Editorials

It seems lately, with a little help from our young IT magician, we have something new to offer with every issue. This time Oliver has created our very own blog which we try to refresh every day. We are at the beginning with the blog so we are still a bit...numb with the experience. But please do visit it and make your comments, or join in a conversation that has already started online.

I started with our new blog but the big thing about this issue is sexuality, is sex, is choice and joy. I want to believe that we made a good issue with a lot of help from our friends around the world. And yes, there are things we missed but we hope in the future more people will join Ovi and write about all these things we missed.

Still, Asa has a very funny moment with his wife in a couple of articles, I try to investigate the big mystery of cream and sex, plus Melissa and Mickey Hotlove take us to other dimensions that I admit I have never thought about. Jouko gives us his personal experience about what freedom of choice in sexuality means and we really thank him since it is not easy to write about personal experiences when it comes to issues like that.

Tony, Phil, Nathan, Satya, Jonathan and Jan are back, plus Hutch, Nic, Lee, Riku, Nick, Ted, Theo and finally our lost black sheep John from the States. So you can see that we try to cover sexuality as best we can but after all that’s what Ovi is, we try to cover every issue.

Naturally current events, especially the cartoons about Mohamed, have their fair share in Ovi magazine, a strong share I have to admit but as much as we fight every prejudice we must fight for freedom of speech as well.

iKritic is... just Asa and I think in the end we will call it Asa-critics!!! Most of all, I was happy to see Ovi fiction improving with more stories joining. In this issue we make a reader test with the first chapter of a book we Asa and I are writing together. This is another adventure I live with Asa and it has had surprising results that I hope you will enjoy and send us your comments.

Ovi magazine is getting bigger and we thank you for your support. We want people to join us, write and express themselves through our pages. We would like to have correspondents everywhere that is possible and I really hope we will manage to see that one day.

We are hoping that this issue will help you to see beyond prejudices and fears.

Thank you

Thanos

Wow, what a month it has been since we last met! I have moved house for the second time in six weeks, recovered from a cold, my daughter has discovered her tongue and my wife was not impressed with my heartfelt request, “Darling, Ovi issue 12 is about sexuality, so it would be great if we good make love and I could use the earthmoving experience as foundation for my research.”

Reeling from a negative answer, I had a cold shower and returned to the keyboard to write about famous Finnish women, communications problems between the sexes, the power of sex and an examination of a male sex toy named the Fleshlight. It seems Thanos has been celibate this month too because he has written over twenty articles, including age and sex, his first time, fantasies and cream. I think we both need to get out more.

Thankfully, our minds have drifted off into other directions too, with articles about nursery rhymes, opening ceremonies, referees and the Oscars, plus reviews of Adobe Creative Suite 2 and an excellent Greek film called A Touch of Spice. World politics are dealt with in our individual styles, plus we throw our opinions about the Mohammed cartoon controversy into the ring.

As talented and marvellous as we are, we could not keep Ovi going without our fantastic contributors who have excelled once again this issue taking the number of articles to over fifty. Tackling the subject of sexuality and gender are Jan Sand, Melissa Dennis, Juhani J., F.A. Hutchison and a Belgian porn webmistress called Mickey Hotlove.

Our regulars are back with Phil Schwarzmann writes his Bilingual illiterate column, Tony Butcher examines the departure of Alan Greenspan from the Federal Reserve, Nic Mephap composes some poetry and Satya Prakash contributes three interesting articles. Newcomers Nathan Hurst investigates biomechanics, Lee Thorkhill reviews ‘Walk the Line’, Riku Pyhala looks at Finnish cinema audiences, Ted is Neurotic Narcissus and Theo Versten will probably shock.

There is so much material here that it should keep you busy for the next month, until issue 13 (topic is radio) is released. Keep spreading the word, submitting feedback and don’t forget to click on to our new blog.

Now, I am going to see if my wife wants to help me finish my research...

Asa
Growing up in the ‘60s didn’t nec- essarily mean that the sexual revo- lution had reached every area. Actu- ally, most of our parents lived in the era of the Puritanism and they were scared of the changes happening around us, including sex behav- ior. By that time, and I was in the first year of the high school, there were schools for boys and different schools for girls.

Mixed schools came a few years later and I didn’t have the chance to live the experience, since the first girls in my school joined when I was in the last year and the system trying to soften the shock didn’t make the whole school mix, but only the first year and the kids con- tinued mixing as they reached the last year. So having girls around you that were around 12-years-old didn’t give much in the sense of a mixed school, since most of us had little sisters the same age.

Boys of every age in the same place for nearly ten hours a day, six days a week then with their hormones boiling, you can imagine that sex was a central issue and Playboy magazine had become something like a Bible. Most of us had slept with thousands of these printed pages and they had joined all our dreams, but still what we were doing with them was in a sort of cloud.

We were somewhere half-way our first year in the high school when one boy came and announced that he had sex. That was like a hundred megaton bomb. Sex? One of us had sex? In the beginning there was de- nial. No way, he’s lying. He’s been lying before, don’t you remember when he told us that he had sex? No way. But the boy stood there with shining eyes and he said: “And I will have sex next weekend.” What? I was not like today; television was the weekend came. I remember the area we went to that night. It was unknown in the schools and something like six to eight hours of fever, I remember the memory of that first sexual experience. Most of us remember our first kiss, I mean real kiss with a sense of romance and forgotten promises; but the first sexual experience can be rough.

It seems that all the gods conspired because one evening during the second week and after our friend’s second manhood visit, a relative of mine told me that I am at the right age and we should do something about it. Saying that, he added that next weekend we were going somewhere where I would become a man. I just had to be careful and have a good shower before, which made me wonder in the beginning but then made me count the sec- onds to the weekend.

Most of us were afraid and asking for further information from a naked woman in a room, I sort of recall her helping me to get undressed but what happened af- ter is a mystery. And I assure you that I have tried to remember many times.

The next week at school I had the same serious look and the same shining eyes explaining to every- body that this was a moon walk- ing experience difficult to explain and that experience is something you earn and not transmitting with speech. The other boy and I be- came something like a legend for the next couple of months till the football world cup started and we both did enjoy it establishing our leadership among the other boys.

We both adopted the phrase “A gen- tleman never talks about a lady” to escape the difficult questions and one day, continuing to enrich our experiences, we got drunk together. The very same day I had my first cigarette so you can imagine what the combination of a head-spinning cigarette and a bottle of wine did to two 13-year-olds.

After a while we started talk- ing about our ‘girls’ and we both admitted that we had no bloody memory of that first sexual experi- ence. It was a great laugh and our little secret started a friendship that still lasts, plus a dramatic moment and a lot of screaming from our parents.

I don’t know if this manhood ini- tiation continues nowadays but it is sad that a boy’s first introduction to the wonderful world of sex had to be in minutes from a woman that had limited time and perhaps no interest to show. Probably the expe- rience is traumatic, coming from the paper photos of naked women and wet dreams with unachievable big breasts to a real woman who just does everything alone with- out even having the time tried to show or explain what she’s doing. Of course that time sexual education was unknown in the schools and let’s hope that today things have changed.

BOY’S DIARY

England lost to Brazil 2-1. Got a shave though.

Friday, 21st June 2002

GIRL’S DIARY

Saw John in the evening and he was acting really strangely. I went shopping in the afternoon with the girls and I did turn up a bit late so I thought it might be that. The bar was really crowded and loud so I suggested we go somewhere quiet- er to talk. He was still very subdued and distracted so I suggested we go somewhere nice to eat. All through dinner he just didn’t seem himself, he hardly laughed, and didn’t seem to be paying any attention to me or what I was saying. I just knew that something was wrong. He dropped me back home and I won- dered if he was going to come in. He hesitated, but followed. I asked him again if there was something other than just the pressure, but he just half shook his head and turned the television on.

After about 10 minutes of si- lence, I said I was going upstairs to bed. I put my arms around him and told him that I loved him deeply. He just gave a sigh, and a sad sort of smile. He didn’t follow me up, but later he did, and I was surprised when we made love. He still seemed distant and a bit cold, and started to think that he was going to leave me and that he had found someone else. I cried myself to sleep.

One of those ‘Men are from Mars’ books explains that when women share a problem between them they usually respond with a problem of their own, thereby creating a sense of ‘solidarity’. Unfortunately, men prefer to offer a solution and this comes across as insensitive. When men share a problem between them, they are usually too drunk to remember the advice.
Sexuality

My gay growth

By Juhanı Giers

I was born in a small country village in the middle of nowhere in western Finland. My family was the most average you can think of: I had farmer parents with two siblings; I was the youngest. By the age of six - the moral age - I was convinced that when I grew up I didn’t want to join the army.

Back then, I hadn’t heard of the possibility of choosing civil service. Well, how could I have, living in the countryside where people vote for Keskiutta (Centre Party)? The rules are so simple there: As a farmer’s son you grow up to be a farmer and you vote for the same party as your parents and you definitely show that you are a real man by serving the compulsory time in the army.

I did declare my opinion - by the age of six - about my decision not to serve my country in the army and how helpful the adults were: “But if you refuse to join the army you’ll end up in jail and you will get just water and bread to eat!” I didn’t believe what the adults said, but I answered: “Well, if the other prisoners will cope with that then I will too.” Back then, I was already a bit overweight, so I thought I’d be all right with the extra energy I have in reserve.

By the age of 11, I accidentally listened to a YLE radio channel and heard about the civil service and what a relief it was! A huge weight dropped from my shoulders when I realised that I did have an alternative to the water and bread diet in prison. Now I had a choice to serve my country another way than by learning to kill. Why do I tell you this at all? Wasn’t this meant to be an article about sexuality? Tell you this because it was a crucial insight for me that there is some kind of justice in this country and you have to listen to your own mind instead of eager adults’ advice around you.

When I was in my teenage in the mid-80s, I started to realize that there are choices for the way of life, such as my parents had in their happy marriage. That there is another way to express your desire and affection, and that those people are somehow different. Everybody knows that they are somewhere, but it is taboo to talk about them because they represent something which is weird and unacceptable.

I had a slight idea of my own personality, that I might be one of those different people. Again, I saw this matter in a very simple way: If everyone knows that they are somewhere, there, I will someday find a couple of them and a match for me. We have a saying in Finnish called MAALAIŠJÄRKKI, which means ‘reasonable thinking’ or ‘power of deduction’, it is wisdom learned by living in the countryside, not from the books or by education. I used my maalaisjärki. I never disregarded myself because of being different: I thought that I’m a quite an all right bloke and there must be someone for an O.K. bloke somewhere.

I had no worries about my sexuality. My worries were more usual: When will it start to grow and how big IT will be at the end of a day? How will I cope with the situation of really DOING IT with someone? You know, kissing and all...? Back then, I had bisexual emotions and I had a crush on a girl from my class. I did get my first kiss from her, which fulfilled my dreams. Unfortunately, I got for the wrong reasons. She wanted her recent boyfriend to be jealous so she made sure that this boyfriend saw the kiss! And she left me right after the kiss and went back to have an emotional discussion with that bloody bloke!

A few years later in high school (lukio, I came out with my bisexuality to my best friend. We were having a break and we had a conversation about jealousy. He asked: “Can you imagine being in a situation where you find your girl friend in bed with someone else? What would you do?” I answered: “I would jump into bed and join them!” His neutral attitude made me think: ‘Gosh! This coming-out thing is so easy!’ And again I was very relieved. Many years later when we talked about my sexuality, my friend was surprised. He didn’t remember the whole conversation and he hadn’t realized what I had said! I was astonished because that moment was a turning point for me!

My first real homosexual experience in a toilet of a middle-size town’s swimming pool. The experience was exciting and a bit frightening at the same time. The same year I also had my first real heterosexual experience, and I can say the same about that experience too. So, yes, I can make a comparison in this matter, which is often asked.

Homosexuality as a phenomenon had to come out of the closet to everybody. It had to stop being a taboo. There was a need to know more about homosexual behaviour to be able to fight against this horrible disease.

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Then it was my time to serve the country and my choice was the civil service. I learned in the civil service education something about us Finns: People actually respect those who choose prison instead of civil service more. This had been my guideline for my way of living and my sexuality. I do get more respect by being honest about what I am, instead of hiding in a closet.

I refuse to be a prisoner of my sexuality. And, GOSH, how surprisingly easy it is! Of course, I have had some difficulties in the past but nothing so serious that it would have put me down. I’ve noticed that time is also my friend. For those to whom my coming-out has been a shock and a disappointment, they have slowly accepted my homosexuality as a part of my charming and lovable personality.

In my first real job in a small town, the coming-out to my colleagues was quite easy. While turning to my thirty, I found myself in Helsinki as a freelance artist. The gay culture had come out for real and I had my wild cruising period. In four years I hadn’t any serious relationship and the life as a free-lancer wore me out. I got back to a smaller town, this time in eastern Finland, and I found a boyfriend after only a few months.

I didn’t work out that well - partly because he was a bit confused about his sexuality and he had his first homosexual experience in his late forties. When his short contract was over I moved again, alone this time, to Tampere; I had this premonition of finding my match from Hämee. In Tampere, I confronted a new problem: I had dates with two gorgeous men in the same week and then fell in love with both!

Did I find my match, you ask? Oh, yes I did! We are happily engaged and planning to get married. Through my boyfriend’s cottage, I am enjoying the slow countryside life in our free time...maybe I’ll grow my own peppermint leaves for my tea next summer.
Sexuality

The power of sex

By Asa Butcher

When you think of ‘feminism’ and ‘feminists’, many of us conjure images of butch lesbians dressed in dungarees filled with hate for anything with a penis. However, once again, the stereotypes miss the mark and the truth is that feminists just want equality, which isn’t too much to ask, and very few own the aforementioned dungarees.

Feminism regularly seems to take two steps forward and one back due to the extreme actions of the few giving rise to the idea that it is “all or nothing” in terms of sexual equality. Men have found themselves walking a tightrope of chivalry and rudeness, as the simple action of opening a door for a lady has becomes a double-edged sword.

My Mum taught my brother and I to act like gentlemen, although laying our jackets over muddy puddles did not go down well on laundry day. We were taught how to look after ourselves at home domestically and went away to university with cooking and rudimentary cleaning skills. I even have a personal weakness of actually enjoying ironing, which goes against the fabric of masculinity apparently.

Society assigns our gender roles and when you go against the grain you are labelled gay or a lesbian if you are a woman. Many women claim that gender roles are oppressive and were created to reinforce the ideal male role, but some men consider the male gender roles similarly oppressive. Men should be strong, unemotional and domestically inept, plus they should never order dry white wine on a night out with the lads.

A comedy show in ‘70s called The Two Ronnies featured a regular sketch entitled ‘The Worm has Turned’ in which men had switched roles with women. The men stayed at home and the women had become the dominant gender, which today doesn’t sound so far-fetched or funny as it did back then.

No matter how much effort you put into advocating and practising equality you are still caught out, like I was a few minutes ago while writing the second paragraph. My wife told me that the driver of the tower crane that is helping to build Finland’s tallest building, which we see from our window, is a woman. I reacted with surprise and I don’t know why.

Women are not regularly associated with building sites and you react with astonishment when they have occupations in male-dominat industry. I don’t believe that it is sexist to react in that way because after my initial shock my immediate thought was good for her. An interview with her in the local paper may inspire other girls to pursue the career emphasising that it does not matter what sex you are, so long as you can do the job professionally.

Finland has the reputation of having advanced levels of quality, with a female president, over 35% of female MPs and was the first country in Europe to allow women to vote, but even they still suffer from unequal salaries and the other common equality problems. I was stunned to read that women own only one percent of the world’s wealth, and earn a tenth percent of the world’s income, despite making up 49.5 percent of the population.

Personally, I believe that equality will slowly emerge over the next few generations when parents begin to teach their children that there are no specific gender roles. Kids will grow-up watching their dad clean the house and mum returning from a day at the office, and as an increase in female role models, such as the tower crane driver, will perhaps even inspire my own daughter.


Internet sex communication

By Thanos Kalamidas

The truth is that the Internet has turned the whole world rapidly into a global village and sex had to be a part, if not a big part, of it. People can communicate with each other despite distance, with nothing more than computers and wires, and that even with the entrance of the wireless connection becomes useless lately.

Computer mediated communication rules. The social implications of CMC are vast from the ability to overthrow centralize control of information to its potential ability to help us, no matter what gender, race, sexuality or physical appearance to communicate with each other with fewer prejudices and misunderstandings.

Cyberspace created its own culture and ethics, morals and sometimes prejudices that reflect our society. Many have claimed that cyberspace improved the communication between men and women helping them to talk more. Leaving out the comfort of the anonymity the Internet offered, as a principal the majority of the people who communicate through cyberspace are pretty honest, especially regarding sex.

It’s noticeable that one more element that helped was the need of a common language. Even though the majority of users are not native English speakers they use the English language to communicate. That added one more element, the use of a different language that forces you to be precise in what you say, since translating their own language word by word would not make any sense.

There are many places on the Internet for women and men to socialize and people can get together in various groups to discuss subjects that cover anything from pets, babies to sex and politics. Yahoo has a very active chat space and there are places where people can actually play a role like Multi User Domains and Multi-user shared hallucinations. In short, the net is full of virtual places where men and women can meet and talk.

It is remarkable that coming to sex, even though the number of women is lower to the number of men chatting it seems that women are more ready to identify their preferences. Another remarkable thing is that gay men on the net somehow force their identity while gay women present it in a more casual and matter of fact manner. Another issue is that over the last year chatting groups 30+ have become more popular and that’s mainly the introduction of the Internet in the process.

It came as a surprise that men participate even in groups that include feminists themes or that involve only women; it is like they are keen to listen to the other side. Still women seem more open to sex issues and are ready to share sex experiences and sex wishes with other anonymous chatters.

A man write in a survey that “face to face it is possible that I would speculate about any or all of these women as a gender oriented perspective, but online this never occurs and I can strictly relate them as a person.” I think that shows why some of these chatting pals ended in weddings.

It’s sad but on the net women can be heard more because they can finish what they want to say without being interrupted and men have to listen because they have to deal with a written content instead of a woman.

It’s also strange that even sexist comments and jokes are dealt differently on the net with more humor and in more neutral ways and that’s coming from both sexes. So has the Internet changed communications between genders? I think the obvious answer is yes.
So much porn
By Mickey Hotlove

Every day, she looks at thousands of hosted galleries with softcore and hardcore pictures. Her hard drive is full of smut, no matter how hard she cleans it. And somehow she doesn’t seem to get tired of all the porn.

“She” is known as the WebMistress, the one who posts most often on Belgium’s most popular website about porn: www.wilt.be.

The WebMistress was there right from the start, in April 2004. And although the other contributors come and go, she’s still around to post news about sex, links to new porn-related websites and reviews of erotic art online. Judging from the mails she gets, most wilt.be visitors like to see her as some kind of a dominatrix, clad in black leather from head to toe. She thinks these mails are funny, and replies to all of them. Not often friendly, though. She doesn’t need to be.

She clearly isn’t doing it to get attention from submissive admirers. But what is driving her then? The money, of course. She saw Danni from Danni’s hard drive at a conference years ago, and heard her say: “My business was profitable from day one.” She also heard about porn being the number one business on the internet. And she noticed that new technologies, like using SMS services for micropayment, or using Flashcom servers to link IVR systems to live video of webcam girls, were always tried out first in the online adult industry.

And yes, the porn got harder and harder. The first half year, Wilt.be only posted links to “softcore” sites, and put all the money-making hardcore stuff in a separate section of the site. But after a while, soft and hard kind of blended. And although videos of people fucking each other in every possible body orifice rarely shocked her, she started to see who the big names were. After Jenna Jameson, things got a lot easier for porn stars. So you had to try and see the difference between a nice young woman who was spreading her legs before the camera, and the next Jenna Jameson, or Aria Giovanni, or Luba Shumeiko.

Because big names make people click. And quality productions make people buy. Although “amateur” is a popular genre, and “gonzo” porn films are the equivalent of reality television, a bad production makes everyone nervous. You can see it from the first frame if the photographer or director was a professional, or just a pervert with a camera.

That’s why WebMistress only has to look at trailers for porn movies to know. And she’ll only look long enough at a photo gallery of some model’s nude pictures to grab a picture for the thumbnail that goes with every post on Wilt.be.

Where does she draw the line? It used to be “personal taste”, but since tastes differ, she changed it into “as long as it’s well-made AND legal”. Which means: no depictions of sex with people who are too young, too drugged or too scared to actually approve being filmed or photographed while getting fucked. And no animals of course, since hoofs or paws are unfit to sign a porn contract.

Does she ever get excited herself, you might wonder? Of course she does. She is, after all, only human. Although most of the time it happens by accident. In the middle of all the smut, she’ll stumble upon a gem of well-made porn, building up tension so slowly that even she finds herself gazing at the page, or putting the windows media in an infinite loop until she’s satisfied.

And when she gets tired of it all, she quits for a few days. But porn is everywhere: it’s in her news feeds, people mail it to her, there are “submissions” by wilt.be community members. So she takes care of it. It’s what she does.

She’s the WebMistress. I don’t think she’ll ever get tired of it.

www.wilt.be
Sexuality

Since that afternoon I had met them entrance into the same café! It took have known for so many years is it was a bit weird. It's different to the fect person was not a woman, but seemed quite normal till, with a lie told me that his life had changed, that I got married and I became a real author book published. I think that one came somehow as a present to him. came back from school. He added that even Tom had his respect to them and their families. I'm not going to use real names in the closet and trumpet your sexualities who shared a house. You must not forget that the early-80s was not exactly a good time to come out of the closet and trumpet your sexualities and sex choices.

I’m not going to use real names in respect to them and their families. Tom, the name of Paul’s partner, was a friend of mine from school. We were both playing in the same team and we continued after school for the little time I played profes- sionally till I left to other lands. One beautiful day on a beautiful island I met him entering a café! I think we were both happy to meet each other and after the small chat about the weather and everything we started talking about more personal things. I told him how much my life had changed, that I got married and I had become a real author. My book published. I think that one came somehow as a present to him. In private moments away from cu

I was a friend of mine from school. He added that even Tom had his...
Sexuality

Breaking the Taboo
By Melissa Dennis

Working as a writer in the professional beauty industry, I sometimes take for granted the number of male skincare and body treatments emerging from around the world onto our high streets, but it’s never far from my mind when hearing of new male-orientated products, that traditionally vanity is not linked to masculinity. However now that the 21st century world of sport and entertainment has its ‘perfect’ male icons, it’s now becoming increasingly acceptable for men to groom.

In the Beauty Industry Survey 2005, an annual source of data which focuses on the UK professional beauty sector, it was revealed that 81% of beauty salons in the UK cater for men, with each averagely just over 10 male clients per month and representing an increase on 2004’s figures.

When you consider that, according to this research, salons in the UK attracted an average of just over 350 client visits each month in 2005, it becomes clear that, although still in the minority, men are contributing to this industry’s continued growth. So why is vanity becoming increasingly popular amongst our males and will it ever replace football and women as the main topic of conversation down the pub?

I receive parcels of products designed for men from across Europe more or less every month, and with my partner encouraged to try them out, it has become common for the man of our house to cleanse, tone and moisturise morning and night. His masculinity is never in question, but still he refrains from telling his friends for fear they may think him a sissy. Yet closer inspection of their bathroom cabinets (there’s nothing I won’t do for a good story!), reveals that they too hide away copious amounts of face wash, spot remedies, anti-shine moisturisers, and in several cases, fake tan.

Stuart Brea, 29, uses moisturiser sporadically when his skin feels dry, particularly in the winter months. He believes men now have little choice as to whether they consider beauty treatments.

“Everywhere you go there’s more pressure to look good, it’s in magazines, on TV, people in gyms, peer pressure from your friends, people going on holiday, going to weddings… even when you go to the dentists there are adverts for cosmetic surgery, and that’s coming down in price too. It’s everywhere,” he says.

Stuart adds: “In my father’s day, something like plucking a stray hair out of your eyebrows would have been considered taboo. But today’s man is practically at the same level as a woman. The only real difference is that women wear make-up.”

Matt Horsburgh, 26, often visits a tanning salon to use the sunbeds, and has mixed views about indulging in beauty.

“I would definitely consider a treatment such as waxing or a facial if they offered it at my salon and made it clear it was aimed at men… But you don’t really want to advertise the fact that you go tanning or have waxing,” he explains.

In recognition of this ‘underground’ trend, skincare companies are building portfolios of products aimed specifically at the man on the street. As with all good marketing campaigns, imagery is of strong, successful and popular individuals – sometimes endorsed by sport or movie stars - with an overdose of masculinity, and products are packaged in traditionally male colours, fragranced with fresh, zesty or musky perfumes.

Even the terminology used to describe the products is carefully conceived, using terms with powerful, scientific connotations such as ‘Moisture Charge’ or ‘Hydra Performer’ as opposed female-orientated products, which largely have names which offer the suggestion of nurture and care, such as ‘De-Stressing Soother’ or ‘Night Recovery’.

Whilst the more cynical may think that these products simply contain the same concoctions gender-specifically rebranded, they would be wrong. The skin is a human’s heaviest and largest organ, weighing between 3 to 3.5kg (in an adult). Whilst the basic three-layer make-up of the skin and its functions is the same in males and females, a man’s skin is actually a lot different to a woman’s, as Nic Coomber, a skincare distributor in the UK, explains:

“Regular shaving systematically depletes a man’s skin of moisture and oil. Men’s skin has more horny layers, making it about 20% thicker than women’s. Men’s skin is also more elastic. Owing to different tissue structure and skin thickness, men’s skin generally remains firm and resilient until about age 30. Then, however, it loses its elasticity and tone much faster than women’s skin.

“Additionally, men’s skin has different sebaceous gland activity, because male hormones (androgens) influence the lipid metabolism of the sebaceous glands. So men naturally have different skin problems than women. The man frequently has to deal with blackheads, impurities, dry skin, inflammations of beard hairs, or oily skin. Therefore, products are developed to deal with these skin issues.

Professional therapists, salons and Spas are more than aware of this difference, and so specifically tailor face and body care programmes, and the environments within which they are administered, to encourage male clientele. Again, these are branded in a style attractive to men, as Sarah North, a skincare brand manager explains:

“Treatment descriptions should be more precise and logical for men. Although ladies tend to prefer a wordy, enticing treatment description, men want to know exactly what it does.”

Thirty-year old Tim Woolridge, a Personal Trainer, visits a salon regularly, and has a strong view on what would appeal to male clients:

“Making the salon a bit more masculine would be a good start if you want to get more chaps through the doors… it’s a shame you can’t just stick Playstation in there!”

Salon owner Karen Cook-Wadman has found that most men initially enter the salon for massage treatments, often relating to sports injuries.

“When they have made that decision to visit a salon, however, they can become loyal customers and start to book treatments like facials and manicures,” she says.

Sarah North agrees: “Once a male client starts having treatments they generally tend to be much more loyal.”

Tim Woolridge adds: “Maybe if salon owners were to hold an open day just for men, or offer something for free at first just to break the ice. Men love a freebie and once they’re in that’ll be it. As a personal trainer I know how nerve-racking people feel places like salons for the first time… it’s a bit like gyms.

“I had a free salt scrub at the beauty salon at the gym where I work the other day… and enjoyed it so much that I’d definitely have another now, and pay for it!”

With attitudes like this it seems that the taboo is becoming the norm for this modern generation of males, and only time will tell whether our sons and grandsons will spend their Saturday afternoons in the salon rather than at the football staduim. www.beautyserve.net
Sexuality

By F.A. Hutchison

Unconditional love

Sex! Three letters, ‘S-E-X’! These three letters get more than their share of attention! We think we understand the meaning of these three letters, the word ‘sex’, but what about its companion, the word, ‘sexuality’? What about this concept, the word in this form?

Ask yourself, as I did… What do you think of when you hear the word, ‘sexuality’?

I immediately thought of ‘sexual in all of its manifestations, including the expression thereof!’

The dictionary says, ‘The condition of being characterized and distinguished by sex. Concern with an interest in sexual activity. Sexual characteristics or potency.’

What a mystery we make of this thing called ‘sexuality’, in all of its conceived forms, when in fact there’s no mystery at all. We, the human race, create it as such! Why? It sells, for one thing! But, there’s a much greater purpose (which only a few understand!)

Remember we live in an age when money (the consuming power it brings) has become ‘God’. One has only to be in China in 2006, where capitalism is bursting forth to understand this… There are unclad women in every media, getting men’s attention, when other icons don’t. Thus, the men read the accompanying message, and more often times than not, ‘buy!’ Of course, this is not a new phenomena, and exists everywhere in the world! But, unheard of in Chinese history, coeds at a University in Xi’an (home of the Terracotta soldiers) are now posing in the nude! Why? Expression! Attention! Sexuality in one of its manifestations.

The zeitgeist is illustrated by a ‘Hollywood’ movie about two gay cowboys, and directed by a Chinese man (Ang Lee). Lee was ‘Best Director’ for this effort at the Golden Globe Awards recently! Wow! Forty, thirty, even twenty years ago that would have been impossible! In addition, movies about transsexuals are also winning awards! What do you suppose this means? ‘Oh, the times they are a changin’!’ (Bob Dylan) ‘Life is modern!’ reads the ‘Chinglish’ in a Shanghai Ad.

We’re coming out of a church-controlled, ‘Puritan’ age (the ‘Age of Pisces’)! The Conservative movement in the U.S. is the last attempt to hold onto safe stereotypes: the nuclear family! In China the capitalist economic system is breaking down the mores of the past—practically anything goes, now as long as it’s profitable!’ I say ‘practically’, as some things in China, as well as the U.S., are still taboo!

However, whether ‘they’ like it or not, the ‘sexes’ are ‘merging’ figuratively, as well as, literally, and literally, as well as figuratively! Men are becoming woman and vice versa! A recent example; a female author, Norah Vincent, just spent a year disguised as a ‘man’, to write a book about what it’s like to be male, this entitled, Self-Made Man! Women are interested in what it’s like to be male, and men are becoming more interested in what it’s like being female! We’re evolving as a species, as necessary! We’re coming together!

The age of male dominance is beginning to end (thank God!). One has only to read, ‘The Da Vinci Code’, a bestseller by the way, to understand that! That the ultimate is ‘hieros gamos ( ),’ the sacred union of compassion (male) and wisdom (female)! Note, ‘say’ chant: ‘We’re coming together! Everything and everybody, everywhere! We’re coming together!’

If the ‘sin’ of the ‘Garden of Eden’ was ‘separation’ (ego consciousness symbolized by eating an apple from the tree of knowledge), then the ‘solution’ is ‘hieros gamos!’ ‘Coming’ together! God is the Divine Union of compassion (male) and wisdom (female)! Yet, so much beyond… In fact, beyond words… But, in words our idea a ‘never-ending organism’!

I’ve often asked myself the reason for such separation’ ego consciousness born in the ‘Garden?’ This is something ‘I’ve’ since answered ( ). That, we couldn’t know ‘God’, without such ego consciousness (animals don’t have, don’t know). That we had to go to the bottom of the ‘well of knowledge’, which ego consciousness (separation) brought, to get out of it (‘hell’), and to the highest, heaven: the union of wow man (human) with God (spirit)! And what does ‘sexuality’ have to do with this?… It is both the ‘evil’ and the ‘good’ (thing) that makes such possible! We cheapen it of course, by using it to manipulate the unconscious for money! But, in Duality (the existence we ‘live in), there’s no ‘good without ‘bad’! No ‘heaven without ‘hell’! No union without male and female. There is no Divine Union without male (compassion) and female (wisdom)! And none of this without the concept of ‘sexuality’! Note, the ‘Garden of Eden’ ‘sin’ was ‘necessary’ in terms of evolution.

‘Sexuality’, is just a word, yet ‘words’ are what creates our ‘reality’! It’s what we do with the idea/concept ( the energy) that is important! ‘Sexuality’ is what’s getting us to God consciousness (the union of compassion and wisdom): unconditional love!

Of course, out of fear of losing control (money/power) the male-dominated church, for thousands of years, has buried the idea! Unfortunately for them (fortunately for wo/mankind), this is an idea whose time has come! ‘There’s no stopping evolution!’ This is the ‘Age of Aquarius!’

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‘We’re coming together!’ Everything and everybody, everywhere! We’re coming together!’ It’s just a matter of time!

Thank God for ‘sexuality’, for it brings, ultimately, unconditional love!

‘Here’s to unconditional love, Beyond all feeling, One is the same! Here’s to allowing and sharing, Flowing back and forth, Until we are lost in each other,”

Not knowing Which is which, But, not really caring!5

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F.A. Hutchison
Kashgar, Xinjiang Province, China
984 words
I tried for a couple of days to think about how to start an article about homophobia and I have to admit that nothing good came to me since homophobia is nothing exceptional; I think most people at one level or another have it. Even though I grew-up in the decade of the sexual revolution, the ‘60s didn’t help much since this sexual revolution didn’t include homosexuality.

It just let us find ways to enjoy the body and increase the adventures between men and women. Somehow we think things like that have happened throughout the religious middle ages and the Victorian era, but they didn’t want to admit it. Actually, from what I have read about the Victorians, they were far more sexually evolved than our times.

So, growing-up in the ‘60s and natu- rally following the period’s fashion, I had long hair; I think the worst thing anybody could say to me, or anybody like me, was: Are you a boy or a girl? The whole hint of homosexuality was enough to drive me and anybody crazy.

Later it was ear-piercing and brought all the same questions again. Just the hint of homosexuality could drive you mad and you were spending all your time analyzing why you did have an ear-ring in your left ear and why you did have long hair. In the end what you did was try to say that you are not a homosexual, but with too many words and avoid the issue.

A lot of guys explain that we all have a feminine or a masculine side and to a certain level I agree, but I think it has nothing to do with sexuality. It is about the inner being and sensitivity. How many times have you felt boys in your eyes watching a film but you held them back not wanting to admit that you are doing a ‘girl’s thing’?

So one step is to fight all these and, before saying anything about Elon John’s glamorous wedding, try to ac- cept and understand gay people that live around us in the day light or hid- den insecure and shame of their own nature.

I grew-up in the decade of the sexual revolution, the ‘60s didn’t help much since this sexual revolution didn’t include homosexuality.

I think gay people will never get the acceptance and respect they ask as long as women don’t get the accept- ance and the respect they are owed. That will change the day this society will not expect a boy to act like a man and a girl to act like a woman that will become true when women don’t need to fight for their natural rights. And it doesn’t matter what the laws are doing.

Legislating for gay weddings did nothing more than focus once more on gay people as a social problem which brings rise to questions and controversy, something that should be just normal, while seeing celeb- rities getting married on television made it even worse. They could do whatever they like legal or illegal because they have the bloody money to do it and they always did, nobody asked the same of a poor soul living in a small village in Yorkshire where it has to do with the way we grow up, it has to do with the way they brought us up and it is not only the parents or the family; it is society as a whole that thinks that you are a girl if you have an ear-ring or longer hair to what is considered respectable. It’s the very same soci- ety that keeps women under and men manipulating the system.

Later I had the chance to meet gay people and become really good friends with some of them and I’m still very good friends with them. What was the funniest thing is that even though they are accepting the idea that I am straight I have to some- times fight the idea that they are gay. And actually that’s the only thing they ask, acceptance to something which is natural. As an old song from the group Cream says, he was born a boy but he feels a girl.

I went through all that and to show that homophobia, whether we like it or not, is part of us. It has to do with the way we grow up, it has to do with the way they brought us up and it is not only the parents or the family; it is society as a whole that thinks that you are a girl if you have an ear-ring or longer hair to what is considered respectable. It’s the very same soci- ety that keeps women under and men manipulating the system.

It has been recently discovered that primitive life even down to the bacterial level indulges in sexual practices because there seems to be a strong evolutionary reason for individuals to share their separate genetic capabilities. Bacteria are evolved with the capability to choose between sexual and asexual reproduction, something, until re- cently, denied humans.

Homophobia is like any other preju- dice and racism and we have to fight it like we fight any other. It’s very hypocritical considering yourself modern, anti-racist and at the same time being homophobe. That only dismisses everything else.

Remember these people ask nothing more than anyone else is asking, acceptance to what they are, without hiding it or being ashamed of it. After all they cannot change it! The two most inflammatory subjects within human societies are sex and religion. Although there are many more urgent problems confronting humanity, which are far more basic to survival, violations to conformity in sex and religion arouse the most controversy frequently accompanied by violence.

By Thanos Kalamidas

The recent outcries over Janet Jackson’s nippe- and the cartoons depicting Muhammad substantiate that something emotionally explo- sive exists in both of them and apparently an over close public in- spection of both religious icons and sexual instruments can be danger- ous. And the many restrictions that religions place on sex indicate that there is a connection between the two.

The legend of Adam and Eve and how their relationship distorted hu- manity’s relationship to the Chris- tian God has laid heavy psychologi- cal burdens on Western society and many of the commercial, monetary and personal relationships between men and women that exist in the secular world.

Coming to homophobic followers of the church, any kind of church I don’t feel surprised, they never accepted anything even though they are with one foot in any possible sin, includ- ing the most disgusting of all pedo- philia. What I cannot understand is when I have to face all these modern progressive and leftist characters who are scared to even shake hands with a gay.

The most of sexually instruct- ions manuals that now exist pro- viding advice as to which and how many male protuberances may be inserted and manipulated in the several female cavities to generate maximum mutual pleasure indicate that there is a good deal of variety in the process. Nevertheless, the frequency of the species testifies to the fact that there are many paths to successful reproduction. So many, in fact, that the stability of a sus- tainable environment for the planet is now in severe danger.

The old saying is that love will find a way but considering how fond of each other multitudes of couples become, it seems more likely that the way will find love.

Homophobic thoughts

By Jan Sand

The way will find love

Sexuality

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By Thanos Kalamidas
Measured response

By Asa Butcher

It was positive to see Muslims restrain themselves over the Jyllands-Posten Muhammad cartoons controversy over the last month. The Western world stopped its claims of freedom of speech for a moment as Muslim leaders gathered together to join in constructive discourse and urge its followers to show respect for another culture, despite not agreeing with their beliefs.

Thankfully, there were no images of burning flags, boycotting of products, death threats to editors, bombard threats to newspapers, masked men shouting and firing guns into the air, recalling of ambassadors or mobs attacking embassies. The Muslim world was angry, but restrained themselves from resorting to terror, violence, intimidation and veiled pressure.

‘Respect their democratic beliefs’ shouted Muslims across the world, ‘but we must make them understand why we feel offended.’ Other Muslims joined in the chorus of diplomatic arguments expressing their understanding at the double standards that they are suddenly showing. ‘We recognise the fact that we are outraged by cartoons of our prophet, but fail to show the same levels of disgust as innocent people are slaughtered in the name of Allah across the world.’

Western governments nodded in agreement and then explained how they would not and could not apologise for what newspapers in their countries printed because the democratic system allows freedom of speech and secondly they have no control over editorial content. Muslims solemnly nodded saying, ‘Yes, we understand and acknowledge your right to caricature God’.

Those Muslims still not pacified by the peaceful debates decided to take the Danish newspaper to court because they wanted to utilise another method of democracy that exists in the West. The court case would be a catalyst for further dialogue between different nations and faiths, with no exaggerated responses from either side.

A clash of cultures is emphasised and not an attack on spiritual values, although Turkey’s PM Recep Tayyip Erdogan is quoted saying, ‘There should be a limit of freedom of press and the United Arab Emirates moderately describes the cartoons as, ‘Cultural terrorism, not freedom of expression.’ The world signs in exasperation as Iran misses the point and declares that it will hold a contest to find the 12 ‘best’ cartoons about the Holocaust.

At times like this I am grateful to be living in such a calm and open world, in which the exchange of ideas, whether religious or cultural, are able to be freely discussed without anybody needlessly dying or being threatened. Sadly, the only positive aspect of the whole affair is that a Danish flag maker is enjoying record profits.

Imagine one day seeing that a newspaper or TV station in Saudi Arabia, Turkey or Iran has printed cartoons that represent the Queen of England as a blood thirsty wolf that eats poor Third World children.

Four months later English newspapers reprint the cartoons attacking the Arabian world of disrespect. The very same evening monarchs from all around London start demonstrations around Piccadilly Circus, Regent Street and Oxford Street. Men in masks and armed with M16s start shooting in the air threatening Saudi Arabia, Iran and Turkey with an invasion and the promise that they will kill every Saudi, Iranian or Turk who dares walk anywhere around London.

They burn down Turkish kebab shops, Saudi banks and an Iranian mini market, then after burning a few hundred flags they go and burn the Saudi, the Iranian and the Turkish embassies. However, because they feel that this was not enough they burn the Syrian embassy to calm their anger.

Now if you didn’t identify with the idea of the Queen as a wolf, then you are free to use the president of Germany, the president of France, the president of Italy and why not the president of the United States instead. You think this is strange? Which part? Was it the first part with the cartoons or the second with the burning of flags, embassies and threats?

It seems that we all forget something; the Queen is not just a sweet old lady who wears funny hats and has an aunty style smile. She is an institution that we have to respect? This old lady is not just an old lady but represents an institution with centuries of history and millions of people. Her name doesn’t matter either. They might call her Elizabeth, Camilla or whatever else they want, what does matter is the respect for the institution she represents.

If our eastern neighbors think that their institutions are covered by Islamic laws and traditions they must learn that our institution is protected by laws and traditions as well. There are laws in every democratic country protecting its leaders and, I inform you, the penalties are not light.

I even used the example of the President of the United States. Do you think Mr. George W. Bush is what will be there forever is the institution of the American president?

Not all the westerners are necessary Christians and there are a lot of atheists and Christians who have been to the church only for weddings and funerals. Which is the institution we believe more in the west? Democracy. It is the foundation of democracy along with the right for free speech, so you can say what you are thinking, even if that’s against your very own institutions.

Have you ever heard about any terrorist that has been in the court demanding an apology from the Queen? On the contrary, there are newspapers in UK that have daily cartoons about the royal family and the very same applies to all the European and American countries.

The most offensive cartoons against the American president come from the American newspapers.

I used the example of Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Iran because the newspapers there often print caricatures and cartoons with the Queen and a few presidents, sometimes even worse than blood thirsty wolves.

What will have been their reaction if the second part with the riots in London was real?

The burning of the Danish and Norwegian embassies has shown another thing, the local governments support the riots and are not willing to do anything to stop them. All that while in democratic Europe a cartoonist and an editor lost their jobs as respect to the poor Muslims.

The statement by the Danish foreign minister I think represents what most Europeans feel this moment, it is enough and this is unacceptable! And one last thing, our Muslim friends must remember that despite what happens to their countries in Europe the press is not depending on the governments, so no government has the right or the obligation to apologize for what the press publishes. That means that attacking the Danish embassy and demanding an apology from the Danish government is all in vain!!!
The election which was held on 25th January saw 75% of voters casting the ballot. Out of the 132 seats, Hamas group won 76 seats thereby getting a majority in the council. The results precipitated the condition of west Asia with comments going back and forth between Hamas and political leadership of Israel.

There is also a view that Palestine was too immature for democracy as they elected a terrorist group. On careful analysis, I don’t seem to agree with this. When the turn out is 75%, which is much higher than the turnout in mature democracies like India, it shows strong resolve of people for choosing their own government. In this particular election, the mandate is not as much for Hamas as it is against the incumbent Fatah party.

In the last ten years, Fatah group has been taken over by corrupt leaders and the legislative council failed to do anything worthwhile to improve the condition of common Palestinians. There was no other option but Hamas. If there is question over democracy then it is not due to Hamas but due to Fatah.

Most of the average Palestinians don’t agree to the extremist policies of Hamas. They are in favor of negotiation with Israel and ties with world community. No doubt the principle of Hamas has been extremism; it considers creation of Palestine as its religious duty and it also does not recognize Israel. Until the election results were declared even Hamas would not have dreamt of such land slide victory. At most it would have thought of emerging as some consequential group and to wield influence over the new government.

A Hamas in government would be much different than Hamas till now. It is going to be subdued in its policy of extremism under the yoke of the immense responsibility of running a country heavily dependent on foreign aid. Political feelers are already being sent out by Hamas leadership for negotiation over foreign aid. The ousted political head of Hamas, Khaled Meshal, in Damascus has talked of adopting a realistic approach over Palestinian authority and to work with Europe and US.

It is not the opportune time to come out with charged statements but of giving Hamas time to settle down and take cognizance of ground situation. Who knows the Palestinian situation may be solved for good during the Hamas rule. It would then be the finest example of same democracy, which is being questioned now.

History shouldn’t surprise Hamas victory and democracy

By Sasya Prakash

The shock waves, which came with the results of Palestinian election in ten years, were not limited to West Asia but transcended continents and countries. Most of the western nations and obviously Israeli have expressed ‘serious’ concerns with Islamist Hamas group getting majority in the Palestinian Legislative Council.

The biggest surprise for the west came from the support of the Iranian people to the clerics. Since the 50s, the world was divided into democratic or capitalist (you can choose the word) west and the Marxist east and there was a constant conflict for power and influence. For being the mistakes of Fatah, Sand was its creation of this dogma. He is a creation of the CIA and the American administration just for the name of stopping the Russian influence in the East. They armed him and funded him with weapons and money, state armies in different places of the world hadn’t even dreamed.

Iran was another case; the Shah was going down even though a loyal servant of the American and European interests and his atrocities were so big that they had to pull out every obvious support. That meant that a new regime had to replace him that would continue to support the western interests.

Back in the ‘70s we all learned the atrocities of the Iranian leader, the Shah, his corrupted government and the militant style dictatorship he had established, destroying and often killing his opposition.

In front of all this, demonstrations and pictures made the public start supporting, especially in Europe, the opposition which, in this case, was either the radical left or the fundamentalists Muslim clerics, with Ayatollah Homeini based in exile in Paris. The clerics won more sympathy since people were somehow keener on a cleric with a peaceful message than a covered face Marxist with a machine gun and that expanded to governments, even with the American government accepting the idea of clerics ruling the country. What happened after the event by surprise. The peaceful clerics established a dictatorship using a total Stalinist structure and slaughtered their opposition establishing a law system that returned the country centuries in the past.

The reason I go through this part of international history is simple, history should teach us; we should learn from our mistakes and change policies if necessary. But here it happened again. A country under siege from a mighty power and suffering a constant war had démocratic elections. Democratic the way the western powers hope that every country will adopt soon.

And what do they elect? Another defeated party and the legislative council failed to do anything worthwhile to improve the condition of common Palestinians. There was no other option but Hamas. If there is question over democracy then it is not due to Hamas but due to Fatah.

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The King has left

By Tony Butcher

The King has left the building. Now the United States of America and a small percentage of the rest of the world is in the hands of Ben Bernanke. He will have to preside over further rate increases and his first few speeches will be scrutinised very closely to get some indication where he plans to halt the current cycle.

In a private speech Alan Greenspan has suggested the markets have underestimated how far the Federal Reserve plans to go, however this may be his continuing attempt to increase the yield on long dated bonds.

In America, mortgage interest repayments are based on long dated bonds, which is 30 year debt issued by the government. Unlike the United Kingdom (4.5%) and Europe (2.25%) whose rates are set against short-term central bank base rates. At the moment, in the US, the yield curve has inverted where the yield on the 2-year debt is greater than the yield on the 30-year debt (4.5%). This has been a precursor for an economic recession in modern times and if the curve inverts even more than it has, it is currently about 0.1% difference (10/02) this will become a serious issue for the Federal Reserve.

We are only a few weeks away from the next European Central Bank (ECB) rate rise. In March Jean Claude Trichet will crank up rates to 2.5% in his continued vigilance against inflationary pressures. In his February press conference he said the ECB moves are purely a response to increasing risks to price stability in the form of inflation. Excess liquidity in the money markets and rising oil prices have been highlighted as primary reasons for the current round of fiscal tightening. As interest rates increase so does the savings ratio, whereby people will save more money and spend less, which removes money from the economy and reduces the excess liquidity. It should also be pointed out that if the ECB do not raise rates now, if there was a serious global economic downturn, it would result in bird flu or another cause, then the ECB has no room for manoeuvre, given real interest rates are very close to 0%.

I could not leave this month without mentioning the amazing strength which continues to be shown in the stock markets across the world. The FTSE 100 in the United Kingdom has reached 4 and a half year highs above 5800. Will the short month of February and onset of spring see these markets stronger and stronger into 2006, at the moment I would not like to be standing in the way of this train.
Freedom to live free

By Thanos Kalamidas

And just when I was ready to continue fighting for freedom of speech, explaining how a cartoonist works and how the idea for a cartoon comes, how much cartoonists love the challenge to provoke everything possible and how much cartoons from the 19th century have fought any kind of dictatorship, then came the proud British army to dismiss any argument I had.

The Chinese used to say that one picture has the value of a thousand words; well, the pictures published in the weekly ‘News of the World’ with British soldiers torturing Iraqi youth in the middle of the street are worth thousands of words.

The photos and the videos are from 2004 and the timing to publish them might look a bit suspicious with all this going on with the Muslim world but it does not change the embarrassment and the disgust any normal human should feel.

From the beginning I was against the invasion of Iraq, even though I thought and still think that Saddam was one of the worst dictators at that time. The occupation made it worse and it is proved that you don’t help a nation by replacing a dictator with an occupying army because you hurt their national pride and Iraqis have the same reasons to have national pride as any American or a Brit.

War is not good as a principal, armies are not good as a principal and humankind should do everything possible to avoid conflict that costs lives, but that was not enough, someone comments on the video sounding like a sadist at his worst.

The video and the photos show British soldiers kicking and hitting a group of young people - average age 15-16 - in the middle of an Iraqi street. If that was not enough, someone comments on the video sounding like a sadist at his worst.

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Over the last month, all of us, including me, talked about how unfair the Muslim world has not understood our values. Actually, most of us explained that we understand and respect their cultures but they have to understand ours and respect our traditions, and most of all to our institution for freedom in speech. We tried to say that let’s separate what’s going on in Middle East, we know that a lot of what’s going on is not fair, we do recognize that and we fight for your rights.

Actually, we even had to deal with the victorious election of Hamas in Palestine. At the same time we were expecting our democratic government to defend our right for free speech and expression dismissing any idea of apologizing and then came the British army making us demand an apology and not only from Tony Blair or the British army, but from the whole west on what’s happened there.

If certain Muslim states and Muslim preachers are responsible for the creation of small Bin Ladens, there is nothing worse than us helping them and unfortunately the British army has just shown how these things happen. The promise of Tony Blair to ‘investigate’ the whole event sounds like a joke after what happened last year with all the photos from the prisons and the joke punishments for the guilty soldiers.

How do you expect others to respect our freedom of speech when we don’t respect a superior value, the freedom to live free?

Mittal Steel & Arcelor

By Satya Prakash

The New Year has not been particularly good for the board executives of Arcelor. Just days after winning the tough fight with ThyssenKrupp AG for buying out the Canadian steel maker Dofasco Inc, they are again huddling in their board room. This time the predator has been turned into prey.

The bid of Rotterdam based Mittal steel has stunned everyone including Arcelor which has termed it as hostile. Mittal steel, controlled 80% by family of L N Mittal has offered to buy shares of Arcelor for Euros 18.6 billion in cash and shares. The steel industry has seen lot of mergers and consolidation in past few years, Arcelor itself being a result of merger of steel companies of France, Luxembourg and Spain. But this bid has outshone all of them.

If successful the combined entity will have total annual capacity of 115mn tones with the next biggest being Nippon Steel of Japan having capacity of 70mn tones. The hectic activity in steel industry started after Chinese demand lifted it from slump. Since then the insatiable Chinese hunger has seen price soaring and profits increasing by 30 to 35 % for most of the companies. At its peak the benchmark hot rolled coil steel jumped from $200 per ton to $600 per ton which has since fallen to around $500.

But this Chinese demand is also supported by huge production from Chinese companies. The output of China in 2005 being 340mn tones, it is estimated that by 2010 Chinese total production will be much higher than its total demand. This would lead to glut coupled with possibility of slump due to cyclical nature of steel market. This leads us to a question, why still Mittal steel is trying to snap Arcelor?

There are few reasons. Though Chinese production capacity is increasing by leaps and bounds it lacks good quality iron ore. It purchases most of the raw material from Brazil and Australia. In the merged scenario, by its sheer size, Mittal steel will have greater bargaining power over suppliers who have increased their prices by 72% in recent times. This will give him an edge over Chinese producers of steel. Secondly steel industry has traditionally been supplier market and Mittal would be able to restore it to that level thus can tide over any slump. Thirdly, with economy of scale it could lower overall operating expense and resist price hike (Arcelor has considerable mining presence).

The other reason could be that Arcelor and Mittal were competing against each other (Ukraine’s state-owned Kryvorizhstal) in buying out other steel companies thereby increasing the price. This problem would be solved for Mittal with the takeover.

Chances are high for takeover to go through as most of the share holders of Arcelor are institutions and they don’t love individual companies. There could be few hiccups like opposition from French and Luxembourg government. Mittal might also have to raise the price it is offering for each share.
“Learning the language will help you find a job. Learning the language will help you understand the culture. Learning the language will help you make friends. Learning the language, learning the language, learning the language…” Immigrants arriving in Finland are forcibly encouraged to learn Finnish so that their integration into society is efficient and painless, but how effective are the language courses that they choose?

Upon arriving in Finland and over the years that follow, immigrants can enrol on a number of different courses offering them the chance to further and improve their Finnish. Unemployed immigrants are automatically enrolled on language courses arranged by the Employment Office; others choose the University of Helsinki, some have personal tutors and there are many more from which to select, but either way they all become students again.

Whether the immigrant wants to learn the language or not, they may find themselves in a classroom with twenty other adults, each of whom has not been in a learning environment for at least a decade. When the teacher arrives and starts handing out homework and tests to student/parents/grandparents, the feeling of being back at school can become awkward and unnerving.

Having completed three language courses myself, my own experiences were just as mixed as anybody else had. I found myself doing art classes, painting and drawing, because it was part of the course; it didn’t teach me any Finnish, but my wife had something pretty to stick to the fridge. Many of the other extracurricular attempts were misguided and plain stupid, such as field trips to the Finnish language school, “This class is a six month course and is five days a week, seven hours a day; it is just Basic Finnish.”

One of the common complaints about the way Finnish is taught on courses is the obsessive focus upon grammar compared to vocabulary. “Some incorrect grammar here and there won’t change the sentence too much, but not knowing a word does,” believes Phil Schwarzmann, a 26-year-old American. “The grammar will be much, much easier once you know vocabulary and can use the grammar in sentences.”

Phil has completed a number of courses and now has a tutor at work, who teaches him whatever he wants, “I concentrate on speaking and listening, while grammar is everything on the university courses.” Kevin Mitchell, a 29-year-old Englishman, adds that there is too much writing and too much time spent sitting in a classroom. “A lot of what the teacher explains is not needed in everyday life, such as advanced grammar that is only used in Finnish writing, plus you teach it all in Finnish.”

Many language courses fail to cover the topic of swear words and other daily slang that Finns use in conversation. We spend a whole day learning about the verb ‘panna’, but it wasn’t until I was practising at home with my wife that I later learnt it didn’t only mean ‘to put’. Language courses teach a language, but they don’t teach the language that Finns actually speak. For example, it took a long time to realise that very few Finns say ‘minun nimeni’, they shorten it to ‘man nime’ - far simpler, but nobody ever taught me that.

Another criticism of language courses is the fact that they are rarely taught in Finnish. “It’s a million times easier to learn Finnish with the help of the English language,” states Phil. “The University of Helsinki would offer lessons in English, but they need to cater to everyone, even non-English speakers, but I have only been in a class once where someone did not speak any English. You can’t learn Finnish in Finnish when you don’t know what is going on around you in everything here is in the local language.”

Juni’s course is far more intensive, “This class is a six month course and is five days a week, seven hours a day; it is just Basic Finnish.”

The purpose of Juni’s course is to help him integrate into the Finnish community, “When I first moved here I found it difficult just to go shopping. In your home country, you take for granted how important communication and understanding is needed for the very basics of life.” The realisation for better language skills comes when you receive the first electricity bill in Finnish, visit the doctor, attend your child’s school play or read an instruction manual, as Justin said, “We take communication for granted.”

Most Finnish language courses are based upon the ‘level system’. For example, beginners are classed at Level 1 and the Employment Office believes that Level 3 is good enough to find a job, although some students feel the system flawed. “The system reflects my written Finnish, but not my spoken Finnish. I am meant to have level three written Finnish but I don’t think that my spoken level is that high. I think there should be a change in the way that they grade you; they should maybe do an oral test as well as a written test. It would give a better overall picture of your level.”

Despite the many criticisms of the language courses, everybody felt that learning Finnish would improve their chances of finding employment and integrating fully into the society, “You’ll constantly be a visitor in a strange land if you don’t learn it,” states Phil.

Even though Finnish is classed as one of the hardest languages to master, with 2,253 possible forms of the Finnish noun ‘kauppa’, and experts saying that it will vanish by 2050, in the end a learning a language is merely about commitment and realising that you have to use your butt muscles and study, which is what many immigrants are doing. On the other hand, it is strange that immigrants are not offered the chance to learn Finland’s other official language, Swedish, which seems to be easier to learn, especially for the German speakers.
Biomechanics International

By Nathan Hurst

It was the last home game of the season, and the Wisconsin Badgers had just been scored on and were now losing to the Iowa Hawkeyes. The football announcer’s voice cracked across the airwaves preceding the Hawkeyes’ ensuing kickoff: “Now kicking into the wind, we’ll see how strong Kyle Schlicher’s leg really is,” he said. But he was only partly right.

How far an athlete can kick a football, or throw a shot put, or how well he or she can perform almost any event depends on much more than muscle strength. Form, angle, physiology, and biomechanics are hidden factors that play important roles as dictating how well an athlete can do his job, and even how well a person can walk or balance.

One of the areas these factors have been used and studied is the therapy of stroke victims, who often have trouble walking. It now seems likely that their problems are directly related to the brain’s ability to control muscle movement.

“For much of athletics, what’s more important is control, how that force generated by the muscle is regulated,” said Kreg Gruben, professor of biomechanical engineering at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Biologists have explored how nerves connect muscles to the brain, and how they cause muscles to activate, but they don’t yet understand how the nervous system controls those actions.

“That’s why these factors are hidden,” he went on. “We don’t know how the control works.” The actual mechanics are soluble using the laws of physics, but Gruben’s work attempts to go beyond combining physics and biology, and reaching into neurology as a way to understand movement of the human body.

The problem was that he was in uncharted territory. “What do we know?” he asked. “I looked, and what I had to do was back up and back up and back up.” He started with a simple action, walking, and had to dissect it completely.

“To understand how people walk, you want to understand first how people generate force,” he said. In the past, that meant observing the actions of walking and measuring everything possible about it. That was especially difficult because walking is very complicated, with many different muscle actions that a person’s brain must coordinate simultaneously. So Gruben took a different approach.

He isolated a simpler task involved in walking. A seated subject would push with his or her foot on a pedal that measured both the force exerted, and the direction pushed. “What we’re getting is their preferred direction of force,” he said. In most individuals, the direction they push forms a straight line from their foot through their center of balance, which is the point in their body about which their weight is evenly distributed.

Stroke victims often have difficulty walking, even years after they have recovered. Many exhibit peculiar gait, and have health problems associated with it. Gruben looked at the direction of force in stroke victims, and noticed an important difference. It didn’t go through their center of balance.

To see why this is important, imagine being seated in a car on a Ferris wheel. The center of balance is the hinge it is mounted on. If an attendant pushes on the car directly towards the hinge, it won’t move. However, if he shifts and pushes a little more upwards or downwards, the car will begin to swing.

It is the same with walking. If your body isn’t pushing off the ground in line with the center of balance, the natural tendency will be to rotate, and your head will end up where your feet were.

To keep from going head over heels, stroke victims compensate by using their muscles and joints in different ways, and often require physical therapy to correct it. Unfortunately, the gait they are trying to correct is only a symptom, and other compensations must be made unless the ultimate cause is fixed. That’s where muscular control comes in.

When the brain sends a signal to a muscle, it can be telling the muscle to generate force, or simply ‘become active’. But which is it? This could apply to athletics, Gruben said, but perhaps not yet.

“I think we need to get those questions answered before we ask why one person can perform better than others,” he said.

In spite of all that remains unknown, a coach or an athlete working on improving athletic ability is not operating completely in the dark. Gruben let on that there is some truth in the methods that have been used for many years.

One man who has been using those methods is Rick Witt, coach of the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point men’s track and field and cross country teams, and 1996 National Collegiate Athletic Association Division III Cross Country Coach of the Year. He records video of runners and analyzes it to help them become more efficient.

“What we try to do is to look at any of the things the individuals do that are not taking advantage of physics,” he said. “My job is to look at these people and find the mistakes they are making so we can remedy them and make sure they are maximizing how efficient they can be.” That is biomechanics. Biomechanics means applying the laws of physics to biological systems.

The form Witt’s runners use is not universal. For example, the form of a sprinter differs significantly from that of a distance runner. Sprinters lift their heels much higher, shortening the length of the lever that is their leg, and leading to quicker turnover and faster top speed, explained Witt.

A distance runner requires less force, but over a longer time. Witt pointed out that while not as important as certain other physical aspects of an athlete, biomechanics can make as much as a 10 to 15 percent difference in performance, or three minutes over a 30-minute cross country race. He compared a runner to the engine of a car. “Having an efficient engine is not going to make up for having less horsepower, but if you have similar engines and one is tuned up and one is not, which one is going to win?”
And the winner is...

By Asia Butcher

The red carpet is being vacuumed and the Kodak Theatre in Los Angeles is being buffed to a shine in preparation for the 78th Academy Awards on Sunday, March 5th. Saturday Night Live’s Jon Stewart will be the host and there seems to be no sign of Peter Jackson, Clint Eastwood or Russell Crowe in the top categories.

Discussion surrounding the possible winner of the Best Motion Picture of the Year has leaned heavily towards the gay cowboys of ‘Brokeback Mountain’, but there are four others in contention: ‘Capote’, ‘Crash’, ‘Good Night, and Good Luck’ and ‘Midnight in Manhattan’. The story does feature in ‘Midnight Cowboy’ with its naive male protagonist, and then there is the connection.

The film has a couple of additional factors in its favour, such as it is not the first Western in the running for an Oscar after ‘Dances with Wolves’ and ‘Cimarron’. Over the last thirty years, nineteen films with running times of over 135 minutes have won an Oscar and ‘Brokeback Mountain’ comes in at 134. Ang Lee, the director, has never won an Oscar despite a nomination in 2000, but Steven Spielberg has won before among the five directors.

‘Capote’ (2005) - Carol Anne, James Schamus

The strength of a ‘Capote’ win is due to the film being nominated for Biography, which none of the other nominees can claim. Fifteen of the last thirty Best Picture winners were inspired by real-life, including ‘The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King’, ‘The Silence of the Lambs’, ‘The Godfather’ and ‘Dances with Wolves’. Books usually mean that the story is based upon true events and this is the case of ‘Capote’, based upon the New Yorker reporter Truman Capote. True stories are a favourite of the Academy with films such as ‘A Beautiful Mind’, ‘Schindler’s List’ and ‘Patton’ proving the rule. However, ‘Capote’ is against ‘Midnight Cowboy’ and ‘Good Night, and Good Luck’, which are both inspired by true stories.

Unfortunately, I believe that its short running time of 98 minutes will dam- age its chances of success, since only two out the last thirty won with durations under 100 minutes - ‘Driving Miss Daisy’ and ‘Annie Hall’. This is only director Benen Miller’s second film of his career and he is in good company, Rob Marshall (‘Chicago’), Sam Mendes (‘American Beauty’), John L. Brooks (‘Terms of Endearment’), Hugh Hudson (‘Chariots of Fire’) and Michael Cimino (‘The Deer Hunter’) all won Best Picture with their first or second picture, so Miller has a good chance.

‘Crash’ (2004) - Paul Haggis, Cathy Schulman

After ‘Sideways’ took the Oscar for Best Writing (Screenplay Based on Material Previously Produced or Published), the Academy may feel they owe Paul Haggis a statue, but how do you award the man who co-created the TV series ‘Walker, Texas Ranger’? They may feel that a film about a racially and economically diverse group deserves an Oscar, but I think it is against stronger competition criteria wise. Additionally, it is 113 minutes long which is no man’s land in terms of past winners, especially when you see that ‘Chicago’ was the same length and that Carrey did not deserve to beat ‘Gangs of New York’, ‘The Hours’, ‘The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers’ and ‘The Pianist’.

Good Night, and Good Luck (2005) - Grant Heslov

Grant Heslov has won under 100-minutes and it is also directed by someone that has only two cinematic directorial credits, but there is a twist. George Clooney is not only actor-turned-director, but he is also starring in his own film. Laurence Olivier began this Oscar-winning trend in 1948 with ‘Hamlet’ and has since been followed by Clint Eastwood, Mel Gibson, Kevin Costner, Robert Redford and Woody Allen. Mel won at the second time of trying, while Redford and Costner struck gold the first time out. This is one of the three nominees based upon a book and a true story. The story is particularly poignant to Hollywood since it deals with Sena- tor Joseph McCarthy whom caused a great deal of misery in the 1950s with the Hollywood Blacklist. The story has the journalistic feel of ‘All the President’s Men’, which lost to ‘Rocky’ in 1977 and that was also written by actor-turned-screenwriter Sylvester Stallone.

Munich (2005) - Steven Spielberg, Kathleen Kennedy, Barry Mendel

Spielberg always has a seat at the Academy Awards and this year he has a number of the criteria up his sleeve. Running at 164 minutes, the film is the longest of all five nominees, deals with true events and involves the two-time winner and seven-times nominated director of ‘Schindler’s List’. However, when compared to ‘Capote’ and ‘Good Night, and Good Luck’, the subject matter is not as Oscar friendly, especially when it involves Israelis, Palestinians and the 1972 Olympic Games in Munich.

By Thanos Kalamidas

It seems that something is going on in Hollywood with biographies of musicians. Not that I have anything against it but somehow it seems that after ‘Amadeus’, something happened. I thought about writing an iKritic about the new film biography of Johnny Cash, I decided to check what’s going on.

By Thanos Kalamidas

1984 - Milos Forman presents the classic ‘Amadeus’, an epic film that goes through the life and death of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. Espe- cially the end brought a lot of con- troversy and disagreement since it hinted murder and not a natural end. The film received eight Acad- emy Awards and became a classic.

1987 - ‘La Bamba’ and the begin- ning of Rock and Roll. Ritchie Valens died when he was just 17- years-old in the same plane ac- cident that killed another Rock & Roll legend, Buddy Holly. The rocker that combined South Ameri- can tradition with Rock and Made La Bamba a hit that survives even today.

1988 - Clint Eastwood, passionate about Jazz music, directed ‘Bird’, the film hymns to Charlie Parker, the best saxophonist ever. The saxo- phonist overcomes an addiction to heroin and the film and the star Forest Whitak- er had to take countless saxophone lessons to look as unbelievable as the Bird on the scenes, who was fa- mous for how long he kept going without breathing.

1989 - Another controversial per- sona of the golden age of Rock & Roll, ‘Great Balls of Fire’ and Jerry Lewis shows his unexpected love affairs and the scandals cover the best part of the film, but the music is there and Lewis plays the scene with his hands and his feet.

1993 - Suddenly controversy inside Disney productions, a film that is not so much for kids and the first one in a list to follow from the same production company. ‘What’s Love Got To Do With It’ about Tina and Ike Turner, featuring the domestic violence and music. Ike made a lot of classics for Soul, Blues and Rock music but he was shown as a monster in the film.

1994 - In the same year another style of music, the classics of the 20th century and the classic name of music as a whole, ‘Immortal Be- loved’ and the life of Ludwig van Beethoven starring a fantastic Gary Oldman. In this film the director is trying to find a part of the compos- er’s rich love life but the music is everywhere.

2004 - It was the turn of another great musician, Cole Porter. The film ‘De Lovely’ goes through his life, his romantic spirit and his life with his wife Linda.

So it seems Hollywood loves music biographies. The good news is that all the films, till now, were carefully made with respect to the musician and most of all to their fans.
Hey Diddle Diddle
By Asa Butcher

Nursery rhymes are believed to aid the development of vocabulary and counting skills, while specific actions and dances associated with particular songs develop coordination and memory. Therefore, my wife is teaching Finnish songs from her own childhood, which has left the English classics to me and I can’t remember more than a couple for the life of me.

Let me see... Rub a dub dub, Humpty Dumpty had a little lamb and Little Bo Peep has lost her sheep, the cow jumped over the moon and the mouse ran up the clock. London Bridge is falling down and the candlestick-maker, Three men in a tub, Rub-a-dub-dub, made me exclaim words that my daughter as a kid was ‘Rub a dub dub’ because it example, one of favourite nursery rhymes many to be completely nonsensical. For instance, one of nursery rhymes associated with particular songs develop coordination and memory . Therefore, my wife is teaching Finnish songs from her own childhood, which has left the English classics to me and I can’t remember more than a couple for the life of me.

My guess is that I need some practice coordination and memory . Therefore, my wife is teaching Finnish songs from her own childhood, which has left the English classics to me and I can’t remember more than a couple for the life of me.

After a close inspection, I discovered many to be completely nonsensical. For example, one of favourite nursery rhymes is based upon a sex scandal in the court of King George IV. ‘Goosey Goosey Gander’ is said to have been frightened by John Knox, a Scottish religious reformer in the 16th century. Urban legend or truth is in the eye of the etymologist.

These people met under the shadow of the Acropolis and with a lot of help from the ancient spirit of Socrates they found out that they had more in common than they ever thought. First of all to protect the heritage of the land they have to live together. The word ‘protect’ when it comes to their case is a difficult issue since there is a war that never ends in this land. A real war with rockets and tanks.

The programme that started included 19 Israelis, 15 Palestinians and 12 Greek and Cypriot archaeologists, and it came out of the necessity to protect all these ancient monuments.

The land of Israel and Palestine is hosting a great part of human history, including Byzantine times, Christianity and the birth place of Christ and, in the end, all the Muslim monuments. The place is really the place where civilisations and religious meet.

As a reporter noticed that at least they talked, they agreed that only cooperation can help and they made the first steps by exchanging e-mails. Something that made me smile thinking that the internet not only helps genders to communicate but the Israelis with the Palestinians also.

We Greeks know well what it means to carry a heavy heritage. Each one of us feels it, feels responsible for the past and the future of this heritage and we have given our battles through the centuries to keep it and give it to our kids. Our history and the monuments that are the material size of our history are there to remind us all the time and I don’t think there is a Greek anywhere in this world who doesn’t carry the picture of the Acropolis in his soul; it doesn’t matter when was the last time he or she saw Greece.

Let’s hope the very same shadow of the Acropolis will help Palestinians and Israelis to understand that despite all their problems they have responsibilities in front of the world’s history, and there are monuments in their land to remind Last, if they want to prevent the destruction of these monuments they have to do something now and do it together.
Ceremonially crazy

By Asa Butcher

Men dressed like sperm, ballroom couples dressed as cows, loads of Italian classical music, the super sexy Sophia Loren, a dove created out of men in white jumpsuits, amazing pyrotechnics and two billion people simultaneously exclaiming, “Isn’t that Yoko Ono?”

The 20th Winter Olympics in Turin surpassed the ridiculous benchmark that audiences now expect for opening ceremonies and we still have the closing ceremony to come. A mere £28.5 million was spent on the ‘spectacle’, ‘extravagance’, call it what you will, and an estimated two billion people watched worldwide - I am assuming the three billion that live on less than two dollars a day missed impressive fireworks finale.

Opening ceremonies all have those special moments, even Turin impressed me with a moving ski jumper made up of hundreds of volunteers and an F1 racing car burning doughnuts, but they all reach a point where you think, “What the hell is going on?” Everything becomes surreal and arty as the organisers attempt to symbolise Italy’s history and culture through precision flag-waving, choreography, music and light.

How many of the two billion stayed tuned for the duration is unknown, how many stay sat on their sofa as 2,500 grinning athletes from 84 countries parade around the stadium waving at anything that moves, while 1970’s disco music is blasted over the PA system. Who couldn’t smile a laugh as the combined number of athletes of the first ten countries still failed to match Canada? Sadly, I saw the Finnish team march through and missed both the Great Britain team and South and North Korea marching together in a show of unity.

Earlier this year, Germany announced to a multi-million pound ‘spectacular’ with a mass of hypocritical sentiment from the Chinese, although I guess the firework display will be good. It is a shame that for once we can’t just have the stadium’s caretakers take out his disposable lighter, light the Olympic Flame and grovel, “Okay, you can start now.”

Two years will see Beijing tackle the opening ceremony of the 2008 Summer Olympics and we will be treated to a multi-million pound ‘spectacular sacrifice’ with a mass of hypercritical sentiments from the Chinese, although I can imagine that they feel a bit left out.

As a principal I always defended referees because in football they are the third element aside with the two teams. They are the human factor in the game with their good times and their mistakes. It is logically impossible for one man to see everything happening between twenty two men in a whole stadium. He can do as much as his physical strength lets him do.

And I thought that that’s how far they can go. But obviously they have far more power since after over ninety minutes of running up and down they manage to screw football as well.

I don’t agree with this idea for a chip that shows when a player does something, I don’t agree either with the idea of watching all the game through videos. That will eliminate the human factor from the game and what’s next, mechanical players who are programmed in fair play?

I hate what Maldonado did in the 1986 game with England, scoring using his hand and I hate watching some players start falling from the center of the stadium and landing just in front the goalkeeper. I accept it as a part of the game. I accept that the referee makes mistakes as long his mistakes don’t target the same players and the same team all the time just because their union, organisation or whatever else you want to call it has issues with one or another player or team.

I find it unbelievable when a referee publicly states that he doesn’t like a player, naming the certain player who is actually a historic member of a team. I don’t understand a referee who’s saying publicly that he is a fan of a certain team. But again these are things you get a lot lately. Sometimes I think that referees become the ones who failed as football players, and with all these millions moving inside football I can imagine that they feel a bit left out.

I suppose there are ways to correct that and after all what supposedly made them become referees is their love of the sport. So please find a way to stop them screwing some teams and most of all football.

Sex and referees

By Thanos Kalamidas

Do you know what death and sex have in common? Three things, they can both happen just anywhere, both end with a groan and in both cases you are dead afterwards. Watching some sports events lately I found out that there is another one who has somehow common things with sex. Football referees. They screw football, they screw football, and they screw football.

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Spicing up history

By Asa Butcher

A Touch of Spice (2003)
(Politiki kouzina / Πολίτικη Κουζίνα)
Directed & written by Tassos Boulmetis

Pepper...is hot and scorches, just like the sun
Salt...is used as needed to spice up one's life
Cinnamon...is bitter and sweet, just like a woman

My experience with Greek films begins with Zorba the Greek and ends with My Big Fat Greek Wedding. So you could say that Hellenic cinema is like a stranger to me. Today that stranger introduced himself. Proceeded to serve 108-minutes of bittersweet Greek modern history and departed as a new best friend.

A Touch of Spice is the title you'll need to remember at the DVD store because its quality matches that of Cinema Paradiso, Jean De Florette and La Vita e Bella. That's how accomplished this movie is. The story absorbed me so much that my mind forgot it was reading subtitles, plus I did not realise when two characters started speaking English.

In the same style as Cinema Paradiso, the film follows Fanis Iakovides (Georges Corraface) as he returns to his roots in Constantinople (Istanbul) in order to visit his ailing grandfather. The film rewinds three decades to life in the city when Fanis was just a little boy spending all his time in his grandfather's spice shop. His grandfather teaches Fanis about the importance of spice, in both life and food, while living under the rule of the Turks.

The Turkish government decree that thousands of Greeks, including Fanis' father, are to be deported back to Greece, so the family pack up leaving the grandfather behind. In Greece, the family are continually called Turks and suffer from the rules and regulations of the dictatorship, but throughout all the problems that Fanis and his family face there are the meals, each more spectacular than the last.

Food is at the heart of the Greek family. It is used politically, romantically, socially and emotionally, each of which is clearly portrayed during the film. One of most poignant scenes is when Fanis' father states why the grandfather will never leave Constantinople to visit them in Athens and this is immediately after one of the funniest scenes in the movie. There were many bittersweet moments during the movie that reflect the emotions that these Greeks suffered during that period of their history...and even now.

I was lucky enough to watch the film with Thanos, who provided his own 'Director's Commentary' that gave further insight into the historical and cultural situations, plus allowed me an insight into his own history. Thanos identified with many of the situations that Fanis faced, while director and writer Tassos Boulmetis based the movie on his own personal experiences, which makes me understand why this movie became the biggest box office hit in Greece with more than one million tickets sold.

A whole generation of Greeks lived and still clearly remember this period of their history, which left me shocked at some points because it is difficult to comprehend some of the situations in which the Iakovides family found themselves. If it hadn't been for Thanos' knowledge about the making of this film, I would never have realised that many of the shots are computer-generated. The two aerial shots that introduce 1960's Constantinople and Athens are amazing, while the grandfather's spice shop is a place I would love to visit - you could almost smell the spice.

Once again, if it hadn't been for Thanos' knowledge about the making of this film, I would never have realised that many of the shots are computer-generated. The two aerial shots that introduce 1960's Constantinople and Athens are amazing, while the grandfather's spice shop is a place I would love to visit - you could almost smell the spice.

A Touch of Spice is a beautiful film that deserves to be mentioned in the same breath as many of the other foreign cinema greats. You don't need to have a Thanos sat next to explaining everything or know much about Greek/Turkish history, my only suggestion is to eat beforehand because all the food on screen will drive you crazy with hunger.
Every time you are facing the name Adobe there are two programs coming to mind: Photoshop and Reader. Over the last three years Adobe followed the competition by selling the programs as a packet and selling them all together in a more economical format. Anybody who has anything to do with design or photography, Adobe Photoshop is simply a must and Adobe Reader is another must for a wider audience, since every document comes in Adobe Reader format or better in PDF format, nowadays.

As Adobe says in the introduction of the package, the biggest change in this new version is the ability for all the programs to perfectly communicate between them. Adobe Bridge is the tool that takes you through all that with its major advance: the good color settings and communication between the programs. However, since Ovi magazine is not part of Adobe’s promotion team let’s see the parts of this suite.

First of all, Adobe’s programs have always been expensive and thanks to the competition, especially Corel Co., Adobe offers the whole suite at a prettier reasonable price. Pretty reasonable does not mean a good price. Still, the product is, without a good excuse, expensive. It becomes a must for many professionals and, in other articles in the past, I have explained why I think these programs are unreasonably expensive and how difficult it is for a professional to make it work.

Colors are perfect in Photoshop and if you have a well-calibrated screen you know exactly what you are going to get in the end, either in print or on the net. Anything more I write will be nothing other than a hymn to a program I consider a must to every professional.

Adobe Photoshop is the flagship of Adobe. Without overdoing it I can say only one thing, Adobe Photoshop is the perfect image program. It’s simple and it does nearly everything and if there is something it doesn’t do, with a little imagination you can make it do it. I have used Photoshop for over ten years and even though I think I have tried everything else, nothing matches Adobe Reader as another of the heavy weapons from Adobe. I think it must be with MS windows one of the most popular programs for users, both PC and Mac. There seems to be no document that is not in PDF format and even communication between printing companies and designers, due to digital montage and digital printing, happens with PDF files.

Acrobat professional is the key for this communication and the extra you get in the suite from the Reader you can download for free on the net. Reader is the translator to any document to PDF. Even competitive programs have to be compatible with Adobe Acrobat. Adobe Photoshop, it has easy tools and is easy to navigate making it work for your needs. It is an excellent program, another must from the suite.

Adobe Illustrator has become the most popular vector program after Adobe targeted designers and architects. Ever since the beginning, the majority of designers were Mac users and the truth is that it took a long time for PCs to become equally trustworthy with the Macs and that’s mainly due to the unstable MS Windows if anything else, but this is a long conversation we can have another time.

Continuing an unreasonable policy, Adobe was always publishing the Mac version of the program a few months before the PC version following the other unexplained mosh room of Macs towards PCs. This continued till Corel came out with the program Corel Draw. The PC users made total turn to Corel Draw making it one of the most popular vector programs. Both the programs still lead the market of vector programs despite all the efforts of companies like Macromedia and their Freehand.

Personally, I like them both equally. I find Corel very easy and Illustrator useful when I want to combine Photoshop with a vector program. The competition has led them both to have nearly the same tools and effects. Before Illustrator became part of the Adobe suite it was expensive and not a good buy compared to Corel, which was much cheaper and in some things much better.

For a professional, both are a must since each one can do magic, but when they cooperate you can make miracles.

Adobe In-Design is like QuarkXpress, which is the leader among the publishing programs and, like Photoshop, the rest disappear somewhere in the nowhere, which is why Adobe is forcing In-Design into the package. Adobe In-Design is a good try, good for students to learn how publishing programs work. When it comes to real life and real printing In-Design has its faults.

For example, the color from the photographs you try to recreate using the In-Design palette might look fine on the screen but when it comes to print it is a totally different story and a bad one. Adobe In-Design has a tool that makes a shadow and it is promoted as the extra thing, but if you want to make a good shadow why use a publishing program? Why not use Photoshop that specializes and is Adobe again.

QuarkXpress is an expensive program, even more expensive than Adobe’s programs and that’s what Adobe tried to use to earn a place in the publishing programs market. They did succeed to a certain level, but when it comes to professionals it is all about QuarkXpress. Somehow it was the market’s revenge for Photoshop’s prices. If your work is to make visit cards and small pizza menus and brochures, In-Design is perfect, if you have further demands and you want a professional result just buy QuarkXpress. Adobe’s excuse that it is cheaper sounds quite stupid next to the comparisons, such as Illustrator Corel Draw or Photoshop, Photo Paint.

Adobe GoLive, I suppose they needed to add a joke because only a joke you can deal with this program. Even MS FrontPage is better than this. I’ve been wondering if there are any users of this program when there is Macromedia Dreamweaver. I don’t want to write anything else about this program, since I’m sure that even Adobe has realized that this is a joke.

Adobe Photoshop is a good reason to make this Adobe Creative suite a must-get for every professional. Still, as I said earlier, the suite is not enough for any professional. You need other programs that can make your work worth printing or publishing.

A few years ago, Corel tried to enter the market of publishing programs putting its program in the suite the program Corel Ventura. Soon they realized that it was not only a case of price but it was what a program offers to the professional and what result you get when you have to present your work to your client, who understands nothing about Adobe or Corel. They stopped producing it and the program disappeared.

Since then, Corel has totally focused on what they are good at: vector programs. They invest in brilliant programs like Corel Painter and Corel Bryce. Perhaps Adobe should follow the example and invest in programs they know how to do and make the cost of their suite
In a televised interview, Silvio Berlusconi, the Italian prime minister, compared himself with Napoleon saying that he has done more than the emperor for the world.

He should stick to comparing their heights otherwise his Waterloo is not far, only a month!!!

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Then Berlusconi said that he is the Christ of politics.

Ok. The man has issues. He keeps forgetting small details. Christ was crucified! And there are doubts if Berlusconi’s father is God to help him in the resurrection.

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This thing with the cartoons, is it going to include Berlusconi pretending to be Christ? Are we going to see Christians demonstrating and boycotting spaghetti around the world?

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An issue about sexuality and iBite feels…extreme sexy, that’s the excuse for the photo!!!

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“The ideal woman should have Nicole Kidman’s laughter, the personality of Julia Roberts and aspects of Michelle Pfeiffer. And finally, the ambition of Jennifer Lopez,” actor George Clooney said in an interview.

What about sexuality man? What’s wrong with you? Let’s see, Jennifer Lopez’s sexuality, Pamela Anderson’s….better leave it!

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Brokeback Mountain.

No comment!

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Has anybody from Africa ever won any medal at the Winter Olympics? Why have I the feeling that they should call them the WASPs Olympics?

It might be because the Scandinavians are protestants?

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There is one Greek in Turin, maybe he was practicing skiing on sand in some island. He was 88th in the 20 km cross country, 88 athletes all together!!!

Countries with tradition in winter ski! The Olympic spirit. Is cricket an Olympic sport?

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Bird flu is spreading all around south Europe.

From now it is dangerous to call somebody ‘chicken’.

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Iran resumes with nuclear enrichment despite international disagreement and threats.

Who threatens whom?

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Report finds that the US government knew about Hurricane Katrina before.

Yes, they had asked Rumsfeld and he had assured them that it was a case of months. Just like Hurricane Iraq.

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In a hunting accident Rumsfeld shot a friend of his, instead of a bird.

That’s the idea; don’t waste any bullet, even if you miss the bird!

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From the media, they were listening into mobile telephone calls.

If they were listening to mine, can they pay the bill as well?

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This is a very sexy magazine!

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I mean sexual sexy, sexuality sexual sexy!!!

Have fun … I mean, have sex!