Fashion’s new school
Welcome to three dollars a gallon
Girls Gone Wild and porn’s mainstreaming
Gay marriage: America’s biggest crisis ever
color your world

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(Table of Elements)

Mis•cel•la•nea
from the editor 6
contributors 7
mail call 8
upcoming events 35

Art
Hop n’ shop 9
  Fiction by Tristan Abbot. A day in the life of your average convenience store clerk.
Fashion’s Newest School 12
  Cesium takes a look at the UNI TAPP annual fashion show. Cool pictures, too.
Interview: Dr. Annette Lynch 18
  A quick talk with the coordinator of the UNI TAPP program.

Me•di•a
Pop Music’s Belated Eulogy 20
  T. J. Washington explains why he’ll never sell his Led Zeppelin box set.
audibles 23
  Brian Tambascio reviews three albums from People Under the Stairs, the Roots and Soul Position.
return to the cult 24
  Brian Tambascio returns to the genre-bending cult movie, Shaun of the Dead.
nightlife 25
  Cesium spends an evening with Drums & Tuba, live at The Reverb.

Cul•ture
Your Sister on T.V. 26
  Essay by Wendy Vickler. Has Girls Gone Wild changed our attitudes on sex?
online culture 29
  Chris Lingler looks at news satire, and reviews some of the funniest sites around.

Pol•i•tics
plain speaking 30
  T. Dalley Waterhaus takes a look at gay marriage and why it won’t destroy us all.
Welcome to Three Dollars a Gallon 32
  Essay by Paul C. Middleton. The government, Big Oil, the Middle East and your empty gas tank.
(a blank page)
So I've been listening to a lot of electronic music lately, and it's something that has surprised even myself. I used to look at the electronic devotees with a mixture of scorn and cynicism; it all sounded like fucking Thomas Dolby, remnants of Human League-era synthesizers and hand claps. How could they sit around and listen to stuff that sounded like tape blips and ambient mating whales, produced by people that didn't play instruments, but simply hit buttons in a studio? It seemed so arrogant, so utterly pompous that I just rebelled, listening to my organically grown punk music and praying for Kraftwerk's eventual enlightenment.

So what's the sudden epiphany? In my ever-going quest to discover new bands and new sounds, it seemed that traditional forms of music had reached the inevitable end of the line. Punk bands could only play so loud and fast, rock bands could only be so hard and pop music could only become so shitty (hard to believe, but true). With the new millennium came a realization that rock might have been dead a lot longer than the mid-90’s; the most creative stuff was coming from electronica and underground hip-hop, from groups that would take existing work and remix it into their own creations. Artists like Gorillaz, DJ Shadow, Portishead and Aphex Twin were mixing so many genres in their music that labels and record outlets quit trying to categorize them, and radio kept their distance. They were visionaries, and showed that you didn't have to be just a rock band, or just a hip-hop group, or just a techno DJ. You could do it all, without feeling like you've sold out.

And with that thinking in tow, I've found myself immersed in the world of remix, and realizing that it isn't just limited to music. The bringing together of disparate parts into a coherent whole has become the new opportunity for cultural invention, and it seems that the truly adventurous are taking advantage of the climate. Clothing designers are merging fashions from incredibly different schools of thought, television is mixing everything with “reality” and even our social values are changing and mashing together previously diametrical ideas (who would have even considered gay marriage a viable cultural idea before the 90’s?), the results haven't always been positive (did anyone see The Benefactor?), but the presence of remixing in our culture has kept us moving forward and provided countless inspiration for all of us here at Cesium.

In the spirit of remixing existing things and making them new again, we proudly present The Remix Issue. We're presenting everything from a look at some of fashion's newest students, reviews of some of the best remix artists around, a look at a genre-busting zombie flick and an exploration of America's burgeoning love for Girls Gone Wild and amateur sex. Sound remixed enough for you? We’ve also done some mild face-lifting (nothing surgical), redesigning our cover and some of our layout. It's a transformation, and hopefully you'll like what we’ve done with the place.

Make sure to continue mixing it up at our website and on our new message boards, as we love hearing what you have to say about all of our nonsense.

Thanks for reading.

Adam Moore
Editor-in-Chief
(contributors)

Presenting some of the people who made the editor go bald.

Wendy Vickler wrote our piece on *Girls Gone Wild* and porn’s mainstreaming. She is currently a senior at Southern Illinois at Carbondale, and studies sociology. She dreams of grad school, but forgot to send us a picture.

Paul C. Middleton wrote about oil and how it sucks to buy it these days. He goes to school in Madison, Wisconsin, and Cesium salutes him for finally busting onto the Dean’s List. Finally, Paul.

T.J. Washington (pictured far right, next to our art director) is currently enrolled at Iowa State University and writes for both the print and online editions of Cesium. He loves long walks on the beach, and hopes to be gainfully employed some day.

Both teachers and faculty have been impressed with Tristan Abbot’s performance as his grades continue to improve. His new novel, *I-Pod*, will soon be finished, and needs a publisher.
(mail call)

We take a moment to open our mail, and read the letters without anthrax in the envelope.

As a former chem student, I could not help but notice your interesting rating system of symbols [Cesium’s music reviews], which you refer to as beakers. Beakers, in the broad sense of the term, refer to general laboratory glassware, but to be accurate, the symbols you show are known as Erlenmeyer flasks (named after the famous German chemist). Other than that, enjoy your magazine, keep up the good work!

-Russell M. • Cedar Rapids, IA

Finally, praise for Project Runway (“Why I Love Project Runway”, Jan/Mar 2006)! I loved that show, and made sure to be in front of a tv every night it was on, just to see who would go home. My friends all made fun of me, but that’s the price I was willing to pay for quality programming. By the way, Santino got robbed.

-Julia K. • Cedar Falls, IA

Enough with the shitty cult movies (“Return to the Cult”, Jan/Mar 2006)...what about some current reviews?

-Paul C. • Cedar Falls, IA

[Ed. response: you must have misplaced your copy of every other magazine available.]

Applause for jumping into the immigration debate (“Si, se puede”, cesium-online). I may be an American citizen, but I still remember where my relatives came from. These people only want something better. Why take it from them?

-John R. • Chicago, IL

Congrats on your balanced coverage. I love being able to hear the liberal and the ultra-liberal points of view. You really span the political spectrum.

-Alicia A. • Davenport, IA

[Ed. response: your sarcasm is duly noted.]

Make sure to write us at cesiummagazine@gmail.com with all your comments, gripes or corrections. Letters may (or may not) be edited for clarity or content. Readers who have correspondence selected will receive a pat on the back for being ambitious.
By this time of day you got to turn the radio down and so even though the country music was still too loud to ignore, the vacant twangs of Skoal-stained retardation didn’t cut through your head like an ice cream headache quite as much. The sun-baked body odor and urine funk of the hot afternoon had faded to moist flitter, found only in the corners and at the entrance, and the counter was no longer so busy that it was impossible to slide beneath it, gather your head in your hands, and sit for a while thinking of a place of employment somewhere over the rainbow, somewhere where you never had to refuse people service due to their marked lack of shoes. It says right on the sign that you need them.

Yes, the late evenings weren’t so bad. They were very nearly tolerable.

Trouble is that you started slacking off. You’d not be so much on your toes as you were in the mornings and middays. Things could come along and knock you right off that horse of selfish semi-comfort you so were so lazily sitting atop, and these things didn’t need to be all that intense, all that stupid, all that cruel, or even all that gruesome. All they had to do was disrupt your balance, and since your balance wasn’t really balance at all it was very easily disrupted.

One such thing: one time a guy comes in and puts down two forties of Mickey’s, a Snickers, and a fake twenty dollar bill. A really fake twenty dollar bill. Like one that came out of a kid’s toy set. Its pictures are the same as a regular twenty, more or less, but it’s a very washed-out shade of green and it’s less than two-thirds the size of a normal bill. That and the serial number is a row of 5s. You look up. A burnt cork face is looking back at you, purple in its sincerity, eyes wide and spectral white, head held confident and high.

“That’s real.”

Of—of course it’s real. I mean, Jesus, who the hell would ever even dream of trying to pay for malt liquor with toy money? These are humans you’re dealing with, after all. And the fact that he even bothered to tell you it’s real—why, that’s just icing on the cake. You start to take it, you honest-to-god start to put his forties in a brown bag… But wait a second, Jackson. Just one gal darn second. Why, exactly, would he have felt the need to tell you that it was real if it really was real, huh? How often do normal people feel compelled to reassure a store clerk of the validity of the notes with which they are paying for their order? Never, that’s how often. You rub your eyes and shake your head.

“This—this isn’t real, man. You can’t pay for anything with this.”

He panics slightly. Knows he’s beaten. Mumbles out a small fake apology and wanders away, without putting back his forties. The rest of the night you can’t believe that you quite nearly fell for it, just because you weren’t paying attention, and so you don’t let yourself get comfy.
until you get home.

But not tonight! Oh no, not tonight. This is going to be a good night. You are going to go about doing your job, a job that should be like any other job, and your attitude will be that of any other low-wage employee. You will care only as much as is reasonable. You will not get threatened, not be called names, not have to watch a woman ignore her small child’s plea for candy—or bread, even, mom, I’m really hungry—while she shovels ten dollars into a pull-tab lottery machine and then blames god for smiting her with bad luck. None of that’s going to happen tonight, my man. Tonight is all made up of roses and sugarplums.

Or half-smiling gangstas and sun-crazed children, actually. All in good moods. Sunday, and most of them got back from church five or six hours ago, putting the young ones in high spirits. “High” spirits, literally. Candy, booze, or weed. Childhood intoxication. Fun. Without the guilt of abandoned responsibilities pinching at you at the back of your neck, gripping your throat, making you lash out at some bullshit provocation God Damn It Bitch Get Off My Back. Kids are nice, and they’re all that come in.

You give the little ones deals on Tootsie Rolls. They think they’re scamming you and you hear them calling you stupid for being nice to them. That’s society’s problem, man. Not yours. But goddammit then they start abusing the favor, bringing up the entire fucking display box and expecting the same 3-for-1 discount they got on a handful. You tell them to get out, and they do.

It’s slow aside from that, winding into the final hour and a half of the shift. You spent a good half-hour in the cooler, restocking the malt liquor and cases of Natural Ice that are so integral to the traditional Iowan recognition of the Bapto-Evangelical Sabbath. You come out, and the whole store is straightened, mopped, and organized. You take a step back and admire your handiwork, from the outside of the cooler. It’s natural to be proud of an accomplishment, even when you didn’t really accomplish anything.

The manager leaves and it’s all you man, one more hour and you can go home.

Just getting dark. This late at night and it’s just now getting dark! You remember long summer evenings like this when you were little, the smell of wet grass from an open window while you were watching TV, turning your head a little to glance at a brushfire orange sunscape, turning the TV up really loud, to overcome the cricket chirps.

And good golly who should walk in now but Phil the Fat Worthless Fuck, fresh from a full day of picking pop cans out of dumpsters, ready to spend all his money on lottery tickets. This man is a sight to behold. Fat and hairy with lots of little holes, like a very old potato, always wearing shiny plastic material that was designed by NASA so it wouldn’t stain, but somehow he made it stain. Today it’s a tight Lion King shirt and navy blue nylon shorts tied in the middle with the poly/nylon strap that you would normally see on a bookbag—looks like he actually made them out of a bookbag.

“Did you make those shorts yourself, Phil? Out of a bookbag?”

“Fuck-ing Niggers!”

Ho ho – my, what a side splitter! That’s our Phil the Fat Worthless Fuck, ladies and gentlemen. Give him a hand.

“Did they make you wear bookbag shorts, Phil?”

“I tell you—I tell you what them niggers did. Always running round. Running with the—music!”

Here his speech devolves into a kind of warbly-pitched half growl, the only recognizable words being “nigger,” “the government,” and his own name. He sets a moldy paper bag on the counter and begins counting out muddy soda and beer cans worth a nickel apiece, growling all the while. You count all 26 of them, and give him a dollar-thirty in quarters with a single nickel tossed in. He then starts to shovel all the quarters into the pull-tab lottery machine, cursing, “Fucking Niggers!” as he opens each one. They all lose, because of the niggers. He takes his seat in the back and starts to smoke.

Now into the store there comes a black woman who is so fat that if she were covered from head to toe in tiny mirrors there would never be a nighttime, ever, not anywhere on earth, not so long as the sun kept shining millions of miles away. She has had a hard day by anyone’s standards, and now it is time for her to slap two 24 ounce cans of Colt .45 on the counter. Usually polite, she is. Your coworker once tried to tell her that she spent 3.55, after tax, on 48 ounces of Colt .45, and that it would be a much better deal to buy the 40 ounce bottle of Colt, with only cost 2.17 after tax. She doesn’t like him anymore, she says, because he tried to cheat her. Standing before you, she turns so some of her hip fat spills onto the counter while unzips a fanny pack and pulls out four crumpled dollar bills. You place the change into one of the folds in her hand and a dime falls out just perfect, rolls as if on a track all the way to the booth where Phil the Fat Worthless Fuck is sitting, right to his foot. Oh—hey now. That there is one dime closer to another pulltab!

Four Mexican children come rushing in, in between the fat black woman and Phil, and after they have passed the dime has mysteriously vanished! Is it—oh no, is it a ghost? Is this place fucking haunted? Because Phil’s face is covered with the unmistakable smile of man who just got a blowjob, and only a dead man, sent to earth from hell as part of some sort of ironic punishment, would ever dream of getting close enough to smell his crouch. Maybe the ghost took the dime for a tip, because in the ghost world inflation is all fucked up and a dime is worth like fifty bucks.

“Where my dime et?”

“Fuck-in niggers!”

The kids are running around and laughing. There’s that really generic, common, bendy giggle of a little girl at the end of the chase, right when she’s being caught, capitulatory, congratulatory, really very happy. Its sounds the same no matter what little girl it’s coming from.

A shadow sweeps across your face as a black arm
comes down with the force of a falling oxen, across Phil the Fat Worthless Fuck's mottled and greasy face. He squeals like a pig. Literally, like a goddamn pig; a throaty inhalation of lit bottle rocket. Another punch sends him out of the booth and then she's kicking the living shit out of this guy and the kids stream out at the first sign of daylight, clutching free candy, and you really, really like watching this but now he's screaming out almost completely coherently. She's really going to kill him. You can't believe it's even Phil, he's speaking so clearly: please stop, please don't kill me.

"Stop it!"

Your voice. From the tip of the chest, as manly as you could make it sound.

She looks down at him. He's crying. She calls him a thievin bitch and waddles away, out the door, not really caring about her ten cents. You see blood on the floor but refuse to go over there and touch him, don't want get Hepatitis Z (which is 25 worse that Hepatitis B). He starts to roll around, trying to get up, and you yell at him to stay put, and you get on the phone to 9-1-1 and say there's been a beating at your store and, yes, immediate is medical attention necessary.

Eyes toward the parking lot, now. The owners of this place got a little deal running with the cops. Free donuts and Skoal in exchange for emergency attention that's fast for this part of town (normal for everywhere else). Phil keeps spitting out raspy cries from his neck, coughing like his throat is full of pistachio shells. A couple of kids didn't leave, and they're crying a lot. You look over towards them, a boy and a girl. You see they're staring right at Phil. He's the most goddamn disgusting thing you've ever seen in your life. Like a skinned mule that had acid poured all over its face and is crying for having shit his own pants. No way that woman could have hurt him this much. No way.

"Don't look at him!"

That intensifies their crying a little bit, a ledge of it tears out right away, panicked, but then gets checked and the volume goes down to just a tad bit higher than it was before you yelled. They listen to you and turn around, face the bathroom wall, crying and mumbling to each other in Spanish.

Jets of police sirens. The kids yell out, "policial!" in the same fast-checked panic that met your yell, and Phil forces his crying up loud enough so it can be heard above the siren. He's definitely faking it, now. It's way too measured.

Two older cops come in, taking their time. You point to the booth, to Phil. The younger-looking one goes over to him, the other walks up to you.

"What happened?"

"He called this big woman a nigger, after he tried stealing a coin she dropped. She punched him out of booth—"

"Fuckin spic niggers!" Phil shouts, at the younger cop. The younger cop raises his tone, you can hear him say something about calming down.

"Then she started kicking him."

The older cop looks back over towards Phil, takes in a deep breath, and turns back to you.

"What did you do?"

"Called you."

"Where is this woman?"

"Left."

"Fuckina. Fuckina. Fuckina nigger nigg—"

His outburst torn through by the cop's voice, telling him to calm down. He doesn't stop, and there's an industrial hum like two wheels grinding together. Electricity. Phil screams like a baby playing with its tongue. The noise stops, and so does Phil. Unconscious.

The best part is that the cop who is talking to you doesn't miss a beat.

"Who're they?"

You're upset. You don't answer. Is—is he reaching to taze me? No. He nudges his head to the side and you turn to look at the two kids, still facing the bathroom wall, crying violently.

"Kids."

"The woman's?"

"No."

"Uhh, Bob?" The other cop calls, slightly panicked, sounding young.

Bob, your cop, walks over to his partner and starts to shake Phil, try to wake him up. You want to tell them that he's faking it but decide to make better use of your time, to go over and tell the kids to get out of here, in case Phil has died.

You get close enough to them for them to sense you, and they start to tremble. The girl starts screaming out in Spanish, falls to her knees. Policia. Mama. A bunch of jumbled stuff you don't know. You put your hand on the boy's head and he turns to face you, head all red as a beet, missing half his teeth, hair matted.


Hey...you know what that means!

"What—What're you sorry for?"

He looks down a little, towards his chest. There's a strange bulge, up from the waist of his little pair of pants and into his dirty T-shirt. The cops start talking more loudly. There are more footsteps, people coming in.

You try and sound as harmless as possible. Whispering.

"What? What is it?"

Little thin little arms lift up his shirt. A box full of pregnancy tests sits against his flat stomach. He starts crying about his mama, talking very fast. Mi mama, mi mama, mi mama.

You nod at him. Point to the door.

"Go."

He looks up.

"Get out. Vamos."

He shakes his sister. She stands and mumbles. He pulls her by the hair, towards the exit. They don't fully stop but they do turn their heads slightly, right before the door, to get a glimpse of the paramedics standing over Phil, before they rush out into the parking lot, sea of sirens, maze of lights. ✮
(Fashion’s Newest School)
a visual look at the 2006 UNI Textiles and Apparel Fashion Show

Angie Hall
We're packed like sardines into the cavernous Lang Hall Auditorium on the University of Northern Iowa campus, and there is literally no empty seat left. Smack in the middle of the Midwest at a college of 14,000, you wouldn't expect to see fashion, let alone a fashion show; but that tag of fashion is a misleading one, and indeed, most of us are dressed fashionably for the cool night air outside, sporting blazers and multi-layered ensembles. However, now we're squeezed next to each other, sweating in a hot auditorium on a Friday night in early April, waiting restlessly for the bright lights to drop and the music to cue.

The fashion show, this year thematically-entitled *Style Perspectives*, marks the 14th annual show produced by students of the Textiles and Apparel Program at UNI, and another year of a packed, anticipatory audience.

When the lights finally do recess and turn towards the action on stage, the music comes on, and it's an energizing, if not eclectic, playlist. Old Rolling Stones tunes mix it up with the techno of Daft Punk, and it becomes obvious that we are in for a genre-blending evening. The crowd voices their approval through frequent oohs and aahs, and even fits in some sporadic applause.

The models, clad in everything from modern-looking evening wear to shredded apart basketballs and tin foil, strut fluidly down the runway and strike their finest diva pose for the cameras. Some of the outfits obviously wow the audience, comprised of intrigued students and fashionistas, more than others; they react to the edgier, conceptual designs out loud (such as a dress composed entirely out of tiny washers), but there is no doubt that more traditional pieces make an impact as well. The designs all prove to be extremely well thought-out and designed, utilizing myriad colors and creating great patterns and textures. Nothing looks out of place or awkward, despite the use of some unconventional materials. Some of the pieces even manage to create interesting juxtapositions through fashion,
Erin Dixon

Marilynda Longoria

Minnie Lee

The models, clad in everything from modern-looking evening wear to shredded apart basketballs and tin foil, strut fluidly down the runway and strike their finest diva pose. Like the wedding gown with “GET A DIVORCE” displayed prominently across the back.

The models do such a good job presenting their assigned pieces that when the designers begin coming out to the runway to take their final bows, it seems like it all just started. We get one last look at the formalwear, the casual line and the schoolgirl outfits. And then the lights come back on.

Reflecting on Style Perspectives, one cannot help but be impressed. The show has a feel of a well-practiced, professional production, and with over 60 student models, all volunteering, that is understandably hard to achieve. That professionalism and attention to aesthetic detail is no fluke; the Textiles and Apparel program, running under the seasoned guidance of Dr. Annette Lynch, has obviously done its homework.

The designers of the displayed apparel spent many hours (both actual hours and semester hours) creating their pieces and exploring the vast concept that is fashion. Seniors Brittny Lester, Erin Dixon and Erin Landt (all also directors of this year’s show) all acknowledge that the program at the University of Northern Iowa encourages creative exploration. “The studio classes are fairly free and experimental,” Dixon says. “There aren’t many specific assignments handed out in the design portion of the program.”

And that long creative leash means that students will either excel in the design, or hang themselves with it.
“The models, clad in everything from modern-looking evening wear to shredded apart basketballs and tin foil, strut fluidly down the runway and strike their finest diva pose.”
Fortunately, judging from the show, which featured 66 original pieces, the students have truly embraced the opportunity to make a personal statement through their work. Designers are often encouraged to look to other areas of art for inspiration, an approach culled from Lynch’s background in art, and resulting in the collusion of clothing design with music and even literary subjects; you’ll likely see a punk-inspired skirt, chopped up and rocked out, sitting directly next to a classically-derived gown.

However, for all the apparent emphasis on design, including the annual fashion show (which takes an entire year to plan, from conceptualization to execution), the program is markedly deeper. There is an equal emphasis on teaching students about the business of fashion, from promotion to merchandising to product testing and development, an approach Lynch has taken to increase the marketability of students in the program. Required major courses cover topics as diverse as apparel buying, the history of costume, marketing strategy, the socio-psychological aspects of clothing, and apparel evaluation, making for a well-rounded undergraduate experience in one of the most effective in the country.

All in all, the Textiles and Apparel Program (shorthand-ed as TAPP) proves to be continually advancing with both the creativity and business of fashion. Look to hear more from the students of this program, past, present and future, as they are well-positioned to take a starring role in the unique mix of art and utility that is fashion.
Dr. Annette Lynch is an Associate Professor in the Textiles and Apparel Program at the University of Northern Iowa, and is repeatedly mentioned by fellow faculty and students as the visionary behind the program’s national success. She recently won the Faculty Excellence Regents Award, the most prestigious award handed out to UNI faculty, and sat down to talk with Cesium about the program and its direction.

Cesium: What is your background in the fashion industry? 
Annette Lynch: I actually come out of an art history degree, and I got interested in textiles and the history of textiles as an art historian; I got my masters in textile design. I have a strong creative thread and kind of look at fashion as almost performance art; and so I think that does influence the kind of work the students design as they are in the program. There is a strong thread of artistic expression in the program. My doctorate is in the clothing and textiles areas, and that’s when I became interested in the feminist aspects of the field.

CS: How do you react to it being mostly a female major? Does that bother you, in a certain social context? 
AL: It’s odd, because programs like this in the Midwest are dominated by women, but if you go to the major design houses in New York, they are dominated by men. And so, trying to convince male students that it is a field that they can make inroads in has been a goal of mine, and as the salaries go up…we send some students out that make salaries comparable to the business school, you know, like $47,000 a year, their first year. That’s a very good salary, and as that happens, we begin to attract more men. But my investment in young women is very high, and so I’m very comfortable in mentoring young women in the program. I like it, but I certainly don’t want to make it appear that men aren’t welcome.

CS: Who are some of your role models in fashion and intellectual areas? People you look to? 
AL: I read the fashion writers from the New York Times constantly. If there is one source to get engaging analysis of what fashion means, it is the NYT fashion columns. The New Yorker also has really great fashion commentary. Rather than saying one person, I think what you want to do in the field is to keep up with what is happening, and those are the two best sources of information.

CS: What was one of the first changes you spearheaded with the program when you arrived? 
AL: The placement of students in dead-end retail jobs, which a lot of programs like this do, was disturbing to me, and I wanted to teach the students about designing the product, as opposed to selling product. So most, about 85 percent, of our placements are design placements. We have some that are going into buying, so merchandising is still a viable position, but we don’t have students going into stores in the same percentages that we did before. That’s been a big transformation, which has to do with me being a feminist; we have mostly women, not all women, we have some strong male designers, but it’s still primarily a feminine major. They’re able to make house payments, and all the things that real people do. Which is important to me (laughs).

CS: Describe the fashion industry now, and how recent graduates are prepared for it. 
AL: We have a industry board that I created in 1995 that advises the program, which meets at Target headquarters in Minneapolis…people that are designers and product developers, and we’ve actually had a VP at one point fly in, and what they’ve done is help us position our students to fit in the industry as it is right now. One of the key things they alerted us to early on was that the old fashion job as a buyer, where you go to New York and buy product out of sales rooms, was a diminishing position. More and more companies were designing their own product. So if you go into Target, Marshall Fields, or American Eagle, and you look at the rack, you have people within the company themselves designing that product, not buying stuff someone else designed. So that was a fundamental shift in the industry, and what we did was take advantage of that, because if all of these companies are making their own product, there’s a lot of jobs in the product development areas.

CS: What exactly does that shift mean for students? 
AL: In the U.S., you still have the design, testing and development of product, but you don’t have the manufacturing of product, as almost all of the manufacturing facilities are in places like China; but you have places in the U.S. working with those vendors. Most of our students are based in the U.S. in product development offices, and they oversee the product development phase. We have testing labs which are industry
specific, and it trains students in the kind of testing they might do in a Target lab, testing product as it is coming back from a vendor.

Q. Talk about the annual fashion show. Has it always been student driven, or has it changed?
A. Actually it happened the second year I was here that students came to see me in my office. I was doing a lot of independent work, trying to get design to happen in the department; students had created all of these designs, and they really wanted to showcase them. So it was really students coming in and saying, “We want a design show.” My response at that time was to work with the art department, because every spring they do an April gallery show. So for the first 4 years we had still model shows in the art gallery...this guy (points to postcard) was a music guy who spun records for us in the gallery, and would stop the music every 5 minutes subtly so the models could move and relieve their muscles. I liked those shows, because it was like the designs were really artistic. They were in different poses, rather than doing a runway show. Once we started doing runway shows, students never wanted to go back; there was something about the drama of the runway, and that again was student driven. We moved into the Union Expansion, and finally outgrew that and moved into Lang [Auditorium]. The audiences have always been very strong, and we’ve always had a lot of interest in the shows, and so I kind of let the students go with it where they want to go. I just think they like producing the shows.

Q. When you think fashion you think runway shows, as well.
A. I think it trains them better as well...we've had students go to Chicago, and intern for the fashion production shows of a big fashion mart...I think my art background likes the still model show, but it's just not industry oriented. I doubt we'll ever look at going back to a still model show.

CS: What part of the fashion world drives the program now that it has evolved? Is it more technical than creative?
AL: There's an equal emphasis on technical design and creative design; you can't do a good creative design without the technical aspect. I think there are 3 threads that come together: students are educated in the business area, students are encouraged to be creative, and they really get the skills in textile testing and production to put it all together.

CS: What keeps you coming back?
AL: Students. Students and the ability to have a job where you're intellectually and creatively engaged. Your mind is never at rest, and I like that.
Not to sound cynical or alarmist, but it seems that the general music scene today has hit rock bottom. Of course, such a blanket statement can only serve to get me in trouble, as there still exists a strong, creative underbelly of independent music; rather, I'm referring to popular music, the music which we all experience as a society, whether it be via the radio, over the supermarket hi-fi system or when we're on hold with the DMV. The popular genre, often also called Top 40, in reference to the music charts which jockey and rank songs by their airplay, has become a laughing-stock, a black eye on the face of music, when it once was respectable and artistically relevant. We've lost an important connection to popular music, and the musicians behind it all.

My parents were the first to give me an education in all things music, and they were steeped in the recently formed popular genre. My father gave me heavy doses of Motown and soul, while my mother schooled me on Led Zeppelin and the Rolling Stones. I would devour entire albums in a sitting, from Led Zeppelin II to the Beatles's Revolver, listening closely like I was reading a classic novel. I learned about the members of the band, their styles and influences. In exchange for their music, I gave these groups my attention and time, and the relationships often grew to be extremely rewarding.

And now, as I turn on the radio during routine drives, or wait for my floor in the elevator, I find myself bombarded by generic teen queens I've never heard of, and don't care to know. They sing (or rap) about their latest boyfriend, their latest breakup, or their latest night partying in the club with their friends. The hit single often resides on an album of twelve other tracks, all musically worthless and essentially serving as filler so the record executives can sell an album, instead of just a single (which obviously goes for less). The songs are often written by other people, produced in studios by multimillion-dollar producers and technicians, and represent the complete antithesis of what popular music used to stand for.

The music world used to be based around the album, with the single playing an important companion role to the development of an artist. Musicians would focus on
creating robust, full-flavored albums that would stand up to repeated listens. Releases from musicians like the Talking Heads or Emerson, Lake and Palmer lacked outright singles, hits that would polarize radio listeners, and yet, these albums flowed together with a brilliance lost on today’s audiences. Each song on the record was crafted with the whole in mind, and it helped to create a coherent, unique work. The single served to introduce audiences to the entire record, not replace it; today, a mainstream artist’s viability is judged by the success of their first single, and not much else.

That’s not to say that every album released decades ago was a classic, or that there weren’t bands that burned out after one single; the relatively short-lived genre known simply as “bubblegum” existed in the late 60’s, giving us full-fledged releases from groups like the 1910 Fruitgum Company and Tommy James & the Shondells - releases that would quickly fade into obscurity after quick forays onto the pop charts. The short shelf life of this genre just served to prove that, in general, audiences were searching for more profound works, albums that worked as a collective effort.

And not only was the concept of listening to the album as a whole work important, but growing and maturing with an artist or band was par for the course. While we may have been introduced to the Beatles with the cute pop of early singles like “Please Please Me” and “She Loves You”, audiences grew alongside our four favorite British boys, experimenting and exploring musical boundaries, moving from simple pop melodies into more complex folk-rock and psychedelic sounds. Eventually, it was this willingness to experiment that culminated in the production of landmark albums like Abbey Road and Sgt. Pepper’s Lonely Hearts Club Band. This experimentation was not viewed negatively, because as the Beatles branched out and explored the world, baby boomers were doing the same at home, and truly identified with the changes taking place in their favorite bands.

Exhibit A: Radiohead’s OK Computer, released in the summer of 1997, would receive rave reviews from nearly every major music magazine, including a five-star rating from allmusic.com.

Exhibit B: Radiohead’s Kid A, released in 2000, still received impressive reviews from critics (four stars from allmusic.com), but alienated fans wanting another OK Computer.

something new. When Radiohead hit big with OK Computer, it seemed that they couldn’t be stopped. Rave reviews rolled in for the eclectic mix of “Karma Police”, and the epic, lengthy rock of “Paranoid Android.” And yet, when the group chose a decidedly more electronic and ambient atmosphere for their next album, Kid A, they were popularly derided as a once great band gone bad, ruined by their failure to sound like the familiar Radiohead audiences loved. While many critics maintained a certain appreciation of Radiohead’s turn to electronics, even Rolling Stone found themselves lamenting, “If you’re looking for instant joy and easy definition, you are swimming in the wrong soup.... Kid A is a work of deliberately inky, often irritating obsession.” Kid A, a giant step forward for the band, was doomed to sit in the shadow of OK Computer, and represented a true loss of mainstream musical independence.

But how does one explain the changes occurring in popular music, from the album to reliance on the abbreviated single form? There has to be some catalyst, a starting point for that fall from popular grace, and it seems that the roots are threefold.

First and perhaps most obviously are the music companies and record labels. As is the case with most good things, the corporate world showed up and ruined all the fun. Once upon a time, there were only a handful of record labels, and the labels around invested in artists for the long haul. Money was put into the development of an artist over several albums, to truly find their voice and niche; of course, due to the smaller number of labels, fewer numbers of groups had the ability to release albums, but this is a strict technicality, as the concern was predominantly quality over quantity. As the decades progressed, and competition among labels and artists increased, the pressure to produce extremely profitable bands intensified. Radio airplay was becoming increasingly dictated by corporation-owned radio stations and faceless disc jockeys, and the battle to get a band on the air was on. The single, that one shot at fame, became the make-or-break vehicle for a group, and that dedication to the slow progression of
an artist's sound slowly died out under the fight for first on
the charts.

As groups became more and more cookie-cutter and
less artistic, audiences lost the social connection to music
which was once so indelible to our societal identity. When
Marvin Gaye and Sam Cooke took to the radio airwaves
in the 60's and early 70's, they not only managed to cre-
ate musical masterpieces (most notably with "What's Goin
On" and "A Change is Gonna Come", respectively), but
also made a statement about popular events and politics.
People listened to these artists for their views on the world,
and rallied around songs by Bob Dylan and Joan Baez as
they marched on Washington and fought for equal rights.

Music was once inseparable from politics, facts proven
by the importance of milestone events like Woodstock.
Today, baby boomers reminisce about the three-day fes-
tival of love and music, now an almost mythic American
event, entrenched between years of Vietnam and escalat-
ing Cold War geopolitics. They proceed to snatch up com-
memorative albums, DVD's and watch endless television
specials exploring the intriguing stew of music, culture
and politics the festival embodied. Much like the moon
landing and Kennedy's assassination, asking the previous
generation about Woodstock will elicit either nostalgic
memories and acid flashbacks, or sighed explanations
about why they weren't able to make it.

Years later, in both 1994 and 1999, a new generation
tried to resurrect the festival's melting pot of music, cul-
ture and peace, and failed miserably both times. The 1994
Woodstock brought Seattle grunge bands to the peace
and love stage, and was seen as a general joke, with yuppy
youngsters wearing their finest $30 tie-dye t-shirts
and drinking expensive Coke. The 1999 Woodstock was
an even more corporate showing, and ended with a mass
riot after days of price gouging and inadequate facilities.
In both instances, the bands had little connection to the
audiences, to society, and in some circumstances, even
to themselves. These reanimated pseudo-festivals were
complete validation of the fact that music is no longer inti-
mately connected to our lives.

It has something to do with our ever-shortening atten-
tion spans, and the fact that we just don't have time to de-
vote to the involved study and attention good independent
music requires. The internet and cable television have
given us instant access to exactly what we want, when we
want it. Thus, the single has become an effective marketing
tool for a new artist; produce a catchy single, and people
will download and listen to it repeatedly, instead of seek-
ing out the entire album. We have an amazing amount of
choice these days, and so instead of listening to an entire
record, we instead seek out our favorite hits from the radio
and MTV.

All of this combined may not necessarily constitute
an evil in itself; enabling musicians to disseminate their
music to a growing and diverse audience means that
more people will be exposed to their ideas and sounds.
Our short attention spans may mean that artists will learn
to eliminate any fluff tracks on their albums, and aim to
make the entire piece more palatable. Our growing tech
lifestyles have done wonders for previously struggling
and unknown independent artists.

And yet, it seems obvious that we've lost something in
that abandonment of artistic principals, in the switch to pop
divas and faceless rock bands, all in the name of making
a quick buck. The masses have become brainwashed in a
 corporate-engineered stew of shitty music and 3 minute
music videos. As a culture and society, we've overwhelmin-
gly forgotten about integrity, intelligence and explora-
tion in our music.

Unfortunately, the fact remains that it's still called popular
music for a reason.
Stepfather • People Under the Stairs

Underground duo Double K and Thes One comprise the prolific rap group known as People Under the Stairs, and Stepfather finds the two staying true to the classic PUTS formula. Relying on lyrical stylings, more so than instrumentation or flashy production, both members have a unique talent of creating easy-flowing beats with smooth lyrics that can become simply hypnotizing. But like the syndrome that plagued 2002’s O.S.T., this album suffers from a lack of variety and a generally slow execution. Of course, songs like, “Pumpin’” and “Flex Off” are unbelievable funky, featuring their trademarked old-school flow and style; unfortunately it feels like Double K and Thes One could have pushed the envelope further, especially for an album designed to cement PUTS as a West Coast establishment. An interesting listen, but Stepfather remains elusive as PUTS’ claim to the underground throne.

The Beginners Guide to Understanding the Roots: Volume Two • The Roots

No group can put together an overview album in two parts, with both discs equal in greatness, quite like the Roots. Interestingly, this album, and the volume before it, hardly seem like a proper introduction to such an accomplished group, as it includes an eclectic mix of the Roots live and remixed, but it is definitely for loyal fans of both the group and political hip-hop in general. On Vol. 2, the Roots return with that hypnotic groove we have come to love, designed and engineered by the consummate beat-smith, ?uestlove; listeners are treated to new remixes of classics like “Don’t Say Nuthin’” and “Essaywhuman?!?!?!?”, as well as never before heard performances of “The Seed” and “Sacrifice” live on BBC radio; perfect for the diehards, but tough for newbies to appreciate. That aside, the Roots have given us another party-ready album in a convenient, easy-to-open package.

Things Go Better with RJ and Al • Soul Position

Things Go Better with RJ and AL proves it: Soul Position’s ability to construct a mélange of phat beats and rhymes knows no boundaries. The under-rated partnership between rapper Blueprint and producer RJD2 returns on Soul Position’s latest album, since 2003’s successful 8 Million Stories. RJD2’s influence is felt from the start, with an expansive and well-versed style, dumping everything from strings to classic horn stabs together and then giving it all a stir. The lyrical message is even more impressive, striking at the heart of bling and Cristal culture with tracks like “No Gimmicks” and “Hand-Me-Downs”, where it’s all about the craft; the street-style essence of the album comes alive on “The Extra Mile”, reminding us that hip-hop is indeed a true artform. If you’re a fan of infectious hip-hop, or just want to know what the genre would have sounded like if corporate music labels had kept their distance, then make sure to check out Things Go Better with RJ and AL.

The rating scale? Read the beakers.

1 beaker: Pass on it  •  2 beakers: Only if you’re a fan  •  3 beakers: Damn good  •  4 beakers: Buy now!

Make sure to get more music for your inner music geek on www.cesium-online.com
(return to the cult)

Our resident cinema nerd, Brian Tambascio, looks at \textit{Shaun of the Dead}, and describes how he now has to sleep with a night light on.

\textbf{Some background}

In 1968, George A. Romero gave us \textit{Night of the Living Dead}, and single-handedly transformed modern horror as we know it, inventing what is now called the zombie movie. He would go on to release underground classics like \textit{Land of the Dead}, and was the inspiration for countless imitators. \textit{Shaun of the Dead}, released in 2004 opposite a reworked version of Romero’s classic, \textit{Dawn of the Dead}, revitalized the genre, an unabashed satire of the Romero-invented zombie flick with touches of dry British humor and classic romantic comedy.

\textbf{What’s the big deal?}

If you have to ask, odds are you aren’t very familiar with the horror sub-genre pioneered by Romero. The zombie movie is traditionally filled with gore and gross-outs, frequently determined to make the viewer simultaneously cringe and think, all while experiencing a mélange of supernatural phenomenon and incredible sci-fi. However, besides the emphasis placed on special effects, there remains equal importance placed upon plot development and character interaction, contrasting the hell surrounding everything with the humanity still surviving. \textit{Shaun of the Dead}, while an obvious satire, still manages to remain true to the basics laid down by Romero and maintained by genre purists, and even borrows heavily from previous Romero works, showing writer/director Edgar Wright’s dedication to stylistic conventions. In the process, we see a redefinition of what it means to be a zombie film, showing that the genre doesn’t have to be isolated from other cinematic motifs.

\textbf{The cult legacy?}

Released the same year as the remixed \textit{Dawn of the Dead}, \textit{Shaun of the Dead} was a tantalizing taste of what the genre could become with a little exploration. While the movie generally received lukewarm mainstream reviews, directors and independent critics jumped on the bandwagon and praised the movie for its cinematic miscegenation, representing the rare collision between people in the cinematic establishment and cult viewers. George A. Romero himself proclaimed \textit{Shaun of the Dead}, “an absolute blast,” proving that the zombie movie as we know it may not be dead.

\textbf{How should you watch it?}

Watch it with your family close by, locked in the safety of your dad’s old cold war bunker.  

Get your cinema fix online at www.cesium-online.com
4/19/06 The Reverb

Hear a name like Drums & Tuba, and you’ll most likely imagine kitsch rock, some sort of alterna-polka beast. Which, on a certain level may have been true; listen to early albums like Box Fetish and you’ll hear grooving instrumentals punctuated by a pulsating tuba. And based on these early tracks, you might make the mistake of not expecting much more. “We’re planning on changing our name,” says drummer Anthony Nozero, and that willingness to radically shakeup the band’s very identity shows just how far they’ve managed to push the envelope into electronica and other deep experimental waters.

Cesium spent an evening at The Reverb in Cedar Falls, a small yet cozy place, and the atmosphere was an intriguing mix of electricity and anticipation. A part of the KUNI Concert Series, Drums & Tuba are renowned for an eclectic soup of sounds, and they unquestionably delivered.

The band was unassuming on stage, quickly setting up and introducing themselves before launching into a dense sonic soundscape. The tones coming from the stage seemed so deep and multifaceted, I quickly looked around for musicians hiding under or behind the band (but found none). The music, and the energy emanated, brought about comparisons to Muse and Radiohead (in-between OK Computer and Kid A), but those comparisons were incredibly unfair, as Drums & Tuba have a sound and style all their own. The set was urgent and epic, with layers of looped guitar, courtesy of Neal McKeeby, floating hypnotically over Nozero’s determined beats, while tuba virtuoso Brian Wolff laid down the bass and masterfully cued samples. However, for all of the urgency (imagine the soundtrack playing during the end of the world), the band’s presence remained intimate and passionate; you got the feeling that the band could give a shit if you liked it, because they truly loved it, and that was all that mattered.

At the end of the band’s set (following a quick two-song encore) of as-yet unrecorded songs, the band said a simple thanks before tearing down their own equipment. And we were left wondering what the hell just happened.
(Your Sister on T.V.)

*Girls Gone Wild* and porn’s newfound mainstream appeal

essay by Wendy Vickler
These days when I find myself up late, around the time when normal cable programming ceases and the blocks of infomercial viewing begin, I frequently see advertisements for a now prolific video series, known to the masses as Girls Gone Wild. Whatever your opinion about the series may be, it has become unavoidable in today’s society, and it raises a number of questions about the intersection of sex with popular culture. What is now acceptable behavior to show on television? Where is our society headed? What does this say about us?

For those of you not familiar with the pioneering video series, Girls Gone Wild remains an exercise in simplicity. Cameramen (a gender assumption, I realize) prowl drunken gatherings, most notably spring break hangouts and Mardi Gras celebrations, and ask voluptuous ladies to bare their breasts (and sometimes other body parts) in exchange for GGW schwag.

The women usually waffle slightly, while the cameramen and/or host encourage them to show it all; the scenes end rather predictably, with the females usually hoisting their shirts up for a ludicrously slow five count. The GGW crew, satisfied, fork over a free t-shirt and move on down the beach, proceeding to repeat the cycle for about an hour.

It’s an amazingly straightforward business plan, and videos in the GGW series all essentially vamp on that main idea, simply taking the action to another location, or introducing some surprises into the proceedings (you have to kiss her too!). What once may have been an underground phenomenon, on late at night on cable and pay-per-view, has morphed somehow into this goliath, a ubiquitous collection of soft-core pornography that has become a cultural reference. But how?

Girls Gone Wild is a unique creature in the land of adult entertainment; most pornography finds itself limited to shady video store backrooms and discrete emporiums, kept separate from a moralizing public. Those associated with it are automatically stigmatized, despite the fact that the now far-ago sexual revolution was supposed to free us of these concerns. Porn stars are often viewed by the mainstream (who usually try to pretend they don’t even know who these people are) with a certain mix of jealousy, disgust and pity, kept at a distant arm’s length. Your average cultural consumer seems to examine people like Ron Jeremy and Jenna Jameson with the same rigor reserved for zoo animals.

And yet, despite possessing the same potential of objectifying the female gender as hardcore pornography, GGW seems to transcend at least some, if not all, of the stigmas imposed by mainstream society. The females taking center stage in these videos are not porn stars; they represent the amateurish girl next door, the one that you always suspected of being a closet freak but never had proof. There remains something intriguing about watching the loss of supposed teenage innocence, and having the power to relive it again and again which keeps consumers coming back for more. It is in this granting of voyeuristic ability that GGW seems to lie at the forefront of a loosening of moral exhibitions, and the closing of the gap between porn fantasy and plausible reality for the avid adult entertainment connoisseur. These videos depict scenarios that might actually come true for an adventurous male traveling through alcohol-soaked locales; what once may have been held up as proof of the corruption of America in a Congressional hearing is now proudly paraded on television and on the racks of Blockbuster and Best Buy for all to purchase.

The fact that the video series (which is one of the most popular adult titles available, and has made the founder, Joseph Francis, a multi-millionaire) is even advertised on television speaks volumes about its newfound social acceptability. Of course, one could argue that advertisements for the videos are relegated to the late-night crowd, aimed at the insomniac perverts of the world, and yet, it should be noted that one doesn’t often encounter televised advertisements for the latest hardcore adult film (unless you

Another Look:
The depiction of women in sexually provocative and exploitative situations does nothing to break the sexual barriers that have long existed between the sexes; instead, videos like GGW only serve to objectify women, and reinforce the belief that men are innocent bystanders in the action. These videos maintain that women are the ones that must be “responsible” in sexual situations, as they are never physically forced to do anything. Men are typically only viewed as consumers of sexually-explicit behavior undertaken by women, and are only buying what is placed in front of them, yet males take an active part in the creation and production of these video series. With the advent of “reality” pornography, showcasing amateur women, unprincipled businessmen serve to cheapen an entire population of young females, even if it is not purposefully.

The loosening of sexual mores in our society is certainly a good thing, as that means better access to contraceptives, sexual education and an overall better informed public. However, this gradual dropping of the sexual guard does not mean that we should encourage easily-accessible depictions of feminine exploitation for t-shirts by young girls who are readily influenced by popular culture.

I am certainly not arguing for the regulation of morals by our government, nor the suppression of sexual behaviors in our culture; however, videos like Girls Gone Wild have no valid, artistically relevant place within our society, and the link between female sexual expression and Girls Gone Wild is a tenuous one at best.

- Molly Paterno, University of Iowa
get the Spice Channel, which my cable company has yet to pick up). Cigarette commercials haven't even been allowed on television since 1971.

It also shouldn't be ignored that the video collection has been the subject of countless parodies on shows like Saturday Night Live and covered in Rolling Stone. People know about these videos, and they know a lot. The video has even spawned imitators since the series' initial release back in 1998, most notably a low-budget knock-off entitled Girls Going Crazy, and the recent addition of Guys Gone Wild to the product line. If imitation is truly the sincerest form of flattery, then this proves that GGW remains the dirty grandfather of a new hybrid genre of adult entertainment.

But what does the fact that GGW has become such a pervasive social entity say about our social mores concerning sex? If one sees the series as representing a loosening of the moral strings surrounding sex and a further push into sexual liberation, it might be hard to disagree with the video's approach, as it only represents a small step in the greater path to sexual freedom. Of course, considering many of the events taking place are heavily staged and frequently under the influence of alcohol, this may be seen an extreme interpretation of the founder as a pioneering post-feminist. Most simply see GGW as strict exploitation, but exploitation never seemed this fun. Girls Gone Wild has found a way to creep in the back-door of the conservative American consciousness, and we aren't even trying to hide it anymore.

Are we headed to a land of hardcore sex depictions everywhere we turn? Sex on billboards and prime time commercial spots? Hardly; but the growing popularity and acceptance of adult entertainment, marketed widely and based around “reality” does seem to mean that the worlds of sexual fantasy and actual reality are becoming quickly fused. The new sexual culture is now clamoring for amateurs, “real” women to star in these sexual situations, because there is a new drive to transition entertainment from the strictly hypothetical fantasy world to something closer to home. We are seeing the conceptual conversion of every sexually mature female in society into a porn star, and there is little push back. Post-feminism and the Girl Power movements have endorsed the abandonment of societal limits on female sexual expression, and the ideas are taking hold, whether your average collegiate female could express them or not.

All in all, that leaves us with the conclusion that while America may have been founded by Puritans and administered by Protestants, we can expect to see more sex, and more of it in the mainstream. It won't be the stuff of snuff films or wild bachelor parties, but it will be taped and televised. It will be “real.” And we'll accept it, whether with a head shake or a high-five, because it has become part of our lives, and we'll wonder what collegiate females aspired to be on before Girls Gone Wild came around.
Here at Cesium, we do our best to keep up with the news, in as many forms as possible; it’s all part of our efforts to stay plugged-in and up-to-date with the happenings of the nation and world. That’s certainly an important task, but sometimes we just get tired of all the seriousness and gloom of our news anchors. That’s when we turn it over to the fake news to get the job done.

When we say fake news, we’re referring to the real advent of satirical news reporting. These days, most younger people know shows like The Daily Show with Jon Stewart and The Colbert Report; these shows have truly brought news and satire together for modern audiences, lampooning modern political debates, and studies by the Annenberg survey show that consumers of these shows are much more informed than those who rely on just network news. Satire can be a great way to increase your brain power, simply by mocking societal institutions!

But most people don’t know that the satirizing of the headlines has been around much longer, since Mark Twain (Huck Finn, anyone?) first wrote news spoofs for the Nevada Territorial Enterprise way back in the 1860’s. Since then, news satire has had its ups and downs, lying dormant much of the first half of the 20th century, and then finding a real renaissance, with television shows in the 60’s and 70’s leading the charge, such as That Was the Week That Was, Laugh-In and Saturday Night Live’s “Weekend Update”. In addition, magazines like National Lampoon and Mad Magazine revitalized a literary humor in America, although they weren’t strictly devoted to spoofing the news (as anything was fair game).

In 1996, The Onion, a well-written satirical newspaper based out of Madison, Wisconsin, took to the internet and exploded into a huge, national publication, and now it seems that the web is the place to be for satire. The feeling of independence that comes with the internet community means that nothing is off-limits, and the web has given people the ability to share humor with a far larger and intellectual audience than through traditional means.

Instead of just talking about news satire, we thought we’d give you some sites to sink your teeth into. Check them out, and hopefully you’ll get hooked too.

Find links to all these sites on www.cesium-online.com

### The Best Satire Sites Around

#### The Onion
**www.theonion.com**
One of the originals, and still the best. A recent redesign brings the website even closer in line with “real” news sites like CNN and the New York Times, and the articles, no matter what section, are always deadpan hillarious (such as the recent, “Commercial Blasted for Product Placement”). Add to that a complete AV section, with coverage of pop culture (not always satirical, but still hillarious) and a complete podcast, and you’ve got the multimedia king of laughs.

#### The Swift Report
**http://swiftreport.blogs.com**
It may look like a bare-bones operation, but The Swift Report always features timely articles on current political fodder. The humor is so dry, you may forget you’re reading fake news. But hey, that’s what satire is all about.

#### Bongo News
**www.bongonews.com**
Bongo News is one of the fastest growing satire sites on the web, and with good reason. The content is fresh, with new additions weekly, and they also have a great media section; a recent review of the movie The Da Vinci Code simply said, “I never knew Jesus got married. The Da Vinci Code would make a good book.”

#### Broken Newz
**www.brokennewz.com**
While not as robust or navigationally friendly as the other sites, Broken Newz publishes some caustic, up-to-date political satire that can’t be missed.
Lately, it has become apparent that some of our most cherished institutions have fallen under attack from (surprise) liberals. First it was humanity's creation and the entire intelligent design debacle, and then it was every other religion in the world teaming up on the defenseless Christmas. Although I wasn't aware of this until recently, it seems that marriage is now the latest all-American institution to find itself under the gun and hoping for a savior. I really wish I had gotten the memo earlier.

In early June, our senators found themselves considering a new constitutional amendment to define marriage as strictly between a man and a woman. Sponsored by Senator Wayne Allard (R-CO), the bill was viewed with a high level of cynicism throughout Congress; Democrats all generally stood out in opposition to the bill and characterized it as a waste of Congress' time, while Republicans restated the apparent importance of maintaining a centuries-old social institution. On June 5th, new White House Press Secretary Tony Snow took to the airwaves, comparing the banning of gay marriage to that of old civil rights struggles, and proceeded to get grilled by the press corp. On June 7th, the matter was brought to a vote; Republicans, currently controlling 48 seats in the Senate, needed 60 votes to push the bill to a vote, and 67 to pass it. When the vote failed miserably (49 votes for the measure), we all hoped that would be the end, and we could go back to living as a sinful country.

But of course, it wasn't.

While the voting setback effectively means that Congress won't consider the issue for another year (the House will review the same issue in July, with no different outcome expected), it did serve to bring up a lot of debate and media coverage of fringe conservative groups and give Fox News something to shout about for a week or two. I watched all of the conservative talking heads posture and pose over the issue, claiming that gay marriage would be the downfall of American society. Apparently every other great civilization in the world's history, from the Greeks to the Romans to the Egyptians, crumbled under the heavy weight that is homosexuality and its ever-encroaching demands.

But in all seriousness, the debate has left me scratching my head and wondering where the logic behind banning gay marriage comes from. What is the problem with allowing homosexuals the right to form lasting unions with each other, in the largely symbolic way afforded to heterosexuals? How does the fact that my lonely neighbor and your weird uncle want to be together affect the relationship between a married couple?

The arguments to ban the practice, as is the norm in these sorts of polarizing moralistic issues, fall along ludicrous, if not homophobic, lines. One of the most cited reasons for the banning of gay marriage is that of the slippery slope; if we allow gay marriage, people will begin to fight for the legality of polygamy, incestuous relationships and even marriage between humans and animals. The possibilities for the perversion of marriage are endless, according to commentators like James Dobson (of the controversial Marriage Under Fire) and the entire Fox News network.

The reality of the situation is that the slippery slope is nonexistent, and a piss-poor defense. Arguing for the marriage rights between two consensual, loving people will not open the door to exotic forms of marital debauchery. Worries about legalizing polygamy are unfounded, as the practice has been illegal in the U.S. since 1862, mostly in response to Mormon colonies, and the Mormon Church itself banned the practice in 1890. Any remaining "splinter" groups from the Mormon Church still practicing polygamy would be in the extreme minority, and would pose no threat in terms of legalizing the practice.

In regards to the more extreme circumstances alleged to emerge because of the legalization of gay marriage, suggesting that incestuous relationships or animal marriage are the next stepping stones in the evolution of a once necessary social institution tarnishes what marriage stands for: the commitment of two individuals to each other. It also demeans homosexuals by insinuating that the next step below are animals and perverts, proving that the banning of gay marriage is an attempt to reign in a
minority viewed by some as dangerous and sinful. This type of reasoning is not only flat wrong, but dangerously divisive and alienating.

Other arguments against the practice come from a demographics concern. The idea that people will cease to get married and have children is one of the most comical constructions to emanate from the far right. Ministers and neo-cons alike warn with apocalyptic fervor that allowing gay people to wed will teach our children that traditional values are no longer valid. Gay couples will begin to adopt children and lead them astray. They warn that people will stop getting married (assumably because heterosexual marriage is a traditional value) and people will stop procreating (assumably because heterosexual sex is a traditional value). In this way, gay marriage will literally be the cause for the downfall of modern civilization.

And yet, this argument is just as ridiculous as the previous one. The idea that humanity will cease to procreate has no basis; it is highly doubtful that heterosexuals (making up an estimated 96% of society, according to the Kinsey Studies) will stop having sex because they know that gay people can get married. Never in recorded history has homosexuality posed a reproductive threat in any society; openly homosexual groups have always been the minority and have little pull on the birth rates in an area. There is even evidence of homosexual activity in nature, with zoologists around the world reporting same-sex mating between penguins and sheep, meaning that same-sex activity and marriage would have no impact on our functioning as a society.

Furthermore, groups intimately involved with the American family, including the Child Welfare League of America, North American Council on Adoptable Children, American Academy of Pediatrics, American Psychiatric Association, American Psychological Association, and the National Association of Social Workers all support same-sex marriage. If gay marriage would prove to be such a weight on the crucial institution of family, wouldn’t these groups be the first to sound the alarm? On July 28, 2004, even the American Psychological Association’s Council of Representatives passed a resolution supporting legalization of same-sex civil marriages, proving that neither our birth rate, nor our values as a society would be put at risk by allowing consensual adults to create a union.

At the heart of it, gay marriage is, all rhetoric aside, a civil rights issue. It is not a societal issue at all; while marriage may traditionally be held as a Judeo-Christian institution, this should have no bearing in a secular government. It is perfectly allowable for a church or synagogue to prohibit gay marriages in its halls, as this is a religious matter and religions have the right to decide which practices to endorse or disallow. All the arguments advanced by those against gay marriage have their roots in religious discourse, and thus should remain a strictly religious debate. The government should not have the ability to decide that gay people do not qualify for state-sanctioned marriages, as this amounts to discrimination against a minority. The 14th Amendment of the Constitution provides for the equal protection of all citizens, and now neo-conservatives find themselves trying to amend the constitution once more, to build in a clause meant only to discriminate against those of a different sexual orientation. Congress already passed the Defense of Marriage Act in 1996, and it failed to prevent the perceived disintegration of American values; if conservatives are truly worried about marriage being under attack, perhaps they should look at some of the other factors, such as no-fault divorce laws and a staggering 43% divorce rate, according to the National Center for Health Statistics. Instead, they see homosexuality as a convenient scapegoat for changing social attitudes.

President Bush recently remarked, “America is a free society which limits the role of government in the lives of our citizens. In this country, people are free to choose how they live their lives.” Perhaps he should begin to live by those words.
The automobile remains one of those ubiquitous American icons, like baseball and apple pie. The idea of our great nation sans auto would be a startling one to most people, but within the past year, that vision has quickly moved to become reality. As of mid-May, gas prices across the United States averaged $2.92, according to reports from the American Automobile Association (AAA), and it appears that the days of two-dollar gas, still talked about by those with decent memories, are all but faded middle-class dreams. Once only murmured about in political and strategic circles, the days of expensive American fuel are here, and here to stay. Mainstream media outlets, from CNN to the *New York Times*, are beginning to seize on the plight of the average American, having to choose between fuel and other leisurely pursuits, and businesses bogged down by excessive gas expenditures. As the situation grows more odious, even politicians, once separated from fuel price grief, are jumping into the fray to convince constituents that they feel the pain too.

Three dollars never looked like so much money.

But this isn’t just about the pump. This is about greed, power and precious resources. This is about textbook capitalism at its finest, about government pandering at its worst, and why you will never, ever be able to fill up your tank cheap again.

In late April, as gas prices shot upward, absent of any significant national emergency (such as another Katrina or 9/11), people started talking. Serious talk, angry talk, all about Washington’s slow response to the encroaching national concern. And Washington, a stodgy, old establishment that had done nothing to change an errant energy policy dating back to the 1970’s, suddenly started to react. Lawmakers began proposing rapid-fire policies, many of which had no potential for an impact at the pump, but looked attractive politically. Leaders like Bill Frist talked about rebate checks, totaling a meager $100, for millions of Americans, to offset high gasoline prices, while Democrats discussed passing windfall taxes on big oil companies, but were quickly shut up by big business donors expressing
“concern.” Senators and other representatives fought to find the quickest and best solution to our energy woes, but quickly realized they had little power to protect the public from massive multinational corporations. Americans were generally counseled to be patient.

Meanwhile, President Bush and his inner circle continued their allegiance to Big Oil, with George W. immediately rejecting any calls for taxes on the profits of these companies, and hesitating to back a popular price-gouging resolution winding its way through Congress, saying simply, “I have no evidence that there’s any rip-off taking place.” The administration’s official line came through Bush’s newly appointed chief of staff, Josh Bolton, who reassuringly said, “It’s not going to be solved in the short run by some silver bullet,” and insisted the only solution would be a drastically reduced dependence on foreign oil, with talk of drilling in Alaskan wildlife preserves thinly veiled underneath.

With the current administration having such large ties to oil (including the vice president, the national security advisor and the secretary of commerce), and enjoying approximately 50 million dollars in political contributions each election cycle, it became clear that Bush would have no part in legislation that would penalize the oil industries. He instead called for the industries to spend more time, effort and money looking into alternative energy resources, all of which were talked about in general, vague terms. Alternative energy became the Holy Grail, the thing everyone wanted, but no legislation was advanced to help support exploration of these phantoms. There was no feasible talk of significant monetary help for Americans, no talk of conservation. In short, there was little change in the energy policy, no change in the administration’s stance.

In late April, people began feeling the pinch, and the government remained in a corporate gridlock.

The oil industry, it would be reasonable to assume, was busy popping the corks on its stockpile of finely-aged champagne. For an industry resigned to a cyclical life of slump and boom, it seemed that the ship (or perhaps, more appropriately, oil tanker) had come in. After enduring substantial grilling over high gas prices at the hands of congressional committees in late 2005, the oil executives could rest assured that their time in the spotlight had blown over. People were turning their ire on their representatives and the Bush administration, and it seemed that they had already forgotten about leaders like Jim Mulva, CEO of Conoco, sitting in front of Congress and half-heartedly intoning, “This level of profit is in the highest price environment our industry has experienced in 22 years, after adjusting for inflation, and we do not see this as a windfall.” The oil industry was in the clear.

Meanwhile, the rest of the world was booming, and the new oil tycoons were running out of caviar for all their cocktail parties. New demand in third world and developing countries was reaching an all-time high, with China and India leading the petroleum-based charge, and The Economist noting that Chinese oil consumption soared by 16% in 2004 alone. U.S. consumption continued to grow, despite the pocketbook pain it caused, with Americans using 25% of the world’s oil, and 45% of the world’s gasoline, and general demand up 4.3% from 2003.

In mid-April, ExxonMobil reported profits of 8.4 billion dollars in the first quarter of 2006; this wasn’t as high as the record 10.7 billion reported in the previous quarter, but was enough to help bring the company’s fiscal-year profits to a record 36.1 billion dollars, a number higher than the gross domestic product of 139 world countries. Shareholders were enjoying a fat 13% profit margin.

This came despite refining and pipeline disruptions from Hurricane Katrina, continued violence in the Middle East, and other procurement hurdles. Speculation on the open market drove prices skyward, and no one thought once to question the energy companies. As oil, an essential component for economies around the world, became harder and harder to find and efficiently deliver, reducing supply with already increased demand, multinationals raked in the consumer’s hard-earned dollars with nary a second thought. It was the epitome of capitalism, and exploitation had never looked so good.

News resurfaced that ExxonMobil chairman Lee Raymond stepped down, and received a severance package worth nearly 400 million dollars. Conscientious people paying attention cried foul; CNBC declared it a glorious day for business.

All in all, it was a lovely time to be Big Oil.

Cars were blowing up in Iraq, and the posturing over an Iranian nuclear program continued, but for all the turmoil, for all the war, mid-April found the Middle East the
new nexus of world control. While Saudis watched the President and his sidekicks talk about weaning America off foreign oil, the tankers kept arriving, and the fact that oil imports represented 61% of American oil consumption kept the oil sheiks sleeping soundly at night. The U.S. remained Saudi Arabia’s number one customer, and the United Arab Emirates remained the biggest oil supplier for Japan and the East, which were growing at an explosive pace. OPEC countries (which includes some non Middle-East members) accounted for 40% of the world production, and an estimated two-thirds of the world oil reserves, meaning that a handful of leaders could directly influence the world’s economy, a power that no one would want to relinquish. Meanwhile, the Bush administration maintained its hushed ties to the Saudi kingdom, and hoped Michael Moore didn’t make another movie.

On the last day of April, Saudi King Abdullah ordered gas prices in Saudi Arabia to be slashed by over 30%, from 24 cents for a liter of gas to 17 cents until January of 2007. His image was bolstered, while the rest of the world decided whether to buy oil or food.

And here we find ourselves heading into the summer, with few alternatives and even fewer solutions to the problem. Politics seem to become more and more entrenched with the rulers of Big Oil. The administration calls for more tax incentives for the oil companies to pursue alternative sources of energy and a lowering of emissions guidelines for oil refineries in the nation; a plan that only seems to ensure that these companies will be able to reach new record profits in the future.

President Bush reiterates that we suffer from a crippling “addiction,” and that we must seek help, although exactly where from remains a mystery to most.

The oil companies continue to tell us they are working hard to get more oil on the market. They’re still beat up from Katrina. They’re still trying to find a way to secure Iraqi oil lines. Lee Raymond tells Americans that the best way to ensure lower gas prices is to use less of it, completely shifting the blame for the whole thing onto a public just trying to fill up their minivans and lawnmowers. Rex Tillerson, the CEO of ExxonMobil goes on the Today show, and bullies Matt Lauer, “I understand it’s very difficult for a lot of families. But the alternative of not having the gasoline at all or having long lines, I don’t think is one people would find attractive.”

Big Oil discounts alternative energy. They say it will take too much time and work. And we have oil now.

We are reminded that gas prices in Europe are much, much higher, and we should be so lucky to be enjoying three dollar gas. Various economists take to the media, informing us that the ExxonMobil gang hates the idea of expensive oil just as much as we do (for some vague, unexplainable reason). It is mentioned that, accounting for inflation, the price of gas right now is still lower than it was during the Arab oil embargo of 1973, and the oil shortages of the early 80’s. Things aren’t that bad. We should be thanking the government, the oil companies and the Middle East for coddling us.

We should stop our bitching. We should open our eyes and take a global view.

All the while, the American lifestyle is being slowly flushed, deliberately trashed by those wielding the new petroleum power, and we fall for every bold-faced statement made to our faces. We become resigned to the fact that there is nothing we can do, even when viable alternatives, such as walking, cycling, carpooling and public transportation exist in a much less visible way. We pull up to the pump and grimace as the fuel trickles into our tank.

Welcome to the new reality of democracy, big business style. Welcome to three dollars a gallon.
Summer has finally showed up, and that can mean only one thing: another losing season for the Cubs. Here’s a few things to do while you nurse your sunburn.

**Thursday, June 22**

KUNI continues its amazing concert series with Kevin Gordon at The Reverb in Cedar Falls, Iowa. Presenting his latest release, *O Come Look at the Burning*, Gordon fuses rock with swampy bayou blues rhythms. Tickets are $7, with Brother Trucker opening; the entire backwater jam begins at 9 p.m. Call The Reverb at (319) 277-4404 for more information.

**Sunday, June 25**

Always wanted to sail the high seas, but were too afraid of scurvy? Now’s your shot, courtesy of the annual Great Cardboard Boat Regatta, in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. Beginning at 11:30 in the morning at Ellis Park, participants will try to pilot boats made entirely of cardboard across a freezing lake; look for the winner of the Titanic award, which celebrates the most impressive sinking. Part of the Freedom Festival, float on over to www.freedomfestival.com for directions and registration information for the intrepid.

**Saturday, July 14 - Sunday, July 15**

A veritable staple of the Cedar Valley, the 28th annual College Hill Arts Festival will come together to present some of the finest creative work around. Ranked 60th on a list of the *100 Best Fine Arts & Design Shows* (there’s that many?) by *Sunshine Artist* magazine, the festival will showcase 75 of the best artists in fields from painting to glasswork. There will also be a stage for musical guests and plenty of food to go around. The festivities will take place on the campus of the University of Northern Iowa.

Get more info at [www.chaf.cfu.net](http://www.chaf.cfu.net)

**Saturday, July 29 – Sunday, July 30**

Okay, okay...so they’re a competing mag, but if we could afford the gas, we’d be found at Pitchfork Media’s Music Festival, held in Chicago’s Union Park. Look for performances from groups like Spank Rock, The Futureheads, Flosstradamus, Yo La Tengo and tons more; tickets for both days are only a meager $30.

Check them out at [http://pitchforkmusicfestival.com/index.htm](http://pitchforkmusicfestival.com/index.htm).

**Saturday, September 2 – Sunday, September 3**

Kart racing through the streets of Rock Island, Illinois? Sounds like it could be fun. The Rock Island Grand Prix will take place in early September, pitting feisty mini-kart drivers against one another, all in the hope for a shot at $25,000. Look for us enjoying cold Bud on the sidelines and hoping for fender benders.

Get more information (and register, you little hot-rodder) at [www.rockislandgrandprix.com](http://www.rockislandgrandprix.com).
Together, we can save a life.

Malorie Letcavage
Saved by you

Camille Spann
Saved by you

Jordan Jacques
Saved by you

Blood isn’t just needed in a disaster. Fact is, every two seconds, somebody in America needs blood.

If you become a regular donor with the American Red Cross, you could help save more lives.

Please call to set up an appointment today. Who knows how many will be saved by you?

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