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Volume 1 / Issue 3 / Summer '06

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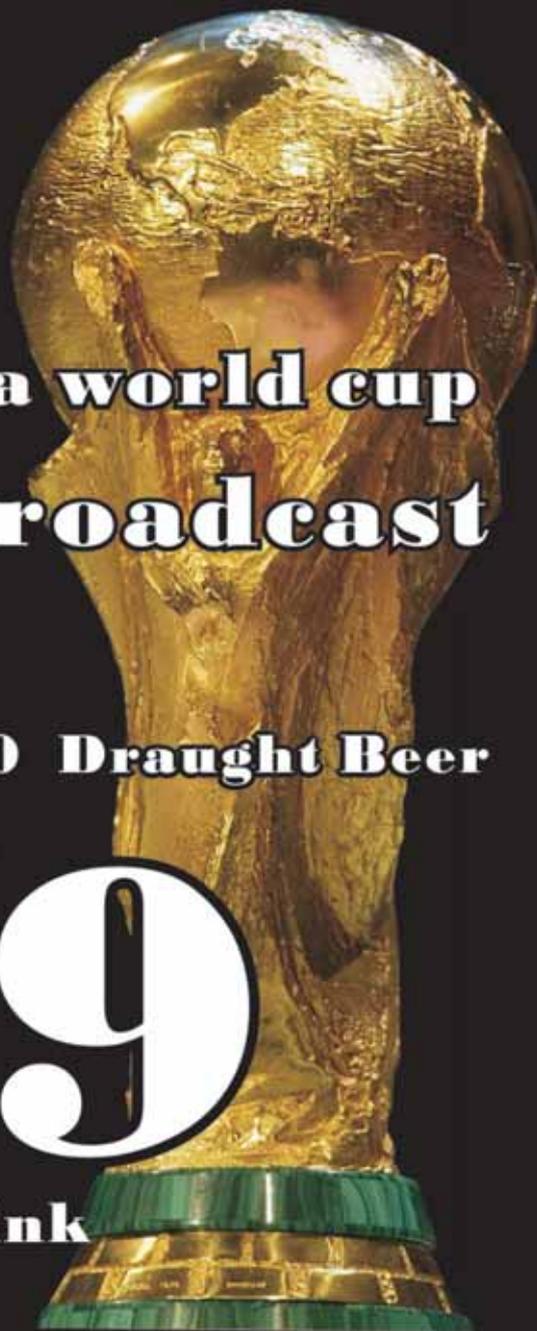
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Correction: The Letter From the Editor in the Faith issue (Vol. 1, Issue 2, Spring '05) implied that only one person accompanied the injured girl in the ambulance. This was incorrect. Four others, including her friend Karne, also accompanied the girl in the ambulance. I would like to offer my sincerest apologies for any grief or inconvenience this omission may have caused.
Ed

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My Pop

Artwork by Tsutomu Paradisio

My pop, or my pappy as I like to call him, had open-heart surgery last fall. He had, not one, but two triple bypasses. Then, about a month ago, he returned to the hospital for a pacemaker installation.

During his latter visit to the hospital he didn't hear from me. In fact, he hasn't heard from me since.

Based on my former letters, you're probably thinking that I hate my father and I'm about to tell you why. But you're wrong. I care for my pop a great deal these days. I probably love him more now than I have for most of my life.

You see, when I was 12 years old my father had an affair and, just before Christmas, he moved out. A short time later my parents were divorced.

Until then, I'd been my father's son. We played football and went on hunting and skiing trips. I wanted nothing more than to grow up to be like him. When I was seven, I even begged my barber to shave a circle on the top of my head just like my pappy's bald spot, and bawled when he refused.

After the divorce that all changed. Along with my brother and sister, I continued to live with our mother. But I wanted to live with my dad. Everybody (my parents, their lawyers, and my counselor) said it was my choice. But when I voiced this desire, I was met with a volley of torrid emotional retorts. My mother sobbed at the prospect of losing a son so soon after losing her husband. My brother and sister shouted what would become our broken-family mantra in the following years; "He didn't just leave Mom. He left all of us."

Living in a household where slander against my father was slung like hash in a greasy diner, eventually I began to believe it. My father was a bad man and he'd done my brethren and me a grave injustice.

My teenage years were filled with unapologetic rebellion. Screaming arguments with my father were common, occasionally ending with me, face tear-streaked and red, starting the long trek back to the city from his rural home. I hated him and I told him so. I even told him he wasn't my father.

After graduation I left my hometown, moved to a different city, and stopped calling him. He responded in kind. Our occasional visits, on holidays and such, remained tense and arguments were frequent. But, with time, our relationship gradually mellowed and

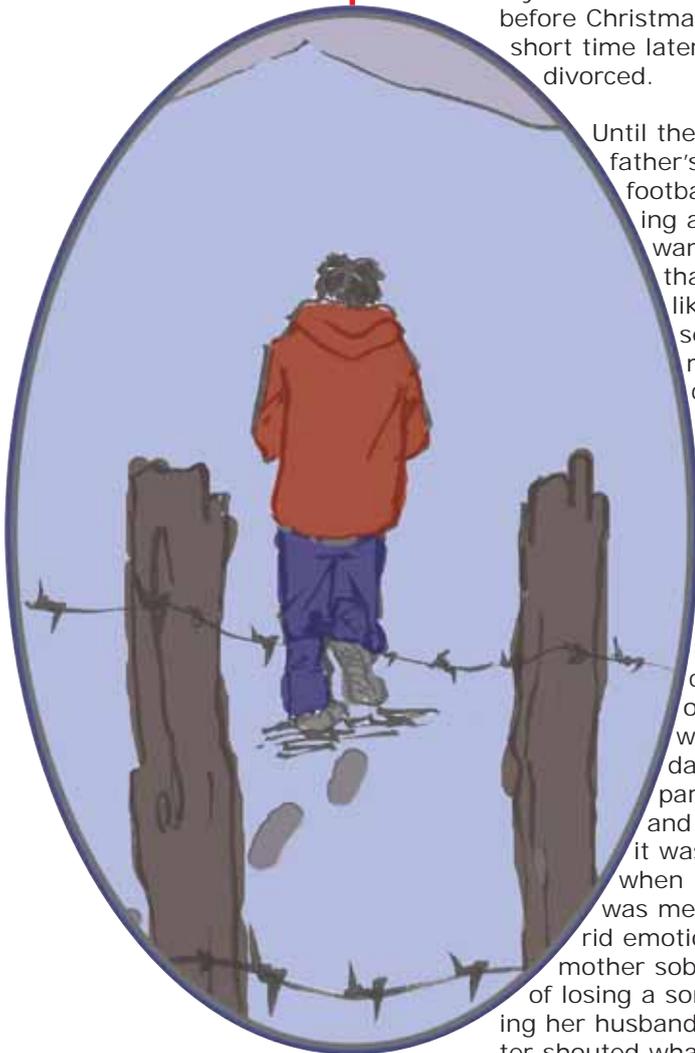
It is not my that I fear. I f much more te

then finally, one day several years later the teeter-totter tipped over.

It was when my father made the long drive from my hometown to Vancouver to help me move home after my university graduation. I was not excited by the prospect of spending 12 hours in a vehicle with my father, but I had no choice. The first seven hours were tense, but eventually the monotony of the road eroded our aggression and we settled into an agreeable discussion, which after a couple hundred kilometers, turned to the divorce.

He told me about his and my mother's marital problems preceding his affair. I had been through a couple long-term relationships and I empathized.

On that drive I learned that his affair was less of an action of selfish gratification, and more the uncharacteristic act of a man in the greatest of



emotional binds – one who wished to leave an unhappy relationship, but had no avenue for escape other than demolishing the family unit that he'd built to rear his children. Most creatures that feel so helpless, confused and trapped will lash out unpredictably, and so did my father.

A new fondness for my father was born in my heart. From then on our conversations were amiable. Arguments, if there were any at all (at this moment I can't recall any), were seldom and inconsequential. My relationship with my father had finally returned to the glory of the old days.

So, dear readers, you must be wondering: how could your author be so unfeeling as to refrain from calling his father when he's in the hospital facing such physical peril as open-heart surgery?

My father's death is something terrifying. //

My only excuse is weak and embarrassing, but it is my excuse nonetheless: I maintained silence out of habit. My father and I spoke so seldom for so long that even after our relationship was rejuvenated, our conversations were occasional. Birthdays passed without notice. E-mails were exchanged every few months, and words even less often.

We became accustomed to silence. And now I'm afraid that it will one day breed in me a dark psychological torment.

Living in Taiwan and with this magazine, I'm so busy that I rarely see friends that live a few blocks away. Returning to Canada, even for a short visit, is unlikely. Meanwhile my father is in Canada and, considering his health, a trip to Asia sounds equally implausible.

So, as my father reclines on the

beach chair of retirement in the twilight of his life, we find ourselves separated by a seemingly impassable ocean. It is possible that I won't see him alive again and, as I sit here writing, this fact sears my soul with icy terror.

But it is not my father's death that I fear. I fear something much more terrifying — regret. I'm afraid that when my father dies I'll regret our lack of communication and that such an irresolvable conflict would burn through my psyche like hot acid.

So what do I do? Do I call my father? I do not. Do I write him a letter? No.

Instead, I write this Letter from the Editor. Four thousand copies of this letter will be printed and distributed around Taiwan to be read by my xpat family. But, as you read this you should know that it isn't meant for you. Hell, I don't even care if you like this issue. Every story I've ever written was for my readers. I've treated every copy of this magazine with tender care for fear that I'd deliver a flawed product to my audience. But not this time. This time I made just one magazine and it's sitting on a desk in a study in a log cabin in the Rocky Mountains of British Columbia and you, dear reader, are reading a sad facsimile of that one.

'Cause this one's for, my pop.

Love and Respect,
Salvatore Paradisio



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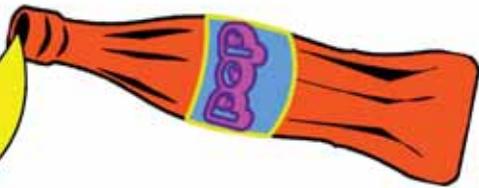
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From the desk

Volume of soft drinks the average North American consumed in 1999: 48 gallons

Top grossing soft drink company in the world: Coca Cola

Number of human rights violations against union members, including unfair dismissal, abduction, torture, and murder, alleged to have been committed by Coca Cola in Columbia (2004 New York City fact finding delegation): 179

Number of violations for murder: 9

Money spent by the US on poppy eradication and anti-drug campaigns in Afghanistan last year: US\$780,000,000

Price to purchase Afghanistan's entire 2004 poppy crop: US\$600,000,000

Number of Popeye statues in the United States: 6

For a complete list of sources with links, visit www.xpatmag.com

Most popular movie of all time (Internet Movie Database): The Godfather

Most published book of all time: The Bible

Greatest novel of all-time (poll of prominent authors from around the world): *Don Quixote* by Miguel De Cervantes

Number of free copies of *Don Quixote* distributed to Venezuelan people by the government in "Operation Dulcinea": 1 million

Reason for "Operation Dulcinea" according to President Hugo Chavez: "We're still oppressed so we want the Venezuelan people to get to know better *Don Quixote*, who we see as a symbol of the struggle for justice and the righting of wrongs."

Most Popular album of all time (2003 Zagat survey): Bruce Springsteen's *Born to Run*

Number of positions in top 5 albums occupied by the Beatles (same survey): 3

Date that John Lennon proclaimed the Beatles "more popular than Jesus": March 4, 1966

Reaction of Richard James Cardinal Cushing, Archbishop of Boston: Lennon was "probably right."

Number of people who search Google for "Jesus" and "Beatles" in one month respectively: 850,000 and 170,000

Ratio of searches for "Britney Spears" to "God": Nearly 2 to 1

Number that search "Cheese": 750,100

Most searched word on Google : sex

Projected measurements of a Barbie doll, if she were a full-sized person: 36-18-33

Percentage of 9 and 10 year-old-girls polled by *Pediatrics* magazine that are trying to lose weight: 40%

President Bush's popularity rating on February 27, 2006: 34% (an all-time low)

President Clinton's approval rating immediately following his impeachment: 73% (his highest ever)

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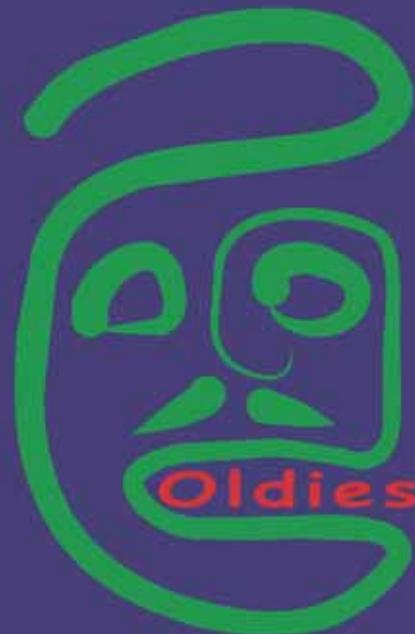


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Removing Gum from Hair

Just soak your gooey follicles in a bowl of the wondrous elixir called Coca-Cola for 3-5 minutes, wipe with a paper towel, and voila! Now your hair is brown and sticky – but no green-minty blob!!



Clean the Grout off Your Kitchen Floor

Martha Stewart is gonna' freak when she sees that this one got out. Simply soak the floor in this ingenious solution, mop, and let dry. Not suggested for abodes with ant problems (or those wishing to avoid ant problems).



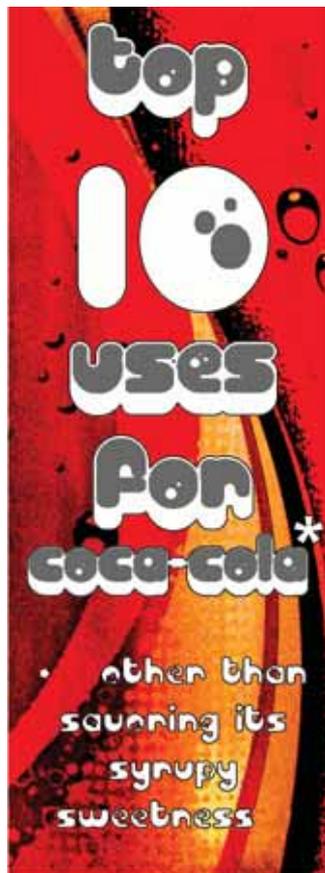
Remove Oil and Blood Stains from Asphalt

That's right. Take that gross dark spot off your driveway with the miracle-cleaning agent. It's said that the U.S. highway patrol carries at least one case per car for this purpose. Personally, I think it's an excuse to keep it on hand for washing down stale apple crullers found in the backseat.

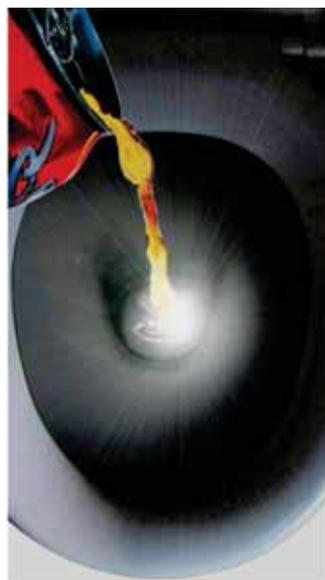


Remove Rust from Everything

Just pour the corrosive wonder of Coca-Cola over the affected area and wipe clean. There are rumors that the Coke Company itself uses it to clean their delivery truck engines.



By Matt Gibson
Images by Pawl English



*Most of these uses are widely con-
tested, but still pretty funny.

Remove the Stains from Your Toilet

Crack a can (take a moment to savor the Coca-Cola crack-pshhhhh sound) and empty contents into the offending bowl. Let sit for one hour, flush, and get ready to mess up that gleaming bowl all over again.



Poo

Now that the toilet's clean enough to settle down on, grab a copy of National Geographic, plop that achin' bottom down, and take a swig of tasty Coca-Cola laxative: 1-3 tablespoons of castor oil mixed vigorously with a cup of coke, and then swig 'er back. "It tastes just like Dr. Pepper and will keep you running like a broken faucet."



Get Your Dream Tan

Ever get jealous of the way your boyfriend eyes that curvaceous brown form? The way he caresses it as he sips its sweet nectar while ignoring your needs? Be jealous no more. Merely spread a healthy layer of this delectable browning phenomenon all over your body before you lay out. Then see which curvaceous brown form he's reaching for and whose nectar he's...well...you get the point.



Relieve a Jellyfish Sting

Did you ever see that episode of Friends where Chandler has to pee on Monica because she got stung by a jellyfish? Do you snorkel? Are you prepared to pee on your friend? Consider this dilemma resolved! In such a situation, pop open a bottle or can of this magical pain-destroyer and pour it over the affected area. Yes, it's true: Coke is as good as pee.



Rid Yourself of Rats

Set out a few bowls of this irresistible death potion wherever you have a problem. Then, take cover. Rats are physiologically unable to burp. Once they've gorged themselves on enough of this delectable bloating agent, they explode. Also works with hamsters (if you really want to try it you sick bastard).



Special thanks to www.Barefoot-Lass.com for permission to use all this information, (most of which we shamelessly ripped off from her website).

a Tale of Two Cities



I have been meaning to write about Bertrand, Canat, and the whole sorry episode for some time now. It is a story of passionate love, death and, ultimately, how we elevate our idols to the vertiginous heights of superstardom and whom we choose to fulfill that mantle. Cantat is currently serving an eight-year jail sentence in Vilnius, Lithuania, for the manslaughter of his lover—the esteemed actress Marie Trintignant

“national totems are a telling reflection of the society that created them”

(of the Trintignant French thespian dynasty).

London

It always fascinates me how a nation concentrates its energies and focus to thrust a particular individual or, more often, a couple, into the stratosphere of fame and celebrity. Last time I was back in the UK, the golden couple was, and I suspect still is, the illiterate football player David Beckham and his useless, tone-deaf ‘singer’ of a wife, Victoria Adams (a.k.a. “Posh” Spice, a nickname as wholly inappropriate as “Tiger” Tim Henman).

These national totems are a telling reflection of the society that created them, and show perfectly the British preoccupation with meaningless and trivial celebritydom where the end has nothing to do with the means. Aside from Beckham being (I am told) a competent football player,

this couple is adored purely because they are famous. This duo is the banal feckless peak of British aspiration, eclipsing even the equally shallow and traditionally worshipped Royal Family.

Paris

Thankfully, the French like to do things differently. Cantat and Trintignant were universally adored by the Gallic public, and they are everything that the Beckhamses are not. He, an intellectual Morrisonesque poet, social campaigner, musician, singer and hard-drinking, coke-sniffing, pill-dropping wild boy with his band *Noir Desir*, originally a punk ensemble that mellowed with age and produced some sublime, dramatic compositions.

And she, talented and vulnerable, a renowned actress who starred in some of France’s best-loved films including *Les Apprentis* (The Apprentices, 1995), opposite her husband François Cluzet, and *Comme Elle Respire* (White Lies, 1998), with Guillaume Depardieu. Both were married to other people, Trintignant having four sons from three fathers, including Richard Kolinka, the drummer of the popular rock band *Téléphone* (possibly the only other French rock band to hit the big-time). They captured the hearts and imaginations of the French psyche which, along with the media, obsessed about them on a daily basis.

At the time of the incident that led to her death, Trintignant was filming a production on the life of the French writer Colette. She was on location in the Lithuanian capital during the summer of 2003, accompanied by Cantat with whom she had been living with in Paris while still married to Cluzet.

The Incident

What happened in the hotel room after a day of filming will remain a mystery to everyone except

By Dean Brockley

Interview by Victoria Morgan

Trintignant, who cannot tell her recollection of events, and Cantat, who is languishing in prison. For the record, he maintains that the couple had been fighting, a frequent occurrence in a relationship that conformed to the tempestuous clichés that one might expect in such a situation. Cantat was prone to passionate and often drunken rages, particularly with regards to his jealousy over the close relationship Marie maintained with her husband.

That night, says Cantat, he recalls 'slapping her around the face'. She fell backwards, hitting her head on a man-

tle-piece and collapsed on the floor. Cantat, believing she had passed out from drinking, laid her in bed and reputedly left her to recover. After receiving a drunken incoherent call from Cantat later that night, Trintignant's brother called the authorities and an ambulance was dispatched to the hotel at around 7:30 a.m., by which time Trintignant had already been in a coma for two hours. While still in a coma and on life support, she was flown by private jet days later to France—where she died on Aug. 1.

During the trial that followed, Cantat admitted he had tussled with Trintignant but insisted her death was a tragic accident. "We loved each other and our love was growing," he tearfully told judges. Family and friends of both Cantat and Trintignant attended, including the actress' mother Nadine, who was directing her daughter in the Colette production. Cantat's mother and father, as well as members of his band, sat nearby. Cantat was clean-shaven and seemingly calm throughout the trial—in stark contrast to his earlier appearance at a pre-trial hearing where he looked disheveled and dejected.

The multimillionaire singer, held in the Czarist-era Lukiskes Prison since his arrest, told judges he slapped Trintignant four times in a drunken

stupor—contradicting prosecutors who said he fatally punched her at least 19 times in a jealous rage. "Everything happened very fast," he said during the trial. "Never, never did I want things to happen that way. This hand should never have risen. And I do not accept myself having raised this hand."

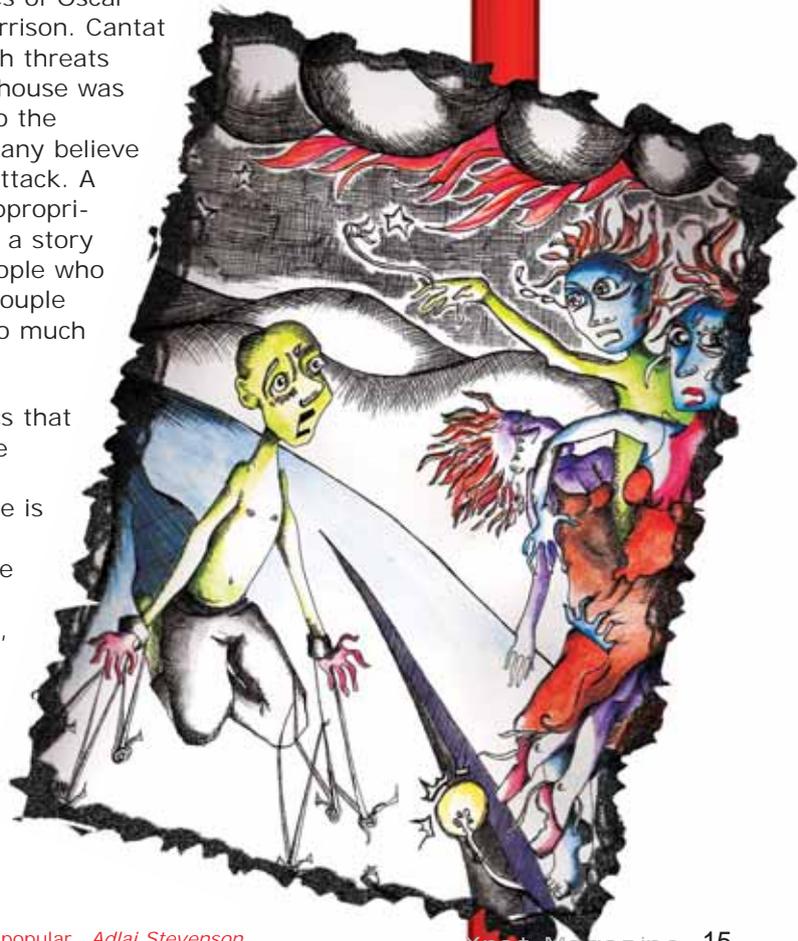
Nadine Trintignant scoffed at Cantat's claim that her daughter's death was unintentional. "He should

"Canat admitted he had tussled with Trintignant but insisted her death was a tragic accident"

have stopped after the first blow, but he just kept on beating my Marie," she told the court after Cantat's testimony. "He is a killer."

Trintignant is buried at the Pere Lachaise Cemetery in Paris, close to the graves of Oscar Wilde and Jim Morrison. Cantat has received death threats and his Marseille house was recently burned to the ground in what many believe to be a revenge attack. A tragic, yet fully appropriate, conclusion to a story that befits the people who constructed this couple that were loved so much by their public.

It is said in politics that the people get the leaders that they deserve. The same is true of cultural iconography. If the French embody such a tale of sex, depravity and murderousness, then the UK truly deserves the cultural void that is David Beckham and his fish of a wife.

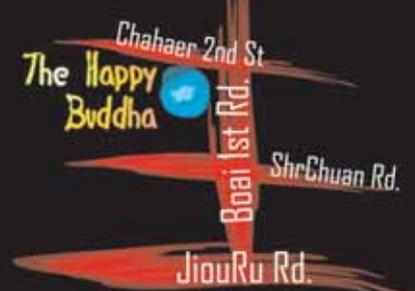




The Happy Buddha

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in skill opposed.

Answers Random Toppers of the Pops

By Preston Ramsay

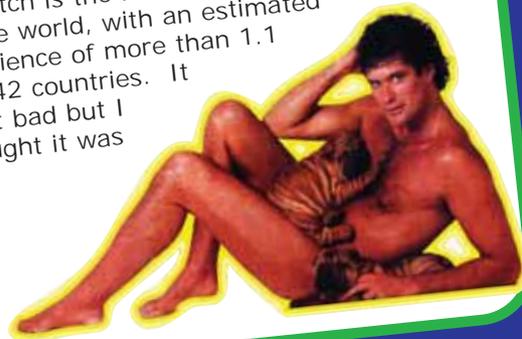
You can't argue preference, but there are some things that are so damned popular that they just can't be ignored. We've collected a few for you here in the Top of the Pops. Did you ever wonder what's the most popular:

Drug

You may prefer crack, however the most popular drug on the planet is actually caffeine, so put down that pipe and grab a cup.

Television Show

David Hasselhoff is not just a German phenomenon. Baywatch is the most widely viewed TV series in the world, with an estimated weekly audience of more than 1.1 billion in 142 countries. It wasn't that bad but I never thought it was that good.



Film

The top-grossing movie of all time, with a worldwide box office revenues of \$1,835,300,000, is Titanic. I didn't enjoy it, but a billion people can't be wrong.

My Space Member

Tia Tequila, a porn-star looking Asian vixen and self-proclaimed "fasion whore" from Hollywood CA, is the most popular person on myspace.com with over 250 billion hits. I have no idea why.



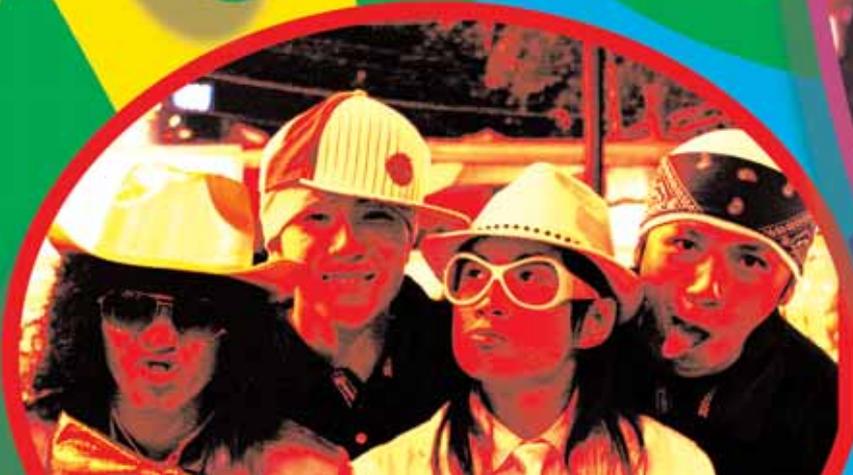
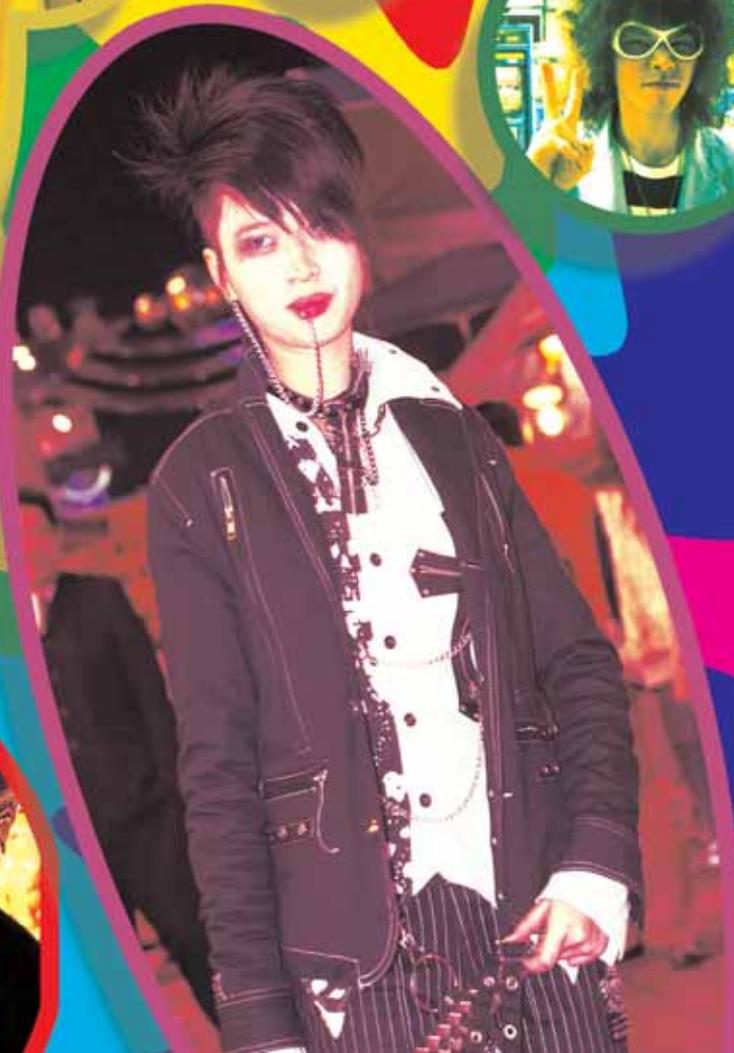
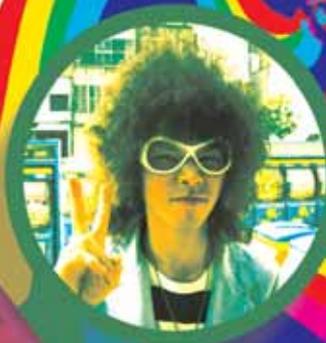
Language

The most spoken language in the world is Mandarin (Chinese) with 1,075,000,006 people claiming it as their mother tongue. Why am I here again?

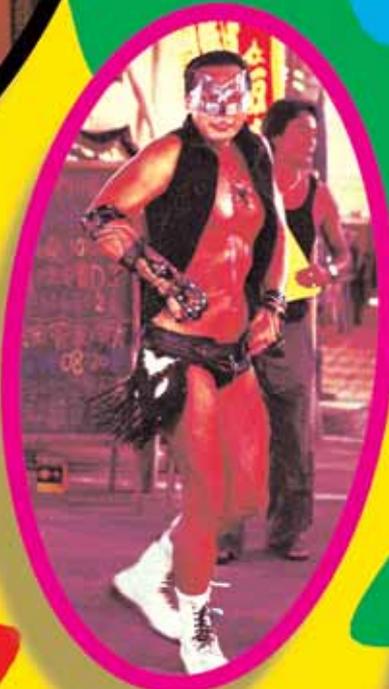
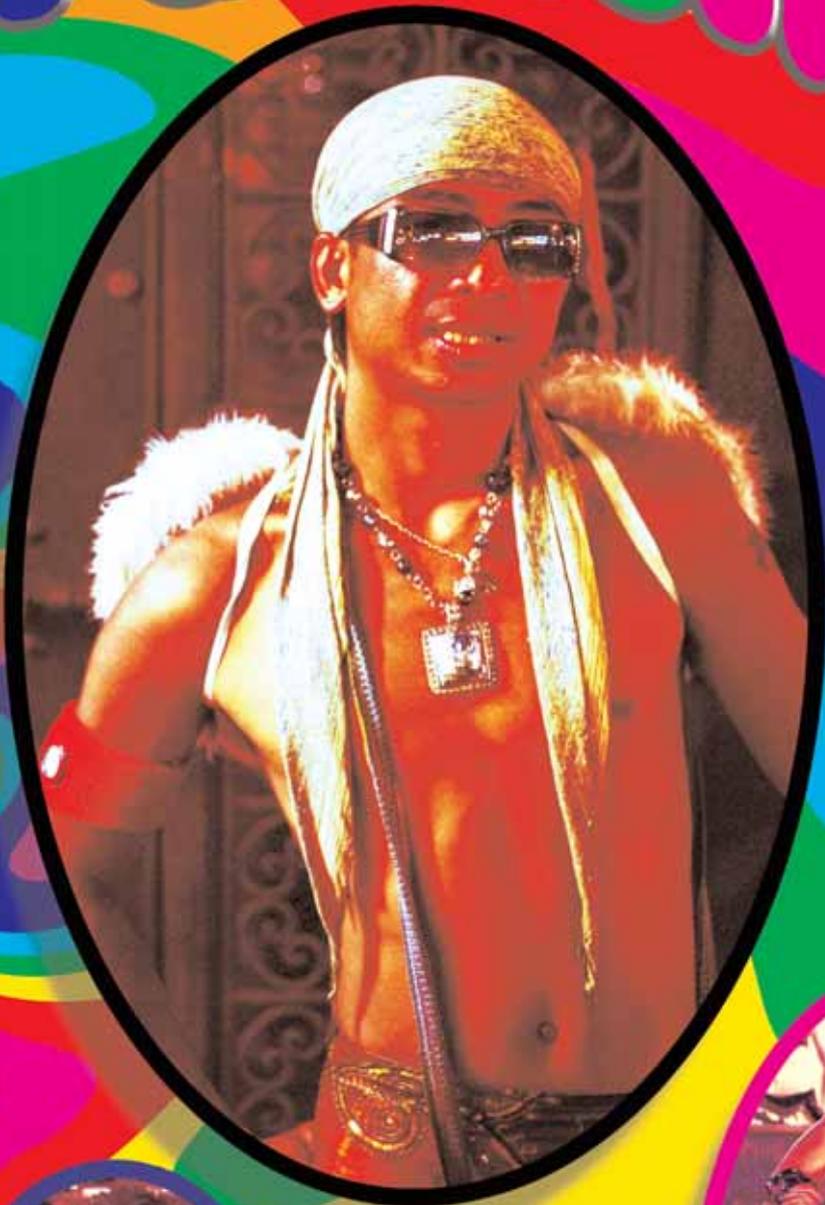
We here at Xpat think that the coolest thing about this crazy island is the clothing. People here will, and do, wear anything that tickles their fashion bone without an inkling of concern for the opinions of others. The result is some of the boldest outfits we've ever seen. So, for your viewing pleasure, we sent our crack photography team into the streets to bring you the best of Taiwan's

Quacky

Photography by staff



fashion



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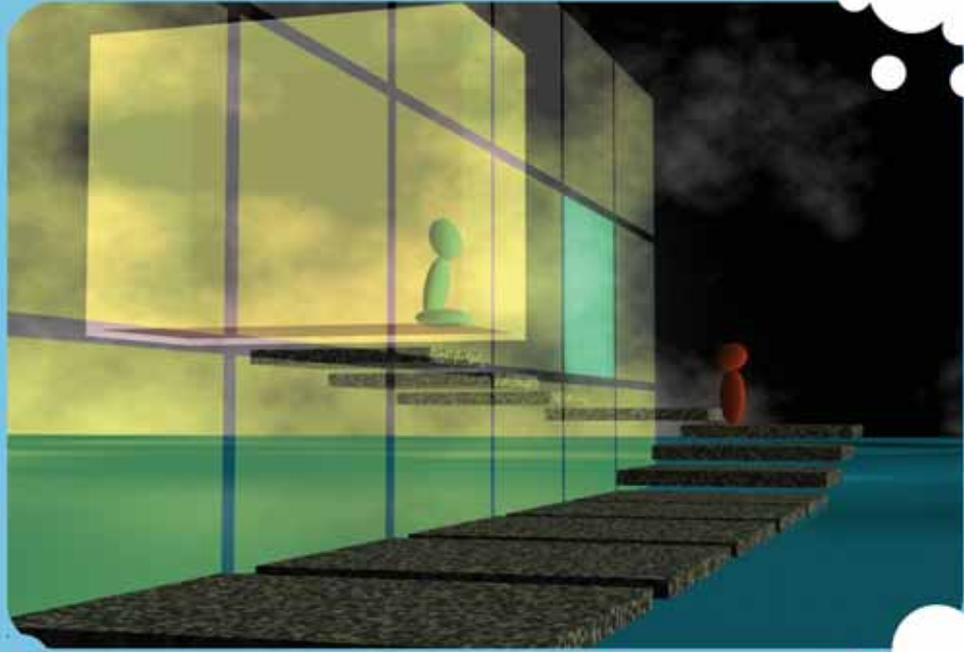
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looks aren't everything, especially when you're the American Spelling Bee champion

by Andrew Grothwaite
artwork by Annie Jin

"We'll be right back after this break with more live spelling."

I dare anyone to switch stations after a sales-pitch like that. The "live" element was the clincher for me, no ordinary pre-recorded spelling bee, this one.

In case you're wondering, a thirteen-year-old with a fluffy brown moustache took first place. Traditionally not a great look for a girl, but with the thick-lensed glasses and immense spelling power, she made it work.

How can TV in this country be so consistently disappointing? During my three years in Taiwan, I've seen several positive changes and improvements, but not so with television. Have you noticed the Taiwan networks' peculiar obsession with Steven Seagal? Rarely a week passes without him gracing my screen at least once, and it's not unusual for two or three stations to vie for our affections with simultaneous Seagal screenplays. In each of them, he goes around looking like the big twat that he is, protecting a woman or some Native Americans from an evil company that pollutes the environment.

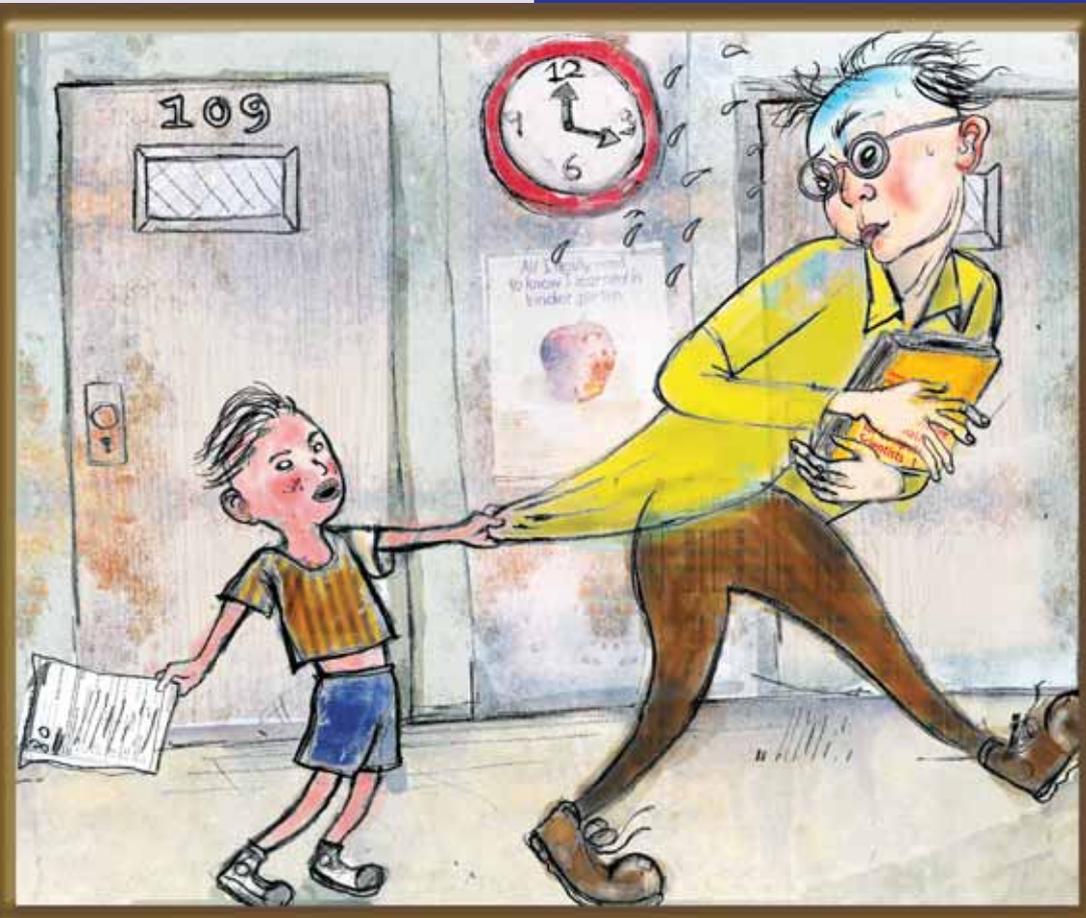
I know English is not the primary language in Taiwan, and I accept that, but I still can't help hating it when I put on the football game and hear two Taiwanese guys talking over the English commentary they can't even be bothered to mute out! It's like they're taunting me with a few English words here and there. They taunt me with Steve Irwin, too.

As irritating as talked-over football is, I prefer it to most of the crap ESPN airs. Its schedules are peppered with little treasures like live spelling bees and, my own personal favorite, the American Jump Rope Championship, full coverage.

If not for Donald Trump and "The Apprentice", I'd seriously consider switching-off and doing something interesting.

The Brief Life of Edward Sowles

by Gindy Lee
 artwork by Dennis Huang



again. He must have asked that girl from his botany class to tea." Her dreamy thoughts carried her to one of her own fantasies as she toyed with the sausage on her dinner plate. "Harrumph!" his father grumbled, rattling his newspaper at the table. She shook out of her fantasy and, glaring at him, deftly skewered the sausage.

Mornings after Edward didn't show for dinner, his mother – tending his lumps at the stove – gently prodded Edward to disclose his whereabouts. He hemmed and hawed yet had the prudence to not divulge the address of a professor's residence. His awkwardness proved to his mother that his relationship with the botany girl was romantically serious. Once she finalized this, she dropped the subject. She knew nothing of romance herself—she was married.

Edward Sowles needed his lumps. His mother often worried how his stubbornness and her placations would form his personality. Regardless, she made the only thing on God's Great Earth he would consume without titanic hassle—Wheatena with lumps, just so.

During his elementary years, if Edward made so low as a B+ on a test he stayed after school to retake it for a better score. He first asked his teacher if he could retake and after the refusal, he stood at her desk patiently. She told him to go home, ignored him when he didn't, and then continued with her duties.

Edward stood there.

The morning after a test he was standing, bedraggled and worn, at her desk. His teachers deliberated and thought it best to allow retests to save his health.

The rumor of his persistence preceded him in his secondary schools. He was either 'required' to stay after school for a retest or given a higher grade from teachers already jaded from the previous and current years' hellions.

On the night of his high school graduation, Edward's teachers drew their flasks and silently cheered.

In university, Edward Sowles walked so close to the wall that he was indistinguishable from the walkway. He continued his vigilance if a test went awry but found it more difficult to bring the university professors around. Many times, he resorted to following them home and standing outside their homes just off property lines to avoid police interaction. Edward always made good grades.

His mother had grand ideas of what he was doing when he was not in the house. "He's late for dinner

In the dean's office after much heated deliberation in his third year, Edward was deemed graduated: his incessant vigils outside his professors' homes gave them all the willies. Hence, they were doomed with his declaration of wont for his Masters degree. His professors made a pact to allow Edward Sowles the most efficient and best education coupled with handsome recommendations. It was in everyone's best interest.

Throughout Edward's last year of school, his parents were lusty for his graduation and his freedom—their freedom. Edward, himself, was apprehensive about his future. He looked to the flowery angel that visited him in his dreams. Nightly she hovered over his bed, hinting at what was to come, what he deserved.

At Edward's graduate school com-

mencement ceremony, his mother was in reverie: when her future daughter-in-law—the botany girl—proceeded across the stage, she saw their grandchildren running past her, laughing, playing tag. She longed to meet the girl with whom Edward whiled away so many evenings. “The engagement is coming, the wedding will be soon,” she excitedly whispered. “Harrumph!” his father grumbled rattling his newspaper, upsetting the hair of those seated before him.

Within weeks, the town newspaper announced the wedding of the botany girl to a dandy from New York. “That little *trollop!*” was all his mother could force from her twisted lips. Tears of rage and compassion for her son’s humiliation teemed. She knew Edward was suffering silently. Edward didn’t know the botany girl.

In his time after graduation, Edward fixated on his lifelong needs. Flipping through the channels on his parents’ Magnavox, he gauged that every contented man needed three things: a fulfilling career that served his world and his lifestyle, a beautiful loving wife to share life’s adventures, and nutritious Wheatena breakfast cereal as part of his daily healthy lifestyle.

Edward ordered his wife from a company that offered free shipping. His Chosen arrived with a fancy pot under her arm. Edward knew this meant the new Mrs. Sowles was an excellent cook. The pot was stowed in the kitchen for the creation of their first meal.

His parents held the small wedding ceremony in their living room. Family Feud aired early that week thus the proceedings were curt. At its conclusion, the bride and groom went to their nuptial bed and awkwardly approached consummation. After some fumbling, coaxing and embarrassed giggling, it was determined that the couple would bear no children – his betrothed had a penis. Refusing to pay a shipping fee to return this faulty merchandise, he chose to accept the circumstances and force matrimonial bliss. His wife further surprised him with a complete lack of cooking ability. Edward was puzzled until one day he found her squatting in the corner of the kitchen. Her fancy pot—a wedding gift handed down from many generations—was not for cooking.

Each morning Edward left the house

in search of his promising career—armed with his resumé, determination and the daily newspaper folded neatly in his back pocket. Each of these evenings he returned without employment convinced that the next day’s results would be fruitful. Edward remained jobless. He held it was indisputable that his talents exceeded those of his interviewers and quite likely their bosses—his grades were magnanimous. These people were inept, and he told them so.

For two years, and every day of them, he set out to oppugn those that kept him from which he was obligated. And for those two years, he returned to his penised wife sandwiched between his parents interacting boisterously with Richard Dawson on the Magnavox. He retreated to their bedroom and lay unsleeping on the bed, the scent of urine wafting from the chamber pot. The beautiful angel of his dreams hovered above him, now mocking, sneering.

Edward decided on suicide. He purchased a rope and left the receipt for his parents for its return. He secured the rope to the roof in a corner of the backyard and threaded his head through the noose. He kicked the stool from under him.

Edward hung for twenty minutes before he realized it was his innate stoic constitution that disallowed his death. The smell of the manure in his mother’s garden below assaulted his sinuses, depressing him further.

He took the folded-up newspaper from his back pocket and began to read while waiting the conclusion of his life. When his toes became numb, he stretched his legs to kick-start his circulation. He swung a little—and this brought him back to his reality. The anger at his inability to control his own bodily inclinations was too much. He bunched his body into a crouch and extended his

arms and legs rapidly trying to cinch the noose. Resting from this exertion, he drifted off to sleep.

Edward’s turbulent snoring brought his mother to the backyard. She scrambled into her kitchen and retrieved her best knife. Edward beat her away the entire time she slashed at his noose. Edward fell to the pavement below, breaking his left elbow.

Edward Sowles died from bacteria in his bloodstream from the dung in his mother’s garden.

Few people attended his funeral.

The botany girl sent flowers.



graffiti art in taiwan

by **steve williams and matt gibson**

photography by **easy. ryan. chris scott and matt gibson**

artwork by **easy. foochi. dzus. reach. sabe. et al**

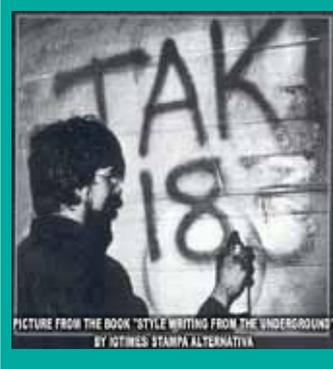
Hot damn! Graffiti has been around since the 1960s. That is if you don't count all that super old-school stuff like caveman paintings and Roman political messages.

Most graffiti artists agree that contemporary graffiti art started in the mid to late '60s in Philadelphia, PA, USA. The first known graffiti writers who bombed a city (spray painted in many different locations) were Cornbread and Cool Earl. They gained some media attention and, by the early '70s, graffiti art had made its way to the Manhattan district of New York City.

Taki 183 and Julio 204 are widely credited as the first graffiti artists in New York. Many of the early New York artists used their name or a nickname and the street they lived on as their tag. For example, Taki was his nickname and he lived on 183rd street, hence Taki 183.

In the early '70s graffiti spread from walls to subways. For many early artists, it was a matter of getting your tag on as many walls and subways as possible in order to gain fame. But

before long there were so many tags around the city that artists needed to do something different to stand out from the crowd. They started using different scripts, fonts, and calligraphic styles and then later increased the



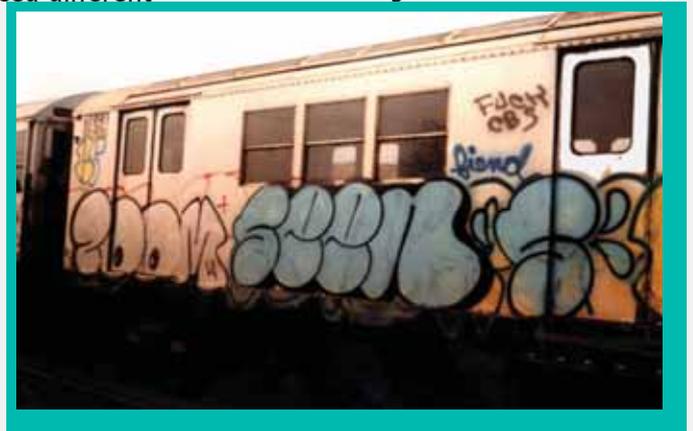
PICTURE FROM THE BOOK "STYLE WRITING FROM THE UNDERGROUND" BY GUYENES STAMPA ALTERNATIVA

size and thickness of their letters, outlining them with different colours. Writers found that using caps (spray can tips) from various aerosol products produced different spray paint lines and effects. This discovery led to the first modern graffiti "masterpieces".

As graffiti art evolved, style and originality became more important. This led to new lettering, such as block letters, leaning letters, blockbusters, 3-D letters and softie (bubble) letters. All of these innovations would lay the groundwork for the future.

In the '80s, due to increased security, it became harder to paint on subways and many shops kept spray paint locked up and refused to sell it to minors. Anti-graffiti city workers painted over graffiti art regularly, effectively discouraging subway graffiti artists. However, when the popularity of hip-hop culture exploded in the early '80s, many young Americans were drawn back to graffiti art. Freight trains were seen as an accessible way for writers to gain fame across America because the trains zig-zagged all over the country with the writer's pieces painted on the sides of box cars and tankers.

During the '80s, graffiti became recognized as a legitimate form of art and many artists developed intricate masterpieces and held exhibitions in well-known art galleries.



At the same time as graffiti artists began touring European art galleries, hip-hop started getting popular in Europe and many young Europeans began to write graffiti. Today, many of the world's most famous artists hail from European countries such as Germany, France, and England.

In the end of the '80s, hip-hop music and its culture gained popularity throughout the rest of the world, as did graffiti art, which brings us to the Taiwan graffiti art scene. The first graffiti in Taiwan was a picture of a Pink Floyd-esque man-dog hybrid spotted by local media in Taipei in '89.

Left: Graffiti artist, Taki 183
Above: Early NY subway graffiti by Seen
Opposite page: Graffiti art by Easy



Easy: local graffiti artist

Xpat magazine recently interviewed Easy, a well-known professional graffiti artist from Kaohsiung, and Ryan, purportedly the first graffiti artist in Taiwan (who was responsible for the original man-beast painting). They gave us the low-down on the graffiti scene in Taiwan and life as a graffiti artist in Taiwan.

Xpat: When did you start writing?

EASY: I started in 2001.

X: What motivated you to become a graffiti artist?

E: I always liked to paint when I was growing up. Then, Tribal clothing was very popular in early 2000 and many of the shirts had graffiti pieces on them. I thought this was very cool, so I began to do graffiti art on the roof of my house and then on walls around Kaohsiung city.

X: How did you learn graffiti art?

E: At first I copied graffiti art I found on the Internet, especially graffiti art done by an artist called CAN2. On the Internet, I found out where Kaohsiung graffiti artists liked to paint in the city. Then I met some local writers who taught me how to spray, showed me where to buy caps, and told me what type of spray paint I should use. They were much older than I was, but still very friendly. Then in late 2001, three guys named Reach, Jerry and Boss invited me into a graffiti crew called "Soul School".

X: Can you make money as a professional graffiti artist in Taiwan?

E: Yes. After a while, our crew began to make money from painting graffiti murals for businesses in various cities around the island, as well as at government-sponsored art shows. Now, I still paint wall murals, but I also do graphic design and teach graffiti art classes at Shu-Te University in Kaohsiung County.



X: When did graffiti art first come to Taiwan?

E: I think that Xue Yuan (Ryan) from Tainan (also a well-known skateboarder) was the first graffiti artist in Taiwan. I think he started writing in the late 80's or early 90's and then graffiti art grew in popularity during the 1990's. Many of

the artists were first into hip-hop and then got into graffiti art.

X: How do Taiwanese view graffiti art?

E: Well, I feel that Taiwanese people think of graffiti as an art form, even though it is difficult to paint in the city because there are no legal walls and very few places to spray graffiti where there are not many people.

In Taipei it is much easier to get an artist ID so you can paint at different government-owned locations. It is very hard to get an artist ID in Kaohsiung. We used to paint at Pier 2 when it was managed by Shu-Te University, but now it is managed by the government and we need cultural permission to paint there, which is difficult to get.

X: What about the future of graffiti art in Taiwan? Is it growing in popularity?

E: Many things in Taiwan are popular for a short amount of time. For example, donuts are a very popular food right now, but there will be something else to replace it soon. So, I think graffiti art is not as prevalent in Taiwan as it was before, but I know graffiti art will always be here because many graffiti artists don't care if it is popular or not.

We just do it because we love to do it, not because everybody likes it.





Top left to right: Dzus
Middle top and bottom
Bottom left to right: E





/Reach, Easy, Easy/Reach
n: Dzus/Foochi/Easy/Reach
asy, Sabe, Foochi/Reach



Ryan: Early graffiti artist

Xpat: Easy told us that you were probably the first graffiti artist in Taiwan. When did you start?

RYAN: When I was 18 years old - 1989.

X: Where did you do your first work?

R: On Min Sen E. Rd in Taipei.

X: What was it?

R: It was a man crossed with a dog. I saw it on MTV; a Pink Floyd video. It was funny, because a magazine found it and wrote about it, but they didn't know who did it, so they said it was probably a Pilipino worker.

X: Just blame it on the Philipino's, eh?

R: Yeah. Always blame the Pilipino, or the Thai. Then my mom saw the picture in the newspaper.

X: Uh oh. Did she spank you?

R: No.

X: Did you ever get in trouble for your graffiti?

R: Sometimes the police come in and say, "Why you do this?" But we always only graffiti old place. No people go there, so no trouble.

X: Where did you paint mostly?

R: Old factories.

X: What did you paint?

R: Cartoons.

X: What first gave you the idea to do graffiti?



R: I studied design in high school. I liked skate t-shirts and skateboard art - punk style. I learned about graffiti from MTV and skate magazines.

X: Do you still do graffiti?

R: Not much. Now I do design: posters, stickers, and clothes.

X: When did graffiti get popular in Taiwan?

R: 3 or 4 years ago. First was the skate, then hip-hop, then graffiti.

X: Is it still pretty popular?

R: No. It was popular for a short time. Now there's more stencil and poster style. I think is like pop graffiti.

X: What kind of art are you into?

R: I like pop art.

X: Who are some of your favorite artists?

R: Banksy from the UK and Obey from America.

X: Who are the best graffiti artists in Taiwan?

R: Soul School Team in Kaohsiung is very good.

**Above: Graffiti art in Taichung
Below: Ryan and graffiti art by various artists**





graffiti lingo and tools

caps: aerosol tips for different spray effects, types include: NY fat, NY thin, rusto, German outline, stencil, needle, pink dot, gold dot

graffiti crew/cru: collective group of graffiti artists

toy: inexperienced graffiti artist

biter: graffiti artist who copies other's work

nic: to steal artist's ideas or themes

graf: graffiti

writer: graffiti artist

moniker: graffiti nickname

king: the best writer



Above: Blackbooks are the starting point for many graffiti artists. Graffiti artists will refer to sketches when painting wall murals.

Left: 'PP Spray', a popular brand for graffiti artists in Taiwan. Different spray paint brands vary in paint thickness and spray quality.



Above: Aerosol can tips, or 'caps', are used for different spray effects, such as wide, narrow, sharp, misty, or calligraphic lines.

Directly above: Paint markers are used for quick tags on glass or plastic.

getting up: spraying name in many highly visible places

tag: a stylized version of a moniker

bomb/throw-up: a quick tag often consisting of block or bubble letters, an outline and sparse fill piece

piece: short for "masterpiece", a graffiti mural that requires a lot of skill and effort, also known as a burner

wildStyle: intricate and complex writing style, often illegible to those unfamiliar with graffiti art

etching: tagging with acid

scratchiti: tags carved with various sharp objects

stenciling: using stencils and spray paint

bombing: spraying graffiti in many locations around a city

buffing: removing graffiti

American Freeway Culture

by Travis Taylor
interview by Steve Williams

This present moment finds me in Kingston, Ont., Canada. A large, strange man enters my cousin's home, where I sit writing alone as Bob Dylan blares from vintage vinyl, "...ain't it hard to stumble, and land in some funny lagoon..."

Another large and strangely nervous young man, a roommate of my cousin, comes home after a tough day sweating over hot stoves and steaming bowls of soup, muttering about "women" and shaking his head in disbelief.

The strangely nervous man races upstairs to avoid contact with me and my bulging pupils, as the other man wanders like a larger-than-life South Park character, in search of a lost sketch book.

The house is cold because the thermostat is set to an energy-efficient level, but I'm comfortably clad in my Guatemalan woolen toque and green Merino sweater. It amazes me to think of how well dressed I am in hand-me-downs.

I'm attempting to arrange to drive a car to California en route to Kaohsiung, Taiwan, capitalizing on the cheap flights departing from LAX. The car service is run by an elderly British gent who seems increasingly confused each time we speak, a general kind of confusion that becomes helplessly condemned when he tries to comprehend my itinerary.

"What is it that you do again?" he asks each time over the phone, usually followed by, "Where are you from?" and, inevitably at some point during each conversation, "Can you remind me once again what it is that you're doing in Kingston?"

These are relevant questions for a car service to ask. Especially so of a sketchy drifter-type holding an expired New Brunswick driver's license and purporting vague Montreal connections including a residential telephone number that reaches an answering machine with a sexy woman's voice advertising a textile company, urging callers to "leave your credit card information after the tone, and we will get back to you."

With travel plans in perpetual limbo, my cousin and I have been having

some fantastic catch-up time and laughs — especially so at the Toucan the other night when a drunken Kingston nurse offered to take us home and play doctor in her nursing outfit.

(A few days later)

"...a drunken Kingston nurse offered to take us home and dress up in her nursing outfit."

I'm still waiting patiently, at this moment in Kingston's quietest tavern, just me and two beautiful barmaids. I'm near exhaustion following an all-night sex session and manic, pot and coffee-fueled day. My cousin and I ran all over town in winter jogging gear like some kind of hyper duo-bum twins, attempting to change his filthy collection of coins into paper money, unsuccessfully, at nearly every single Kingston financial institution — eliciting nothing more than strange looks and sourly-puckered mouths. No bills for change.

There are still places in the world where money means money, but no longer in this place. The last time someone dressed as the Fisher King was able to exchange a roll of pennies with song lyrics like "never love a woman" written on the side, Nixon was still lecturing Margaret Trudeau about the mating rituals of panda bears at White House state dinners.

Nowadays, if you're not associated with a business or a similar institution that has legitimate reasons to collect large amounts of change, and if your coinage isn't rolled perfectly in Chinese mass-produced see through plastic receptacles, you're considered

some sort of odd cancer or mutant, deviant societal-boil, and your dime is no longer worth a dime. Look the part loser, or stay out of this game of trance.

(A few days later)

I check quickly out the window to assure the Lexus hasn't yet been stolen. When staying at a former crack house in Kingston with an unalarmed luxury automobile parked in the driveway, it's a good idea to sleep with one eye open.

The car is staying well hidden, tucked neatly beneath a good foot of snow that continues to fall steadily. I barely had a chance to really stretch her out yesterday, getting up to 160 kmh only once before the snow started falling and the rally tires started slipping and sliding — nowhere near the 280 she's registered for.

(A few days later, in Vandalia, Illinois)

I sped across the US into the plains this morning, the Lexus flying across the Kaskaskia River, straight up the off-ramp at 75 mph then into the Chuckwagon Café — "Hunters are welcome", where this present moment finds me.

I find myself fearful to make much eye contact with the Americans; this is only the third time I've left the Cowboy Junkie and Tom Waits-laden comfort of my luxury automobile. I find I don't have much to

say to the neo-colonists. I just want to watch, participate and learn — filling up my tank with premium octane to fuel the efforts of the boys abroad, fingering the 'CNN Presents: War in Iraq' DVD at the freeway filling station with a tear in my eye, wondering where I can get me one of those little white ribbons to put on the back of my car.

Yesterday I sped through a toll at the



NY/PA border. Spying the attendant in the rearview leap from his hut, bent over trying to read my license plate, I decided to stop and back-up after briefly considering a speedy getaway.

"I'm sorry sir," I said in my best subservient voice. "I thought I saw a green light."

"That was for Eeeee-Zeeee pay," the attendant whined, his voice reminiscent of a fourth grader whose last piece of bubblegum I once stole. "Pay more attention next time," he bawled with great moral authority.

God bless America, if for her freeway billboards alone:

"1-800-DIVORCE"; and,

"WE WILL REMEMBER 9/11" (on the giant, flashing filling-station tower) and

"PORNOGRAPHY IS HARMFUL" (aside photo of a saddened little girl) and

"WHEN THE NEWS MATTERS MOST, LIKE NOW" (with photos of bin Laden, Hussein and Kim Jong II) and

"SERENITY FOR SALE" (a gated-community advertisement) and

"FREE 72-OUNCE STEAK" (accompanied, in small print, with "if you can finish it within one hour")

...and of course all the competing church-sponsored messages are cleverly placed beside the adult video mega-depots, inspiration perhaps for the trucker who just can't quite wait 'til he's home.

(Later, at a Denny's 90 miles north of Phoenix)

An over-sized American flag covers the wall facing my booth as the Lexus cools down out front following her 2,500 mile trip. She's a little dirty, but I've stolen some towels from the various East Indian

owned-and-operated motels that I've slept in en route so that I can do a quick clean-up before delivery later today.

I should have had the flag wrapped around my shoulders last night as I sped across the New Mexico and Arizona desert, the sheer speed caused the car to shake and rattle,

**"I'm sorry sir,"
I said in my
best subservient
voice, "but I
thought I saw a
green light."**

the sound-system speakers pumped an incredible volume of bass, and sweet Margo Timmins screamed at me, "Johnny, beeee-haaaaave yourself!!!"

The car and stereo vibrations combined to take hold of the entire automated driver's seat itself. With my long and lanky legs confined in the tiny coupe, and the left side of my body pressed-up tight against the car door speaker – the pulsations caused a throb and tingle that traveled

straight from my knee to my nuts.

I've never before known such pleasure.

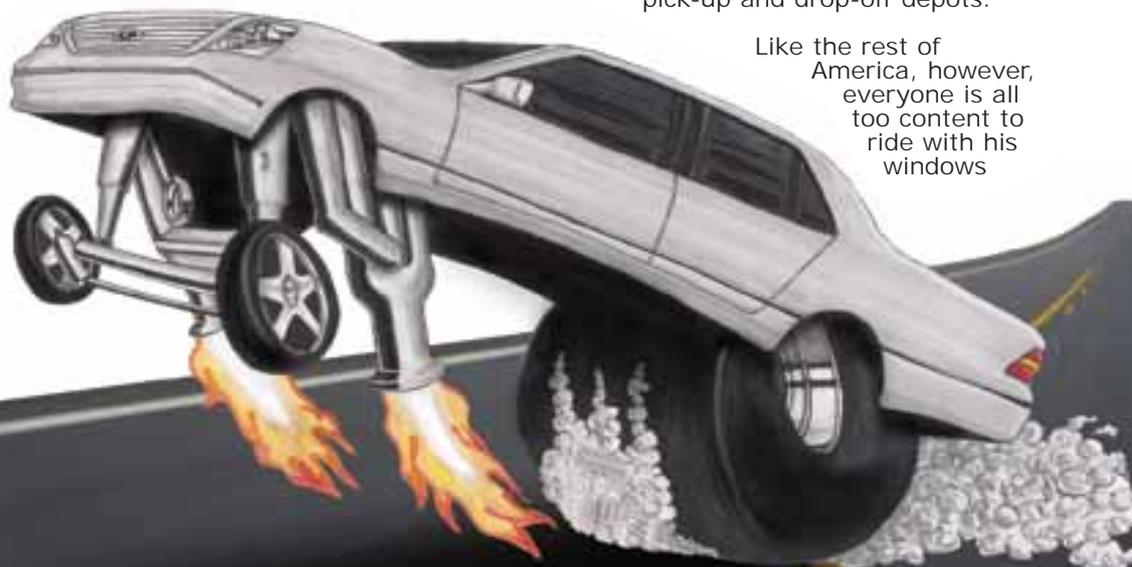
I flicked on CNN at the dodgy Wavering Pines motel this morning, and noticed how very carefully they avoided showing their two top news stories back-to-back. The first piece was coverage from Saddam's trial, including the graphic testimony of five witnesses describing torture under the old Iraqi regime at Abu Ghraib prison. After sandwiching in some fear-inducing fluff of little relevance, token warthog Condoleezza Rice's European scutwork vacation was detailed, complete with clips of her attempts to "defend", cleft-tongue and all, against allegations the CIA has flown al-Qa'ida prisoners to various covert prisons in Eastern Europe and tortured them there – including a German man who was allegedly picked up in a case of mistaken identity and flown to Afghanistan, where he was detained and tortured for 5 months.

He is currently launching a lawsuit against the CIA.

(Later)

Duke was right; Phoenix *is* hell. A noisy, polluted matrix of retirees, yuppie business-types and a Latino underclass. Like the rest of America, Phoenix might have a bit of potential if it banned all vehicles except delivery vans, taxis and buses – then implemented public bicycle pick-up and drop-off depots.

Like the rest of America, however, everyone is all too content to ride with his windows



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American Freeway Culture continued

up in re-circulated air conditioned cars and pass judgment on other drivers they've never met. These cities are not a part of nature, of the external world. They are transit grids upon which we commute day-to-day, place-to-place, living our lives inside – inside our homes, our offices, our cars. There's a parallel between the way America views her cities and the way her inhabitants view their bodies – as though they are two distinct and mutually exclusive entities – our bodies a separate vehicle from us, our cities something separate from nature. Take a vacation to a nature preserve in your RV if you want to get outdoors.

(The following day)

I'm sleepy as hell as I reflect upon my last 24 hours – a last minute repacking and jettisoning of winter items in Camp Verde, Arizona; the successful delivery of the Lexus and the successful bulging of my wallet to the tune of nearly an American grand; a serendipitous meeting with anarchists at the counter-culture cafe in Phoenix; a night of freestyle rapping in front of an open mic by the young and hiply dispossessed; standing on an Arizona freeway at 3:30 a.m.

beside a smoking Greyhound bus, a minority white guy surrounded by a fair sampling of the black and

"...the sheer speed causing the car to shake and rattle...and sweet Margo Timmins screaming at me, "Johnny, beeee-haaaave yourself!!!"

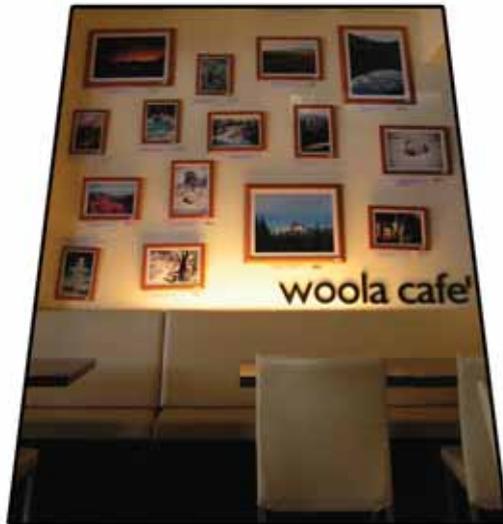
Latino-American labor underclass; the lengthy bus ride from hell that I thought would never get me to LAX in time for my flight.

And now here I sit, enthralled by the petite bodies of China Airline stewardesses that brush up against me in my aisle seat every few moments. I plan to have a beer before nodding off into some Asian fantasy dream that could send wood jutting straight out into the aisle.

I'm calm as hell but likely underestimating the fear that will grip me when I land in a city of 1.5 million people without speaking the language or knowing a soul. A challenge, though, is always good for the spirit. And the only moment that exists right now is the present one. If I can harangue another Suntory Malt beer from one of these sexy stewardesses, and catch a little shut-eye – perhaps I can challenge myself to seize the moment when I arrive in Kaohsiung.

As I reflect upon my four days of American freeway culture, I'm not really sure of what to say. I'm trying to be less hateful lately. Americans *are* very good drivers. They do get lots of practice.

the art of relaxation



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Bitter Espresso

by Mark Evans

If I see another coffee franchise wannabe open up in Taiwan, I'm going to spew. Is pop culture characterised by the very few flogging an inferior product under the guise of clever branding and marketing? In the case of soda drinks, fried chicken or hamburgers that's fine, but I wish they'd stop molesting the beautiful goddess espresso with three layers of syrup makeup and 12 ounces of milk foundation.

I'm not going to recant the over-worked objections about the ubiquitous and reassuring nature of large franchises, the acres of stainless steel, high-tech cash registers and the smell of disinfectant that wraps you gently against the great bosom of the corporate motherhip. I'm objecting to the eagerness with which businessmen embrace a product and reduce it to the very worst it can be to make it fast and cheap and flog it to the masses.

But, the packed tables and long queues suggest that marketing and research have paid off and the consumer is happy. So, what's my problem? I want no part of it. I want to listen to the symphony of a well-balanced espresso harmonising its sweet Brazilian tones with the big brass dry fruit of a Yemen Mocha as prepared by a master roaster and brought to fruition in a mug by a skilled barista.

Espresso preparation is an art. To capture the volatile aromatics present in ground coffee you must tease and cajole them into the cup. The finest and most noble flavours are delicate, fleeting compounds. The basis of fine espresso is fresh, carefully roasted beans. If prepared properly, the final coffee extract is as thick as honey. Espresso should offer a taste balanced between varietal flavours of the regional coffees used in the blend, and the nuttiness produced by the roast. To reduce such a fragile balance to a 'saleable unit'

going stale across thousands of miles of ocean to be burnt into a cup by a half-trained monkey hanging off a dirty porta filter is a contemptible culinary transgression.

I've scoured Kaohsiung's cafés and found that for every five café owners who respond to the question "Why did you open a café?" with "To make money," there is one who has devoted himself to the art of espresso preparation. You'll usually find him tucked away in a hidden alley or empty street, unable to afford the massive rent on a high-traffic corner, quietly roasting away or fretting over the cleanliness of his equipment and the freshness of his beans. They've been there for years, unconcerned about the current wave of fly-by-nighters slinging dirty water just to make a buck off the magic bean, and they should be rewarded.

Maybe the situation is not so bleak. People yearn for some soul in the places where they hang out; to be part of a real scene, not some cookie-cutter clone fallen from the business school womb in a pastel pile of blonde wood and green logos. So I urge you to join us. Break from that warm nugget of reassurance of the corporate bar and find some soul! If we meet some day, I'll be happy to help you find the true merchants of this wonderful brew.

How will you find me? I'll be the one heaving my lunch on those beautifully designed green logos.



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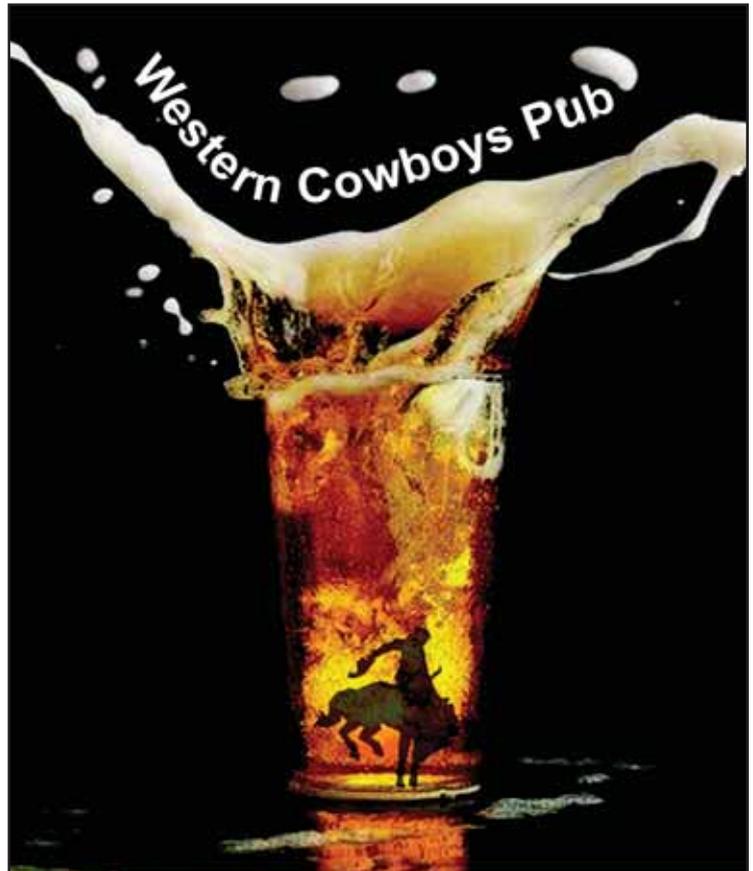
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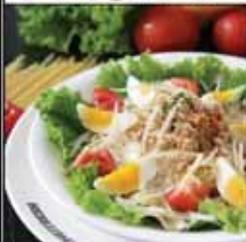
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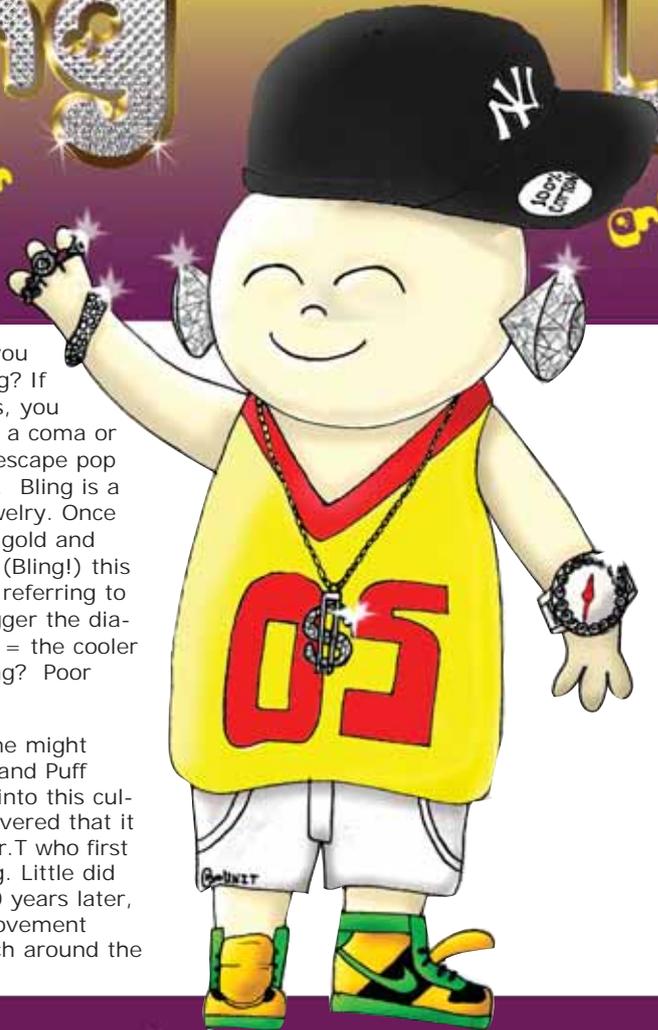
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Bling

by Danny Ushen

Bling

network by Steve Williams



You are not cool unless you have bling. What is bling? If you don't know what bling is, you have either just woken from a coma or have been lucky enough to escape pop culture for the last 10 years. Bling is a slang term for expensive jewelry. Once an adjective describing how gold and diamonds glitter in the light (Bling!) this term is now used as a noun referring to expensive shininess. The bigger the diamond= the higher the karat = the cooler you are. What!?! Got no bling? Poor people are not cool.

Who started this craze? Some might argue it was Jennifer Lopez and Puff Daddy, but I delved deeper into this cultural phenomenon and discovered that it was actually the A-Team's Mr.T who first rocked the bling-bling. Little did he know that, 20 years later, his fashion movement would stretch around the

jocks I know look like they have been dressed by colorblind Eskimos. So why are we letting them design shoes? I don't care if he's last year's NBA point leader: orange and green do not look good together! Moreover, I am not an astronaut and see no reason for my shoes to shoot out laser beams or glitter. Well, okay, laser beams are kind of cool.

I can't end this rant without mentioning how ridiculous music lyrics have gotten. There was a time when music was poetry. Lyrics made us look into our souls and question the meaning of life. Now, it seems that the stupider the lyrics are, the more popular the song becomes. Superstar rappers like 50 Cent mumble about absolutely nothing and are heralded as musical geniuses. Come on, people! The man is the Barney of rap music. One very interesting thing that 50 Cent and Barney the Dinosaur have in common is



"Mr.T pities the fool that don't wear bling."



world reaching faraway countries; even Taiwan. Mr.T was unavailable for comment but sources close to the '80's star relayed this message to us: "Mr.T pities the fool that don't wear bling."

No little girl's private jewelry stash is safe from the Mr.T movement. Many a 20-something man has a shameful secret. They raid their little sisters' bedrooms plundering their Little Princess fashion accessories to wear clubbing. One glance at the dance floor and you'll see dozens of young men, acting like thugs, wearing costume jewelry that would make an eight-year-old girl keel over with jealousy.

The other day at a club, I saw a young, blinged-out thug wearing a sideways baseball cap with 'Compton' emblazoned across the front, and the size sticker pasted on the brim. After working in clubs in Taiwan, I have become friends

with several bling-wearing bandits. None of them knows what Compton is. Most think it's a basketball team, and others say it's someone who Gwen Stefani is dating.

Have you noticed the plethora of young Taiwanese Catholics walking around wearing rosary beads and crosses? This is not God's influence. It's the influence of Jay, the music video king. This purveyor of Taiwanese pop culture pranced around in a video sporting this Catholic jewelry. Thus, organized religion is now being twisted into something it isn't.

While on the topic of ridiculous fashion movements, I might as well get it all off my chest. Has anyone else noticed how ridiculous shoes are starting to look? Try to buy a pair of running shoes that don't look like the footwear offspring of Elton John's and Shaq's wardrobes. Jocks have never been the most fashion conscious people in the world. Hell, most

that they both move exactly the same way when they perform - watch a video of Barney and then put on any music video by 50 Cent. See?

Furthermore, pop song lyrics are getting worse and worse. Hip Hop lyrics in the '80s and early '90s challenged society, protested discrimination and fought racism. Now, most lyrics revolve around bling, booty and bitches. It's sad that such a promising music style was destroyed by mass marketing. No one seems to even notice this loss. The youth of the world are eating up this trash.

I leave you with brilliant song lyrics of Miss Gwen Stefani, cutting us to the core: "This shit is bananas. B-A-N-A-N-A-S. This shit is bananas. B-A-N-A-N-A-S".

Workin' Up a Sweat

By Dana Lee

Exercise has become an integral part of pop culture, and a necessary evil in my life. With four million people crammed into a city that is roughly one-seventeenth the size of Ottawa, getting out for a workout is a bit more difficult than one might imagine. Allow me this rant.

You can't take a brisk walk down a city sidewalk, because you will be constantly swerving around street vendors and food stalls, dodging errant scooters jockeying for a parking space, or trapped behind the slow-moving local out for a stroll. North Americans tend to walk at a pace that is much faster than the average Asian, even when we aren't late for work. The locals must think we are always in a rush to get somewhere. They just meander down the middle of the sidewalk, stopping abruptly in front of every window that interests them.

If you are in a hurry, you will constantly find yourself tapping the locals on the shoulder and saying "jeh gwo" which literally means "please give me some light" or, loosely translated, "please move over". In most cases, you are better off walking along the side of the street, dodging swerving scooters and taxis coasting to the curb. Forget walking for exercise.

Running tracks exist in most districts of the city, but unless you have time to do your exercise mid-morning or mid-afternoon, you may have trouble finding your own space in a lane. The Taiwanese like to take their daily exercise in the park, so the track will be full before and after working hours, and during lunch. In addition, if you are sensitive to poor air quality, or have any breathing problems at all, you do *not* want to be exercising outdoor in Taipei, even on a 'clear' day. The clearest air in Taipei is right after a big rain. But

on those days, the park running-tracks are packed with people all day long. Another obstacle in the park running tracks is the dog-on-the-loose. Leashes are extremely rare in Taiwan, as dogs are trained with a

instinct and run to confront/greet them.

As the center of the running-track oval is the most popular place to let dogs loose for a run, you can imagine the scene. Dogs are frolicking in the grassy center of the oval, chasing balls and catching frisbees.

People are running and walking around the track. As newcomers approach the oval and prepare to cross the track into the center, their unleashed dogs spot the other dogs and go barreling across the lanes toward their canine comrades. Anyone running in those lanes must possess great leaping and diving skills to avoid being floored by a four-legged sprinter. In light of these conditions, running in the park isn't my favorite thing either.

Perhaps another sign of exercise being popular culture is the numerous fitness centers and gyms that now operate in Taiwan. California Fitness: a huge American-style chain with glossy black tiles and tracklights, has several locations. However, if you have an aversion to any of the following – earsplitting dance music, lineups at weights machines, crowded aerobics studios and cramped change rooms – this scene isn't for you either.

At CA Fitness, your first hint of what is to come is the six or seven uniformed staff members waiting to greet you when you approach the entrance to the gym. With their club music spilling into the street, they approach – no – *confront* passersby with free weekly trial coupons, in an effort to drum up more memberships. They are already full to capacity, so if you buy a membership now, you will most likely be



switch of bamboo. From puppyhood, the master takes the dog for frequent unleashed walks. If it strays or gets into mischief, it is whacked with the training switch. This is difficult for many foreigners to bear, but I am told that it is the preferred method for training dogs. They learn the ways of the city and, if accidentally let out of the house without a leash, they are less likely to go running crazily into the street. The problem with this method, however, is that an unleashed dog is still a dog; if it encounters other canines, it will most likely act on



restrict-
ed to exercising between the hours
of 10 a.m. to 12; 2 p.m. to 4 p.m.,
or 10 o'clock to midnight.

If you opt to splurge on an annual membership, a personal trainer will be forced upon you, at a ridiculous hourly rate. These minimally trained fitness staffers do little more than supervise the client while he or she attempts to use the various complicated machines. They don't advise the client against doing exercises that are dangerous, and they aren't necessarily confident about how to use each machine. Basically, they just double the number of bodies in the gym. But it doesn't really matter anyway. Most of the members of the gym are not there to exercise, but to meet people. The fact that they do their hair and makeup *before* exercising (males included) is a dead giveaway.

Recently, my boyfriend stumbled upon an activity that we thought just might be the answer to getting some exercise and stress relief from life in the busy city. Mountain and riverside cycling paths are abundant in Taipei, and bike shops are on every corner. So, kitted out from head to toe, we wedged our bikes in the elevator and out into the cacophony of noise that is our city. At first I thought I would have a heart attack as taxis and buses kept cutting me off while I rode along the curb, but I got used to it. When it was really gridlocked, I dodged pedestrians on the sidewalk.

When we finally turned off the main street about ten minutes later, it was like entering another world. The

cor-
rugated iron
buildings lining the narrow
alley shut out all the noise from the
thoroughfare we left behind; the
silence closed in around us. As we
began our uphill climb, the exhaust
fumes from the traffic seemed to
clear; we filled our lungs with cool
fresh air.

The narrow street thinned to a
tractor-path winding up and
around the mountain through
Taipei's biggest hillside grave-



The next thing I knew, I had a dog on either side of me, teeth bared.

yard. Spindly palms
were the only vegeta-
tion among the colorful
tombs covering every
square meter of the slope. At one
bend in the road, ghostly music
could be heard wafting from speak-
ers above an altar that was cut into
the hillside. The climb up the hill
was hard work, but worth it. From
the crest, we could see most of the
city, and looked Taipei 101 straight
in the eye.

After a few minutes' rest and a
drink of water, we started to head
downhill. What happened next just
may prove to be the main obstacle
to my becoming a regular cyclist in
the Taipei hills. As we rounded a
corner and hit the brakes in order to
avoid careening into the graveyard
(there are no guardrails, save a few
rusty mattresses on the sharpest
turns), we heard a strange grum-



bling.
Standing on the
bluff above us were three of
the blackest, most menacing looking
feral dogs I have ever seen. All I
could think was "The Hound of the
Baskervilles". But, as they hunt at
night and sleep all day, we still had
a few hours' grace. The curs just
watched us balefully as we picked
up speed and pedaled away.

We thought we were in the
clear when a scooter with two
dogs riding the running board
approached us from behind. As
the driver slowed for the curve,
the dogs spotted Matt and I
cycling ahead. What dog can
resist the urge to take a bite
of a spinning tire — especially
when there's a fleshy calf beside it?
The next thing I knew, I had a dog
on either side of me, teeth bared.
Spurred to action by the intriguing
ruckus, the graveyard dogs joined
the pack at my legs. I kicked at
them, still cycling, and tried to
sound aggressive: "Go! Get away!"
Thankfully, the owner caught up to
us and ordered his dogs back into
obedience. The feral mutts stood
posturing in the middle of the lane,
too lazy to keep up the chase.
Adrenalin coursing through my legs,
I continued wobbily down the hill
and then home. If I ever return, it
will be with an air horn.

We discussed the day's events over
Vietnamese spring rolls later that
evening, and considered our
remaining options for exercise.
Windsurfing, anyone?

Yenshuei Fireworks Festival

by David May

photography by Matt Gibson,

Chris Scott, and Richard Matheson

YENSHUI FANG PAO:

A raucous festival of fireworks meant to cleanse the Tainan county town of Yenshui.

During the Ching Dynasty (around 1875) a cholera epidemic overwhelmed Yenshui for more than 20 years. The townsfolk invited the God of War Kuan Kung to help ward off this evil. The citizens carried statues of Kuan Kung on palanquins and paraded through the town letting off fireworks. Shortly thereafter, the plague disappeared. The festival has continued ever since.

Population of Yenshui: approx 30,000

Number of people in Yenshui during this festival: 100,000 – 200,000



Approximate height of a hive of bottle rockets: two meters

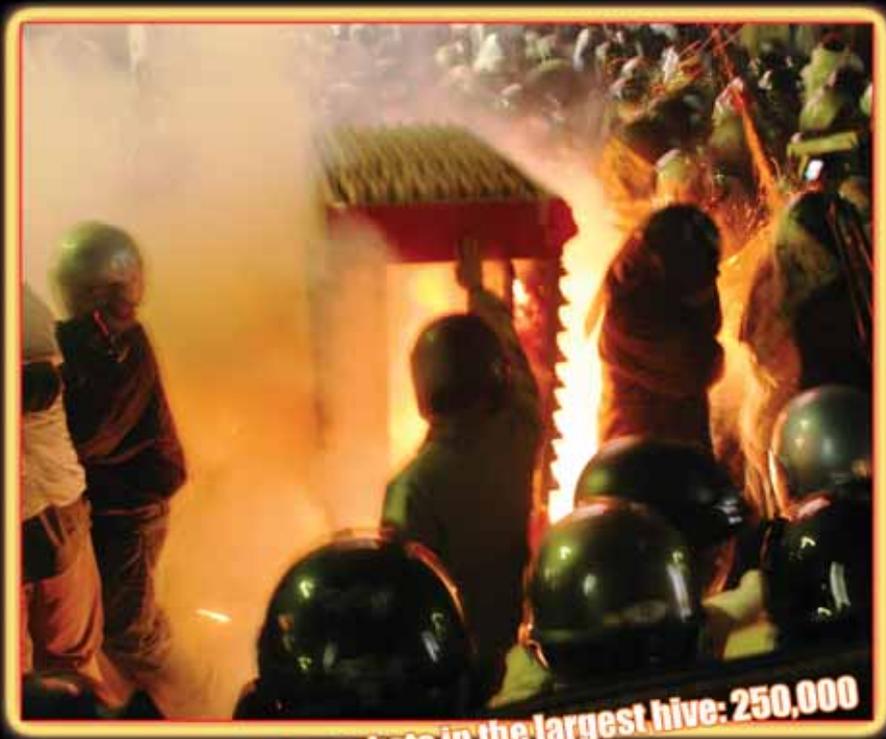


Length of time for a hive

The festival is held for two days on the first full moon of each lunar year.



...re to let out all its bottle rockets: 10 - 20 seconds



Number of bottle rockets in the largest hive: 250,000

Recommended attire:
full-face helmet
towl or scarf (wrapped around the neck)
gloves,
jacket
long pants
boots



Number of bottle rockets let off on the final night: 2,000,000+

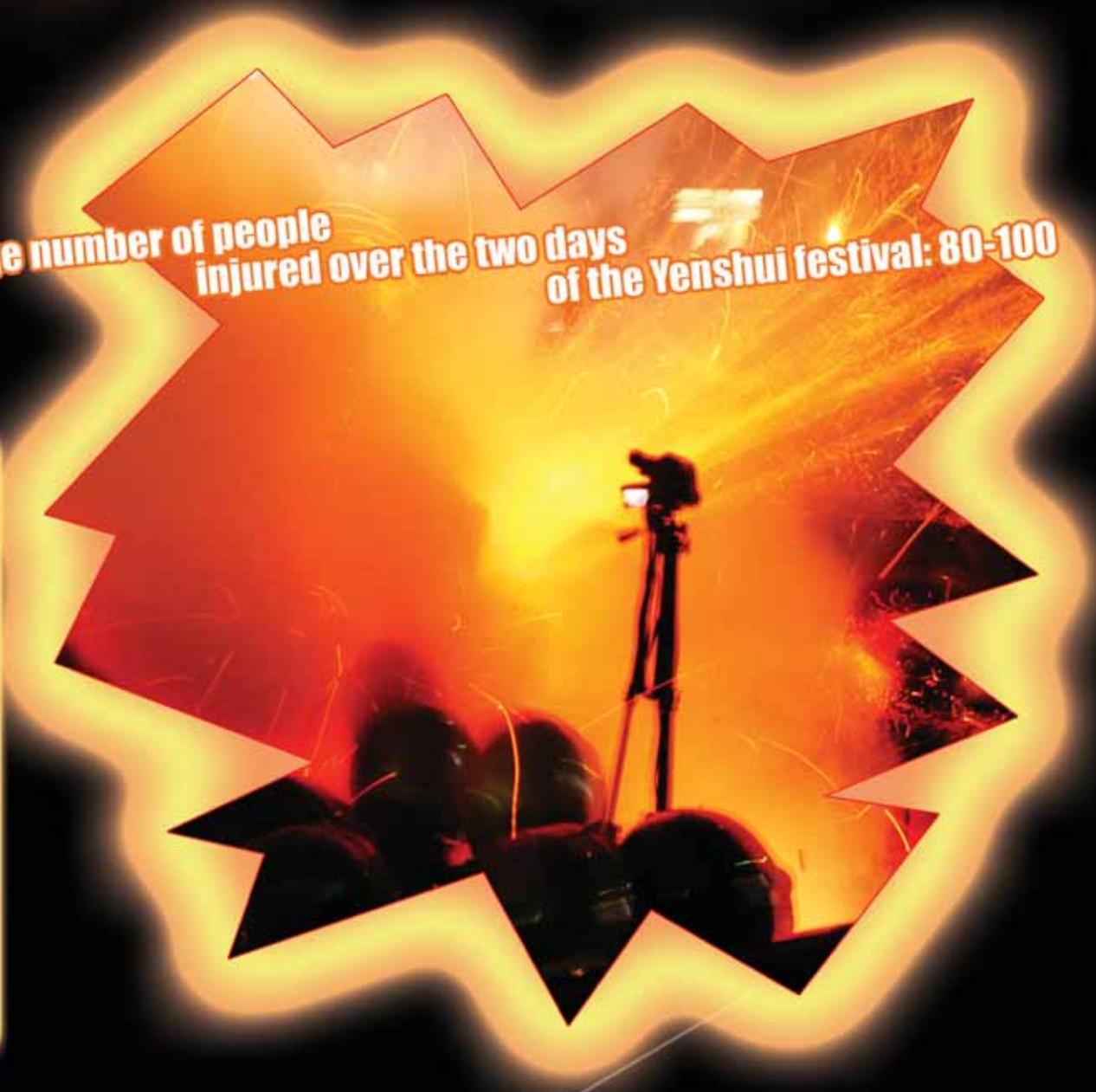


Normal daily maximum density of air particulate matter (PM): 125 micrograms



Recording of air particulate matter at Yenshui Festival's peak: 326.5mg. per sq. meter.

Average number of people injured over the two days of the Yenshui festival: 80-100





Pornography (n) (pôr-ngr-f): creative activity; writing or pictures or films etc., of no literary or artistic value other than to stimulate sexual desire [syn: porno, porn, erotica, smut]. Source: dictionary.com

When the Internet was coming of age in the early 1990s, few of us realized the impact it would have on our daily lives, and even fewer people imagined how images of naked women would take over the Internet, creating at least one more popular catch phrase: Internet porn. This, of course, is in addition to traditional sources of pornography such as magazines, films, videos, DVDs and literature. Millions, if not billions, of dollars have changed hands in the name of erotica. Sources say 42% of Internet users view on-line pornography.

Go to the modern measuring stick of popularity—that being, ironically, the Internet, and enter the search word “porn” and you’ll find no less than 145,000,000 entries or 86 Internet pages. The first entry is *Free porn pictures and movie galleries*, available at pichunter.com. The last entry, *Nude Girl Galleries: naked and drunk girls gone wild!* can be found at wild-girls.com. Add it all

up and that’s a lot of women doing a lot of nude or semi-nude modeling. The porn found in Taiwan is labeled faux-pornography: women may indeed reveal their breasts in Taiwan (not porn), but nothing below the belt unless concealed by a thong.

By comparison, there are 87,500,000 Internet sites under the word search “pope” and 321,000,000 Internet entries under the word search “cell phones”. And we can access porn from our cell phones, too. There was a running joke when I was teaching in Korea: the only thing the Internet is good for is e-mail and porn.

So what is it about the female body that prompts men and women to view it, naked or otherwise, to the point of over-indulgence? In the name of investigative journalism, I took on the difficult assignment of investigating numerous Internet pornography



this vexing question.

I left no stone unturned.

For some aficionados, only two categories of pornography exist: hardcore and soft-core. Hardcore is anything that is extreme and explicit, such as sexual acts of intercourse in its wide variety of forms, while soft-core consists of

it takes all kinds to



nude or semi-nude models, and perhaps simulated sex. This also includes animated films and pictures, sometimes called “anime” or cartoon sex. It takes all kinds to satisfy the masses.

pages, in addition to carefully examining, in rapt detail, live action DVDs and digital downloads in an effort to offer some answer to

During the course of my lengthy research, one thing I found particularly irritating is the number of pornography Web sites that lead to more such sites, which lead to nothing at all except a big headache and constant re-booting of my comput-

er. Commonly called "misdirects", these sites offer nothing to the seeker of sexual stimuli. Smut sites also seem to be a favorite for pop-up windows, Trojan viruses, and 'worms' that infect your PC with a changing interface and a new home-page, and often cause permanent damage. Pornography sites can and will damage your hard drive and create endless problems no matter how good your defenses are.

But once you know what you're doing, the sheer volume of nakedness available on the Web is mind-boggling—from women who seem much too young to women who seem much too old, all apparently ready and willing to do anything for money or to get their

Japanese, in their cutting-edge culture, have also made exponential advances in perverted Internet porn—nothing is taboo: from candid upskirts in shopping malls to orgies – typically six men and one submissive woman. The Japanese do porn with veteran precision.

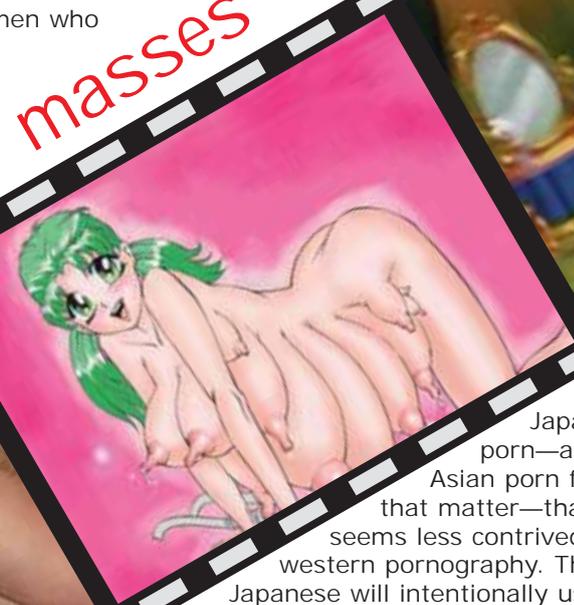
Oh sure, American and European smut ranks right up there with some of the best and certainly most accessible. But there is something

sites because most websites that try to sidestep federal and international laws by hiring models under 18 will simply be shut-down by that

satisfy the masses



image out to the millions of Internet users.



about Japanese porn—all Asian porn for that matter—that seems less contrived than western pornography. The Japanese will intentionally use plain-looking models and grainy low-grade video or photography to give their brand of porn a less polished, rough around the edges appearance and grainy film to make the women appear more 'real'. In my research, I found European porn to be much more bright and colorful, while American porn seemed to have a mixed bag of professional and amateur quality. The western porn was also littered with amazons with implants and over-age has-beens. In other words, they look more like paid models than everyday women who simply want to take their clothes off and have sex...with anyone.

So what is the most popular sex site? This depends on the user, but some of the more popular pornography sites have their own gauge for regular sex surfers. It seems that free sex sites are incestuous and will advertise each other's sites on their own pages. Thus, a list of perhaps 20-30 free sex sites is listed on the home page, the first being the most popular. However, we cannot say this is the most popular in definitive form – only the most popular among that brand of sex surfer. By the way, you should never pay for Internet porn. There are far too many free sites out there.

In my careful and thorough research, white-skinned women seemed to be the most popular in almost every instance. But among dark-skinned women, Japanese pornography won hands down. The

Teen-porn (nude models who are allegedly 18 and 19 years old) is indeed the most advertised and the most misleading of all porn. Click your mouse on a hyperlink that promises teen-porn and you're lucky to find any pornography at all. Most teen-porn links are misdirects to paysites. At best you will find standard and low-quality pornography at these



country's Internet watchdogs. Thankfully, I found no child-porn during my research, not to say that it doesn't exist.

The porn industry generates \$57 billion annually for those on top (way more than Microsoft earns selling Windows), as stated in 2005 during a Talk Radio interview with a former prostitute/porn star. This makes it easier to understand what motivates women to undress and have sex in front of the camera. From amateur porn to professional smut, there seems to be an endless parade of beautiful young and older women willing to take the plunge into the world of porn. And let's not forget the men simply referred to as 'props' because of their anonymity. Yes they make money too, albeit much less.





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cherry poppin



Her Story

It was a dark and stormy night. My parents had gone into the city. I was home alone. The snowflakes glistered in the moonlight. I heard the snow crackle and crunch under the tires of D's father's pickup.

He brought a bottle of sparkling white Bianca. It was going to be a classy evening. We lit the fireplace and sipped our wine. I had been waiting for this night for a long time. My friends and I read Cosmo and Teen; one friend even got some of her brother's porn videos. Between screams of excitement and laughter we discussed every juicy detail.

I had it all planned. We was going to put Frisco and Felicia from General Hospital to shame. I would see sparks flying and stars twinkling. After tonight I would be in a new club – no longer a virgin. I would become woman, a seductress.

The build-up was intolerable. My skin tingled. I had butterflies in my stomach. I was ready. I saw D through Bianca-misted eyes. He was ready too. I closed my eyes and puckered up.

He kissed me—tongue and everything! Even after all our previous make-out occasions his

hands still couldn't find the secret key to the magic lock of my bra. After a few snaps and tugs it finally came off and his hungry hands groped and kneaded. I reciprocated. I finally got to see it! It was pink and hard and throbbing! My nerves were getting to me. I was a bit grossed out. We fumbled with the condom. "God I hope

"I was a bit grossed out"

he knows what to do with it," I thought. (More fumbling). Is it on? Quickly into the missionary position. This is it!!!

Was that it? Not only was it over with inexplicable speed but by the time I began to revel in my moment of non-virgindom he was already snoring.



It is the greatest moment of my young life.

My pants come off. My boxers are half way down. She's wet. It's not difficult or embarrassing. It's easy and glorious.

It lasts an amazing fifteen minutes! Fifteen minutes of ultra-awareness and sensual greed. Fifteen long minutes of mesmerizing nakedness that will be replayed endlessly in my mind's eye. Well, fifteen minutes, if

measured by the feeling of time passing. But when measured by a more objective device, say the grey plastic Swatch on my wrist, it's actually something like 70 seconds.

I am so drunk with satisfaction that I jump up, "Excuse me, I've just got to do this," and leap in the air, right fist pumping. Smiling a ten foot smile, boxers tenting in front, wearing only my shirt and socks I look down at her lying there half amused, half naked, utterly adorable like she never will be again.

She is lithe and beautiful, I don't yet know we will have more great sex. I don't yet know that she will break my heart with my best friend, killing both relationships in one fell fuck. I know only that she is soft, and sweet, and smiling, with cute little breasts and dull red hair. Of course, her parents finally fumble with the door at the top of the stairs and we scurry like guilty mice into the 'just watching TV' position excited, guilty, and elated.



His Story

We are both in grade 11. She's seventeen with a tiny waist, small breasts and straight red hair. I'm thin but not skinny, boyish and quixotic. Her mom is upstairs and her dad is out rehearsing for the school musical. Mom might open the noisy door at the top of the stairs, Dad might come home, but neither will descend to the basement rec room without plenty of stalling and clomping around. They're smart parents (or stupid depending on your perspective).

She's wearing a funny one piece T-shirt that reaches to

"It is the greatest moment of my young life"

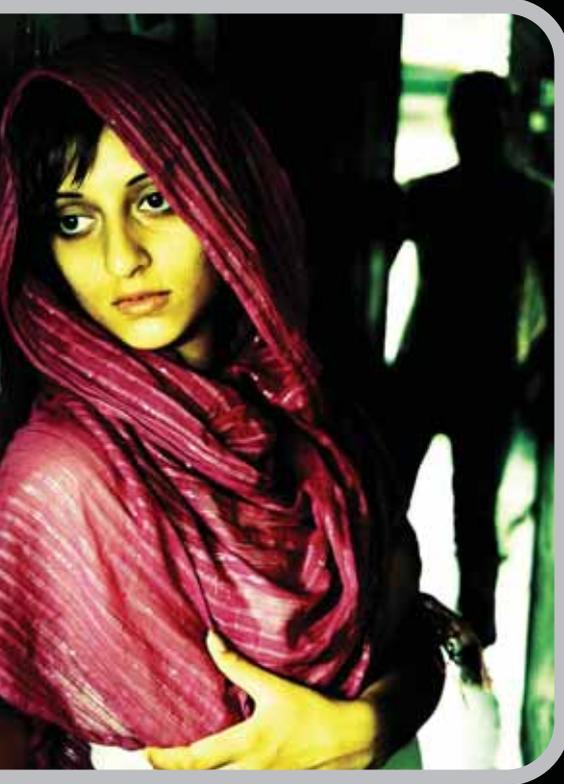
her knees, no bra, and crescent-moon earrings. Ignoring the sitcom but with alert ears, we neck until my hand gets under her tee to pull at her panties. To my surprise she lays back, lifts her bum, and pulls her panties down, and kicks them to the end of the brown corduroy couch.

A Reply to cherry poppin'

Against Their Will

By David Alexander

Photography by Chris Scott
and Steven Vigar



In *Reviving Ophelia: Saving the Selves of Adolescent Girls* Mary Pipher, a clinical psychiatrist, wrote of the intense pressure upon girls in America to act out sexually when they were physically, though not yet emotionally, "ready". This kind of pressure was put into a nutshell by a man I served with in the American army. He said of girls, and women in general, "If they're old enough to bleed, they're old enough to breed."

Describing the pressure from the girl's side, Dr. Pipher offers the story of a ninth grade girl named Cayenne, who had been diagnosed with herpes. After several months of therapy relating to the general problems of ado-

lescence, Cayenne eventually opened up about her sexual initiation, which happened in the middle of the eighth grade. At the time she was being teased by her friends for still being a virgin. During the first hour of an unsupervised party where there were 10 boys and 10 girls, all about the same age, she had sex with a boy a year older than her. Reflecting on the experience with Dr. Pipher later, Cayenne said, "I wish it had been more romantic."

Middle and upper class American adolescent girls have a luxury not shared by their sisters elsewhere in the world, many of whom experience even less romantic sexual initiations.

Swaziland

Futhi (not her real name) is from Makanyane, Swaziland. She was 13 years old when her father first raped her. He was HIV positive and his sexual abuse infected her with the virus. When she was diagnosed, she told other family members about the rapes. They didn't believe her and eventually

forced her to leave home. She now lives in a halfway house. "I'm HIV positive and I'm afraid," Futhi said. "I take 13 pills a day. My family knows I have HIV. I got it from my father. They still blame me. They don't see that my HIV is my father's HIV. They didn't ask where or how I acquired it."



South Africa

There's a rumor in Africa that having sex with a virgin will cleanse a male of AIDS. The Johannesburg city council conducted a three-year study of about 28,000 men. They found that one in five men believed in the virgin/AIDS cure. The fallout from that is a rise in assaults on women and children. Of particular alarm has been the rise in infant rapes. Not all researchers blame that on the virgin/AIDS cure-myth, but they believe it has contributed to it. The rape of the nine-month-old baby by six men in Upington at the end of 2001 enraged many South Africans. That was followed by the discovery of a seven-month-old who

had been raped and left for dead in a suburb of Capetown in November, 2001.

The belief in the virgin/AIDS cure is not restricted to Africa. According to a Knight-Ridder report from Mark McDonald in January 2000, it also helps fuel child prostitution in Cambodia. McDonald says that many Asian men believe having sex with virgins will cleanse them of AIDS. The same is true in India and Jamaica. The belief that AIDS is cured by having sex with a virgin is an outgrowth of a long-standing belief (held by many cultures) in the healing powers of sex with virgins.



Afghanistan

After the 1992 overthrow of the government and suspension of the constitution in Kabul, women's rights were violated with impunity. Rape by armed guards of the various warring factions was condoned by leaders. It was viewed as a way of intimidating vanquished populations, and of rewarding soldiers. Fear of rape drove women to suicide, and fathers to kill their daughters. Scores of women were abducted and detained, sexually abused, and sold into prostitution. Most girls were victimized and tortured because they belonged to different religious and ethnic groups. This is, in a nutshell, the record of the Northern Alliance, which is run by the very same

warlords that are now strutting around Kabul with the support of the US.

Fourteen-year-old Fatima begged the Hazara soldiers not to rape her, saying she was young and a virgin. One of the soldiers threatened her with his gun, ordering her to undress or be killed. Two soldiers raped her, and then three others raped her mother. The mother asked why the soldiers were doing these things. She was told "You are Talibs and you are Pashtun." Before leaving, the soldiers beat Fatima's crippled father unconscious, and carried off all the family's possessions. "There is nothing left for us; marriage and honor are gone," Fatima's mother said.



America

Sexual initiation against the will of the initiated is not limited to far away places, or even to women in dangerous situations. On Jan. 13, 2006, Thomas Gumbleton, the auxiliary Roman Catholic bishop in Detroit, Michigan, declared that he had been sexually abused as a teenager by a Catholic priest while he attended seminary.

During the Vietnam war, rape was

an all too common occurrence, often described by GIs as SOP (Standard Operating Procedure). Public archives include records of an August 1967 atrocity in which a 13-year-old Vietnamese child was raped by American Military Intelligence interrogator of the Army's 196th Infantry Brigade. The soldier was convicted only of indecent acts with a child and assault. He served seven months and sixteen days for his crime.

Dreaming Dreams

It would be great if all stories of sexual initiation contained nothing more unfortunate than amusing anecdotes about accidents with tapioca pudding and fire ants. One would hope that all who tell such stories could regale their audi-

ence with tales of their feelings of security, bathed in love and are now surrounded with memories of commitment and care. Unfortunately for many girls, boys, men and women around the world, that is not the case.



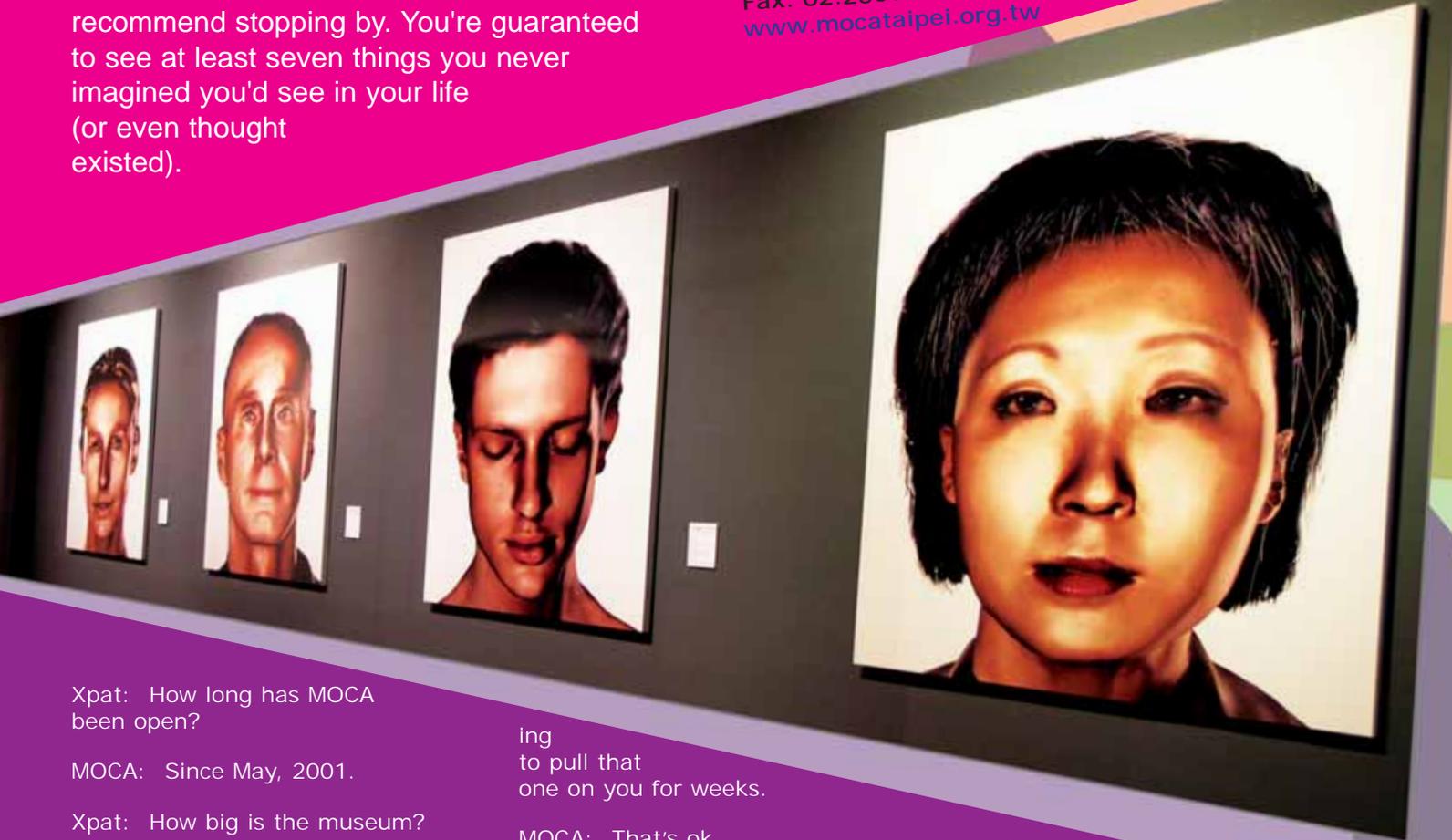
David Alexander is the International Students' Advisor at the Tainan Theological College and Seminary

taipei museum

by staff

In Xpat's never-ending endeavor to bring you cool, cutting-edge art, we present this interview with Taipei's Museum of Contemporary Art. MOCA is one of the most progressive museums in Taiwan supporting innovative and unusual art from sculpture to multimedia to interactive installations. We recommend stopping by. You're guaranteed to see at least seven things you never imagined you'd see in your life (or even thought existed).

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Xpat: How long has MOCA been open?

MOCA: Since May, 2001.

Xpat: How big is the museum?

MOCA: Total 1,350 ping.

Xpat: How many visitors do you receive annually?

MOCA: About 74,000 visitors.

Xpat: Wouldn't it be funny if I asked a girl those questions and she answered that way?

MOCA: No.

Xpat: How many exhibitions do you host at one time?

MOCA: One or two.

Xpat: How long does a typical exhibition run?

MOCA: Two to three months.

Xpat: Do they ever get tired?

MOCA: Excuse me?

Xpat: (sniggering) I'm sorry, I couldn't help myself. I've been wait-

ing to pull that one on you for weeks.

MOCA: That's ok.

Xpat: What kinds of exhibitions do you focus on?

MOCA: Contemporary Art.

Xpat: You don't say? Have you run any pop-art exhibitions in the past?

MOCA: Yes, occasionally. For example: Fiction, Love, and XUltra New Vision in Contemporary Art

Xpat: What exhibitions are currently running?

MOCA: The two exhibitions that we have now are: *50 Years of Italian Fashion*, and *A Glimpse of Contemporary Art in Taiwan*. They end on June 4.

Xpat: What exhibitions are next?

MOCA: Slow Tech, from June 24 to Sept.3.

Xpat: What is contemporary art?

MOCA: It's hard to define.

Xpat: Sort of like the term 'vicissitude.' That's pretty hard to define, too. It means "the quality of being changeable," but most people don't know that. Even most English teachers don't know that. Actually I didn't know that either, but I was just fiddling with my electronic dictionary here...

MOCA: Huh? Are you drunk?

Xpat: No! ... uh, not really...um.... What are some of the best exhibitions you've hosted?

MOCA: We appreciate every exhibition.

Xpat: Who are some of the most prominent contemporary artists?

MOCA: We appreciate every artist.

Xpat: Who are the most prominent

of contemporary art

photography courtesy of moca



con-
temporary
Taiwanese artists?

MOCA: We appreciate every
Taiwanese artist.

Xpat: Would you say that MOCA is
an appreciative institution?

MOCA: Yes.

Xpat: What different mediums of
exhibitions do you host?

MOCA: We host exhibitions includ-
ing painting, sculpture and interac-
tive installations.

Xpat: What's MOCA's mission?

MOCA: ... (deep breath) Facing the
current trends of globalization and
post-modernism, MOCA has inti-
mately combined the fields of archi-

tec-
ture, design,
fashion and multimedia
art. The spreading domain of
Asian art does not wander aimlessly,
cover its face, or fawn on the rich
and powerful, and it is willing to be
relegated to the sidelines. It is only
willing to change with time, and to
give form to ideas.

Our exhibitions range from ones that
fill the whole museum to small
installations. By collaboration with
international and local curators and
artists, we hope to reflect a vision
that is both global and regional.

Xpat: That's awesome. Care for a
shot of Jager?

MOCA:
No. I'm going
home now.

Xpat: Thank you very much for your
time.

MOCA: Boo hway. (translation: no
problem, chuckles).

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