, get there a couple of hours early—the festivities start at 7 p.m.—to find a spot along the parade route, which stretches from Spring Street to 21st Street along 6th Avenue. Honestly, though, seeing the parade isn’t essential to enjoying the scene. Instead of waiting in the cold for the parade to start, try using that time to pre-game uptown instead. There are plenty of police attempting to manage the mob scene in the Village that night, and toting mixed drinks in Snapple or Coke bottles will make you a target. You can get to Christopher Street around 8 p.m. or later and get the best of both worlds.

It’s difficult to suggest specific restaurants

or bars to try out around the Christopher Street stop—on Halloween, it’s hard enough just to effectively navigate the crowd. Luckily, walking around aimlessly is an essential experience in itself. Everyone there will be dressed in outrageous costumes—I’ve seen people portraying everything including penises, drag queens, princesses (with their dresses mostly missing), Christmas trees, five versions of Superman, lots of homemade costumes, and hundreds of your standard, super-sexed, overpriced Ricky’s costumes. In general, you can wear and do what you want, so have fun and don’t be afraid to get rowdy. Don’t get offended when people shout obscenities at you—they think that’s what they’re supposed to do. Most important, don’t forget to bring some friends. Going downtown on Halloween isn’t a solo gig, and how could you not want to share the pure hilarity with friends?

If you’re really ambitious and willing to walk some lengths away from the 1 stop, try Jekyll and Hyde on 7th Avenue between Grove and Bleecker. It’s a horror-themed restaurant that’s super-campy. It’s perfect for Halloween, but keep in mind that the lines will surely be long that night. If you want some lounges and restaurants, keep walking toward the NYU area, which is two blocks southeast of the 1 train stop around MacDougal, Sullivan, or Bleecker Street. And for some necessary Halloween sugar, Magnolia is on 11th Street and Bleecker. They’re even selling Halloween-themed cupcakes with extra orange frosting. Just remember that they close the bakery at 12:30 a.m., and the cupcake bouncers won’t let you in a minute past. ●

This Is England

the eye's former a & e managing editor heads across the pond

BY ALISON BUMKE

PHOTO BY SUSAN WEEBER

Fresh off my bus from London's Heathrow Airport three weeks ago, the first thing about Oxford that struck me were the extremes—double-decker buses pummeling past ancient streets with names like Logic Lane or Rectory Road, crowded Cornmarket Street just blocks from Christ Church Meadow where ancient law permits students to keep one cow apiece, the startling beauty of the Isis River glimpsed through rows of traffic. The contrasts make a casual walk to class thrilling, like I'm living someone's antiquated fantasy (possibly my own).

My building is on Dawson Street, a tiny, cobblestone lane not far from High Street, the main road through town. It's a 10-minute walk from my college—Teddy (St. Edmund) Hall—a dorm where third-years (Oxford's seniors) live in huge singles with private bathrooms. There's also, I was thrilled to discover, regular maid service—*Brideshead Revisited* lives! My walk to college takes me over Magdalen ("maudlin") Bridge, circa the 1770s, the site of Oxford's traditional May Morning celebration—like Orgo Night but with a lot of bell tolling instead of the marching band.

Cowley Road, which splits off High Street, is our Amsterdam Avenue, with restaurants serving cheap, tasty, ethnic food, a grocery store and pharmacy (Tesco and Boots), and my favorite coffee shop, G&D's. My first attempt to order a coffee in Oxford was met with a blank stare. Turns out "filter coffee" is the term you're supposed to use in England, and it's either white (with milk) or black. The accompanying treats—caramel slices, tiffins, and flapjacks—are just as delicious as you'd expect in the country that produced *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*.

I've found that American politics are surprisingly effective as a conversation starter, whether over coffee in G&D's or drinks in Teddy Hall's pub (which you pass through, ironically, on your way to the library). Everyone has been following the presidential race closely, and opinions are strongly held, if somewhat unvaried—no one

WRITING MY *CANTERBURY TALES* ESSAY, I SAT NEXT TO A TOMB OF SOMEONE WHO PROBABLY KNEW CHAUCER.



And you thought Columbia was beautiful—Oxford's gorgeous, ancient architecture puts the Morningside campus to shame.

has exactly leaped to Sarah Palin's defense when I mention the Tina Fey videos. My absentee ballot finally arrived in the mail today, and as I prepared to send it, a post office employee told me cheerily, "Hope your vote makes a difference!" (Probably won't in New Jersey, but it was still charming.)

My college is the oldest in Oxford (and in the western world, maybe), dating to 1140 or so. The library is in a former church little changed since the 12th century, except for the bookshelves and desks installed in the 1970s and computer stations in the bell tower. Writing my *Canterbury Tales* essay, I sat next to a tomb of someone who probably knew Chaucer, who set his *Miller's Tale* in 14th century Oxford and whom I've had to read in the original Middle English. Anyone caught with a translation is summarily drawn and quartered. Luckily, the next book on my reading list, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, is written in such an indecipherable northern dialect that my tutor grudgingly conceded I'd probably need the translation.

I have one-on-one encounters with my two tutors weekly to discuss essays turned in the day before. Lectures are optional, but often helpful, not to mention entertaining (at one, the

don, in her early 30s, did her best imitation of Ving Rhames in *Pulp Fiction* threatening to "go Medieval on yo' ass.") Sometimes, tutorials get a little inquisitorial, though my John Donne tutor, Lizzie, opened our first meeting by asking whether I'd prefer Earl Grey or peppermint tea.

We were told to purchase academic gowns in 0th ("ought") week in early October, the week before classes started, so we'd be ready for the Freshers' Dinner (visiting students were roped in with the freshers, or freshmen). As we sat in our black robes at long, candlelit tables, drinking the college wine and eating our four-course meals, it was mentioned more than once—unnecessarily—that the Great Hall scenes in the Harry Potter movies were filmed in an Oxford dining hall.

Moments like these, when I think about where I am, make me almost giddy. I felt it walking back from the library last night as I passed Magdalen Tower, and the ancient church bells struck midnight in deep, round tones. It is reminders of how students have been doing the same things here for 800 years—several cycled past at that moment, singing drunkenly, as they might have in the *Miller's Tale*—that make Oxford's inescapable link to its medieval roots so mesmerizing. ●

Counting His Chickens

hillary busis interviews simon rich

BY HILLARY BUSIS

PHOTO COURTESY OF SIMON RICH

Creative writing majors and comedy enthusiasts, prepare to turn green with envy: Simon Rich is leading the life you want. While at Harvard, he served as president of the *Lampoon*, an office held by the likes of Conan O'Brien. Now, at the tender age of 24, he's the youngest staff writer at *Saturday Night Live* and an Emmy nominee. Rich has published two critically acclaimed comedy shorts collections: 2007's *Ant Farm* and this year's *Free-Range Chickens*—title based on the time he spent living on a chicken farm with his friends. Hillary Busis talked with Rich about the wonderful world of chicken farming and about what it's like to work with Tina Fey.

Did you know that one of your books is on the syllabus for a Columbia class called "Comedy: Past and Present"?

Oh my God, that is so... surreal. Thanks so much for telling me. That's incredible. That is really... wow. That's the most ridiculous thing I've ever heard.

Your stuff is pretty G-rated—there aren't any swear words or anything like that. Is that something you do on purpose?

I'm definitely not toning myself down. I'm naturally, I think, just a pretty nerdy, inoffensive, mainstream kind of guy. I wish I could say that I was an awesome, bad-ass dude and some dorky editor was reining me in, but the truth is I actually am a G-rated kind of guy.

Is the chicken farm you refer to in the acknowledgments section of *Free-Range Chickens* real?

Yeah, it's an actual farm. They have really high-quality eggs. The guy who runs it, Josh Morgenstau, is a really talented farmer, and everybody should buy his eggs.

Did you ever work on the farm while you were staying there?

I did a lot of chasing chickens, actually. And it was really fun. The one thing about chickens is that they are dumb. They are dumb animals. ... They'll try to run from you. They'll get winded, and when they realize their running strategy isn't working, they'll go to their plan B, which is to hide. But

because they live on flat grass, they can only hide behind a blade of grass, which is the equivalent of a full-grown man hiding behind a parking meter.

Do you think as you get older, you'll start looking more toward, I don't want to say adult topics, but...

Yeah, I'm not sure. I'm writing a novel now, and it's a comic novel. ... It's hard to tell. It's always fun to think about what kind of stuff I'll be writing in 20 years. Who knows? Maybe it'll be, like, a terrifying, serious theory book. There's no way to know.

I GREW UP WATCHING [TINA FEY], AND IT'S JUST AMAZING TO WORK WITH SOME OF THE PEOPLE YOU IDOLIZED WHEN YOU WERE A KID.

Who's been your favorite *SNL* host to write for so far?

I feel like I shouldn't—I don't want to hurt people's feelings.

The chances that they'll be reading the *Columbia Spectator* are slim.

I don't know. James Franco goes to Columbia. That guy is super cool. I'm not just saying that because there's a chance that he's reading this.

What was it like to work with Tina Fey?

Really surreal. I grew up watching her, and it's just amazing to work with some of the people you idolized when you were a kid. The most surreal thing for me has been to work with Amy Poehler because when I was in high school, I was obsessed with the *Upright Citizens Brigade* show on Comedy Central. Writing jokes that she says on TV is such a mind-blowing experience for me. If I could tell my 14-year-old self that that was going to happen, I would go into cardiac arrest.

Your father and stepmother write for the *New York Times*, and your brother is a novelist. What are family dinners like?

I could totally see why from an outside perspective people would sort of group us all together. It makes total sense. But when I think about their jobs, they seem pretty different from mine, and I'm sure that's true of them.

When you were at Harvard, you were the president of the *Lampoon*. Do you think that experience set you on your current path?

Definitely. ... I feel really lucky that I got to go to Harvard because I really got a chance to just focus on writing jokes, which is a completely frivolous and ridiculous thing to do, but at Harvard I feel like you could get away with it. Nobody told me to do anything worthwhile. ●





Nothing to Wear?

the eye does halloween

If you're still at a loss for Halloween costume ideas, you have two options. Go as Daniel Radcliffe in *Equus*, if you have the body for it (our friend Brandon here does). Or take the advice of *The Eye's* associate editors, who have put together awesome, easily-assembled costumes in their respective areas of interest. (Fair warning, though: none are quite as revealing as Brandon's.)

*photos by Molly Crossin
and Tina Gao*



Lucy Tang, books editor, suggests:

James Joyce

You'll need: round glasses, an eye patch, a blazer, a bowler hat.

Optional bonus component: a riverrun, if you can find one.

Learned Foote, film editor, suggests:

The Joker as a nurse

You'll need: white face paint, lipstick, scrubs.

Optional bonus component: sociopathology.



Julia Halperin, art editor, suggests:

a Jackson Pollock painting

You'll need: a white T-shirt, a couple of tubes of paint, a complicitious friend.

Optional bonus component: a white wall attached to your back.

Raphael Pope-Sussman, humor editor, suggests:

Groucho Marx

You'll need: a suit, a cigar, a fake nose/glasses with mustache and eyebrows attached.

Optional bonus component: Harpo, Zeppo, Chico, Gummo.



Moira Lynch, style editor,
suggests:

Barbie

You'll need: a long blond wig, a Velcro-heavy wardrobe.

Optional bonus component: naturally-flexed feet.



Shane Ferro, food editor,
suggests:

the last John Jay dining hall tray

You'll need: a dark-blue sweater, a plate, silverware, glue.

Optional bonus component: a waffle complete with John Jay insignia.



Jennie Rose Halperin,
music editor, suggests:

Bob Dylan

You'll need: a lean frame, sunglasses, a cigarette, hair gel (for rumpling).

Optional bonus component: a girlfriend who has a brand-new leopard-skin pillbox hat.





Juiceboxxxx @ Music Hall of Williamsburg

Juiceboxxxx is a rapper from Milwaukee, Wisconsin who looks like an average college kid from the suburbs but spews fiery lyrics. Don't let his appearance fool you—he will scissor-kick all over the stage, climb onto speakers, and get in your face. The crowd didn't know what to make of the one-man party. The lyrics to "Center Stage" offer one suggestion: "You came to the club to really freak out / You came to the club to have a good night / You came to the club to go scream and shout / You came to the club to feel allllll right."

This Was the Week That Was

cmj rocks a photographer's socks off

TEXT AND PHOTOS BY DIANA WONG



Hearts Revolution @ Music Hall of Williamsburg

This boy/girl duo's aesthetic is summed up best in their dance anthem "C.Y.O.A.," an acronym for "Choose Your Own Adventure." Indeed, this band is not like other synthesizer-driven electroclash bands. Unlike Ladytron, Hearts Revolution isn't too cool to talk to you. Unlike Crystal Castles, they neither scream at nor try to scare you. As singer Lo bounced around, all smiles, with her hot pink face paint and rhinestone-studded microphone, it became clear that Hearts Revolution is making dance music fun again.



Team Robespierre @ Music Hall of Williamsburg

Having seen this band the past summer in Brooklyn, I knew that the performance would have an energetic audience and that I would have to stand my ground to get the photos I wanted. However, I didn't anticipate that Team Robespierre would play in the round and ask the crowd to surround the band. Initially standing in front of the guitarist, I had to make my way out of the crowd to ensure the safety of my camera equipment. I ended up standing on the stage to capture what became my favorite photograph from the music marathon.

Playing Politics

the best presidents of the silver screen

PHOTO COURTESY OF UNIVERSAL PICTURES

Not the President

I'll take this opportunity to write about the president who never was, and why she should have been president. I'm not talking about Hillary—I'm talking about Sandra Oh. When I first saw the trailer for *Blindness*, I witnessed Oh sitting solemnly at a podium, addressing "my fellow Americans." I felt comforted, even as the cinematic world she addressed faced an epidemic of blindness. Alas, the full movie reveals that Oh does not play the president, but instead, the Minister of Health. Instantly, my trust in the movie—and the nation—plummeted. Then I asked myself: Why do we place so much stock in the image of the President? Surely, in an epidemic, Oh could accomplish even more as the Minister of Health than as the commander-in-chief? Perhaps not. *The Eye* reflects on why the president is so important in the image-driven world of cinema. —*Learned Foote*

Dave

Dave, a 1993 film directed by Ivan Reitman, recounts the rather ridiculous tale of Dave Kovic (played by Kevin Kline), a presidential impersonator who assumes leadership of the Oval Office. The switch becomes necessary when the real president falls into a coma while—in a morbid prophecy of the Clinton era—cheating on his wife. Affable *Dave*,

the humdrum everyman, is secretly conscripted into office by the president's advisors, who fear the possibility of the vice president's (Ben Kingsley) assuming power, since he is "mentally unbalanced." Because of his identical appearance to the incapacitated president, Dave takes on the role of commander-in-chief without anyone noticing the switch. Of course, the presidential advisors and Washington's power structures don't win out, as the *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*-esque Kline shakes up the Washington establishment with his common sense and charm (cue the "awww").

Kline's presidential portrayal plays off of our nation's love for well-intentioned liars. Dave hoodwinks the entire nation, but his good works and inspiring approach bring the audience over to his side. He may be lying, but he still gets the job done. The film is a foreshadowing—albeit a clichéd and flimsily plotted one—of Bill Clinton's tenure. Clinton, despite his serial mendacity, left office with a 65 percent approval rating, the highest for any post-WWII president (assuming Bush does not garner over 30 more points of favor in the next

PICTURES OF THE PRESIDENT ARE VITALLY IMPORTANT IN THE IMAGE-DRIVEN WORLD OF CINEMA.



From the political stage to the silver screen, image is everything to perceptions of the American president.

few months). The leadership lesson of Dave—and a good one for the kids—is that anyone can be a good president, even a fraud. —*David Berke*

Frost/Nixon & Tricky Dick

Frank Langella's portrayal of Richard Nixon in the upcoming *Frost/Nixon* is already generating Oscar buzz, and for good reason—Langella racked up critical praise and everything from an Outer Critics Circle award to a Tony for his performance in the play from which the film is adapted. No matter how hard he growls about "ruining" David Frost, though, Langella will never be the definitive celluloid representation of Tricky Dick. That accolade belongs to Dan Hedaya's hilarious, spot-on impersonation of America's 37th president in *Dick*, a criminally underrated comedy from 1999.

Hedaya—who, coincidentally, also had a bit part in Oliver Stone's *Nixon*—plays the titular commander-in-chief as a conniving, squirrely goon, someone who's evil enough to threaten to feed his cocker spaniel to the Chinese if it doesn't stop yapping, and deluded enough to declare, "I've got a way with young people. They trust me." His remarks come back to haunt him when, in a wacky series of events, two ditzzy teenagers (Michelle Williams and Kirsten Dunst) bring down his administration by accidentally discovering the truth behind the Watergate scandal and telling the details to bickering *Washington Post* reporters Woodward and Bernstein (Will Ferrell and Bruce McCulloch). Silly? Sure. Contrived? Absolutely. The inherent ridiculousness and sub-*Forrest Gump*-ian believability of *Dick* are what make the movie so great, and Hedaya's pitch-perfect Nixon is what holds the film together. —*Hillary Busis*

Dr. Strangelove

When John McCain or Barack Obama takes office in January, there will be a lot to do, but not a lot of time in which to do it. This unfortunate conflict is especially relevant to the realm of foreign policy. Thankfully, if Obama or McCain simply watches Stanley Kubrick's dark comedy *Dr. Strangelove*, he will learn exactly what not to do as president when dealing with nuclear weapons. In the film, President Muffley (Peter Sellers) finds himself on the brink of total annihilation after an insane general launches planes carrying hydrogen bombs at the Soviet Union. First of all, he should not try to reason with the prime minister of the other country, especially if that prime minister is drunk. Second of all, he shouldn't try to employ insane mad scientists who have ideas that include a new society with a 10:1 female-to-male ratio. And most of all, he shouldn't allow any sort of a mineshaft gap.

But the central image of the president in *Dr. Strangelove*—a spineless coward—is a very pertinent one today. Muffley loses all the power of the presidential office, finding himself controlled by a series of men full of crazy ideas. Kubrick makes Muffley out to be possibly the worst president of all time—unable to commit to one decision or another. In 2009, when our new man takes office, he must demonstrate the ability to actually lead the nation, instead of simply sitting on the fence. After all, the last thing we need is a cowboy riding an A-Bomb down to its Soviet target. —*Peter Labuza* ●

All Tied Up

yarntopia is a local utopia for neighborhood knitters

TEXT AND PHOTO BY OPEYEMI OMOJOLA

"I live in Astoria," one young woman said, "But I work in Midtown, so I'm not crazy for coming here, I promise." Every Tuesday evening, a group of people, from as nearby as Columbia's campus and as far away as Brooklyn and Queens, sits around a table at Yarntopia and knits together. They share ideas, give advice, and bond over their shared artistic interest. Yarntopia is more than just a place to get supplies: It serves as a home for creative minds to be nurtured and encouraged.

Tucked into the southwest corner of 108th Street and Amsterdam Avenue, Yarntopia has become a much-needed creative resource for plenty of Columbia students and staff, as well as local Morningside Heights residents. Opened just two years ago in December 2006, Yarntopia provides not only a wide selection of yarns, but also notions, as well as knitting and crocheting lessons, all for a reasonable fee.

Many students may have the impression that needlework is an interest confined to their grandparents' living rooms. Yet Yarntopia is anything but antiquated. Now, more than ever, an increasing number of people are pushing knitting and crochet further into the art and design world, as exhibits such as last March's "Pricked" and 2007's "Radical Lace and Subversive Knitting" at the Museum of Arts & Design attract new audiences. As the issues of *Vogue Knitting* next to Yarntopia's cash register suggest, the ladies at the store clearly have a fashion-savvy perspective. "Plenty of designers ... Christian Lacroix, Sonia

Rykiel, Sandra Backlund, to name a few, have a major interest in knitwear," says Hannah Wallace, who recently began teaching lessons at the store. As the temperatures decrease, Columbia students especially understand the appeal of a good-looking knit sweater or cap—and where better to begin but Yarntopia?

From the outside, the store is bright and inviting, and four window mannequins model hand-knit creations. A cozy, warmly lit space, Yarntopia is crammed with yarns of incredible variation, from delicate, silky cashmere blends to thick, brightly colored hanks of hand-spun wool. A round table sits in the center of the room, covered with an array of swatches of all sizes and stitch types and projects in progress, with finished sweaters and scarves draped over the backs of the surrounding chairs. In the back of the store, a small staircase leads downward to the lesson space, an orange- and purple-painted room furnished with a couch and a long table.

Although the store's stock comes from all over the world, Dona Flam, GS '00, the store's owner and manager, has been a Morningside Heights resident since 1992. Flam has been a knitter for many years, and her interest carried through to her work as a psychiatric social worker. "I worked with quite a few mentally ill patients," Flam says, "and taught about 50 percent of my clients how to knit." Flam was, and is, a firm believer in "yarn therapy" as a stress reliever and creative outlet.

Also working as a designer at the time, Flam debated whether to continue her design business or get a Ph.D. in clinical psychology. But she ultimately realized that she could harness her interest in knitting and do something for the community she called home. "I think Morningside Heights is really underserved in terms of artistic endeavors,"

Flam says. "I've always loved knitting and hearing about what other people are doing, and I thought this would be a great way to maintain an interest."

Plenty of her customers agree. Since its opening, Yarntopia has been host to knitting and crochet lessons for all skill and interest levels, as well as the Tuesday Night Knitting Group, in which anyone who is interested is welcome to bring their projects and share and create with others. The members' shared creative interest has fostered a bond that is evident at every Tuesday meeting. As more people enter the store and sit down, the group orders Chinese food to be delivered. Over fried rice and current projects, the group members discuss everything from their inability to stick to one venture ("I haven't been monogamous with my knitting projects in years!" says a brunette piecing together a forest green sweater) to tales of previous living situations ("I once lived in a house that used a wood stove as central heating," says a blonde working on a hat).

"IT'S IMPORTANT FOR EVERY NEIGHBORHOOD TO HAVE INDEPENDENT STORES TO ADD TO THE COLOR AND FABRIC OF THE COMMUNITY."

All of the group members agree, however, that the sense of community is what makes the knitting group work so well. "I've been coming here for a year," says Kat Selvocki, a Seattle native, "and I like this group better than almost any other knitting group I've ever been in." Suzie Newman, a Morningside Heights resident, agrees: "Everyone is at differing levels, so we encourage each other to try new things, but there's never any pressure to compete."

Despite Yarntopia's close proximity to campus, many students are unaware of what the store has to offer. Quite a few Columbia students probably walk by the store daily, idly wondering what goes on inside. Yarntopia is just one of many stores in New York that offer unique, underutilized creative opportunities. Nestled on street corners all over the city as testaments to each neighborhood's individuality, stores like Yarntopia provide an excellent chance for students and residents to become involved in their communities by supporting local businesses. "I think it's important for every neighborhood to have independent stores to add to the color and fabric of the community," Flam said.

Although the scope of Yarntopia's trade is rather specific, the store is a key example of the importance of independent, local businesses. "I wanted to create a fun, inviting, friendly environment where people can share and talk about what they're doing," Flam says. Whether they serve an artistic purpose, like Yarntopia, a literary purpose, like the oft-visited Book Culture, or a more primal purpose, like Koronet Pizza, small institutions like these are absolutely necessary in shaping a neighborhood's identity and enriching the lives of those who live in it. ●



When the weather gets cold, neighborhood knitting store Yarntopia keeps its patrons warm—with both cozy sweaters and constructive support.

No Longer Part of That World

columbia addresses the decline in young theater-goers: part 1

BY TOMMY HILL

PHOTO BY LAUREN WEISS

Not long after I'd taken my seat and spent a few minutes leafing through my \$20 program for the hit Broadway musical *Wicked*, I realized that something felt a bit off about the theater. Could it be the sickly sweet show tunes I knew would be stuck in my head for months to come? The nauseatingly colorful costumes? The Munchkins? All of the above? No, I realized. It was the audience—or, rather, it was my presence there. With the exception of a few equally out-of-place preteens—obviously dragged there by their parents—I was the youngest one in the theater by far. The sea of gray heads in the audience seemed to exaggerate the already intense colors on the stage. Broadway, it was clear, has gone the way of bus tours, bingo halls, and early-bird specials—it's lost its coolness and entered the domain of the middle-aged.

It's a trend that's hit many of the major theatrical venues across the country: Over the years, as prices climb and young people find it harder and harder to afford tickets, youth attendance at theatrical performances has been in decline. The average age of theater-goers just keeps climbing. It's this trend that many of Columbia's and Barnard's theatrical groups and initiatives have taken as a rallying point.

When asked if the graying of the American theater is something she's noticed over the years, Caralyn Spector, Program Manager of the Arts Initiative at Columbia University, replies, "Big time. It's something many major cultural institutions

have been experiencing because of their heavy reliance on the subscription system and, of course, the expense of tickets ... These days, theater has become almost like an insider's club." Young people have been largely priced out of Broadway.

Enter the Columbia University Ticket and Information Center, offering dramatically discounted tickets to theatrical events across the city. "We want people to take a risk—to see something they wouldn't normally see," says Spector. "For 10 or 20 or 25 dollars, you have the opportunity to see a great show. The ticket center is a great way for us to introduce theater to students."

A step in the right direction it certainly is, but Spector doubts whether this initiative alone can turn back the clocks on the rising age of theater-going audiences. While the Ticket Center has had some clear successes—the hoards that so often flood the Lerner lobby to wait for tickets are a testament to the center's popularity—Spector feels it's simply not used enough. Apparently, the extortionate prices aren't the only thing keeping young people off Broadway. "There's definitely a disconnect between providing discounted tickets and actually getting people to go to the theater," notes Spector. "I bet by the end of their four years,

more than half of the senior class will never have used the Ticket Center."

A much deeper problem seems to lie at the source of this trend. "There's another component that's much harder to quantify—and qualify," she says, choosing her words slowly and carefully here, as if talking about a sick friend. "Maybe theater's not as cool as it used to be. Lots of people in the 18 to 35 range have this idea of theater as too hard to access, too expensive ... too Disney." Broadway theater's sheer expense means that it can no longer appeal to the young and the avant; it's shifted its appeal to the middle-aged and, alas, the tourists.

But Spector espouses a pragmatic approach to combating young people's negative views of Broadway. "There's a whole other layer of conversation that needs to happen ... the best advertisement is word of mouth. What we need is an opportunity for more discussion about theater."

The New York Theater course offered at Barnard seems to be sparking that kind of much-needed dialogue. The course takes students to plays and theatrical events around the city every week. There are no tests and no exams. Instead, the course serves as a vehicle for dialogue about theater: The students are asked to consider certain questions as they watch each drama. Then they present their reactions, on paper and through class-facilitated discussions. Jessica Brater, Theatre Administrator at the Barnard Theatre Department, expresses the extraordinary popularity of the course, saying, "This semester, we had more than twice as many students petition for the course as we had room for. We always have to turn people away." And not only theater majors are taking the course. "It appeals to non-theater majors as well," she says with satisfaction.

Further, Brater denies the idea that the rising age of theater-going audiences is symptomatic of a declining interest in theater in general. "Each year, we see more and more people at auditions," she points out. Further, while it's becoming virtually impossible for young people to frequent major venues because of these rising prices, smaller off-Broadway theaters around the city seem to be experiencing a Renaissance. "The audiences are mostly young people at places like PS 122, Chocolate Factory in Queens, or Galapagos in Brooklyn," Brater elaborates.

So maybe theater as a whole isn't in such dire straits after all. But while young New Yorkers are invested in the theater, marketing tactics and ticket prices have largely weeded the young out of Broadway's audiences. It's a tragedy that prices and perceptions have carved such a disconnect between the Great White Way—which has long been one of the most iconic symbols of New York's vibrancy and creativity—and the young people who are so often the source of our city's legendary vitality. ●

"LOTS OF PEOPLE IN THE 18 TO 35 RANGE HAVE THIS IDEA OF THEATER AS TOO HARD TO ACCESS, TOO EXPENSIVE ... TOO DISNEY."



Broadway audiences are aging overall, as exorbitant ticket prices force strapped-for-cash students out of theaters.

Dark Beauty

black lipstick that's actually wearable

BY ALEX OWENS

Halloween came early this year in Paris. Back in February, an army of size-zero ghouls with black lips marched down Yves Saint Laurent's runway. Shocking and severe, it seemed natural to label the makeup as typical catwalk theatrics and not as a budding trend.

But now that the real season of witches and wizards is upon us, the fad of black lip gloss and lipstick is selling just as fast as it's developing. YSL has, of course, cashed in on their new look. Retailing for \$28, Pur Black lip gloss is so dark, it has an almost vinyl quality when applied heavily. Nevertheless, it has been in demand across the globe.

While this dominatrix-esque look has its

fan club and is undeniably high-fashion—it has already been featured in magazines such as *Vogue*—Pur Black has spawned gentler options for the more faint of heart. For example, MAC's Cult of Cherry collection, which offers a wide range of reds with black undertones, including the popular mattene in Bing, flew off the shelves. Shu Uemura and Kevyn Aucoin also offer their own versions,

Perhaps the most anticipated lip gloss is Lancôme's Color Fever in Piha Black, which will be released in early November for \$48. Already subject to a mile-long waiting list, Piha Black offers a unique take on the trend. Aaron de Mey, Lancôme's artistic director, cites the shine of black rocks on Piha Beach in his native New Zealand as inspiration. The gloss will be sold as a set with Piha Red lipstick, and can be worn alone for a dark sheen or layered over the matte lipstick for an effect reminiscent of a bruised cherry. De Mey

even suggests wearing the gloss around the eyes for a smoky look.

Fortunately for the college student with a college student's budget, fashion is a fast-moving industry. This trend has already trickled down to a less expensive market. NYX recently created its Mega Shine Gloss in black for \$5, while Alcone, a professional-quality beauty store, sells Ben Nye black lipstick for \$7.50. But if you're looking for the maximum number of options, go to the ever-popular Manic Panic. Goths have been buying their matte, metallic, and glitter black lip products here for \$10.80 long before it became chic. Or, if all else fails, try a do-it-yourself trick: Line the lips with black eyeliner, fill them in and then blend with your thumb.

No matter how high-end your makeup, you will be faced with the problem of how to pull off such a pronounced look without looking like every day is Halloween. YSL solved this problem by pairing their black lips with structured black and charcoal power clothes. If you choose the same palette, wear a fierce, well-tailored outfit, or you might get mistaken for a Hot Topic Goth. Another option is to experiment with a brightly colored minimalist look for a fun yet fashion-forward outfit.

Who would have guessed that the next fresh look would look so dead? ●

The Gothic Lolita Style

from the harajuku district to the runways

BY HANAKO MAEDA

The Gothic Lolita trend is in full swing this fall, from Alexander McQueen's tiered skirts which are fit for a princess to Christian Lacroix's asymmetrical silhouettes adorned with ruffles and jewels. These styles have extravagant and romantic shapes, but come in shades of black that cast a dark undertone on the sweet silhouettes. This amalgam of darkness and youthful girlishness is uncharacteristic of the mainstream Gothic subculture. The contemporary Goth style is based on the Victorian cult of mourning, which explains the all-black, ankle-length dresses, complete with veils to cover typically pale skin.

The widely observed fall trend of sweet and bitter Gothic style seems to draw its inspiration from the Japanese street fashion known as Gothic Lolita, or Goth-Loli for short. Gothic Lolita is a combination of Gothic and Lolita styles, drawing much of its inspiration from Rococo and Victorian-style designs that often imitate the look of Victorian porcelain dolls.

Like most Japanese street fashion, this style originated in the Harajuku district in Tokyo. Harajuku serves as an arena for budding young designers to explore new styles and experiment with pre-existing fashion. The kawaii (Japanese for cute) aesthetic doesn't quite fit with the morbidity of most Gothic fashion, but the sweet dash of Lolita made the Goth-Loli style popular.

The Gothic Lolita phenomenon is not confined to Japan. Through movies and magazines that are exported from Japan, the Gothic Lolita culture has gained international recognition. *Kamikaze Girls* is a popular contemporary Japanese movie that features the Goth-Loli look. The protagonist of the movie, Momoko Ryugasaki (Kyoko Fukada), is a Gothic Lolita girl who has dedicated her life to the Gothic Lolita culture. Through Momoko's struggle to become a designer for her favorite brand, Baby, the Stars Shine Bright, the viewer sees a seemingly ephemeral trend become a way of life.

The runway isn't the only place where you can witness this trend. The Museum at the Fashion Institute of Technology at 7th Avenue and 27th Street is having an exhibition on Gothic style through February 21, 2009. ///



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