While writing one of my last articles for this issue of the Ovi magazine, I heard on the radio that is constantly on next to me that Slobodan Milošević is dead. To be exact, the reporter announced that there was a rumour that Milošević was dead and in the next breaking news they were going to give more details and if possible a verification of the event.

Oddly enough, at that very moment, I was writing my last article about my radio memories, since this issue of Ovi magazine is all about ‘Radio Waves’. I have a lot of stories about my relationship with the radio; stories that have to do with history, politics, fun and romance.

I remember when I was really young, one summer in a Greek village next to the sea, I spent endless nights listening to romantic songs and holding a young French girl. It’s funny that I don’t remember her name or even her face, but I do remember a song they played often, “Summer’s Gone” by Paul Anka.

Radio, in many ways, has been a big part of my life and I remember my father complaining all the time that it was impossible for anyone to do their homework while having the radio blasting away next to them. I think I am one of these very lucky people to ‘do’ radio a few times in my life. It is really ‘do’. Not one of these extra-modern digital radio stations, I mean radio stations like the one Asa and I have our program now.

It is an old building with an old analogue console coming from the ’80s (twenty years are like centuries for radio), it even has an old record player, while the studio is just a room with funny cheap lamps and filled with people who have a passion for radio. People who live and breathe for the radio. People who like Dickey Troll, a very unique character who works for Lähiradio here in Helsinki and, even though he is part of modern Finnish radio history, I could never see him in one of these digital extra-modern radio stations.

You see, that’s what happened to me from the beginning when we decided to make an issue about radio, stories filled my mind and if Asa didn’t stop me I would probably fill this issue with god knows how many pages. To be honest, Asa said that he’s not going to proofread any more articles of mine so I’d better stick to what I’ve written till now.

Our last issue “sexuality” was one of our most successful, not only for the visits our site had but because it raised some interesting conversations and reactions, and that’s exactly what we want.

You must have noticed that our young IT wizard continually adds new things, including the latest video news from Reuters. Olivier has also added a page for our radio show which you can download a couple of days after the Sunday broadcast.

Tony, Hutch, Satya, Georgios, Jonathan, Jan and Theo are here, and we are waiting till the last moment for Phil and John - I’m writing the editorial and there’s been no news from either of them, yet! I’m not going to say anything about Asa because I’ve been a fan of his writing style for a long time and I loved his “I Spy W”

Thank you all, guys, your unique writing styles and messages prove how stupid a commend I heard a few weeks ago that, “Ovi is just a ‘game’” and also that “Asa and I write everything with different names.” Envy is something we have never felt in Ovi, actually the last six months we have been the victims of envy - jealousy is something we leave to little people.

In Ovi magazine we are always looking for new people to join us and knowing that our readers expand from Europe to Japan, America, Africa and Australia, we invite anybody who wants to join to send us a mail. We are looking for people who can share our style; we are looking for journalists, reporters, corresponder, photographers, illustrators, anything you can imagine, but especially more female contributors.

Thank you for being with us again,

Enjoy our radio issue

Thanos

I must begin by apologising to all the Triskaidekaphobics, who are unable to overcome their fear of the number thirteen to properly enjoy this issue. We discussed the option of numbering this issue 12b or jumping to fourteen, but we thought that would disappoint any Sikh or Chinese readers who believe that thirteen is lucky. You’re damned if you do, damned if you don’t.

Welcome to another issue of Ovi, whatever the number, and we hope you are looking forward to what written delights we have for you this month. Following last month’s weighty ‘sexuality’ theme, we have eased up on the severity and chosen ‘radio waves’ as the topic of the day. (Apologies to the French speakers).

Many of our regular readers will be aware that we have extensive and intellectual reasoning behind the choice of topic, this issue is no different. At the beginning of February, Thanos and I began our new independent radio show for a Helsinki radio station, which is also available to download from the Bad Boys link on the left-hand side of the page. Our buzzing creative brains derived the conclusion that ‘radio’ would be quite appropriate.

Thanos has put me to shame with his wealth of articles about growing up listening to the radio in Greece, although I didn’t know that Socrates presented the breakfast show. Be sure to read ‘Radio memories’ about his first transistor radio and ‘Farewell Greek BBC’, which is an interesting article about the BBC’s Greek radio service and its place in history.

Our regulars are back with more for you to enjoy, including Satya Prakash examining the potential danger of AT&T returning to its pre-1984 stranglehold, Jonathan Fischer presents another ‘Death of the Party’ and F.A. Hutchinson asks and answers the one million dollar question. Tony Butcher discusses the coded sentences that tell the market what is going to happen, Jan Sand takes a walk down memory lane with all of his favourite radio stars from yesteryear and Theo Versten is back with the second chapter of ‘The Dead Pinky’.

There are a few from me, a few more from Thanos and all the usual sections for your enjoyment. Don’t forget that Ovi is democratic and endorses freedom of speech, which is why you don’t need to register to use our forum or to leave a message on our blog. You can also use the feedback facility to the left of every article and we do read all of your comments and suggestions.

Thanks for taking the time to read Ovi,

Asa Butcher
Radio waves

By Thanos Kalamidas

I think the first people who really understood what the radio can do if you press the right buttons were the politicians with first two megawatts, Winston Churchill and the notorious Joseph Goebbels. The Nazi propaganda master used the radio to promote and mislead the German public years before the beginning of WWII, he realized soon enough that radio can reach far more people than any other printed media and in the far away places of Germany. His constant bombarding of false messages and lies worked perfectly for the Nazi party until the first years of WWII. Then the allies showed their real talent taking over. Winston Churchill’s radio messages have been documented and they are already part of history. His famous “We will never surrender” speech is a lesson not only of a brilliant strategist but as a lesson for all the history books but even from the bestselling paperback spy novels. The Red Cross used the power of the radio a great deal looking for missing people, soldiers or just civilians. It continued after WWII during the Cold War. During the Cold War the radio waves became tenor. American stations all there doing nothing. Radio Albania was famous and a big laugh then with all the wooden language and the cliché slogans for the monstrous capitalism and the American and British capitalism.

I remember a joke during the Cold War period. The General Secretary of the USSR Leonid Brezhnev was following: in a race that took place in Washington D.C. between President Richard Nixon and USSR General Secretary Leonid Brezhnev, the American president won while his Russian rival finished last. On the other side of the world all the Russian stations were transmitting the following: after provocatively challenging, the General Secretary of the C.P. of USSR took part in a race around the White House where, among others, the President of the United States participated. After a difficult ending, our General Secretary came second, but the American president was only one position before the last.” The funny thing was that somehow both they said the truth. That just shows a taste of the power radio used to have.

Nowadays it seems that television enjoys this glory but still nothing has managed to beat the power of the radio, at least with the morning programs when most of the people are in their cars. Perhaps that’s why the American president still addresses his citizens weekly from the radio and before elections the media that somehow monopolizes the biggest part of the adverts is the radio.

Since it is the rare human who is fascinated by gobbling flying insects humans have a more generalized sound capability to create their surround. And this permits sound to delude humans into a fabricated reality which is the magic of radio. In a radio studio a technician can example cellophone to create a roaring fire, can slap his thighs in a precise pattern to create a galloping horse, can repeatedly pat a loose bundle of clothes to hit a table top and an arm reluctantly marches forward. To do this on television is a very expensive business.

Radio is cheap because it calls upon the imagination and experience of the listener that can evoke vivid pictures in the mind. In this, it is closely related to the written word. The visual image is where humanity lives so humans are very good in accepting abstract sound clues to make personal mental images.

With a good descriptive narrator, sound can create a beautiful woman, a delicious frying breakfast, the roaring tanker of a huge spaceship, an encounter with a most horrible monster, a soaring ship, a swarm of vicious invisible insects, - all at negligible cost. Each of these pictures is different for each individual since we have each lived different lives with different ideals but this is far more effective than an actual picture that appeals to the taste of the TV director but has variable effect on the individuals in an audience.

I grew up in Brooklyn, New York, back in the 1930s when radio was the emperor of the imagination.

Radio buttons

By Jan Sand

There are several creatures that can construct their world by the use of sound alone. There are bats, there are dolphins, and there are humans. Bats and dolphins confront the world with a precise sound capability involving a specialized nervous system. This can create a topological model of their environment with exquisite precision. Bats guided by sound alone can fly safely through a space crisscrossed with fine threads and can accurately locate tiny insects in flight to capture them and gobble them up. There were others, of course. During the day there were the soap operas like the Story of Mary Martin, Our Gal Sunday, The Romance of Helen Trent, Stella Dallas, Myrt and Margie and the Goldbergs. In the evening, news people like Gabriel Heatter and Lowell Thomas and H.V. Kaltenborn were the early people to be succeeded by Edward R. Murrow and Eric Sevareid; a rich and fascinating parade of personalities kept the nation entertained and informed. And it created its own reality that occasionally even revealed the real world.

It was only during the Second World War that correspondents were actually stationed overseas to report the news on the spot. The Columbia Broadcasting System was prominent in this effort and Edward Murrow is still fondly remembered in his courageous battle with the despicable Republican Senator McCarthy in the current film “Goodnight and Good Luck”.

And, of course, after WWII, there was the rise of the witty funny men like Henry Morgan (who was chastised for claiming Life Savers candies cleaned the public with the hole in the center) and Bob and Ray. Radio today is submerged by all the other ways people have perfected to communicate throughout the world but I am still nostalgic over that couple of decades before the rise of television when immense talent created an era when the human ear was filled momentarily by the ever-dominant ear.
Radio memories

By Thanos Kalamidas

When I was a kid there was a rule in the house, eight o’clock I should be in bed. A different time then, school was six days a week, Saturdays included with church in the morning. Anyway I must have been eight or nine years old when, as a Christmas present, I got a small transistor.

Now, talking about a small transistor in the age of the Walkman and iPods and I don’t know what else is like talking about cave paintings in the Tate Gallery, but back in the 60’s that was a real revolution. I could fit it in my pocket and it soon became a nightmare for my father since the small transistor accompanied me at all times, except school hours. The batteries rarely lasted more than two days and when they died it was like somebody had taken my breath away from me.

The radio became my inspiration for another love in my life, the theater. Back in the 60’s in most countries, including Greece, the radio was a state business with very little advertisement and most of the European radio stations were trying to be as more intellectual as possible, with the BBC as their role model. There were a lot of plays on the radio. I know it will sound weird but my first contact with Samuel Beckett came through a radio broadcast. Suddenly student bedrooms and garages with a transmitter and a record player became radio stations. Athens created a radio station that was broadcasting rock & roll, blues and an hour of rock & roll. Wolfman Jack! I’m serious, that was the name of a DJ with a wolfish voice who brought to me my first love, the Beatles and The Rolling Stones, Bob Dylan and Joan Baez. I’m sure some kind of Pop Art museums, some kind of light spy stories were some kind of ethic of the dictators. The American bases in Athens created a radio station that started broadcasting an all American programme with a lot of jazz, blues and an hour of rock & roll.

In the late-60s Greece suffered from the dictatorship and more anti-communist programmes appeared, with rock & roll becoming somehow illegal since it was against the religious and nationalistic ethic of the Americans in Athens. The first radio station was a result of one man’s effort and surprisingly a policeman who, at the time, was the major of Athens, Miltiadis Evert. The man, despite political and ideological differences, called around him people who loved radio to staff the first private radio station.

I was lucky enough to be part of that and I have some of the best memories from that time. Nobody ever told us what to say and how to say it, nobody ever told us what kind of music to play and as long as we kept some kind of ethic code, no swearing, we were totally free in our choices. I still think that this period, except mine, was the best period of Greek radio and many people who later had radio or television careers started from there. The amazing thing is that the same man later became the leader of the conservative party, but I think his more modern touch on the contemporary life and his honesty didn’t let him survive long in a conservative party at least as a leader.

The 90s was the total commercialization of the radio. Suddenly the same people who owned football teams started owning radio stations. To be a radio producer meant that you could bring adverts and radio shows were depending on statistics and numbers. Quality and passion had no room there.

I know that I might sound bitter about the ’90s, but I feel that the radio has lost something. I have a weekly radio show with Asa, but I still miss the hours spent in the radio station in Athens, helping each other and making shows for fun not for the numbers. You never know, this might be another period before the next evolution like it happened back in the ’70s.
Farewell Greek BBC

By Thanos Kalamidas

However odd it sounds some of the best moments of Greek radio came from England, to be exact the BBC Greek service. In a short message in Greek at the beginning of 1967, the Nobel Prize awarded poet Georgios Seferis said he had gone against one of the darkest periods of Modern Greek history, the military dictatorship. Unfortunately, he died soon after, but the recorded message was often transmitted to encourage the Greeks who were suffering under the dictators.

During the Nazi occupation in the ’40s, the BBC was the voice from the free world, the government and part of the army had escaped to Egypt and united with the allies in the African frontier. The BBC was transmitting in Greek every night sending news and messages to occupied Greece. Behind the songs or love poems, messages encouraged people and gave them the feeling that they were not alone. The Nazis forbid people to listen to BBC, but...who cared. It didn’t matter how deadly the threats were, people tuned into the BBC every night and the next morning the news was transmitted mouth to mouth.

During the seven years of the military dictatorship, the BBC was there again, but this time more active, occasionally not to the liking of the British government. They criticized the dictatorship, interviewed known politicians and personalities that had fled Greece and lived all around Europe. Andreas Papandreou was a fugitive living all around the world that time hunted by the dictatorship and their lackeys.

Somehow the Greek service of the BBC is part of the New Greek history and it has documented a lot of dramatic moments. A few months ago, the administration of the BBC decided to end this service even though it had moved from the traditional short wave transmission to the internet. The excuse was that they were going to create a BBC television station in Arabic.

66 years of presenting Greek events stopped one evening last December. There is nothing wrong with creating a television in Arabic and probably a lot of people will agree that there is a need for an independent news agency in the Arab world. Still, is this an excuse for shutting down history? I’m not sure, I’m just sorry it happened.

For the ones who can understand Greek some of the most dramatic or beautiful moments of the Greek service of the BBC are still online, including George Seferis’ voice: http://www.bbc.co.uk/greek/
In order to get the job I wanted at the Pictorial Center, which took me all day! I had to work on the television networks across the East River in 'The City!' I had my heart set on working in the 'big time!' Impossible, most said!

The upset, I got fired from ABC! Amazingly, this turned out to be one of the best things that could happen. I'm still amazed by how life appears at one 'stage,' only to appear completely different at another 'stage.' I went on to work for other television networks (wouldn't give up), only to discover, I was right the first time in my life. I was wrong!

There's absolutely no integrity in 'that game!' The old coach of the Green Bay Packers, Vince Lombardi had said it, 'Winning isn't the only thing; it's everything!' In that 'league,' (network television) the truth means just the end? I have people 'killed,' and over money, over a job! I saw lives ruined 'Death of a salesman,' the old play. I have experience! My bosses back at KVUA in Tucson, hadn't mentioned anything about this, prepared me for anything like this! And I couldn't 'smash!' It's a tough world, but I learned some key things, as I had thought. But, I was directed the 'live live,' news feeding of teletype machines at Fort Monmouth, N.Y. But, fortune! I saw lives ruined 'Death of a salesman,' the old play. I had experience! My bosses back at KVUA in Tucson, hadn't mentioned anything about this, prepared me for anything like this! And I couldn't 'smash!' It's a tough world, but I learned some key things, as I had thought. But, I was directed the 'live live,' news feeding of teletype machines at Fort Monmouth, N.Y. But, fortune! I saw lives ruined 'Death of a salesman,' the old play. I had experience! My bosses back at KVUA in Tucson, hadn't mentioned anything about this, prepared me for anything like this! And I couldn't 'smash!' It's a tough world, but I learned some key things, as I had thought.

By the time I was but 18-years old, and that to work in television in New York City, my plans worked! 'Moon River, wider than a mile, I'm crossing you in style! some day!' my inspiration, the movie 'Breakfast at Tiffany's!' Inagination is important!

What I try to do with young people (or that ask is to tell my story, and help them develop and having a 'relationship with that.' I don't go to church nor read a book describing it. I'm writing a book of my own!

I've discovered something sublimer, yet ineffectible! Something that will take hundreds of years to get into mainstream consciousness (long after I have no ego body)!' I've tried to explain to some of my more enlightened friends, but they don't think I'm not ready! And who am I to sell it!' One of Rumi's (5) great lines, only discovered 800 years after he 'lost his ego body.' 'How can I sell sorrow, when you know it's good for them?'

Now, who would have ever known, least of all, about such matters! I sold my rich, make a million dollars before I was 30 years of age, get the beauty queen and live happily ever after! But it turned out that the money wasn't important, the lesson was! So, I just 'made a million dollar lesson!' Now, I'm genuinely 'rich!' 'Rich' beyond explaining!

Unfortunately, for the world (circa 2006), 'money has become God,' and how they get it, a 'rebellion!' But, you don't have to listen to such! You can be different! You can create something everlasting!

We can create something everlastong together!

Let us 'Make magic together!' I sell sorrow, when you know it's good for them! Do what I did, dare to 'fail' your way to success! 'Life is a daring adventure, or nothing at all!' (Helen Keller)

Dare to have a great adventure! You've but one life to live as your own! Join us! Let us 'Make magic together!' 1

1 A giant Monsters, a small desert lizard that get their name from the fact that once they clamp down on something with their jaws, they never release (have to be killed to be removed). 2 A French red Bordeaux wine. 3 People inadvertently believe that this is a government 'doctrine,' not! You pay into this fund for years, and it gets entitled to collect in it (age 62)! A good idea, FDR had! 4 Jean Claude Iwas. 5 My favorite 12BCh. Sufi poet.
The wider picture

By Asa Butcher

We are all very familiar with the cartoons depicting the Islamic prophet Muhammad that were published in the Danish newspaper Jyllands-Posten and subsequently in newspapers in more than fifty other countries, leading to violent protests involving dozens of deaths. The most controversial of the twelve cartoons depicts Muhammad with a bomb in his turban, with a lit fuse and the Islamic creed written on the bomb, but have Muslims stopped to ask why has they have become associated with bombs, death and terror?

Out of approximately 40 cartoonists, only twelve responded and less than half were flattering to the Islamic faith. Anger at the cartoons has been quite evident, but anger can make all of us blind to underlying issues, whether we want to acknowledge them or not. During all of these protests and televised discussions, has a single Muslim that stopped to think, "Shit, is that how they really view our faith? Where did we go wrong? How can we begin regain one another’s trust?"

Whether you believe the cartoons are culturally insensitive, insulting or blasphemous, or that they are exercising a right of free speech, these cartoons were not drawn absently or even depict Muhammad; they are a representation of how the majority of the west view Islam and that view is one of terror, death and bombs. A viewpoint that is unlikely to have improved much since the protests have now resulted in death and have gone one-step too far in the minds of the west.

Protest, that is everybody’s right, but don’t undermine your protest by reinforcing the caricatures drawn by the cartoonists. A demonstration held by some Muslims in London at the beginning of February damaged any good will that some may have had with their cause in UK after placards glorifying the 7 July bombings were on display and the crowd called for the enemies of Islam to be killed, ‘be prepared for the real holocaust!’ proclaimed one placard.

This time it was British public’s turn for the angry reaction and the cycle began once again, except both sides had hardened their positions against each other. Throughout this whole controversy, I have only been impressed by one comment and it was made by an elderly French Muslim man, “When I see some cartoon about our prophet I feel some bleeding in my heart. Really. But at the same time, I have the same feeling when I see the flag of Denmark burning outside. Because this is not our behaviour as a Muslim. It is not our character. Really.”

The world needs a few more like that old man because many of us are too blinded by what is in front of us, arguing over whether or not the cartoonists should or should not have been published, instead of what they represent. Sadly Muslims have to realise that Islam does currently have the stereotype of death, bombs and terror, but it is now up to them to stop and think, “Shit, that is how they see our faith. How can we change that?”

The second thing that makes me more worry, which is what I tried to say to that editor/publisher, is that, if I didn’t know better, I would suspect that he is either an undercover supporter of the new republicans. They were targeting a person, an institution or an event that had crossed the border that separates the serious from the ridiculous, and be sure that this happens often, especially regarding politics and religion.

The reason I’m returning again to this issue is an article I read in a Finnish monthly magazine and the reaction of Muslim editor/publisher when I tried to talk to him about his article regarding the cartoons.

First of all, after probably hundreds of pages in the international media, it seems that everybody forgot to ask the cartoonists themselves why they drew these cartoons. It seems that everybody was bothered about the publishers and the editors of the magazines and newspapers that published the cartoons, but nobody bothered to ask the cartoonists. Even in Finland, an editor of a magazine lost his job just because he published a very clever – at least for me – cartoon that criticizes the whole situation with the cartoons.

I believe my experience as a cartoonist for daily newspapers allows me to give my opinion and add to the argument. I have often mentioned that cartoonists try to find things to criticize and provoke all the time. They are like stand-up comedians, but in print form. You see a stand-up comedian and you probably laugh with some of the most racist jokes, but when you see it print it is a totally different reaction. Why?

I never really understood. The cartoons were not to my taste and during my long career I have designed some cartoons that were quite pathetic. Quality aside, the moment I produced them I was to serve a purpose. They were targeting a person, an institution or an event that had crossed the border that separates the serious from the ridiculous, and be sure that this happens often, especially regarding politics and religion.

The second thing that makes me more worry, which is what I tried to say to that editor/publisher, is that, if I didn’t know better, I would suspect that he is either an undercover provocative of the CIA or a crypto-supporter of the new republicans. The man took such a loud position on one side of the February’s demonstrations in the Arab countries everybody seems to forget about the Mohamed cartoons. Or maybe not?

It seems that the whole cartoons case has closely followed the same path of other global news stories over the last few years. It became a comet that burns brightly for some time and then disappears, and then a new one appears. It seems that nobody remembers the riots in Paris, even though the people are still suffering in the east side of the city, and only two months after the huge demonstrations in the Arab countries everybody seems to forget about the Mohamed cartoons. Or maybe not?

Freedom of speech

By Thanos Kalamidas

It seems that the whole cartoons case has closely followed the same path of other global news stories over the last few years. It became a comet that burns brightly for some time and then disappears, and then a new one appears. It seems that nobody remembers the riots in Paris, even though the people are still suffering in the east side of the city, and only two months after the huge demonstrations in the Arab countries everybody seems to forget about the Mohamed cartoons. Or maybe not?
Suvi-Anne Siimes

By Thanos Kalamidas

For many years it has been a question between historians about the role of a personality in events. Some personas are so strong that things happened much faster than they were supposed to or slowed down other events that were not supposed to.

European history is full of personas like that and I’m not only referring to people that actually changed the history of the continent and not only for their nations, such as Otto von Bismarck in Germany or Francois Mitterrand in France. In the Nordic European history we talk about personas who made the difference in their own coun-

tries and hopefully their example will brighten the future.

Finland has many personas to show at this level, Urho Kekkonen was one of these personas and his contribution during the hardest years of the Cold War will be remembered for a long time, not only in Finland but in European his-

tory books. He earned his place in European history. Martti Ahtisaari is another former president of the Finnish democracy who will gradually take his place in European history, even though he’s not much appreciated in Finland at least not as much as he is abroad.

In an interview a few years ago with a philosopher in Paris, he said to me something that I kept all these years. This interview was a bit after the fall of the wall and the dismantling of the old USSR, the man was a theoretical represen-
tative of the new conservative wave starting at that moment in Europe. He said to me: to be a communist is very romantic, think of it asking total equal-

ity for the majority and as a supporter of the enemy, therefore a traitor.

According to what I have read and heard about her, she managed very well. First of all she managed to unite all the broken pieces of a movement that had suffered after the fall of the Berlin Wall. Her knowledge in European politics and economics made her a fearless opposi-
tion and her honest reaction to history made her a well-appreciated speaker.

Suvi-Anne Siimes' decision sadd-
denly was the country's need for democracy needs all the voices especially in a time of globalization. Romantic voices are the most valuable, from the other side her decision shows her deep romantic char-

acter and there is nothing else to be said than I hope she will not stay far away.

Mrs. Suvi-Anne Siimes’ decision sadd-
denly was the country's need for democracy needs all the voices especially in a time of globalization. Romantic voices are the most valuable, from the other side her decision shows her deep romantic char-
acter and there is nothing else to be said than I hope she will not stay far away.

To be president of any country is a superior honor. I have learnt that the role of a country, at least for the majority of European coun-

tries, are people who, through their actions, personality and “above parties” have become symbols of unity and their icon rep-

resents their country abroad.

In most of European countries presidents don’t have real power and they are there more as higher advisors to the governments, a bal-

ance between the government and the opposition and as the voice of the public inside and outside the country. The former president of the Czech Republic, Vaclav Havel, is an example of all the above. A known east European writer of the “70s and 80s became the symbol of change for Czechoslovakia in the 1990s, the first and the last free-
ly-elected president of the Czechoslovak democracy and the first president of the Czech Republic.

Vaclav Havel totally strengthened the presence of the new republican international and is one of the biggest names in the international theater have one of his plays in their repertoire and there are not many people who don’t know about the “Spring in Prague” or the “Velvet Revolu-
tion” - the key ceremonies of the dramatic moments of the Cold War in Europe. Where-
nerver he went everybody had to bow in front of the legend and, to an ex-

tent, the Czech Republic.

Havel is just one example and I can think of a number of other European presidents who been equally honest and honor the title of president. Nobody I think ever questioned how much these people made, or how much they spent, since their personality was a huge thing for any country’s P.R. The only times people questions questions like that was when the president didn’t fulfill the demands of their honor... and to be president of a country is very demanding.

Costis Stephanopoulos was presi-

Tarja’s salary

The Finnish government announced that they are going to increase the President’s salary from 102,000 euros a year to 126,000 euros a year. According to the Finnish law, the salary is tax-free and all the expenses for the president’s residence and staff are paid from the government’s annual budget.

Yes, the people understand that their president needs money, far more than the average citizen but is it necessary to scream in a country with nearly 10% unemployment, in a country with homeless even through the Arctic cold, in a county where many families live with less than 1,000 euros a month? They don’t need to know that their president is getting a 24,000 euro pay rise.

There are members of the senior management in the private sector who take much more, probably five times more a month, but none of them is the president of the repub-
lic. Why suddenly do the govern-
ment and the media decide to hurt the presidential institution? Is it bight-
ness for the election result or just vindictiveness?
Predictable Men

By Tony Butcher

If you read information about financial markets you won’t be able to get through many paragraphs without someone saying, “Markets don’t like uncertainty”. Well from our point of view, this is not strictly true. If everyone in the market knew what is going to happen, i.e. certainty, how can anyone make any money? Let’s be clear, we are all looking at these markets with a view to making money, if you are looking for spiritual fulfillment then you’ve strolled into the wrong lobby.

Uncertainty creates volatility because it makes different traders take different views on events. In essence, it gives traders chances to make money. The problem at the moment is that in the debt / bond markets there is not a great deal of uncertainty on the macro-scale. All the major central banks of the world do a fantastic job of “signalling” interest rate expectations to the financial markets. In truth, what markets don’t like is unexpected shocks.

The last European central bank meeting was a guaranteed quarter point rise, in the same way they are guaranteed not to do anything at the next meeting. How do we know this? Jean Claude Trichet has developed a language whereby in coded sentences he allows the markets to know what he is thinking without actually giving straight answers.

By using the term “monitor closely instead of ‘vigilance’” we are led to believe that key European Interest Rates will be left on hold, when he changes the language back that will be the signal for another rate rise. It is widely expected there will be another rate rise of one-quarter of one percent in one of the months between April and June.

A similar situation has occurred in the United States with former Chairman Greenspan developing his own language with the help of contacts in the media who translate what he says. The only interesting point will be how the new man in charge, Ben Bernanke, tackles this situation. However, after serving several years under “Big Al” he may become even more transparent for the benefit of the markets.

Other global events that continue to bubble away are bird flu and the Iranian Nuclear situations, both of which have monumental consequences for the globe if we get anywhere near the worst case scenarios. Bird Flu is gradually making its way across Europe, and currently France seems to be the worst hit. This could possibly cripple a country that is so dependant on its agricultural industry - I just can’t help but form a very smile.

Ironically, Europe is in the final process of lifting a ten-year export ban on British Beef and it may not be long before France suffers a similar situation with its poultry exports. The Iranian situation continues to be a far more pressing and serious issue with countries from all corners of the world posturing over the rhetoric.

Iran has been giving veiled threats towards the United States if it continues to refer them to the United Nations Security Council, but somehow I cannot see Mr Bush backing down on this issue. I would not be surprised to see Israeli take a more pro-active and destructive approach to any building plans the Iranians have.

Return of AT&T

By Satya Prakash

Spread over 22 states of the US it had a complete monopoly till 1984. Then a Federal judge split the giant in 7 smaller parts. Yeah, it was then ‘Ma Bell’ now known as AT&T. Twenty two years later the split is getting reversed. Already four of the seven babies have joined and now there is a new development.

AT&T is set to acquire ‘BellSouth’ for a sum of 67bn US dollars. If this merger gets the go ahead from the regulators then AT&T will again become largest telecom company in US, pushing Verizon to second place.

In recent years no other industry has seen so much of change across the world than telecom. Technological innovations, convergence of services and new ways of communication have made telecom one of the most profitable sectors. When Ma Bell was split in 1984 it was to allow competition to flourish in public interest and today when Ma Bell is reversing the split it is again the competition.

One of the collateral benefit of this merger will be coming of Cingular – the mobile phone company, into the folds of AT&T. Till now AT&T and BellSouth has joint holding of Cingular. The ultimate entity will be sort of one stop for services like local, long distance and mobile calls. AT&T has many other benefits to accrue if this merger goes through.

I guess regulators will be taking a hard look at all the facts. Many consumer groups have already gone on record with their opposition to the deal. They believe if allowed, AT&T will become what it was before 1984 and prices of all the services will increase.

The question is will the regulator think alike? Will they be of view that competition will be eliminated with this deal? The answer for them might be in the technological change that has happened in telecommunication industry in the past few years. The biggest change is that now voice transfer does not depend on telecom companies. Many internet companies like Vonage, Skype and TimeWarner are providing voice services at far cheaper price.
Greek stories about Iran

By Thanos Kalamidas

For the ones who are familiar with Greek history there is a period in the modern era that is very sad for all the Greeks first and then for the whole of Europe. From 1967 till 1974, in the country that discovered democracy and practice it first, there were dark times of a military dictatorship.

During this time a lot of Greeks had to live in exile or died and this had nothing to do with sides and beliefs, there were many people from the left, but there were people from the conservative right that believed in democracy and they found themselves obliged to fight any kind of fascism.

During this period many countries, politicians and individuals stood and supported the Greeks in exile or the imprisoned victims of the dictatorship. Some countries went even further by not recognizing the dictators as the legal representatives of the country. Sweden was one of these countries and gave a home to thousands of Greeks who were escaping from Greece, including a lot of known personas of Greek political life, such as future first socialist Greek Prime Minister Andreas Papandreou, while France did the same for Constantinos Karamanlis, later president of the Greek democracy, and the list goes on.

Melina Mercouri, the Oscar award winner and Greek actress activist once said that every time a foreign government was going against the dictators they had a party because the dictators were not representing Greece, had nothing to do with Greece, they were traitors to everything for which Greece stands.

I grew up during that period and I realize myself that my beliefs were tested and that’s why I’m so sensitive regarding dictators and dictatorships. I cannot understand why some people defend a dictatorship just because they live abroad and they feel like they are obliged to defend their native country. Can’t they understand that if they really love their country they should never defend the people that destroy it?

Next, among all these people running from the dictatorship during those years there were some parasites funded by the dictatorship and moving around the Greek embassies abroad. Their only purpose was to lobby for the dictators and inform on the movements of the activists abroad.

There are many ways to characterize these people and I think “parasites” is the mildest word I could think of. However, having the right funds these parasites usually managed to enter the local societies, getting involved with the local social life, local media and so on. I want to believe that most of these parasites paid for what they did after the dictatorship fell.

As a principal, I cannot believe that any theocratic state has anything to do with democracy and freedom and I cannot believe that Sharia Laws have anything to do with justice. I have grown up believing that execution is a crime and I’m happy to live in a continent where execution is forbidden. How can I accept stoning as justice and further more, how can I accept that a state that uses this practice as a democratic state?

One more thing I’ve learned from dictatorships is how important it is for them to feel powerful and scary for everybody around them. While Greece was suffering, with people getting poorer and poorer every day, the dictators were investing more money in new weapons and new strategies.

Now, which country nowadays has a theocratic government, a monolithic policy a dictatorial system and researches nuclear capability? I’m sure your mind went straight to Iran. Iran has one of the most dangerous dictatorships and you can just hope that the Iranian people will find the strength the Greeks found thirty years ago to overthrow the dictatorship. Alone, just like the Greeks, without any invasion that will lead to worse situations like it has happened in Iraq, which is facing a civil war.

Living in Finland that has a strong Iranian community, I had the chance to meet many Iranians. They are very sweet and friendly people who remind me of Mediterranean people, ready to open their houses to you and introduce you to their culture and life. A lot of them came here escaping from a dictatorship that manages to control even the smallest details of their life, trying to even invade their minds, filling them with a blind nationalism and the feeling that everybody wants to take over their land. People with free spirit and beautiful ideas. And then you get the others.

They are the parasites that, without good reason, start defending the dictators and voice excuses for their plans. Naïve? Parasites? I tend to believe the latter. Pushing themselves inside the local social life, getting involved with everything and using the system and the European spirit of giving everybody a chance. I will defend your right to say what you want even if I don’t agree with you, they are the worst nightmare of any democratic person as they lobby ambassadors and promote the ideas that they represent.

Perhaps the Iranian democrats should follow the example of the Greeks during the dictatorship that made the names of these parasites and their crimes known publicly. From the other side, these parasites should never forget that nothing lasts for ever and in the end they will pay and, like the Greeks in exile, the Iranian real democrats will find friends everywhere.
When an admiral criticizes the political developments in Russia, emphasizes the concentration of power in Kremlin and reminds everybody that an eye should be kept on Russia, the only thing missing is James Bond and Leonid Brezhnev. This is not an intro for a spy book written sometime in early-80s or late-70s, this is 2006 and the person who said those things in a public interview for a Finnish newspaper is the Chief of Defense of Finland, Admiral Juhanu Kaskeala.

When comments like that come from a public figure, you remember that this is democracy and they can say whatever they want, but when these words come out of the mouth of the Chief of Defense of a country like Finland that makes you chill.

Trying to see everything from a distance there are only two ways to face what the admiral said. First, nothing has changed with Brezhnev–Russia. The good old bureaucratic mechanism is still there, conspiring how to get into international negotiations and expand influence globally or the admiral still lives back in the ’80s.

Regarding the first case there are certain suspicions, after a long period, when the economy is in pieces, a big power like Russia seems as though it is trying to recover. After decades of dominion in the east side of Europe, as a big power, there is the fear of the other side. Russia found herself fighting between crime, an economy in a deadlock, a public at the limits of poverty, the highest possible unemployment, no health system and no education system.

Boris Yeltsin was perhaps the best solution, even though history will remember him only for the drunk-en moment he started conducting the army band, while sat next to Bill Clinton in front of the White House. Vladimir Putin is another story altogether. He is a contrast to Boris, who is open-hearted, always in a good mood, the former basketball player is open to the public and in a good mood, the former basket ball player is always ready to say something in a good moment he started conducting the army band, while sat next to Bill Clinton in front of the White House.

The secretive former KGB rarely smiles; there is something lurking in the way the people look around at every public appearance that does not inspire trust. However, Mr. Putin knows that the road to democracy is one-way for Russia and it will take a long time before the Russian bear will be able to stand up alone. Till then, Russia will be depending on the financial help from the USA and EU, which means that the Russian generals have to forget old plans even for their war games. Never forget that Russia has a huge problem with its own war on terror in Chechnya.

The second point is the Finnish admiral, which makes the whole thing much simpler and far more logical. After living for nearly eighty years with the big boogeyman waiting around the corner, it is difficult to change habits. I don’t underestimate the role of the army in the defense of any country, especially when your neighbor is an imperialistic country, I’m Greek and I know only too well what that means. However, I have the picture of all these generals spending their time trying to find ways to get more weapons, calculating how many people they will kill and planning it all.

Unfortunately for the admiral, the enemy has gone and his thirst for new weapons, more war games and the need of him being the protector of the weak is still there. There is an old Greek poem that goes: After they made all the preparations and they stood there fully-armed, they were waiting for the barbarians, but the barbarians never came so they had to create them and they dressed some passing by people like barbarians and they killed them.

There is another conversation going on in Finland which harks back to the Cold War as well. The question of joining NATO. First of all, NATO has no good reason for its existence since it was the opposite war machine of the Warsaw Pact that doesn’t exist either. The excuse that NATO can play the role of international peacekeeper sounds very poor, since for that reason we have the United Nations and Finland is one of the most active members of the Peacekeeping force. Coming now to a more coop-erative and active defense program that includes other countries in the continent, this is the new EU force. Once more the whole idea of joining NATO is like a general’s dream for war games.

I’m afraid that what the admiral was doing with his interview was just proof of how sad his life has become with no barbarians. We can only hope that the rest of the people realize that and the political adminis-tration of the ministry advise the admiral to keep his mouth shut in the future and leave diplomacy to the diplomats...maybe somebody should also remind him that the period of the Cold War is over with- out no scheduled return.

During the peace talks in Madrid, after the Oslo agreement, the then Israeli PM Yitzhak Shamir promised to James Baker, then USA Secretary of State, that Israel was going to stop every movement with the settlers and that no more set-tlements would be built. In 1992, when this promise was made, there were 120,000 settlers in the West Bank and now the number is up to 240,000 making the settlements 30% of the occupied land.

The Palestinians had to do something. They had to show that they cannot accept any more this quiet agreement from the EU and the support to Israel from the USA, and they wanted to show to all those who became rulers of their destiny in one night promoting their own good and forgetting the struggle of the people that they knew how to punish them. They elected Hamas.

The Palestinians did everything. They signed in Oslo, including the recognition of Israel, and the only thing they wanted was the other side to keep their part of the deal. The Oslo agreement was putting as a point date the year 1993 when the Palestinians would recognize Israel as a country and then the peace process was supposed to last till 1999, when a new independent na-tion would arise in the West Bank.

In 2006 it seems that the only ones who keep their promise were the Palestinians.

The Palestinians, despite what will happen in the future with Hamas and if EU and the Americans will accept the idea that they have to negotiate with them, managed to send a very clear message: We can play the game with your rules if you want, are you prepared to ac-cept the result? Unfortunately the last messages coming from the American administration show that we are not!
Fighting piracy

By Asa Butcher

For those of you who watched the 78th Academy Awards, you will have noticed a number of references to movie piracy. The first was in the form of a joke by host Jon Stewart about it financially hurting actors so much that some of the women here tonight couldn’t afford enough material to cover their breasts. The second came during a speech by the Academy President Sid Ganis, who said: “Please keep going to the pictures.”

Going to the cinema was once an experience I used to enjoy at least once a week, but now I am lucky if it is every two months. Aside from the lifestyle changes, what are the reasons are I not tempted to make the journey to my local cinema and hand over a large number of banknotes to the cashier? Oh that’s right, it’s because I have to hand over a large number of bank notes.

Why has it become so expensive to go to the cinema? Admission, popcorn and drinks take the price for a married couple to such a hefty height that it’s better to buy a couple of DVDs and watch them at home. Movie piracy can cost you nothing, which makes the prospect very attractive, but it is not something in which I participate.

Investing in a DVD, I feel that it is important for my daughter’s cultural development. The prospect of her being able to watch classic movies on the big screen is minimal, while the likelihood she gets to watch a remake of a classic is highly probable, so believe it is better to compensate and let her watch the original on a small screen.

Hollywood studios need to stop remaking and producing sequels, and begin re-releasing those classic for new and past audiences. ‘Nostalgia’ is the buzzword for most generations and past audiences. ‘Nostalgia’ is the buzzword for most generations and past audiences. ‘Nostalgia’ is the buzzword for most generations and past audiences. ‘Nostalgia’ is the buzzword for most generations and past audiences. ‘Nostalgia’ is the buzzword for most generations and past audiences. ‘Nostalgia’ is the buzzword for most generations and past audiences. ‘Nostalgia’ is the buzzword for most generations and past audiences. ‘Nostalgia’ is the buzzword for most generations and past audiences. ‘Nostalgia’ is the buzzword for most generations and past audiences. ‘Nostalgia’ is the buzzword for most generations and past audiences. ‘Nostalgia’ is the buzzword for most generations and past audiences. ‘Nostalgia’ is the buzzword for most generations and past audiences. ‘Nostalgia’ is the buzzword for most generations and past audiences. ‘Nostalgia’ is the buzzword for most generations and past audiences. ‘Nostalgia’ is the buzzword for most generations and past audiences. ‘Nostalgia’ is the buzzword for most generations and past audiences. ‘Nostalgia’ is the buzzword for most generations and past audiences. ‘Nostalgia’ is the buzzword for most generations and past audiences. ‘Nostalgia’ is the buzzword for most generations and past audiences. ‘Nostalgia’ is the buzzword for most generations and past audiences. ‘Nostalgia’ is the buzzword for most generations and past audiences. ‘Nostalgia’ is the buzzword for most generations and past audiences. ‘Nostalgia’ is the buzzword for most generations and past audiences. ‘Nostalgia’ is the buzzword for most generations and past audiences. ‘Nostalgia’ is the buzzword for most generations and past audiences. ‘Nostalgia’ is the buzzword for most generations and past audiences. ‘Nostalgia’ is the buzzword for most generations and past audiences. ‘Nostalgia’ is the buzzword for most generations and past audiences. ‘Nostalgia’ is the buzzword for most generations and past audiences. ‘Nostalgia’ is the buzzword for most generations and past audiences. ‘Nostalgia’ is the buzzword for most generations and past audiences. ‘Nostalgia’ is the buzzword for most generations and past audiences. ‘Nostalgia’ is the buzzword for most generations and past audiences. ‘Nostalgia’ is the buzzword for most generations and past audiences. ‘Nostalgia’ is the buzzword for most generations and past audiences. ‘Nostalgia’ is the buzzword for most generations and past audiences.

If you think of it, every single square that makes a comic page is a small painting with every single detail that makes a painting and through the history of cartoons we often saw comic art following the same waves. We saw Cubism in the late-50s and Surrealism in these little squares, while at the same time we saw literature and theater involved. Suddenly to make a comic you should be gifted in a number of things, draw well, write well and have a huge imagination, since we had to create new worlds and new situations on a piece of paper.

I started talking about cartoons and comics because this is a field I have studied a great deal over the last 40 years, since I realized that I can read and enjoy the text that accompanied all these pictures. I often write articles about comics and I was more than happy when Umberto Eco wrote books about comic art; analyzing all the little details most of us miss most of the time and that from the side of a philosopher researcher.

Doing radio now, since I am one of these lucky people who has been on both sides of a radio programme, either as a listener of radio programmes or as a producer of a radio show, I can say that it is art. It’s the art of performing and it has nothing to do with if you have radio voice or radio attitude. A radio voice helps, but what you need more is inspiration, passion and love, just like drawing comics.

Over the last year, Asa and I lived the adventure of a radio show broadcasting once a week in Helsinki. Most of the people cannot understand or feel what we are doing and we had some really bad hours in this programme. We have to be something like invisible clowns that have to entertain our listeners for an hour, make them smile and feel that we are their escape pod, even when we have to mention some of the most tragic things.

I will never forget two shows we did, one when the tragic events of the explosions in London and another one when we were talking about the Holocaust and the 60th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz. We were not planning to make a dramatic show, after all we were supposed to make people smile, but somehow everything turned so sad and depressing that it was something we carried for hours after the show.

A radio show includes the following elements, a radio station, a script, music and the presenters. Comparing the whole thing with a painting, the radio station is the canvas, the script is the colors and the theme, the music is the background and the presenter is the painter and his inspiration.

Ok, I might have pushed it a little too much, but the truth is that all of us have laughed or cried with a radio programme and all of us have shared feelings or memories with a good radio show, but that’s exactly what a good play does or a good film. So, if a movie can be art why not a good radio show?
If I do, there'll be sign on the door:

“I won't go to Heaven, "

“Please get key from downstairs!”

The interviewer called me special and unique!

She said that she had never met anybody like me!

She warned me that critics might not like my work.

Because they are jealous of your talent.

That's what I said, but she suddenly started to laugh.

Yes, yes! Humour, intelligence, charm. I do have the whole package.

What about height?

He said you have a cultural insight.

Must be your intellectual sense of humour.

Yes, yes! You have a talent that should remain underground.

What else did the interviewer say?

No he didn't! He said...

What?

Yeah, buried.

He said I have a talent that should remain underground.
Radio waves

Tuning in

By Asa Butcher

“Good evening, you are through to the late-night request show! What song can we play for you?” “I’d like to hear Africa by Toto, please.” “Certainly, why do you want to hear that particular song?” “Oh, it always reminds me of Africa.” “Have you been?” “No!” A few seconds of stunned silence and the song begins.

Radio is a great source for classic anecdotes and that was one of my favourites. Radio seems to have a wider availability to the public, since they can interact with stations far more easily and more often than with television. Whether they are placing in to request songs, voice an opinion, enter a competition or just pass the time of day with the DJ, the public live on-air can provide some great amusement.

A woman phoned in during a breakfast show and the presenter asked her what she was doing, she answered, “I just got out of the shower and I am sitting on the bed naked!” For once the DJ was a loss for words, as was the giggling audience. Another classic caller moment came unexpectedly during a competition week, when somebody phoned in a little too early trying to win the big prize. “Sorry, listen, you have to call when we play the special song!” “Oh, I just guessed because I don’t have a radio.”

During 1995 I became addicted to a late-night show on Talk Radio UK hosted by a man known as Caesar the Geezer. Whether you could describe him as a shock jock doesn’t matter, it is actually incorrect. His caller was complaining about political incorrectness and Caesar would correct him on all of his innocent racist remarks and statements; Caesar was fired from Talk Radio UK after only a few months!

I remember him once saying during a discussion about racism that the word ‘racism’ doesn’t exist, it is actually ignorance. He was right.

I've been listening radio since the golden age of piracy, when private radios were illegal and making a radio programme was a passion for people who actually had to build their “radio stations” inside their room or in the garage. That period was real fun. Then came the end or at least things changed. How can they change back?

1. Computers. The radio stations don’t have a DJ with a pile of LPs under their arm getting ready to describe the cover of the album to you. Nowadays there is a play list which most of the time follows the demands of the advertisers.
2. Computers again, replacing the passion, playing music and adverts without anybody’s help one song after the other. No comments, no mistakes, so perfect that makes it anything else than radio.
3. Producers that make an hour programme without really caring about what they play, without having any memories or personal attachment with the songs, often without even hearing them before.
4. The reporters, journalists, DJs are there to do what the boss wants and when the management is changing - something often with the private radio stations - they easily change their style; it’s like they never had a character.
5. The sameness between programmes and music the different shows play makes radio borrowing, the same borrowing with the television.
6. The advertisers that have opinion on the programme but this is a general problem with the media nowadays.
7. The involvement of people that have nothing to do with the media in general but use it as a way to promote other activities or even themselves.

I suppose I could add a few more but somehow I feel that the radio has changed nowadays because of these seven reasons.
Perfect radio

By Thanos Kalamidas

In a survey between media students about how they want a radio show to sound the answered that they want a show that can criticize life and events, be sensitive to people and their lives, help the imagination, give a chance for a conversation and other opinions, give information, play refreshing music, be independent for advertisers and bosses and finally do something for the common good.

The very same survey proved that radio is something more romantic in the media world. When it comes to careers the majority of the media students put radio first, newspapers second, magazines third and, far behind in fourth, television. I suppose when you are a student you are dreaming to be Clark Kent in Metropolis, choosing radio and newspapers as the first choice these kids show that they are ready, since radio and daily newspapers are hard work.

Another interesting part of the survey is that the majority of the participants enjoy music, even during informative programs they want music breaks, while they hate the advert breaks and the stations’ self-promotional jingles. They are interested in sports but only as a part of an information program and not as a whole sport program.

When do they listen to radio? Most of the time it is while they are on the move, but most popular is while they are driving, somehow it seems that driving and radio go together. Obviously that expands while they are on the move, but most popular is of the time it is while they are on the go. The move, but most popular is the majority of the participants confess to listening to radio while doing a sport or when they want to have a rest away from the colorful bombardment of the television. This is very hopeful for people like me, who grew up with the radio and are still listening and doing radio.

Advert breaks and the stations’ self-promotional jingles. They are interested in sports but only as a part of an information program and not as a whole sport program.

The truth is that radio is romantic and you have the sense of participation in the events. After all, it is much easier to call a radio show and ask for a song and take part in a conversation than doing the same with any other kind of media.

Coming now to the adverts, it seems that this is an issue in all the media, often people complain about the adverts and the stations’ self-promotional jingles. They are interested in sports but only as a part of an information program and not as a whole sport program.

The Internet certainly gave a sense of freedom to the radio to such extent that radio stations are able to broadcast online another number of stations and program. On the other hand, it is more romantic to make a radio show and nothing can replace the feeling of at least for the people like us who are involved.

The longest traffic jam I’ve ever seen

CountrySide VS the City

Right now I’m traveling through some forests returning to the city from a weekend at my parents’ house in Corfu island and I’m thinking “Why on earth am I leaving this heaven?” and to go where? To the city??

It’s more of a philosophical dilemma actually since I already know the answer to this question, I can’t study there! The local university doesn’t support my subject and I couldn’t possibly make the same “business connections” there. However I can’t stop thinking about this... What is this special thing big cities have that make us... live there?

It can’t be the small distances there aren’t any! It can’t be the clean natural environment, there is no such thing in a city! It can’t be the safe and secure streets, there aren’t any, and it definitely isn’t the quality surrounding a child requires to grow up!

So why do we insist on living in such a place? Employment, entertainment and fast and easy access to quality medical care are a few things that come to my mind instantly. The opportunities are endless in a city...

Oh who am I joking? I began writing this piece in order to make a convincing argument on why it would be cool to move to the countryside but I’m not even able to convince myself... I like it here! Sometimes it feels really “cold” and unwelcoming but I still like it!
Sports

Cheerleaders are athletes

By Asa Butcher

Mention cheerleading and the Hollywood image of dim-witted beautiful blonde girls in short skirts comes to mind. Other common beliefs are that cheerleaders are not real athletes and the sport is only for girls. Ovi magazine wanted to know how true these stereotypes are and what is the deal with cheerleading, so we met Marie Jenkinson, a ‘cheer grandma’, who is ready to set the record straight.

“Ultimately, there can be truth in any stereotype, but overwhelmingly the stereotype is inaccurate,” begins Marie, 26, “However, it can be quite harmful, people never consider that most cheerleaders are children, who go to school, participate in other sports or activities, and are fearless athletes. Don’t believe those 1980’s movies.”

In high school, Marie hung out with skateboarders, played football and wore baggy trousers, “I didn’t sleep around and I went to university to study architecture; cheerleading came second - that’s not to say I don’t have my ditsy girlish moments though.” Marie has been cheerleading competitively since the age of ten and she cheered for the UIC Flames during university.

Today, Marie is working with Cheer Ltd. in the USA as an instructor and competitions judge, and she is a judge’s instructor. In addition to that, she is a head instructor for Future Cheer in the UK and coaches the King’s College Cheer Society in London. Proper training is essential in cheerleading, especially during ‘stunting’, which involves one or more persons holding or tossing another cheerleader in the air and is one of the most dangerous aspects of the sport.

“Many sports physicians rate cheerleading more dangerous than American Football and cheerleaders suffer from wear and tear injuries similar to those of gymnasts and runners,” explains Marie, “The most common injuries are bruises from colliding with another person, but sometimes there are sprains, broken bones and sometimes there are fatalities. In August 2005, Ashley Burns, a 14-year-old cheerleader, died after her spleen was damaged after she was caught across her stomach, instead of her back, when she did not complete a rotation during a dismount. ‘Ashley’s death was tragic but was accepted as a “complete fluke” by both cheerleading safety experts and medical experts. The response to this tragedy was handled well by acknowledging safety statistics of the sport and industry expert opinions. Banning stunts or stunting altogether (like the state of Nebraska) would have been a damaging blow to the sport.’

The physical costs are evident, but what are the financial costs of becoming a cheerleader? “Brand new uniforms may cost around $100 each, but they are usually owned by the team and are used for as long as possible. Cheer shoes will cost about $50, body suit (worn under the uniform) $15 each, bloomers (these cover your underwear) $10 each,” lists Marie. “There are entrance fees for competitions and camps, about $25 per person per event, and there are other costs, such as private gymnastic instruction and competitive programmes are more costly because they involve more competitions and intensive training.”

Developing the sport would allow the athletes to develop their physical talents safely and more creatively than ever before, but to do this the sport needs coaches who are usually trained in cheerleading. “This will make the biggest impact on the sport because people will learn the right techniques from the start. Over the past two years the major players in the cheerleading industry came together to standardise the rule systems and also set a standard for coaches’ training that is recognised by insurance companies.”

“It would be great if cheerleading could be an Olympic sport, but because there are so many age groups that participate, it would be difficult to decide who could qualify and who couldn’t. Olympic cheerleading is still many years away as it is still developing around the world. The closest thing right now is the Cheerleading Worlds in Orlando, where you’ll find teams from all over

All over includes the UK and even Finland, who seem to really have it together when it comes to cheerleading, in Marie’s opinion. “Most Finnish teams cheer in English and their style is very similar to All-Star cheerleading in the US, which allows more difficulty in stunting than scholastic teams. The UK is developing this style very quickly but was using the US’s scholastic rules up until last year.”

“The Finnish squads have a sense of team unity and discipline that I haven’t really seen in the UK, but it is prominent in the US. Culturally, the northern states in the US (cheerleading was born in Minnesota) are very Scandinavian, so the concepts of cheerleading may lend themselves more to Finland than the UK. However, like the UK, the teams are not affiliated with schools, like most in the US, are much less, but are catching up. Some of the best cheerleaders I have ever seen are guys,” notes Marie, putting an end to another of the stereotypes.

www.futurecheer.net
www.cheerld.com
Fangs for nothing

By Asa Butcher

Dracula (1931)
Directed by Tod Browning

Over the last few issues of Ovi, I have been reviewing some of Universal’s monster classics and it has been a pleasant experience. I take into account the fact that these movies are over sixty years old and the audiences expected something different compared to today’s cinemagoers, but after watching ‘Dracula’ I realised that finally one of them had bored me rigid.

Perhaps my initial reaction to the film was too harsh, so I decided to wait a day before writing this and see if my feelings changed. After sleeping on it, I began to remember some of the positive and comedic moments from the film, even though the feeling of disappointment remained.

75 years is a substantial age for a movie; the lame special effects, such as the bats flapping about on wire and the armadillos running around a castle in Transylvania, are forgivable, but the performances by a couple of the main actors is not. Here I’ll write something that will upset many people: Bela Lugosi was terrible as Dracula.

Yeah, I know that Lugosi is the definitive Dracula, he is synonymous with the character and his performance is the benchmark, but that doesn’t make him good. He was as wooden as a coffin, his lines were delivered with splinters and his mesmerising stare just wasn’t scary. Once again, this has nothing to do with the period because some of the other actors are great, plus ‘Grand Hotel’ was released the following year and features some of the best performances of that era.

Lugosi had come straight from portraying Dracula on stage and naturally brought his melodramatic persona with him. We can forgive him the poor delivery of his dialogue because he had learnt his lines phonetically, but he was one of those unfortunate actors caught between the stage and the change from silent movies to talkies. Strangely, I also felt some pity for Lugosi, after learning about his future heroin addiction from ‘Ed Wood’ and the sad fact that he was typecast from this movie on.

Dracula does have its positive moments, such as the atmospheric sets, imposing scenery and mysterious cinematography, plus three of the other actors are fantastic. The first is Edward Van Sloan playing Prof. Abraham Van Helsing, who strongly resembles Max von Sydow and is believable as the strong-willed scientist. The next is Dwight Frye who plays the multifaceted Renfield, who is bitten by Dracula and become an insect-eating madman; his insanity scenes are far more chilling than anything Lugosi has to offer.

My favourite character has to be Martin played by Charles K. Gerhardt. The character is one of the wardens/foolies at the sanatorium, but he has some of the funniest moments and lines in the film. At one point, he is walking in the grounds of the sanatorium with a shotgun randomly shooting at bats and later exclaims: “Strike me down dead, doctor! He’s got me goin’! Now he’s gone and twisted them bars as if they was cheese!” Classic stuff.

Watching the first of three universal Dracula films was an experience, especially seeing all the iconography now closely associated with vampires, although it was strange not to see any fangs or bite marks throughout the whole film. Over the opening credits, it was obvious where the inspiration for the future Batman logo was found and I have discovered that the music from Act 2 of Swan Lake is quite irritating.

I would be amiss if my review failed to mock the highly irritating character of John Harker, who is the fiancé of Mina - a girl who speaks like this: “And just as I was commencing to get drowsy…” The pair are well suited and provide the comic climax to the film as they ascend the sweeping staircase to safety…forgetting that only moments earlier the door at the top is securely locked.

I understand now why David Manners, the man who played John Harker, never watched Dracula despite living for 67 years after the film was released.
Forget Sir Andrew Lloyd Webber, Lon Chaney or the dozens of other interpretations, let’s go straight back to the original literary source — Gaston Leroux. The Phantom of the Opera, 1910 (Le Fantôme de l’Opéra in France)

By Asa Butcher

The Phantom of the Opera is a beautiful book that cleverly plays with your emotions. Throughout the majority of the book, the reader hates the Opera Ghost; he is portrayed as a cold-blooded ruthless killer and blackmailer, but, by the conclusion, you feel a sympathy that you never knew could exist for an individual such as O.G.

True or not, The Phantom of the Opera is a fantastic story that will keep you reading. Gaston Leroux has a talent that few writers possess; his ability to mix a great story with a cellar. Ah, yes, we must needs mention the cellars below the Opera Garnier in Paris.

Gaston Louis Alfred Leroux was a French journalist, detective and novelist who created the evil genius called Erik, also known as the Opera Ghost, or O.G. to his tormented acquaintances. Leroux’s famous story is written as a personal investigation into the strange events that had occurred at the opera house culminating in the disappearance of a beautiful soprano protégé named Christine Daaé.

Writing the story through a mixture of first-person narratives and research from interviews leaves you with the feeling that it is a true story, but you must keep reminding yourself that it is a fictional story. There are ‘Phanton Phans’ that believe there is some element of truth, but these facts are often dismissed as either urban legend or fiction.

One of my favourite characters was Raoul, the Vicomte de Chagny. The gentle way he describes the confinements of the Opera Ghost, the torture chamber, and his love for Christine is painful and sad.

Two chapters stood out in my mind as being some of the best writing I have had the chance to experience. Describing one would spoil the story for you, while the other has Christine Daaé describing her relationship with Erik to her childhood boyfriend Raoul, the Vicomte de Chagny. The gentle way she describes the confinements, terror, anger and pity that she felt with a cellar. Ah, yes, we must needs pity the Opera ghost.

Frequency was a film that came free with my DVD player and it took quite some time before my wife and I sat down and watched it - the folks we were! Time travel is one of my favourite movie genres and this film is now in my Top 5 thanks to an enthralling plotline and two great performances by Dennis Quaid and Jim Caviezel.

Due to a rare intensity of the aurora borealis, Frank Sullivan, a New York City fireman (Quaid), is able to chat to his son John (Caviezel) thirty years in the future via a short-wave radio. John warns his father of the fire in which he died the next day, but history tragically changes after saving his father’s life. Across three decades they must work together to stop the murder of his mother and several other women.

Initially I was dubious about the believability behind the film, but the director subtly brings realism to events through both the actors’ reactions and background news broadcasts discussing the atmospheric phenomenon. Both John and Frank disbelieve what is going on, which reassures the viewer that the characters are normal people and the tension of the forewarned fire is tripled.

The scenes between John and Frank are emotionally charged, especially their first proper conversation chatting about life and baseball. Dennis Quaid is a great actor whom is often forgotten for his roles in the 80s, but you can see why he is still getting roles. He dominates the screen from the very first scene, which involves a dramatic tanker crash and rescue, to the exciting finale. Jim Caviezel also does an outstanding job as the emotionally scarred son, who has tried to carry on with his life as a New York homicide detective.

The film is fast-paced, the plot twists and turns, and some of the best moments come while events from the past begin to alter the present. I loved the scene when Quaid burns a message into the disk in 1969 and it magically appears in 1999, plus many others that I won’t spoil for you here.

Frequency is the perfect thriller for both guys and girls, and is definitely one for those who love the time travel genre and the work of Dennis Quaid. Check it out…
Slobodan Milošević died.

There is a suspicion that after a light dinner with Croatian light chicken he later showed the symptoms of some kind of flu.

**********

Is Iraq heading for a civil war?

Is the sequel of “Good morning Vietnam” going to be called “Good night Baghdad”?

**********

My team is second twelve points behind the first.

Hope dies last. Mine died last season!

**********

Silvio Berlusconi stepped out of a televised interview complaining that they weren’t letting him speak and express himself.

Why didn’t they? They want him to lose, don’t they? One hour of him expressing himself should be enough to lose any elections.

**********

Thinking of it there is only one person who would be able to cope with Berlusconi for one hour on television. Guess who!!!

George W. Bush!!! The same brain waves!

**********

Correction, the same waves … no brains!!!

**********

Schumi came second in the F1 grand prix in Bahrain but the German newspapers call him the big winner.

“Just don’t remind them of the war” John Cleese from the series Fawlty Towers.

**********

What’s the sequel to “Good night Baghdad”?

“The Camel Hill” and then “Iran, here I come”

**********

If you don’t like the Bad Boys radio show you can always turn your radio off!!!

**********

The last Ovi magazine was…sexy, especially the cover!

By the way, the two girls are not sisters and the man in the background is NOT Asa or Thanos!

**********

Just tune your radio to the Ovi Bad Boys, your PC is good as well since you can download the shows!!!

--------------------