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eye



THE FUTURE OF NYC BIKING

by Embry Owen



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THE FUTURE OF NYC BIKING

Cycles of urban renewal, pg. 07

by Embry Owen
cover photo and back-cover photo by Embry Owen

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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

“No one in Times Square knows we’re coming.”

Professor Kenneth Jackson should have known that most of us hadn’t been on a bike in years, and statements like this do nothing but proliferate Clammy Palm Syndrome.

We were in Central Park. We’d just finished the first leg of his all-night bike ride for the class he teaches every other year, History of the City of New York. Jackson talked for a few minutes about the history of the park before priming us on the most anticipated part of the trip, at least for me: riding through Times Square, in the middle of the night, in the middle of the street, stopping traffic.

My ass already kind of throbbed. I don’t own a bike, so I borrowed my boyfriend’s, which was designed for different body parts. I hadn’t ridden a bike long-distance for 10 years, when I rode across California in 5th grade (everyone at my elementary school did it). The experience was a scarring one, needless to say. A preliminary lap around his block before the ride proved that, indeed, it was just like riding a bike.

So here I was at the south end of Central Park, the shitstorm that is Times Square looming ahead. Somehow, I’d ridden to the front of the pack, so I was pretty excited by my athletic ability, even though I was wearing jorts and sweating profusely.

And then, what the hell, we did it.

Hundreds of us plowed through that famous stretch of lights and stench, with no police escort to be seen. The cabs hated us, the tourists loved us. (Or at least it seemed, since they were taking pictures, but I guess that doesn’t say much.)

It’s easy to speak in hyperbole about a moment like that. I hooted and hollered like never before: like a frat boy in heat. I even sang the fight song along with my classmates. I’d never felt prouder to go to Columbia, and I’d never felt prouder to live in this city. I felt like I knew the city in a different way—just like the difference between seeing a block from a cab and experiencing it by foot.

Embry Owen is someone who has known the city this way for a while. In fact, I borrowed her helmet for the all-night bike ride. Her journey this week through some of the city’s most important bike routes shows that I’m not the only one newly excited about biking in the New York. It’s a cultural revolution.

I swore, after riding through Times Square, to bike around the city more—a thought that was nearly wiped clean by total bodily exhaustion at the end of the night. But it’s still there, and gains momentum every time I see a happy cyclist in Riverside Park.

Amanda Cormier
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THE RIGHT CHOICE MODERN LOVE

BY KAITLIN PHILLIPS

You are sexually/intellectually/fer-
vently attracted to him/her. You have
made eye contact/secretly read their
posts on CourseWorks. Once, you talked
about *Antichrist/Melancholia*, and last
Thursday at 3 a.m. you even awkwardly
exchanged numbers. But Thanksgiv-

ing/Chrismukkah is fast approaching.
Changing your relationship status before
you get home is crucial. You are ready
to make a move, but you realize there is
a fine line between creepy and creative.
Don't worry: You have a lot of technology
at your disposal.

THE FACE BOOK POKE

After fifth grade, you lose the opportunity to poke people you think are
cute, but thanks to Zuckie, it is still theoretically feasible despite its, uh, to-
tal social stigma. Which is exactly why you should use it. It isn't like you're
actually trying to physically connect with someone over the internet. You
are making a joke. Like, "Haha, the Facebook poke, who does this?!" Not
only are you showing that you care, you're making the subtle suggestion
that you are cool enough to have internalized the algorithm of Facebook
and flirted with it.

THE FUNNY HAHA EMAIL EXCHANGE

Sending a YouTube video is a good idea. I'm not saying this isn't risky,
because it is. So pay attention: in the beginning of any relationship, it isn't
that cool to forward cat videos—lest you unwittingly give the impression
that you are a crazy-cat-lady-soon-to-be-harridan type. I don't mean
this as a gendered critique, just like, don't assume people's pet proclivi-
ties. Ever.

THE CASUAL GCHAT

Just. Act. Natural. And by that, I mean act like you are on Valium. Re-
member, they know when you stop typing: So think slowly, type slowly.
No matter what, don't pull a Gatsby: Waiting all night for the green light
is freakishly unhealthy, and you will no doubt end up floating dead in a
swimming pool.

THE PHONE CALL

Oh I know, people who don't know each other don't talk on the phone.
But they should. How freaked out, but secretly delighted, would you be if
someone actually had the balls to talk to you before you were wasted and
embarrassing yourself at 1020's trivia night?

TIMELINE IN THE WAKE OF MIDTERMS

BY P.J. SAUERTEIG

*With all the newfound free time and remnants from two weeks
of caffeine injections still pumping through their veins, how are
Columbia students spending their nights? Productively, no doubt.
Eyesites imagines a likely timeline—don't pretend that it doesn't
sound familiar.*

12:24 a.m.

Facebook-stalk your grad-student
Music Hum professor. Hate yourself
for not knowing any of the bands
found in his "music" info section.

12:56 a.m.

Eat Greek yogurt in
the fetal position.

2:50 a.m.

Organize your deck
shoes by color.

1:14 a.m.

Blast Nick-
elback's
discography
until your
self-esteem
has risen sig-
nificantly.

1:12 a.m.

Look over recent
French grammar
quiz grades. Re-
assess major in
the fetal position.

3:34 a.m.

Realize you have
to finish Plato
for your 2:00
p.m. class. Im-
mediately look
on iTunes for an
audiobook.

3:43 a.m.

Rediscover all those GarageBand
masterpieces you made in high school.
After a brief listen, start designing your
EP cover on loose-leaf paper.

3:43 a.m.

Realize that you have to pick up a package at
Lerner Mail tomorrow. End up back in the fetal
position, sobbing self to sleep.

FALL BREAK EDITION EDITORS' PICKS



Julien Martin Hawthorne
Features Associate

I will begin eating large stores of
nuts and berries so I am able to
hibernate for the long winter.



Anna Marcum
Features Associate

I'm going home to Mis-
sissippi, where it is still 70
and sunny. And yes, I will
continue to be in denial that
winter is eminently ap-
proaching. What is that white
stuff on the ground again?



Anneliese Cooper
Features Associate

I'm retreating, hat in hand, from an
avalanche of midterms to the frosty
shores of Boston, there to recuper-
ate with home cooking, my trusty
featherbed, and copious amounts of
The A-List: Dallas.



Anthony Clay
Visuals Editor

I am literally snug-
gling up with myself,
drinking Starbucks hot
chocolate and watch-
ing *A Charlie Brown*
Christmas...100 times.



Liana Gergely
Interview Associate

I'm going to Penn with my best friends for their
homecoming, as a way to make up for our
dismal one.

COMPILED BY MARGARET BOYKIN
ILLUSTRATION BY CINDY PAN

Sex, Violence, and the Silver Screen

is sexual brutality in film a sign of dark times?

BY MOLLY SPEACHT

ILLUSTRATION BY THUTO DURKAC SOMO

In the 2009 cinematic adaptation of Stieg Larsson's novel *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*, hacker heroine Lisbeth Salander is handcuffed to a bed, gagged, and savagely raped by her legal guardian. The scene is hard to watch, and it is not the only sexually violent scene in the movie. I enjoyed this film, yet walking out of theater, I couldn't help but feel guilty for finding pleasure in a movie that featured such horrible violence. By paying for my ticket, was I encouraging sexual brutality?

Graphic rape, sexual humiliation, and mutilation are not just fodder for NC-17-rated art films and pornography anymore. *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* (the original Swedish title translates to *Men Who Hate Women*) grossed more than \$10 million in only 202 theaters in the U.S., and has already been remade into an English-language film by David Fincher, set to release Dec. 2011. Big Hollywood names (Dakota Fanning in *Hound-dog*, Kate Bosworth and Alexander Skarsgård in the recent remake of *Straw Dogs*) are starring in films portraying sexual violence, and even more notably, graphic films are featured at renowned film festivals (like Lars von Trier's *Antichrist* at the 2010 Cannes Film Festival). Sexual violence has become mainstream in the last few years—it has also pervaded TV programming. With a weekly viewership of 15.2 million, *Law & Order: Special Victims Unit* is one of the most popular shows on television. Columbia professor and media expert David Eisenbach believes that there is a perverse attraction in watching violence, particularly sexual violence, on screen.

"Especially with shows like *SVU*, [watching sexual violence] gives us the vicarious experience of the victim and the bad guy, but it ties it up at the end as the case is solved," Eisenbach, an expert on media and sexual politics, says. "The bad guy gets punished and it gets us off the hook. There is an attraction for a lot of people. It pushes the boundaries of acceptability."

An interesting subset of the sexually violent film is called "the rape revenge film"—films where the victimized get brutal vengeance on their victimizers. In *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*, Lisbeth returns to her victimizer's house, strips him naked, and sodomizes him. This is a horrific scene, but perhaps also a justifiable and almost therapeutic one. In fact, the Rape, Abuse, and Incest National Network responded positively to the film and encouraged screenings. This is certainly not the first film where the victim inflicts brutal revenge on her rapist, but it is notable for Lisbeth's own use of sexual violence. Is this contradiction a sign of something dangerous, perhaps sending out a message that sexual violence should be avenged with more sexual violence? According to Columbia

film professor Richard Peña, viewers don't all react the same way to these images, and it's therefore dangerous to make these types of generalizations.

"I think the contradiction is precisely the point, which is why I think it is so hard to generalize—or worse—legislate against scenes of violence or rape," Peña explains. "Do some people enjoy these scenes? Probably. Are some people turned off by violence because of the brutality of those scenes? Probably. There is no rule nor any real way of determining what it should be."

On the other hand, other sexually violent films seem to have a much less feminist slant. The practice of eroticizing rape can be seen in films from David Lynch's *Blue Velvet* to Ang Lee's *Lust, Caution*. The 1971 film *Straw Dogs*, which inspired a recent remake, takes that idea one step further—Susan George's character is taken forcibly, but then seems to enjoy the rape. Intermingling rape with arousal seems like a dangerous representation.

Eisenbach questions if filmic representations really influence emulation. "There are plenty of studies that go either way on whether violent films—or in this case, sexually violent films—actually impact behavior," says Eisenbach. "I've seen studies that say it does and studies that say it doesn't."

What interests Eisenbach more, however, is what the replacement of sex with rape says about the pulse of the culture. "I think there is a great deal of anger out there, and I think that plays into sadomasochism in our culture right now," Eisenbach states. "I think the economy has something to do with that."

With sexual brutality pervading film and television, the real question is whether filmmakers and distributors are filling or creating this disturbing demand. A desire to watch graphic scenes is perhaps something that has always been part of the public consciousness, as there is no concrete proof that watching violence, sexual or non-sexual, breeds violence.

"Japan has some of the most horrifically violent



"I THINK THERE IS A GREAT DEAL OF ANGER OUT THERE, AND I THINK THAT PLAYS INTO SADOMASOCHISM IN OUR CULTURE RIGHT NOW."

popular culture imaginable—some Hollywood films, such as *Basic Instinct*, actually prepare a "Japanese cut" considered too violent for American audiences. Yet Japan is one of the most peaceful countries in the world," Peña says. "So perhaps all the violent imagery and stories serve as some kind of pressure valve—seeing so much in the media lessens the desire to see —(and do) it— for real."

Perhaps, film reflects, rather than creates, the deepest and darkest desires of humankind.

"The human psyche is a dark space," explains Eisenbach. "Directors and writers satisfy these desires, and now can do it in ways that were unimaginable 20 years ago." ●

Beyond Conflict

creating an israeli community through film

BY LIANA GERGELY

PHOTO COURTESY OF ISAAC ZABLOCKI

For the past three years, at least one Academy Award nominee for Best Foreign Language Film has been Israeli. The number of Israeli filmmakers has expanded significantly in the past seven years, as has the number of distributors of these films. Isaac Zablocki, the executive director and co-founder of the Other Israel Film Festival, which is being held on Nov. 10-17, is an alumnus of the Film Division at the Columbia University School of Arts. He is bringing the Israeli film presence to the United States, hoping to alter the way we perceive life in the Middle East. Zablocki talked to The Eye about rising above politics, the responsibility of filmmakers, and the human drama.

What has been your goal in creating the Other Israel Film Festival?

We started it about six years ago, and the idea was to show films from Israel. I mean, Israel right now has a blossoming film industry; the industry has grown tremendously in the past seven years. We wanted films that focus on minority and Arab populations. And we wanted to focus outside of what you normally see on the news. On the news, we see a lot of terror, bombings, and religious issues. We see these minorities with such a specific lens, and we're trying to express the humanity of the situation instead. We want to show the day-to-day lives of Arabs in Israeli societies and other minorities and wanted New Yorkers to see the side they rarely see.

"THESE FILMMAKERS ARE REALLY PAVING THE WAY WHERE THE POLITICIANS ARE DEFINITELY FAILING."

Why is the Israeli film industry blossoming now?

It's matured and come into its own, and the last 10 years, the laws of Israel have changed, giving more support to filmmaking in Israel. There are more funds and more creative minds to use that money to create meaningful films.

How do you think that this festival, the films, and the speakers contribute to an understanding of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict through the use of art?

We try to stay away from politics. You can have the endless political conversations, but this is designed to look beyond the politics. We're looking at the actual people. Through these stories that we're showing, we can see this day-to-day life that we don't see in the news. We're all under the impression that it's just bombings and arguments and political

controversies, but it's just people doing their thing. These films follow the human drama, and the filmmakers are trying to rise above the conflict and look at the people behind it.

What have you noticed in terms of their humanity? Who are these people you're looking at?

There are a lot of young voices. A surprisingly strong younger side. One of the films, *77 Steps*, follows the filmmaker, who is a Palestinian living in Tel Aviv and dating a Jewish man. This film, like many of the others, shows the difficulties and the triumphs in something like that.

Although you try to stay away from politics, what role do you think art has in reshaping the way we see the relationships between these people?

I think that is the answer to it all. I believe art is a great part of what creates culture, and I believe that a cultural change is one of the first things that needs to change in this region. These filmmakers are really paving the way where the politicians are definitely failing. They are creating a new Israeli-Palestinian culture that is ultimately going to change things within Israeli society.

What cultural changes can you envision?

A better understanding of one another's lives. Politicians are good at putting up the boundaries between the Israelis and the Palestinians. The festival

includes perspectives from the outside, the peripheries of Israeli society ... things that are outside of the mainstream. There is a view that is not as defined as the classic understanding of Israel.

How does your role as film director of The Jewish Community Center in Manhattan relate to your ideas about transforming this viewpoint?

The goal of the JCC is to create a community for film. We want to create an opportunity that you can't have at home—the conversations and interactions you can have about the film. The discussion we are having together—directors, producers, guest speakers. People want and need to have conversations about these films.

In terms of bringing those conversations to New York, and, hopefully, the rest of the United States, how do you suggest the U.S. changes its views about Israel or other aspects of international relations?

I think America has a lot to change. We just need to open our minds. One of the reasons Israeli films are more successful in Europe than they are in the U.S. is because Americans fear foreign films. We do not have as much comfort with subtitles. The movie experience for us is usually not one where we have to think and read but instead one where we sit back and enjoy our summer blockbuster. But films can be a lot more powerful than that.

Why should students from Columbia attend the Other Israel Film Festival?

Beyond the wonderful films and interactive discussions, I think there are great ways for both pro-Israel and pro-Palestinian students to see things a little bit differently. I don't know who this festival would be better for ... the pro-Israeli side or the pro-Palestinian, because this festival truly goes beyond those one-sided dimensions and labels. ●





Food from Down Under

aussie and kiwi cuisines invade the city

BY PARUL GULIANI

ILLUSTRATION BY CINDY PAN

Most New Yorkers know little more about Australian and New Zealand culture than what they've gleaned from *The Crocodile Hunter* and *Flight of the Concorde*. But anyone who's visited the Tuck Shop, Public, or any of the other Australian or New Zealand restaurants that have cropped up in NYC in recent years knows that there's a lot more to the culture than kangaroos and enviable accents. And those who haven't yet ventured to any Aussie/Kiwi restaurants don't have to wait long, for cuisine from down under is starting to carve a nook for itself among the Chinese, Indian, and Middle Eastern restaurants that dominate Manhattan's immigrant food scene.

According to Tuck Shop's owner Niall Grant, the number of Australian and New Zealand restaurants in the area has more than tripled in the last six years. Grant and co-owner Lincoln Davies opened the Tuck Shop six years ago when they noticed "a gap in the market." "You just couldn't get a decent Australian meat pie in New York City," Grant says.

The meat pie—various kinds of meat enclosed in a pastry crust—according to Grant, is standard fast-food fare in Australia, comparable to the American hot dog. A 2006 New York Magazine article described the pies as, "Drinking food at its primitive best, meant to be doused with ketchup and eaten out of hand from a paper bag like a Bowery bum."

The Tuck Shop, which has expanded to three locations—Chelsea Market, 1st Street, and St. Mark's Place—carries salads, sausage, and veggie rolls in addition to its staple meat pies. Meat pie offerings range widely, from Guinness Steak or lamb to a Thai chicken pie.

But the Tuck Shop is only one among several Australian/New Zealand restaurants in the area—Eight Mile Creek, Nelson Blue, Ruby's Café, and The Australian NYC, to name a few. While Grant attributes this cuisine's popularity to the approachability of Australian culture, local chef Brad Farmerie offers a different perspective. "It's the purity of the flavors. They're so clean and fresh," Farmerie says. "Venison is lean and healthy, good for you, but it still has rich and robust flavor."

Farmerie is the award-winning chef of the Michelin Star-winning restaurant Public. His cooking style is inventive and globally-influenced. It is the ingredients and products he uses that are Australian—not so much the cooking methods themselves.

MEAT PIE OFFERINGS RANGE WIDELY, FROM GUINNESS STEAK OR LAMB TO A THAI CHICKEN PIE.

Public's most popular dish is New Zealand venison, but the offerings, according to Farmerie, are "all over the map." "We have a scallop dish," he says, "We play around with Asian and Middle Eastern flavors. We have a lot of vegan and vegetarian dishes."

Farmerie says he'd never cooked in New York before he opened Public in 2002. He grew up in Pittsburgh and studied mechanical engineering at Penn State, cooking on the side to pay for college. He soon realized that he was enjoying his side job more than his schoolwork, and he took a year off to travel England and France and pursue cooking. What was supposed to be six months in London

turned into eight years. There, he worked under a number of chefs, including the famous New Zealand-born Peter Gordon, whose "unique, inventive" style Farmerie adopted into his own cooking. When Public first opened, Australian and New Zealand restaurants were "few and far between."

"If you look at England, they've had huge waves of immigration from Australia and New Zealand, and I think that's why they're so affected by that cuisine and those ingredients," Farmerie says. "It's second nature for them to use these ingredients, because such a huge percentage of their population is from there. We just don't have that here." However, Farmerie thinks Aussie and Kiwi ingredients are gaining popularity in the U.S., especially in cities like New York, Chicago, and L.A. New York, in particular, is receptive to the new flavors. "You have so many who have traveled and are interested in something new," he says. He sees the number of New Zealand and Australian restaurants cropping up around the city as a permanent fixture of New York dining, rather than a temporary trend.

"I remember when *The Lord of the Rings* came out, there was a lot of attention on New Zealand, because that's where the film was shot, and everyone was saying that was the peak of popularity for New Zealand in America," Farmerie says. But, he points out that the popularity of New Zealand/Australian cuisine and culture has continued to grow—especially in New York.

Why, though? According to Farmerie, the answer is simple. Aussies and Kiwis are a growing population in New York. They want to represent their culture, as it is something that most Americans haven't seen before. "There's already a lot of Aussies and Kiwis here," Farmerie says. "So it's natural that some of them would be chefs and would want to offer this point of difference to New York diners." ●



THE FUTURE OF NYC BIKING

cycles of urban renewal

by Embry Owen
 photos by Embry Owen
 graphics by Cathi Choi and Cindy Pan

Kenneth Jackson recalls his first class bike trips in the 1970s with a certain fondness. “You and I and a dozen other people would go out on bikes and we’d ride around Manhattan. And we’d say, ‘This looks interesting! Let’s go down here!’” These were as much exploratory missions as they were teaching moments.

In recent years, things have changed. His now-famous midnight bike ride is attended by more than 200 students, has been covered by the Wall Street Journal, requires a police permit, and is accompanied by an ambulance. “It’s not spontaneous anymore. ... It’s gotten bigger, it’s less fun, it’s more bureaucratic. I have to know which streets are one way, where there’s a bathroom, where people can get a hamburger.” Suddenly, Jackson’s bike ride is one of the hottest Thursday nights of the semester.

In much the same way, biking in New York City has exploded over the past ten years. More than 200,000 people now bike on a daily basis. Furthermore, almost 10,000 people commute by bike from Brooklyn to Manhattan over the Williamsburg, Manhattan, and Brooklyn bridges on any given day. Down at City Hall, Mayor Bloomberg and Transportation Commissioner Janette Sadik-Khan are watching, and attempting to accommodate the growing two-wheeled masses.

And in Morningside Heights, Columbia administrators and students increasingly point to biking as a choice mode of transportation. As Jackson notes, “There’s almost no downside [to] a bike.” And yet, as New York City is seeing, “bicycling requires change.”

Central Park: “A serviceable machine”

By now, I know the six-mile outer loop of Central Park by heart. I mentally prepare myself to climb the Three Sisters, a trio of steep hills in the north part of the park, before even leaving my building. Slow and steady wins the race, I’ve learned. My right hand shifts my gears automatically now. My first inhales after entering the park at 110th and Frederick Douglass are familiar, and I am comforted by the silence, interrupted only by the chatter of tourists and the whine of road bikes speeding past. The initial wafts of horse shit usually hit around 72nd Street. I weave in and out of the pedicabs, with their dinging bells and unpredictable paths. After navigating the tourist chaos that is south Central Park, I am rewarded with the sweeping reservoir views of the East 80s and 90s, before flying down the hills of the Harlem Meers. This was my first bike ride in New York, in spring 2010, and it remains my favorite.

In fact, this is where some of the first bike rides in Manhattan took place. The bicycle

exploded across America in the late 19th century, especially in New York. The city’s parks department was integral to its success. By 1885, Brooklyn park officials developed rules for cyclists, primarily applicable in Prospect Park, and noted that “this machine ... would be found very serviceable” for traveling “upon the park and parkways.” “Wheelmen” formed clubs across the city and Long Island, and were required to obtain badges to ride in parks.

In 1894, the country’s first bike path was completed on Ocean Parkway. The path’s speed limit was 12 miles per hour, a pace most modern-day Central Park racers would scoff at. Shortly thereafter, additional bike paths along the waterfronts of Brooklyn, Manhattan, and the Bronx were constructed. In 1936, under Parks Commissioner Robert Moses, the west drive of Central Park was finally opened to cyclists in order to establish a space for them outside of streets and park paths, which were deemed “dangerous.” Moses was integral in championing additional bike paths in parks across the city.

Interest in cycling as a recreational activity and competitive sport ebbed and flowed, then picked up speed again in the 1960 as the city began to close avenues and park drives to cars at certain hours to accommodate cyclists. Street bike lanes emerged in 1978 in Manhattan,



connecting Central Park South to downtown. In the 1990s, the city government decided to recuperate the once-industrial western shore of Manhattan and develop a bike greenway. Today the Hudson River Greenway stretches from Dyckman Street in Inwood to Battery Park, and is the most heavily used bikeway in the United States.

For most of the bicycle's history, it has served as a purely recreational tool for New Yorkers. It's only with the development of bike lanes and greenways, especially on inter-borough bridges, that cycling has become a practical means of transportation.

Williamsburg Bridge: "There's strength in numbers"

Nearly every weekday, Laralyn Mowers commutes from Crown Heights to Manhattan over the Williamsburg and Manhattan bridges. Mowers, who began commuting by bike in April, received her masters in human rights from Columbia's Graduate School of Arts and Sciences in the spring, and is a former employee of ModSquad Cycles at 114th and Frederick Douglass. "I can get anywhere in New York on my bike faster than on the subway. I have control over my life when I take my bike," she explains. Even though she suffered three accidents this summer, she still believes commuting by bike is the best option in New York City.

Mowers is joined by more than 17,000 New Yorkers who cycle to work on an average weekday, many of whom come from Brooklyn to Manhattan via the bridges. Commuter cycling in New York City grew by 13 percent between 2009 and 2010. More than four times as many people commuted by bike in 2010 than in 1986. Every Manhattan avenue except 11th and 12th avenues now carries more than 1,000 cyclists a day.

Why are so many people commuting by bike? George Beane, Upper West Side resident, bike commuter and member of the Columbus Avenue Business Improvement District, says it's simple: bikes are the "fastest, cheapest, and most fun way to get around." In many cases it's easier to get around New York on bike, especially within Brooklyn, and between the east and west sides of Manhattan. New York's population is rapidly growing in places like Hell's Kitchen, Greenpoint, and Bushwick, where subway service is inconvenient and bus service is painfully slow.

Biking, by comparison, is fast. Each year, Transportation Alternatives, a bike activism organization, sponsors a morning commute race in which three

people travel from their homes in Fort Greene to their offices in Union Square. A cyclist, a taxi passenger, and a subway passenger speed to work, coping with traffic and train delays along the way. For the past eight years, the cyclist has won.

The Department of Transportation, under Bloomberg and Sadik-Khan, is encouraging New Yorkers to bike to work, primarily by constructing new bike lanes, increasing bike parking inside and outside of office buildings, and developing a new city-wide bike share, which will launch next year. As Brent Tongco of Bike New York, a bicycle education and advocacy group, notes, "The DOT has done a tremendous job in building bicycle connectivity. Ten years ago I wouldn't be able to find a bike lane for the life of me. Now they're almost everywhere."

"WHAT ARE CYCLISTS? ARE THEY VEHICLES LIKE A CAR, OR PEOPLE LIKE A PERSON?"

Both Beane and Tongco add that rising concerns about health, efficiency, and cost motivate people to bike, too. For the price of a monthly MetroCard, you can buy a decent used bike to commute. Though Beane has been biking in the city for 45 years, he has noticed that the recent surge in cyclists is among "all ages and all incomes." Tongco cites rising environmental awareness as motivation for many people to bike, even though New Yorkers' carbon footprints are below the national average.

Ultimately, however, the commuter biking movement is building on itself. Beane notes that "people are following the lead of other cyclists. What works for some gets picked up by others." Seeing other people biking safely, and talking about how much they enjoy it, empowers new cyclists. This cyclical effect makes biking safer for everyone—and safety is paramount. "There's the strength in numbers idea. You won't have more bicyclists without infrastructure improvements, and you won't have those without more bicyclists. Janette Sadik-Khan is a visionary and she knows this is cyclical, and she wants to take the lead... so that the people come out of the woodwork

and start biking," Tongco says.

There are plenty of cyclists who have climbed out of the woodwork and are riding on the Williamsburg Bridge when I journey across it on a recent Sunday afternoon. I enter the bridge from the Manhattan side, exiting the trafficked chaos of Delancey Street. The climb up is always steeper than I remember. At first I'm speeding past the pedestrians in our semi-shared lane, then they're passing me and I've lost my breath. Cyclists coming from the Brooklyn side fly by me on their sleek road bikes and European-style cruisers. As I leave Manhattan behind, the sound of traffic below me on the bridge dissipates, and the J train rumbles by. When I look up, I am surrounded by sweeping views of Brooklyn, lower Manhattan, and the East River. This, I remember, is why I started biking in New York—to feel connected to the city itself, to experience it as I move through it. Within minutes I reach the top and descend into the industrial, bike-laned quiet of south Williamsburg.

The DOT's all-stops-out effort to increase biking in New York is not to be underestimated. As part of PlaNYC, the city's sustainability initiative, the DOT constructed 200 bike-lane miles between 2006 and 2009. In the same period, it installed 3100 on-street bike racks. Commuter cycling grew 45 percent. By 2030, the city will have 1800 bike-lane miles. The DOT has also led innovation in cycling infrastructure. Not all bike lanes are created alike. Some are separate white lanes painted on the road, others are protected bike paths that utilize a lane of parked cars to separate vehicle and bike traffic. Many bike lanes are painted green to increase motorist and pedestrian awareness.

Bike parking, a seemingly small issue, has been another force for innovation within DOT bike policy. Under the Bicycle Access to Office Buildings law, passed in 2009, office building owners are required to accommodate cyclists who bike to work, if they so request. The DOT has grown the network of outdoor bike racks and developed a sheltered bike parking structure.

A lack of residential bike storage prohibits many people from buying and commuting by bike. For this and other reasons, the DOT has partnered with Alta Bicycle Share, a private company, to develop a city-wide bike share, which will launch next summer. For an annual fee of less than \$100, city residents will have access to 10,000 bikes at 600 stations across Manhattan and Brooklyn, and potentially other boroughs. Modeled after similar programs found across the U.S. and Europe, the NYC Bike Share will allow people who either don't have the physical space or desire to own a bike to move throughout the city on two wheels. It will also allow locals and tourists to rent sporadically, for recreational purposes. Once again, the DOT and Commissioner Sadik-Khan are driving the increase in cycling.

Columbus Avenue: Towards "complete streets"

Yet the uptick in ridership has not been met with city-wide acclaim.

"What are cyclists?" asks Jackson. "Are they vehicles like a car, or people like a person? They can't fight with cars, but it's not fair for them to fight with people either." This dichotomy is at the heart of many New Yorkers' discontent with the growth of bicycling. Deliverymen on tricked-out bikes frequently ride on sidewalks or on the wrong side of the street. Nearly every cyclist runs red lights (myself included). "Lots of people see bicyclists as menaces, and Janette Sadik-Khan as a Nazi," Jackson says. It often seems that cyclists want all the rights of the road and none of the

responsibilities. Drivers complain that cyclists riding in traffic are unpredictable and don't signal. Pedestrians, accustomed to looking out for cars but not bikes, are caught off-guard.

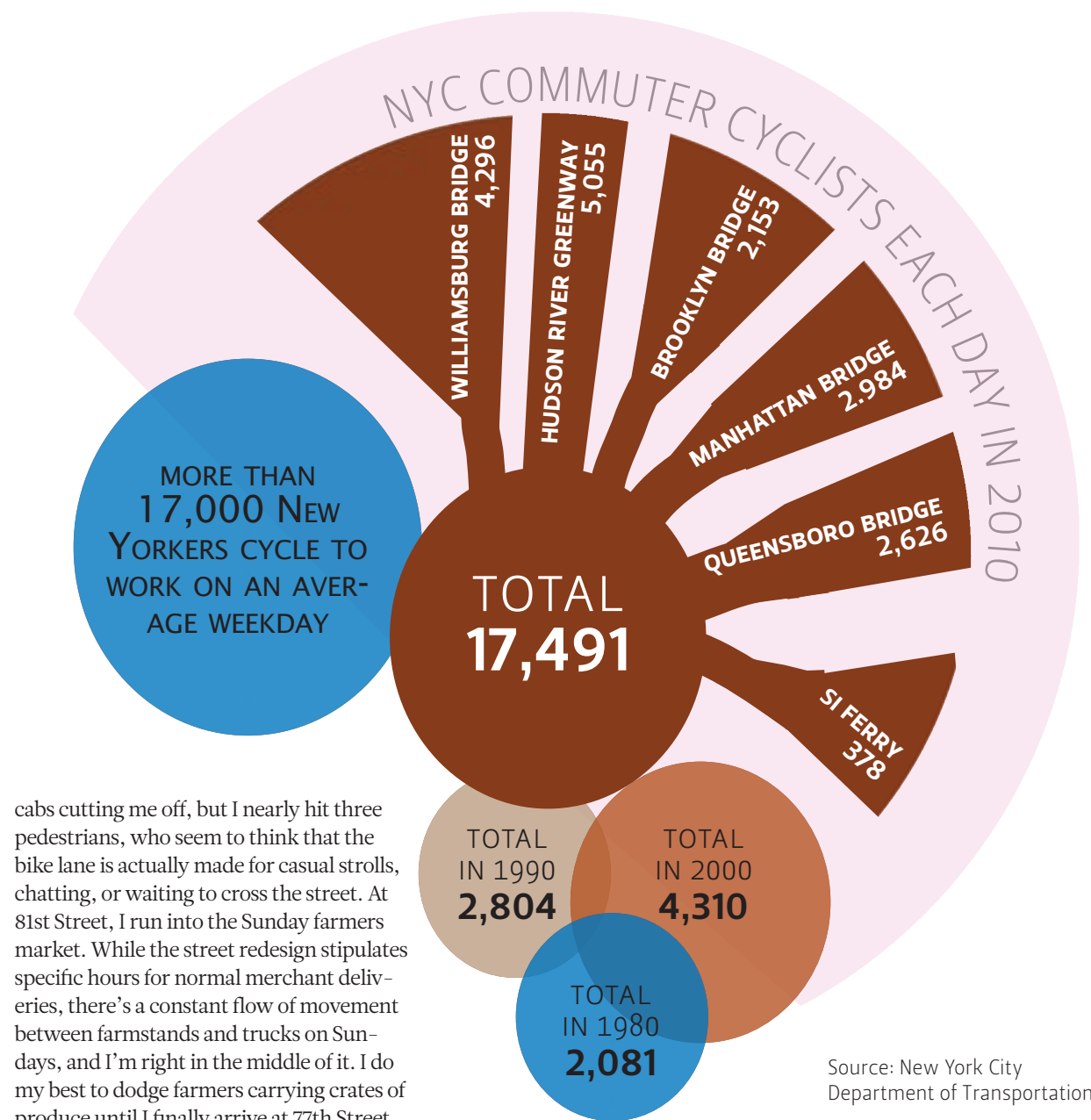
Bike lanes and street redesigns have attempted to create a third space for cyclists, in line with their seemingly separate status. The Columbus Avenue redesign, between 96th and 77th streets, is a prime example. The bike lane lies on the east side of the street and is separated from traffic by a lane of parked cars. Like most street redesigns in New York City, the Columbus one was decided between the local community board, the DOT, and residents. In 2009, Community Board 7 requested that the DOT develop a plan to implement a protected bike lane on the Upper West Side. Mel Wymore, outgoing chair of CB7, says: "There was a lot of common support for a bike lane on the Upper West Side, especially on Columbus." The lane was seen as the first step in "creating a network of viable lanes" in the neighborhood. In April 2010, the DOT responded with a complete street redesign plan for Columbus between 96th and 77th streets. From here, CB7 approved the plan with community support.

Construction was slated to start on the redesign in August 2010, when the community board was on a summer hiatus. The DOT, without CB7's consent, changed several design elements before implementation, in what Wymore sees as a mix of an increase in available funds from the city and a "broader vision" for the avenue. The new plan more than quadrupled the number of pedestrian islands and reduced parking even more. "It would have been nice to have been involved," Wymore states. "We didn't have an opportunity to inform the community." As a result, many people who supported the new bike lane as a temporary measure were "disconcerted by the permanence" of the new plan.

"There's a difference between thinking about a bike lane and the actual implementation of it," Wymore asserts. "The physicality [of the Columbus redesign] was different than what people thought." As a result, he created a working group last fall comprised of various stakeholders, such as avenue businesses, concerned residents, local government officials, and cycling advocates. The group went block by block to assess problems with the redesign. The most outspoken critics were (and still are) residents in need of parking and business owners who rely on loading and unloading, both of which were significantly reduced by the redesign. 81st Street was also heavily hit by the changes and produced angry residents and business owners, some of whom have now come to firmly support the bike lane. There were concerns about the new pedestrian islands, which can be confusing for pedestrians themselves. "The bike lane was blamed for a lack of parking, and loading/unloading spaces, but it wasn't the bike lane's fault," Wymore says.

The group produced a report with specific adjustments for the bike lane, such as signage and turning lane changes. Wymore credits the group's success on the fact that "we were able to be data-driven and specific" in addressing the issues instead of relying on opinions and feelings. "I think the DOT is dedicated," he notes. "People sometimes feel like the DOT does not have a robust public process before it moves forward, but its job is enormous."

My ride down the Columbus lane is short and bumpy. As I enter on 96th Street, I immediately hit a series of storm drains and sewer covers that last the entire lane. It's nice not having to worry about



cabs cutting me off, but I nearly hit three pedestrians, who seem to think that the bike lane is actually made for casual strolls, chatting, or waiting to cross the street. At 81st Street, I run into the Sunday farmers market. While the street redesign stipulates specific hours for normal merchant deliveries, there's a constant flow of movement between farmstands and trucks on Sundays, and I'm right in the middle of it. I do my best to dodge farmers carrying crates of produce until I finally arrive at 77th Street and rejoin traffic. Thanks, DOT and CB7, for building me a bike lane. I appreciate the sentiment. But next time, I might just ride with traffic instead.

I am reminded by Tila Duhaime of Upper West Side Streets Renaissance that the Columbus redesign is not just about me as a cyclist. Rather, it's about making the street "more democratic" for all. The increased bike traffic on Columbus since the redesign is "speaking to a large unmet need" among cyclists for safe streets. Yet the new Columbus is also designed to "improve the streetscape generally" especially for pedestrians. The goal is to make the street safer for everyone. The DOT's data from the first six months of the new Columbus show that the redesign has done just that. Total crashes are down 34 percent, and vehicular speeding has also dropped. Sidewalk bike ridership has dropped from a pre-redesign high of 9.3 percent to a current maximum of 2.8 percent. City Councilwoman Gale Brewer's office, in a separate survey, found that 70 percent of locals surveyed believe the street redesign is "moving in the right direction."

Beane also points to cyclists as just one element of establishing "complete streets." He believes that the new Columbus is closer to achieving this goal than the old. Because the bike lanes went in with other, more controversial changes, such as decreased street parking, all of the subsequent complaints were associated with the bike lanes. He attributes this to "growing pains" and nothing more. "Merchants have gotten accustomed and deliveries are working out well now." Like Duhaime, Beane points to the community task

force established by Wymore as the driving force in resolving the problems that arose with the redesign.

Wymore believes that the Columbus redesign should be the first of many DOT initiatives to "engage the whole city around the idea of complete streets." The Columbus changes have been a challenge and a shift for the community. "It's difficult when you're talking about change of behavior," he notes. The issue is not just that bike lanes, street redesigns and the changing urban landscape require personal, everyday changes, but that "people keep being taken by surprise" when these changes arrive on their block.

Morningside: "A much bigger idea of what New York is"

By now, I know Broadway between 110th and 116th streets on two wheels just as well as I do on two feet. I've ridden these six blocks in the freezing cold and in mid-August sweat, coming back from a day trip to Brooklyn and from countless loops in Central Park, in the setting sun and at two in the morning.

I pass Westside and Deluxe on the uptown side and know that I am slowly, block-by-block, making my way home. I dodge delivery trucks and wave to friends before pulling over at the gates. On my way downtown, everything is a blur until the chaos of the 110th intersection. Only there do I begin to feel the anonymity and freedom of leaving Morningside Heights.

Stephanie Jurburg, a Columbia College senior, explains why biking is especially viable for college

students: “It’s cheaper than the subway, for one,” she notes. And furthermore, “You get to see way more. ... You know where you are.” Cycling “gives you a much bigger idea of what New York is.” Grasping that “bigger idea” is why many of us chose to attend Columbia in the first place.

It’s for these reasons that Elizabeth Kipp-Giusti and the Columbia EcoReps are developing a campus-wide bike share program, to hopefully launch in 2012. The project was born out of Columbia Public Safety’s mysterious “bike closet,” a collection of abandoned bikes on Columbia’s campus that public safety officers clipped. The issue was simple: the bikes were taking up valuable space in Low Library. A working group, which Kipp-Giusti was a part of, started examining the feasibility of turning the collection into a bike share last year. In the same way that the City’s bike share is not targeting the most avid cyclists, who already have their own bikes, the Columbia share would serve people who are interested in cycling but not yet committed bikers. “A bike share is a program for a people who happen to have a couple of hours and want to go for a bike ride,” she explains. She envisions students using the bikes to pick up groceries at the 72nd Street Trader Joe’s or taking a day trip to the Brooklyn Bridge. The program does not seek to revolutionize the way students get around the Morningside campus but rather “provide a choice to students who want to get out into the city more, which is one of the main purposes of being at a school like Columbia.”

“I DON’T THINK THERE IS A LACK OF INTEREST FROM AN ADMINISTRATIVE STANDPOINT, BUT I DO THINK THAT OTHER THINGS HAVE BEEN PRIORITIZED.”

Yet the University also must consider liability, rider education, and the actual mechanism of checking bikes in and out. Most pressing among the unresolved issues is who will have access to the share. Would the program be limited to students, or would faculty and staff be included as well? Currently the bike share committee within the EcoReps is working to garner student council support, and writing a strategic plan to bring before the administration. The challenge is developing the program so that it can last long after students on the committee graduate.

Beyond the bike closet, Public Safety has been the origin of the majority of the University’s bike-related initiatives. Ricardo “Ricky” Morales, crime prevention director, lists the host of efforts his office has made to support cyclists: installing more than 200 bike racks across the University’s campuses, creating a program to register bikes with the NYPD in case of theft, selling expensive but effective U-locks at cost, and distributing bike maps and information. Morales mentions, with special pride, his twice-annual “Ride your bike to campus” events, which offer University students and staff free bike tune-ups and the opportunity to register their bikes with the NYPD. At the August event, 61 bikes were registered and students came from as far as Brooklyn to participate.

Because of Public Safety’s efforts to “constantly promote how to secure your bike,” bike theft has decreased in recent years, and Morales believes theft rates are “evening out.” In terms of additional initiatives, Morales asserts that “what we have done is good enough.”

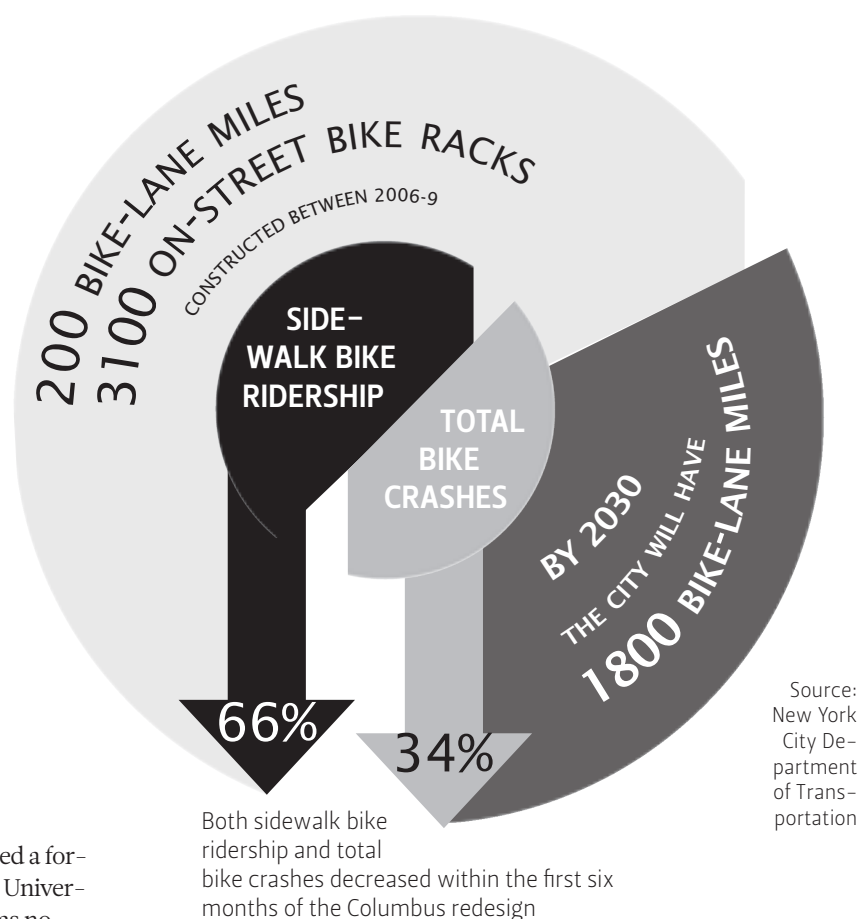
The Office of Environmental Stewardship and the Work/Life Office are also working to promote biking among faculty and staff, and to some degree, students.

According to Nilda Mesa, associate vice president of environmental stewardship, her office tries to advertise Public Safety’s bike-related initiatives. Environmental Stewardship hasn’t conducted a formal survey on cycling in the University community, but Mesa has noticed “that the level of interest amongst both faculty/staff and students has increased” in recent years. She points to the growth of the city’s bike infrastructure under Bloomberg and Sadik-Khan as the cause. The number of bike parking options has increased across campus, and, apart from providing information and developing the bike share, Mesa seems to think that this is the best way to promote biking in the community. She notes that, while “we can always do more, New York City has come a long way over the last few years, and so have we.”

Yet there is a general consensus among students and faculty that the university does indeed need to do more. Several students involved in realizing the EcoReps bike share explain that the initiative is now primarily student-driven, even though it originated within the administration. “You could make the argument that this is not one of the most pressing issues” the University is facing, so “it gets put on the back burner,” Kipp-Giusti says. “I don’t think there is a lack of interest from an administrative standpoint, but I do think that other things have been prioritized.”

Meanwhile, Christia Mercer, associate professor of philosophy in Columbia College, believes the University needs to step up its efforts to make biking to campus a feasible option for faculty and staff. “It makes me happy to bike” from her home on 105th Street and Central Park West, “but in the past year it has become more of a chore” with the lack of bike parking on lower campus, she explains. Now that commuter cycling has become more popular, bike parking is even more difficult to come by, and Mercer doesn’t see carrying her bike up Low Steps to her office in Philosophy Hall as a viable option.

After her bike was stolen from a bike rack in front of the guardhouse at 116th and Amsterdam, Mercer reported the incident to Public Safety, who never followed up on her report. “This happens all the time,” Public Safety told her. “They never catch anyone.” This, along with the lack of parking, leads Mercer to believe that “Columbia hasn’t gotten the fact that the bike culture has changed,” even though University



administrators argue otherwise. “They don’t make it easy for those of us who have bikes.”

Ultimately, increasing infrastructure for cyclists, whether at Columbia or in New York City as a whole, must originate with increased communication between cyclists and the people who design the systems they use. It has been thanks to outspoken cyclists such as Mercer and Kipp-Giusti that the University is being to act.

New York City: “A time of tremendous adjustment”

With so much progress made in the past ten years, is New York City on track to be the next Amsterdam? Certainly, every cyclist I spoke to for this story couldn’t help but dream.

Over the next five years, “cycling will become taken for granted as another form of transportation,” Beane asserts. He notes that, while “we are going through a time of tremendous adjustment,” cycling will become more integrated into daily life, and pedestrians and drivers will adjust. He envisions interconnected bike lanes throughout New York City, specifically the extension of the Columbus lane uptown, and connections in midtown.

Before traveling and biking through Europe, “I didn’t know that post-modern countries had adopted the bike,” Jurburg says. “New York is falling behind.” And yet she confirms that cycling is taking on here, and will continue to. With reason, she points to the fact that police are cracking down on cyclists as a sign that cycling is being integrated into the cityscape. “You don’t regulate something that’s insignificant.” Mowers, however, argues that the police “need to back off of cyclists.” Instead of “punishing the bikers” as cycling becomes more prevalent, she hopes to see “a legitimate plan for biking to become a real transportation alternative.”

“We want as many people to bike as possible, from all walks of life,” Tongco says. “We want to stress the importance of safety for complete living streets.”

For now, I hop on my bike outside my building on 114th Street and fly down Broadway with traffic. On two wheels, New York is mine. ●

Diva-Off

the battle between over-the-top glam and toned-down soul

BY ZOE CAMP
ILLUSTRATION BY CINDY PAN

"I'm bootyful in my way, cause Arby's makes no mistakes/I've got the right order, baby, I was born this weight."

No, it's not the next jingle for the Thickburger. It's a bit of Twitter-verse venom spewed by a Little Monster (a Lady Gaga fan, for those who have had their heads in the sand the past three years) about Adele—the "Rolling in the Deep" chanteuse who's netted perhaps the biggest album and single of the year.

When Adele edged out Gaga in VMA (MTV Video Music Awards) nods this year, she and her curvy frame became the target of millions of Mother Monster's minions. Despite dozens of rumors circulated on sites like Tumblr, Gaga did not join in the musical mud-slinging. Still, even if the allegedly bad blood between Gaga and Adele is confined to their respective fan-bases for the moment, there's no denying that the stage has been set for the battle that will decide female pop supremacy. It's Gaga's glam-and-grime dance versus Adele's sultry soul.

"ADELE ISN'T ANY PARTICULAR REVELATION, BUT SHE'S A SOUND INVESTMENT—THE RECORD LABELS CAN BE COMFORTABLE THAT SHE WILL CHURN OUT HIT AFTER HIT."

Gaga and Adele aren't the only artists with a stake in this battle—rather, they're simply the generals of two musical camps: the former glitzy, sleek, and bombastic, the latter vocal-intensive, minimal and R&B-tinged. Katy Perry, Ke\$ha, Rihanna, and Britney fit into the former; Beyoncé and Christina Aguilera, the latter. You'll notice that electro-pop's got the edge: For that genre's dominance, you can thank the cast of *Jersey Shore*, and recent surges in popularity for dubstep and rave culture. Gaga's latest LP, *Born this Way*, is currently certified platinum seven times over, while Perry's most recent effort, 2010's *Teenage Dream*, has spawned a cascade of number-one hits and earned her an unprecedented, 69-week streak in the top ten on the Billboard Hot 100. All predictable outcomes for pop's heavy hitters.

But then, sometime last winter, "Rolling in the Deep" roared onto the airwaves, with levels of

emotional vulnerability and bare rage unseen since Alanis Morissette's 1995 smash, "You Oughta Know." Yet, the song was unique for reasons other than its aggro: Adele's sultry contralto was notably spared the standard Pro Tools treatment, left instead to float above gloomy, bare-bones blues. It was a nostalgia-seeped return to the days of Carly Simon and Joni Mitchell, as well as a nod to the spunky revivalism of the late Amy Winehouse—and it paid off big time: The song sat atop the top spot on the Hot 100 for seven weeks (the longest reign of 2011 so far), went to number one in 11 countries, and sold over 5.3 million copies. "Rolling in the Deep"—and *21*, the album from which it was taken—was everywhere, from Starbucks and soccer moms' minivans to proms and parties. Here was a worthy opponent for the beast of *Born this Way*—a strain of simple, timeless soul that the club kids and their parents could rock out to together.

That's not to say the dance machine is out of the race—the floor-ready beats of Britney and David Guetta remain the party music of choice, and will provide pre-gaming soundtracks of students for the foreseeable future. As for the reigning queen of pop, Gaga recently surpassed 15 million Twitter followers—more than any other person in the world—proof that her brand of glammed-out dance pop is still the hottest commodity in the music world. But despite their undeniable pop appeal, songs like Taio Cruz' "Dynamite" and Britney Spears' "Till the World Ends" also carry an expiration date—within three months, people grow tired of the sugar rush, and look for a newer, fresher one to take its place. Artists like Adele—as well as Beyoncé and Amy Winehouse—represent the golden standards of pop: they're the little black dresses, the musical fashions that never go out of style.



"Dance music is still huge—that's not going to change any time soon," explains Nathan Albert, a junior in Columbia College and a music director at WBAR, Barnard's free-form radio station. "But at the same time, there's this rekindled interest in simplistic, classic pop. Adele isn't any particular revelation, but she's a sound investment—the record labels can be comfortable that she will churn out hit after hit."

At the time this article went to press, the number one song on the Billboard Hot 100 was Adele's "Someone Like You"—a minimalist ballad containing only the singer's hearty, pained voice, woven around modest piano. It's sparse, simple, and entirely unconcerned with drawing attention to anything other than its universal, heartbroken sentiment. It's also the polar opposite of Gaga's latest single, "Marry the Night," a thumping, confident banger practically oozing with glitter and grease. It's too early to call a winner in this battle of the Billboard—"Marry the Night" has yet to make its formal debut on radio. But there's something alarming—and refreshing—about the fact that a track consisting of the most skeletal rudiments—no bass wobbles, no auto-tune, no guitar—has managed to bore a hole in ol' S.S. Dance-Pop for the time being.

Regardless of the Twitter chatter—"CONFIRMED : Gaga will not be wearing the meat dress at the 2011 VMA's because she is afraid Adele will eat her," among other gems—there doesn't appear to be a battle brewing between Captains Adele and Gaga. Still, the contrast between bare-bones and bombast remains one of the most interesting trends in pop circa 2011. So next time your hipster friends scoff at you for playing mainstream garbage, tell them you're just watching the next culture war play out. ●



Seeking an Arrangement

students pay tuition by working as ‘sugar babies’

BY NAOMI COHEN
PHOTO BY JOSE LUIS MARTINEZ
ILLUSTRATION BY IAN MARSHALL

“Are you Chinese?”

I’ve heard a lot of pick-up lines tonight, but none quite so direct. I turn around to get a view of the guy who interrupted my interview to ask my subject his question. He looks like he came straight off of an *Apprentice* taping: early 40s, posh jacket with loosened tie, Brooklyn accent, a reek of Bacardi and sweat. I consider hiding my handheld recorder, but then I realize he doesn’t seem to notice my presence. He leans in toward the girl, even though she can hear him over the blaring reggaeton music permeating the club.

Lucky for him, she laughs.

“What do I look like?” She’s 19, smiles a lot, and wears a skin-tight blue dress with cutouts on the sides.

Turns out she is Chinese.

He’s intrigued. After a bit of aimless banter, he tells her what she has been waiting to hear. “I have dessert companies throughout the U.S,” he says. “I have shows, and I haven’t been to Beijing or Shanghai yet. There may be some opportunity to work with each other. You know what I mean? To

help each other.”

It’s Monday night at the Copacabana Nightclub, and Seeking Arrangement, the banner website for the growing phenomenon of sugar dating, is throwing its annual Beauty Ball and Businessman Bash. I, like the sugar daddy dessert entrepreneur, am on the prowl for sugar babies. According to Alan “Action” Schneider, the promoter of this “mixer of empowered and beautiful people,” a sugar relationship involves a sugar daddy or momma “that can mentor, give, barter, provide any kind of enrichment to [a sugar baby’s] lifestyle in exchange for love, care, and affection.” Both parties settle the terms and conditions in a negotiation process.

Seeking Arrangement was founded in 2005 by MIT graduate Brandon Wade because he was frustrated with the limits of conventional online dating. Now, the site boasts nearly 900,000 members—15 percent from New York City and many from abroad. A quick Google search unearths dozens of other sites serving the same purpose. But recent media attention highlights one number especially: the 35 percent of sugar babies who court daddies or mommas for college tuition.

Getting into the industry

Sasha, who, like other girls discussed in this

A DATABASE CHECK OF SEEKING ARRANGEMENT’S MEMBERS REVEALS THAT AT LEAST 99 SUGAR BABIES ARE COLUMBIA STUDENTS OR GRADUATES.

article, uses a pseudonym to protect her identity, is sandwiched between a lap dancer and a middle-aged woman reapplying hairspray after some heavy necking. Her round face, white silk dress and side ‘do remind me of prom. Despite drawing an analogy to a flea market, she says she likes the vibe.

Sasha, with a \$60,000 educational burden, first created an account on Seeking Arrangements after learning about the site on a news show, which is a common avenue onto the site. Another girl, who goes by “Nonchalant,” came to sugar culture after an episode of *True Life*. For others, the path is a bit different.

“I had worked in accounting and finance, and it was very boring,” says Natalia, a recent

graduate of Florida International University with a degree in finance. “It just came to my mind one day—I should be a prostitute.” According to sugar culture researcher Elizabeth Nistico, about a third of all babies begin as or are also working as professional sex workers. As an erotic back rubber, Natalia says she found the transition to sugar life easy.

Making the transaction

Unlike many sugar babies, Natalia feels comfortable setting a price. The top customer service inquiry on Seeking Arrangement is how to talk about money, not sex. Sex rarely comes up since the baby either makes a no-sex policy explicit or accepts it as a natural part of any relationship.

The Chinese sugar baby I talked to sticks strictly to the former, only accompanying her dates to art galleries and other haute functions. A student at Parsons The New School for Design, she calls the relationship a “connection” that’s “convenient” for both of their schedules and aspirations. She has a long-term girlfriend (who is sitting next to her with three sugar daddies vying for her attention), so she says they both participate for financial security and not attraction.

At the party, the business nature of these arrangements is evident: no man circulates without business cards, and, for the first two and a half hours, vendors set up shop in the club. The vendors run the gamut from plastic surgeons to chauffeurs, comedians, promoters, and even representatives from Wells Fargo. (“Sugar babies should be prudent with their money so that sugar daddies can invest in them,” says Schneider.) Sugar couples seem to enjoy the theme. I meet a couple from Las Vegas who came to test the market for new products “to spoil your sugar baby with.” Out by Christmas: a sex hormone-releasing electric cigarette.

The business nature of the relationship allows for a certain frankness from both parties in articulating their desires. And these desires are often not limited to sex—many sugar daddies desire intimate relationships with their babies. According to Natalia, her sugar daddies’ sex lives are so repressed that the majority of their time together just involves talking. Relationships can become extremely intimate—once, Natalia claims, an NYU professor offered to write her a recommendation letter and indicate her as a dependent to reduce her fees.

This near-mimicry of parenthood isn’t uncommon in a sugar relationship, as evidenced by the designation of roles as daddy, momma, and baby. Ashley, a registered nursing student at Rutgers, says she finds the paternal dynamics intriguing. The Bash is her first exposure to the sugar world—though the friend that invited her is a sugar baby herself—and she is already considering creating an account.

“Why not?” Ashley probes. “Someone older and successful can teach me something besides the latest Louis Vuitton purse.” She tells me she’s 21 (the Copacabana is a 21-and-over nightclub), but her looks suggest otherwise.

College bait

The expanding college sugar demographic neglects few schools. A database check of Seeking Arrangement’s members reveals that at least 99

sugar babies are Columbia students or graduates. NYU claims the most sugar babies with more than 500; Harvard is ninth with 231. Paul Madison, founder of sugar baby-daddy site Sugar Sugar, attributes the high numbers to a “moral openness” as the economy weakens and tuition rises steadily. Yet despite the near-doubling of the student portion of babies after the recession, researcher Nistico suggests that money is only a pretext.

Wade of Seeking Arrangement says that he, like Mark Zuckerberg, targets users with .edu email addresses because the market shows they are more trustworthy and more active daters who are also more likely to be comfortable with the sugar baby concept. Certified college baby badges, in turn,



THE BUSINESS NATURE OF THE RELATIONSHIP ALLOWS FOR A CERTAIN FRANKNESS FROM BOTH PARTIES IN ARTICULATING THEIR DESIRES.

yield more responses.

The babies have observed that sugar daddies and mommas are often nostalgic and feel philanthropic when they invest in an education. Barnard psychology professor Wendy McKenna remarks that the success of college sugar babies implies a “cultural pedophilia” upon which the relationship capitalizes. She adds, “There’s an interesting analysis here of why being educated makes a woman’s body parts more valuable.”

Natalia, who hopes for a full ride to the London School of Economics, finds that by marketing herself on Seeking Arrangement as a college student, she attracts more attention. On her profile, she lists books that she likes. That, she thinks, paired with her “exotic” Puerto Rican looks, may be what draws in regulars, which mostly include Hasidic Jews and even a few Columbia professors.

Tuition babies are also unique in that they often treat the relationship less as a transaction than as a means to an intellectual end. A 23-year-old baby proud of her blouse-khaki pants ensemble and 10

o’clock curfew emphasizes, “I’m not gonna show my vagina off.” She has her sights on Cambridge and came to the party to find herself a Robert Redford type—to fund her way there.

The public gaze

The current hype around college sugars makes me one in a brigade of press at the party: among them, BBC, NBC, CNN, CBS, and Time Out New York. Since Seeking Arrangement’s launch, few television personalities have neglected to add their dose of edifying commentary, warning listeners to scramble before the prostitution ring-in-disguise ambushes their children.

“Eighteen months from now, another talk show will need another potentially scandalous theme, and [the prostitution question in the sugar phenomenon] will recycle all over again,” says Madison of Sugar Sugar.

Though some sugar interactions are too strained for me to look at comfortably—the balmy hands, the painted smiles, the distracted gazes—none of the sugar babies I talk to express remorse. A Dr. Phil poll (which, granted, isn’t entirely representative of the wider populace) indicates that more people would participate in the sugar baby lifestyle than not if it were kept secret.

“If they wanted to be prostitutes, they could,” says Wade. “The reason why they choose Seeking Arrangement is that they can have a relationship on an ongoing basis. A person will help them so that they don’t have to sleep alone [in the streets] where sex is being sold.”

Legally, a sugar relationship is not prostitution. But the same deception—the same double life—remains. Natalia has no problem bringing her best friend to the party—most of the babies, for company or precaution, did—but she still tells her parents she works in the financial sector.

“It’s a lot every day,” she says. “I wake up, I have another name, another bullshit going on.” She dismisses the idea that the sugar life is an option for everyone. “My maturity gave me the peace of mind of doing this.”

Baby expiration

The unspoken purpose of the Beauty Ball is to provide a haven from disapproving eyes. Still, the more discreet, generally higher-profile babies and daddies avoided even the accepting party crowd. (Some babies, like Nonchalant, don’t seem to care: “Fuck what people think, I’m not sticking a gun to their head!”) While New York City offers a liberal climate, a few sugar babies mention aspirations of studying abroad in Europe, where they feel sexual norms are even more relaxed.

To babies like Natalia, though, the sugar life is just a “small vacation” to last until the final loan is paid off. Or, for others, to last until their youth wears out. Once the baby does move on, Professor McKenna says a psychological toll is unlikely to stay. As long as the baby is in control of her relationships—which, minus a few cases of what Wade dismisses as “bad apples,” is largely true—she can presumably transition into her old lifestyle unscathed. Natalia acknowledges that the transition will be hard but necessary.

“I still have that passion to pursue other stuff. Of course, it will take me [time] to adjust back to buying clothing at Kmart and not designer stores, but that’s something I have to do. Eventually.” ●

Indie 2.0

kevin smith tries to change the game with *red state*

BY ANNA MARCUM AND JON EDELMAN
ILLUSTRATION BY MADDY KLOSS

The preview for *Red State* is eye-catching. Mixing powerful Christian imagery, crimes committed in the name of God, and kitschy horror undertones, it seems like a film that would pique almost anyone's interest. Yet, everyone knows that a horror film is best viewed in theaters, so why does the trailer say that *Red State* is already available on On Demand? Did you really miss it on the big screen? Could you have been so oblivious to such a controversial movie? Don't question your cultural cred just yet—director Kevin Smith has pulled a fast one, not only on the general public, but on the entire film industry.

This isn't Smith's first time shaking up the business. He famously broke into Hollywood in 1994 with the indie comedy *Clerks*, shot for \$27,000 at the convenience store in which he worked, with a cast of friends and local actors. The film was purchased by Miramax at the Sundance Film Festival and went on to become a cult classic, launching a series of films taking place in the same fictional universe, including *Dogma*, *Jay and Silent Bob Strike Back*, and *Clerks II*.

However, Smith's forays outside of the world of *Jay and Silent Bob*, including *Jersey Girl*, *Zack and Miri Make a Porno*, and *Cop Out*, have been greeted with mixed critical and financial success. In response, Smith has taken a left turn—creating SModcast (a popular network of podcasts centered around free-ranging conversations between Smith and his friends), smoking a great deal of marijuana, and working on *Red State*, his first independently financed, produced and distributed film since *Clerks*.

SO, IF KEVIN SMITH CAN SUCCESSFULLY PRODUCE, MARKET, AND DISTRIBUTE A FILM INDEPENDENTLY, CAN BUDDING INDEPENDENT FILMMAKERS HOPE TO ACCOMPLISH SIMILAR FEATS?

Red State starts out like any other cheesy horror film—with three high school students looking to get laid. The rural accents are thick and the mullets abound. After answering an internet sex solicitation, the boys find themselves in quite a jam—they've been captured by the radical Five Points Church (an analogue for the Westboro Baptist Church, of "God Hates Fags" fame), who intend to execute them in front of their congregation as sinners.

But *Red State* is attracting more attention for its unconventional production and distribution than for its subject matter. The film's controversial content, graphic violence, and dark ending made it difficult to find financing from a major studio. Even Smith's frequent backers, the Weinstein brothers, passed. After briefly considering a Kickstarter-esque plan to raise money for the film from his fans (too legally complicated), Smith scraped together \$4 million from several private investors, and shot and edited the film in around five weeks.

Prior to the film's debut at Sundance, Smith announced that he would sell the rights to distribute it in a live auction directly after the premiere. After the screening, however, Smith, holding a hockey stick like a scepter, and announced in a rambling speech that he intended to distribute the film himself.

Disappointed that studio marketing campaigns had failed to generate dramatic financial success for *Zack and Miri* and *Cop Out*, Smith announced that he would spend no money whatsoever on advertising his film, relying only on his television appearances, SModcast Network, and word of mouth to make a profit. As studio executives shook their heads and showbiz reporters suggested that he had "imploded," Smith embarked on a series of regional tours, in which, for a premium price, ticket-buyers could see the film, followed by a lengthy question-and-answer session with Smith himself. In a series of screenings this October, Smith broadened his reach even further, appearing live in several theaters at once via satellite to answer audience questions over Twitter. Simultaneously, the movie has been released to cable On Demand services, internet portals like iTunes and Netflix, and as a physical DVD.

Although *Red State* has hardly been a blockbuster, it has already made back its \$4 million budget and has entered profitability. So, if Kevin Smith can successfully produce, market and distribute a film independently, can budding independent filmmakers hope to accomplish similar feats? In recent years, self-publishing has reached new heights of popularity in the book and magazine worlds through sites like Issuu and Amazon's Kindle Direct Publishing service. Could *Red State* mark the beginning of widespread self-distribution for movies?

Kevin Smith has previously stated that he would like to use *Red State*'s profits to help distribute other independent filmmakers' movies, but that only changes the middleman instead of eliminating it. Additionally, Smith's strategy for marketing *Red State* relied heavily on his pre-existing die-hard fan base.



Few mainstream, let alone little-known directors can lay claim to a comparable cult. It's also unclear whether other directors would be willing to expose themselves as publicly as Smith does—as listeners of his podcast can attest, there's little he won't talk about.

On the other hand, Smith's decision to take *Red State* straight to On Demand, online viewing and DVD could inspire sites like Netflix and Amazon Instant Video to offer independent distribution services, much like their publishing counterparts.

Clerks helped to kick off an indie revolution in film, with big studios snapping up independents or creating boutique divisions to seek out and profit from new, unique voices. In a decidedly different era, one of threequels, reboots, and the Internet, whether *Red State* can do the same remains to be seen. ●

Of Sticky Notes, Planners, and Procrastination

representing the 1/2 percent

BY HANNAH PAGE

ILLUSTRATION BY STEPHANIE MANNHEIM

I have my first full-scale nervous breakdown during the third week of classes. Three weeks of appearing relatively carefree have been enough to ensure that my suitemates won't think of me first and foremost as a self-effacing, hair-pulling, stressed-out coed. Instead, I've already firmly established my reputation as the roommate who leaves her clothes on the floor next to the laundry basket on a daily basis. But one 10-minute freak-out every three weeks will work out to be approximately one hour of tension-fueled time-wasting each semester that doesn't factor into my daily quota of non-academic, extracurricular, or social life-related activities, which currently include Facebook-ing, texting, and compulsive-email-checking. I'm starting to think that, in college, even naps should be penned into the margins of the swollen, "Roar-ee" sticker-plastered planner I bought from the Columbia bookstore. Hopefully it won't come to that.

I'm sitting on my four-foot high Carman bed and my concerned-looking and admirably understanding roommate—who only occasionally deposits a sticky note atop a pile of clothes or shoes left wherever I happened to shed them at three in the morning—is making an impressive effort to temper my stress. She's trying to convince me that one half-finished *Frontiers of Science* worksheet won't result in my failing the class, flunking out of the Ivy League school of my dreams, and living in poverty (which is funny, since, like many a fantasy-filled liberal New York City college student, I plan on becoming a starving artist upon graduation).

I perch on the very edge of the bed, trying not to plummet to the floor, along with the mattress pad. The rest of the surface is unusable, war-torn: filled with the scattered detritus of a rushed homework session between my morning classes (and, afterward, an extended nap) and my 4:10–6:00 Fro Sci discussion section, which meets in 15 minutes—leaving me five minutes to come to terms with the fact that I'll be getting partial credit for my rushed "back-of-the-envelope calculations," pack up my stuff, and hoof it down the hall to wait upwards of another five minutes for the elevator.

The elevator takes six minutes to arrive. I indulge in unnecessary, frantic button-pushing, which is made all the more traumatic by the fact that the light on the button is broken, so there's no evidence of the 12 times I've already pressed it. After waiting five-and-a-half minutes, I suspect tomfoolery. I've listened to my



I FEEL SO CONSPICUOUS, SO TERRIBLY OBVIOUS RUNNING ON COLLEGE WALK.

roommate tell three different people how she was stuck in the elevator with a group of guys who pushed the button for every. Single. Floor. Sometimes I wonder at people's immaturity. Then I remember that we're at college. I have seen *Animal House*.

Outside the dorm, my insensible metropolitan heels clomp across the cobblestones. I feel so conspicuous, so terribly obvious running on College Walk. I know I can't be the only student who's perpetually in a rush. By the time I get to Hamilton, my shoulder is aching from the weight of my swinging messenger bag and my bangs stick gracelessly to my forehead. I wonder how I can walk 10, 20 blocks downtown more easily than I can travel halfway across campus.

The professor has already begun addressing the class when I slide into an empty seat that's mercifully close to the door. When she pauses for breath, I raise my hand. I know my face is red from bolting up the stairs, and I'm hoping that will help my case. I ask, as tactfully as possible, if she might give a one-day extension to someone who had last-minute problems with

the math on the weekly worksheet. Of course, weekly homework doesn't merit extensions, as the whole point is to prepare us for class. But there's a happy bit of news in her response: each worksheet is one percent of our grade. My half-completed homework—the former doomsday guarantor of my life's ruin—will earn half credit, and my grade has gone down half of a percent.

I evaluate the result of my procrastination, and it doesn't seem so bad. I am, for the moment, appeased. I sit back in my chair, cross my legs, and try to look like I'm interested in the professor's answer to one of my classmate's questions about Monday's lecture. But it was easier to focus on model systems when my irrational mind was convinced I needed to salvage a failing grade. I have so much work to do, so many other things to stress about. She is detailing an experiment involving spectrographs and frog mating calls. I wrote a poem about cricket mating songs in my poetry seminar. Writing. I have two rough drafts of articles due Sunday. Haven't even started outlining them.

Multi-tasking is a relevant stress-reduction strategy, right?

I flip to a blank page in my notebook and write the words "View From Here." I underline the title—the first few sentences are already half-formed in my mind. "I have my first full-scale nervous breakdown during the third week of classes ..." ●

