This was my hardest editorial ever to write for Ovi magazine.

During the last two years of preparing Ovi magazine and putting it online, creating new sections, changing the layout and facing a series of problems, we had one thing that really made us proud: the positive reaction from everybody who read it and the positive reaction from everybody who understood our aims and philosophy.

Naturally, we had some critics, although most was just constructive criticism that we took seriously; happily there was nothing like hate mails. Oh yes, we did have one small problem with somebody who saw us as competition. He believes that he is the only one with the right to have opinion, including our personal choices, but his actions were small and bitter just like his size and character.

In two years and 14 issues we established Ovi magazine (‘Ovi lehti’ in Finnish) as one of the top magazines in Finland and were proud to see it ranking close to other international online magazines. Ovi, our name and logo, is a Finnish word that means ‘door’ and we used it to symbolize that Ovi magazine was our door to freely express ourselves and our talents. On this journey we found many friends who began as guest writers and gradually became part of the Ovi magazine; friends from all around the world, friends that carry the identification of Ovi magazine.

We could have easily used ‘Ovi lehti’ or ‘Ovi uutiset’ - Finnish words that translate into Ovi magazine and Ovi news respectfully. We decided to call it ‘Ovi magazine’ for only one reason: what we had to say is universal and not local. We didn’t want to be the immigrant’s or the refugees’ magazine in Finland because there are other magazines for this role. We are a political, cultural magazine in English based in Finland. Our readers are from around the world, including foreigners who live in Finland and Finns. We don’t separate them, we don’t care; we leave this role for other degrees magazines.

Ovi magazine used the Finnish word ‘Ovi’ to honor the country in which we live and we didn’t use the words ‘lehti’, ‘uutiset’ or ‘sanomat’ to maintain our international character. However, a few weeks ago, somebody announced the creation of a free monthly magazine with the name Ovi. Here I would like to thank the people who sent us mails and the ones who called to tell us the news.

Using the same name as a magazine with an established reputation - one that has successfully existed for one and half years - consists of a crime. Not just a crime that can be resolved in a court, but a far more serious crime of an ethical nature. It’s unethical to create anything using the success of somebody else and it doesn’t matter if you call it ‘magazine Ovi’, ‘Ovi lehti’, ‘oviuutiset’, ‘ovi’, ‘lehti Ovi’, ‘lehtiovi’ or ‘Ovi uutiset’, it is just the same. You have committed an unethical crime.

How odd that this issue has the theme ‘boundaries’, since ethics has always been the strongest of boundaries. The boundaries that no Ovi, Ovi lehti, oviuutiset, lehti Ovi, lehtiovi or Ovi uutiset can ever cross. Ovi magazine is the one and only, it is the one you just found now.

In our first contact with the company in question, we got the angry reaction, “We checked the internet and didn’t find anything!” My reaction was, “You must be joking!” It doesn’t matter what word you Google (Ovi magazine, magazine Ovi, Ovi lehti, oviehti, oviuutiset, lehti Ovi, lehtiovi or Ovi), the Ovi magazine is one of the first three choices every time.

Since the first moment we heard about it we put an announcement in our forum and our blog network. You must read it and put it on your sites and blogs to remind them that you can not create a magazine or anything that depends on a copycat crime, especially an ethical crime. Remind them that Ovi magazine, magazine Ovi, Ovi lehti, oviehti, oviuutiset, lehti Ovi, lehtiovi or Ovi is always known as the Ovi magazine.

Thank you all for your support, I’m sorry if I have been too lengthy concerning this imitation news, but I suppose you all understand the reasons.

Enjoy issue fourteen

Thanos Kalamidas
Charles Caleb Colton was an eccentric 19th century English cleric, writer and collector, but he is best known for coining the phrase: “Imitation is the sincerest of flattery.” This has been quoted at us a number of times over the past week in reference to the staggering news that a new free magazine in Finland is going to use the name Ovi.

Our initial reaction was one of bemusement, but the realisation of somebody capitalising upon a reputation that Thanos and I have built over the last 15 issues and sixteen months. In our line of work the best personal tool we have is our reputation, whether people enjoy our magazine or not they know who we are and what we do, and we hope they respect us for dedication to this non-profit project.

Therefore, the greatest fear we have is to lose this fragile ingredient of Ovi magazine with the arrival of a magazine that will be hawking its unoriginal name to advertisers hoping to get revenue. The Irish novelist George A. Moore once said, “Taking something from one man and making it worse is plagiarism” and this sums up our fears.

If it is hard for you to understand our fuss over this latest development then you have never nurtured, toiled or bled into a project from its inception. Ovi is our child; the name we have given to our hopes and dreams, so to see it snatched away by people who show our sixteen-month project no respect hurts deeply.

“You should feel flattered that somebody has used your name,” enthused one well-meaning person to us, but we believe that influence is only a polite term for plagiarism. There are thousands of names out there to be taken, but they struck upon the word ‘Ovi’ through some miracle of a coincidence.

We wanted to clarify to all our readers that this new magazine has nothing to do with us and we will continue to be a non-profit magazine for as long as we see fit. The next issue of Ovi carries the theme ‘Copycats’, so I am sure you will read more then.

On a brighter note, we have issue fifteen and ‘Boundaries’ completed for your enjoyment and the pages are packed full of original material by our faithful team of writers. Jan Sand, Tony Butcher, Mark Hayton, Ed Dutton, Theo Versten and Giorgos Vrachliotis are all here, plus we welcome back Lee Thorkhill and Christophe Berthoud after a short break.

Ovi warmly greets two new members, Rob Jenkinson and Matti Mc-Cambridge. Rob will be writing a new column entitled ‘Letter from the USA’ and Matti has signalled his arrival with a deuce of interesting iKritics. Naturally, Thanos has pushed his keyboard to the outer limits and has managed to write about almost every country on the globe, with a few comments on Finland and Iran.

Take your time to explore the full contents of our magazine and maybe you’ll find something that you want to copy.

Asa
Political boundaries
By Thanos Kalamidas

The latest event from Greece makes me wonder how far boundaries can go. The socialist part chose a Muslim woman as a candidate for the municipality elections. The woman was born in Greece, has Greek parents and she comes from an area in northern Greece where there is a strong Muslim minority.

You would imagine that the first question that she would have to face as a candidate would be what her plans for the area that has a lot of needs. That’s the logical thing to happen, but she has had to deal with another series of questions that all centered on her Muslim religion and most of all if she has or hasn’t connections with Turkey.

You see that was the issue. It didn’t really matter if she was a Muslim. After all, there are thousands of Muslim immigrants in Greece, active and productive from nearly everywhere. There are Kurds, Pakistanis and from nearly every single Muslim African and Asian country.

Without going into historical details, less than a century ago both Greece and Turkey had been nearly led to a doom with peace the only solution, so as a guarantee to that peace they made a population exchange in the sense that people from both sides during the centuries had crossed the borders. Both countries found themselves with some thousands of the other country’s ethnic minority.

During the last century the Greek minority in Turkey decreased from some thousands to a few hundred, but this is not the right place to explain how that happened. There are history books even films to explain. From the other side, the Muslim minority in Greece thrived and increased, so within four generations they had assimilated into Greek society and there was nothing to remind them of their Turkish roots except a few idiots who consider themselves protectors of the Greek values.

Unfortunately, those include members of parliament and the media. The church should not be surprises since there are religious articles on every side, but the surprise was that the church was the one that reacted on every side, but the surprise was that the church was the one that reacted on every side, but the surprise was that the church was the one that reacted on every side, but the surprise was that the church was the one that reacted. The boundaries that all centralized on her Muslim religion and most of all if she has or hasn’t connections with Turkey.

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**Share your bed**

By Asa Butcher

Last month a coroner in the UK spoke out against the so-called ‘dangers’ of sharing your bed with your baby claiming that 300 babies die every year. Mr Roger Whittaker, the coroner in question, has only seen 12 accidental smothering cases in the past two years and is criticising the Royal College of Midwives for saying that there are some benefits to babies sharing a bed with mothers.

Sharing a bed with your baby is only dangerous if you have been drinking, are on medication or are extremely tired; otherwise, the practice is perfectly natural. Nature is the keyword here because the majority of mammals sleep with their babies after they are born and it is common practice across Africa and Asia to share a bed with your baby. The thought of putting your child to sleep in a separate room is an alien concept on both those continents.

Now we have to listen to coroners becoming self-proclaimed baby experts casually dismissing what science is proving and veterans parents know. How many babies stick curious fingers into power sockets, how many drink bleach, how many know. How many babies stick their hands into their mouths, how many know. How many parents share a bed with their baby by others to openly admit the practice. The act of putting your baby to sleep in a separate room or in a cot stems from convenient parenting, forcing the baby to fit to your needs and not vice-versa.

Hearing parents crow with pride: ‘My baby sleeps in his cot through the night in the other room’, cries, well done. Does the pacifier stop it from crying or are you using the ‘let it cry it out’ method? Dr. Sears, a paediatrician, coined the term “attachment parenting” and is one of the foremost advocates of nurturing your baby according to the way you feel. Picking the baby up won’t make him needy, letting the baby cry it out damages the trust and sharing a bed is one of the most natural things a mother can do.

Sharing a bed with your baby brings an emotional connection between both mum and dad. It means that you share sleep cycles, night-time emotions and a connection that feels like no other. Babies go to sleep better, plus both mother and baby have improved sleep patterns. Breastfeeding is easier, sharing fits in with busy lifestyles and babies thrive, which is something that has been known since 1840.

Mr Whittaker should do some research about the subject before scaremongering new parents who have enough to worry about without that sort of input. If you want to learn more about ‘attachment parenting’ and its benefits, visit: www.d Sears.com

**Super cockroaches**

By Jan Sand

The word “boundary” conjures the concept of limit to a space, or a time or some form of sequestered interaction of participant factors. Abstract boundaries, such as those defined in mathematics, religion and legal matters are normally conceptually rigid and precise (or as precise as careful consideration permits) but the actual universe is of one piece and natural boundaries have, in almost all instances, various degrees of permeability. Even black holes, with their forbidding event horizons, have been noted to permit the escape of energy which, at end, leads to their dissolution.

The wedge and the lever are two basic mechanical machines. The wheel, the block and tackle, the screw and the gear are variations of the original two. But one basic machine which is rarely if ever mentioned is the filter. Since no barrier is ever total (except, perhaps, neglecting the fantasies of Star Trek and Star Wars, the speed of light) most barriers of one kind or another act as filters.

One fascinating characteristic of filters is that they possess a quality of intelligence. Prevailing environmental conditions comprise a barrier which confronts the proliferating randomness of genetic variation and ruthless denies the offspring of those who cannot survive and those who may not.

This barrier to life itself continuously flexes, adjusts and changes depending upon the current conditions on Earth and results in the cornucopia of all the varieties of life which have lived, which live now and which may come in the future.

In recent times mankind has gotten a handle on both ends of this process. Its expert enthusiasm for thoughtlessly tweaking violence on the environment is rapidly changing the natural environmental filter to the point that, if permitted to continue, may filter out humanity altogether. It becomes a kind of self-solving problem, which is not particularly complimentary to human intellect.

But humanity is also rapidly gaining a hold on the other end of the process. Wherein we may eventually twist our own genetics to be able to survive on a bleak sterile planet filled with choking gases, lethal hard radiation, water generally not potable to either ourselves or the plant life we need to sustain us, while violent weather systems seemingly intent on-bedeviling our existence towards misery and extinction.

By tweaking our genetic makeup which has recently been noted to be almost indistinguishable from that of the chimpanzee and not really all that far from many other forms of life, we should be able to modify ourselves to slip by that ultimate evolutionary barrier into an existence more compatible with the environmental demons we have summoned.

Our best bet, of course, is to turn ourselves into super cockroaches who are super survivors. No demon from Hell could devise a more appropriate punishment for the idiots now in control of humanity’s future, but, after all, I am prejudiced. Nothing could be more delightful, from the cockroach point of view, than the languorous sexy six-legged stroll of the opposite sex.
Where are the ‘wows’?

By Asa Butcher

July 21, 1969: A small family sits in silence around their black and set television set in a town just outside London; it is approaching 0147. The images on the screen are difficult to make out clearly, but the sound is audible. After years of anticipation everybody is in awe of what is unravelling before them, the tension fills the room as we watch in amazement. 'Houston, Tranquillity Base here. The Eagle has landed.'

Every day we hear of another advance in technology in all areas of life, we are informed of another disease being tamed, none of makes us stop what we are doing and say, ‘wow’. The speed of information is stopping us from absorbing these monumental breakthroughs leaving us apathetic to it all. Talk of cloning and cures for AIDS leaves us thinking ‘it’s about time’ and ‘why did it take so long?’

Global warming, sweatshops, globalisation and more have been accepted by the majority because if governments really wanted to instigate change then they would have passed laws immediately. In the wake of the terror attacks on America and London, both countries rapidly invested billions, created new laws designed to combat terrorism and threaten our basic human rights, yet against poverty and deteriorating health systems are prevalent in both these countries and nothing significant has ever happened.

We have resigned ourselves to being helpless, toothless in the face of government and globalisation. McDonalds has spread across the globe, Bill Gates does monopolise the computer industry, what can we do about it and why should we care anyway? The world is hardening our cynicism, eroding our trust and numbing our disappointment, plus we are suffering from the mindset: it’s not my problem.

The past was no better, thanks to distorted nostalgia people can remember the past as they wanted it to be and the danger with that is some try to replicate the past. Elvis Presley may have been the king in the ‘70s, but my generation are offered the impersonators, and Live Aid was a moment in time, while Live 8 was a poor diluted copy.

‘What is the point?’ many of us ask and this apathy is running through all aspects of our life. A recent environmental report announced that a quarter of the world’s plant and vertebrate animal species will face extinction by 2050, but most of us reply, ‘And?’ The Green Party seems to have given up all hope, they collected signatures in a letter addressing fellow MPs, which isn’t much when campaigning against a fifth nuclear power plant in the year marking the twentieth anniversary of Chernobyl.

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Heroes become villains, like Michael Jackson, and villains become heroes, like New Labour in Britain; history is turned on its head as the past is idealised, becoming mythical in nature. Margaret Thatcher is now Tony Blair, Richard Nixon is now George W. Bush, which shows that we do not learn from the past forever condemned to repeat our mistakes.

Too young to remember the Royal Wedding of Charles and Diana, old enough to watch her funeral; missed man on the moon, but saw the space shuttle Challenger explode; Concorde is retired and hundreds have climbed Mount Everest; what is left to amaze, except death? Catastrophes always capture our attention with the World Trade Center attacks, Hurricane Katrina and the Indian Ocean Earthquake, but we feel like masochist voyeurs watching them on our plasma TV screens from the comfort and safety of our living rooms.

The magnitude of natural phenomena, such as the Northern Lights and the Grand Canyon, are vastly reduced after appearing in the media countless times that when we actually go we already have an imagined experience; the moment is watered down and a disappointment. On the other hand, we have areas of natural beauty that are in danger of vanishing forever, such as the Australian Coral Reef, so huge numbers of tourists visiting; they vanish thereby contributing more to the criminal damage against our planet.

Our children may only be able to see an elephant in a history book; soon, they will become legends like the dinosaurs, but at least they will enjoy the benefits of cloning, two-hour flights from UK to New Zealand, cures for cancer and AIDS, and computers that may finally be as fast as we demand of them. Perhaps they may reach a saturation point and stop, a five-minute respite to realise what the world has achieved and say, ‘wow.’
HoriZones

Athens in the tropical zone
By Thanos Kalamidas

If somebody had asked me a few years ago which is my favorite season in Athens I would have definitely said autumn. I know that most of the Greeks who read this will be shocked and the others who don’t know will start wondering why now; I will explain more after I describe to you what autumn in Athens meant.

Athens in the late-70s still had small colorful houses with the smells of freshly cooked vegetables escaping from the gardens and the aroma of coal from the portable grills mixed with the smell of roasted chestnuts. The rain was soft and welcome after a hot summer and the kids used to play in the streets. I loved walking from my house to the old marble Olympic stadium - not the modern new one. The leaves on the trees had a beautiful shining orange color and at night we used to wear our autumn jackets to go out.

Do you know these old yellowish monochrome old photographs? That’s how I felt while talking about Athens’ autumn, it doesn’t exist any more. Actually nothing exists - no spring, any summer, no autumn and no winter. What exists is a tropical heat from June to September, then four days hot and flood for the rest of the months. The rhinoceros is an endangered species, well autumn and spring will be another one in danger of extinction. I’m afraid that our kids will talk about the dodo like the middle of Sahara, is not far to it.

The same report says that the tropical zones have expanded to nearly two degrees both sides - that equals to 225 kilometers. This explains the gradual decrease of rains in South America and the Mediterranean Sea, plus the surrounding countries. According to the same American scientists, the day the tropical zones will start transforming major cities into dead cities, like the middle of Sahara, is not far away.

If that was not enough to make us seriously worry, the international organization for the protection of tropical forest in Mexico reported that if the deforestation of tropical forests continues at the same speed it is a case of 50 years until we will not have tropical forests any more.

Think of it, no forest means no life! These magic documentaries we used to watch when we were kids making us proud of the paradise in which we live is going to become a burning hell.

Finally, I still cannot believe that the Finnish Green Party decided to make certain compromises for the “nation’s good” and the need for energy, and in exchange for the promise to have a minister from the Green Party. As sad as it sounds, the worst enemy of the environment and the environmental movement in Finland is quickly becoming the Green Party.

Environmental pettiness
By Thanos Kalamidas

When the green movement - I’m very careful to use the word ‘movement’ and not ‘party’ - established itself on the German political horizon back in the ’70s, with Petra Kelly, it become a global environmental movement with political influence and one of the main slogans was “nuclear power, no thank you!” I’m sure a lot of you have seen the small yellow badges decorating the denim jackets of teenagers nowadays.

Petra Kelly and two hundred people around her realized that the environmental movement had started to have a voice and more people were watching, so it was time to interfere in the political system actively. This happened far before the green movement became a party that dreams of ministries and starting middle-class revolutionaries from the sofa in front of their flat screen TV. Sadly the romantic end came too early with the tragic murder of Petra Kelly.

I know that in nearly every issue of Ovi magazine, one way or another, I return to the subject of the new nuclear plant in Finland, but somehow I cannot resist. The funny thing is that the nuclear plant has become a second issue in front of the immaturely and inconsiderate behavior of the Green Party and its members.

The article I wrote in the last issue of Ovi magazine (“Green Party, R.I.P.”) became a theme in a few conversations I had with Finnish friends and their attitude towards what calls itself the Green Party in Finland. My friends are not supporters or voters of the Green Party, but they are considered progressional and environmentally aware, yet they would never vote for the Green Party.

When you ask a member what they are doing about the landmines in Finland the answer is that this is a tradition. Like the folklore dances and dresses, Finns see landmines as a tradition.

To be an immigrant is a good thing; it doesn’t matter if you are as environmentally aware as George W. Bush or you just love flowers, this doesn’t make you Green, especially when at the same time you are prejudice to anything that doesn’t fit your measures and personal ambitions.

Green doesn’t mean I say ‘I am green’, but everything you do contradicts every single principal of the green movement. The people who run this party have to understand that the work is collective, the decisions are collective and that quantity is not necessary quality. The number of votes that bring the ministry chair closer just makes the distance to the environment bigger.

Amazing as it sounds, the Finnish Green Party seems to make all the mistakes there are in the book. Nepotism, believe it or not there are whole families as candidates with the bright example of three sisters
Fat boundaries
By Thanos Kalamidas

Recently my biggest personal boundary has been my weight. Most of my life I’ve been somehow normal, which means around 90 kilos - being 183cms tall means the occasional ups and downs. But then something like ten years ago, thanks to a therapy I did, I was told that my metabolism changed from normal to what my mirror now tells me; I was overweight or, in simple English, fat.

In the beginning I could blame my therapy but later I found other intellectual excuses, like “when is the due day?” you don’t laugh any more, you just hope there is some therapy but later I found other in a conversation, an almost vertical moment that my metabolism changed from normal to what my mirror now tells me; I was overweight or, in simple English, fat.

Airplanes, trains and buses suddenly become a nightmare because you discover that they are designed for anorexic fashion models and not for you. There is the practical side: you can put your drink on your belly since there is no way to unfold the portable table. Most of all, when you step into a restaurant they are happy because here comes somebody who appreciates food. Sadly, when you see the size of the beef they serve, you become unhappy but who cares?

Being 183cms, plus the weight that I carefully avoid putting on, makes nearly all private cars impossible - uncomfortable - none are designed for horizontally-challenged people! By the way I never learned what is the correct way to call overweight people, fat?

In a conversation, an almost vertically-challenged individual (a case of a couple centimeters), with a ‘fantastic’ background, referred to me as fat, among other nice things, but for him it was an insult. In his multicultural rarely-working-brain calling somebody ‘fat’ was not prejudice, but within the limits of racism.

So who put these boundaries around me? Why, when they refer to me, do they, “the fat guy”? How has the weight of my stomach suddenly outweighing my personality? Why am I to blame for something I could never have brought the portable table. Most of all, when you step into a restaurant they are happy because here comes somebody who appreciates food. Sadly, when you see the size of the beef they serve, you become unhappy but who cares?

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You see, everybody thinks of ways to be nice to others and emphasize to them that they are not handicapped, just different, but with overweight people it is totally different, they are fat, they are handicapped! Apparently they are responsible for their handicap.

Surveys come every so often talking about the increasing number of overweight people and it comes as a disadvantage to our civilization. Oddly enough nobody has ever asked me if I feel nice being fat. They take it for credit that I caused it and I enjoy it and I don’t do anything else other than eating all day. It is funny seeing all that announced on television from somebody bigger than me.

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I’m one of these lucky people who have a lot of friends, very close friends that I can share everything and they know that they can share everything with me - trying to explain that is difficult. First of all because most see my friendships as they are now and how close they have become now, not what they have gone through all these years.

My four closest friends live in Greece, but this has nothing to do with my origins, since another three live in the UK, one in Belgium, one in Japan and two in USA and one in Mexico, plus some new friends in Finland where I live now. The friendships with some of them go back decades and with some others years. Some of them…well, I haven’t met for years and some, however weird it sounds, I have never met face to face, yet I consider them as close friends.

I think the first and the best boundary you have to cross in a friendship is acceptance that your friends cannot be like you. With that I don’t mean the possibility of having a gay friend while being a straight man. I think that was the easiest boundary I had to cross. You see that is part of your universal acceptance and in accepting that all are equal, but having a friend who likes to impress constantly, a friend who can be occasionally jealous, this is another boundary.

I think that crossing the boundaries in a friendship means to accept your friends with their weaknesses, even if some of them are bothering you. You just have to accept them in exchange of all the other good things their friendship can give you.

Crossing boundaries in a friendship is not something that happens from one day to another. Actually, you are building for years and then a small thing is what changes everything. Funny as it might sound I have one belief: If I’m in a bad situation, ill and everything else, and I go out on the street and ask for help, I’m sure tens of people will run to help despite all the theories about life in urban areas. However, if I win the lottery and go outside celebrating I’m sure half of the people will try to kill me. Despite what most of the people believe I think that you can see who your real friends are in a happy moment not sad.

An exchange of mails with a friend became the reason for me to start thinking about boundaries in friendship and how you build a friendship. Among others, how many boundaries do you have to cross to make a friendship work?

I have always believed that to build a friendship is more difficult than to build a love/sexual relationship. In a romantic or love/sex relationship there is a strong chemistry that blinds you, while in a friendship this chemistry works in a different way and most of the time doesn’t blind you.

Thinking of it, I’m sure my friends had to cross a lot of boundaries regarding me. I mean really a lot and you see this is a key point, to be your real self with your friends and give them a chance.

So, the only thing I can do with this text is…thank them all for being my friends!
Criticizing what the president of a country says is always something you think twice about, since by principal the
president is not the representative of a party but the representative of a whole nation. In most democratic states the
president is elected from the parliament and demands the agreement of two-thirds of the members. That means
that the major parties have to agree and put aside their petty political agendas and theoretical differences and agree
on one persona accepted from the republic.

Tarja Halonen was somehow trying to respond to comments made by members of the Centre Party suggesting
that the new EU constitution would reduce the president’s involvement in EU meetings and affairs, which is what changed everything. Tarja Halonen tried to respond exactly to what a president of a country avoids, petty politics.

The EU demands certain changes to the country-member’s constitution but that has mainly to do with jus-
tice and transparency, and it mainly guarantees that all the states members will guarantee equality, justice for all and a state that takes care of its citizens, especially since some states didn’t have laws that protect basic rights. The role of the president is not something negot-
iable with the EU. It’s something that has to do with internal policy of the country and exactly as that is pro-
tected from the EU constitution.

If a member state wants to be represented in the EU decision councils from their president that has nothing to
do with the EU. Nobody from the EU will ever sug-
gest to France to stop being represented by President Jacques Chirac and start being represented by Domin-
ique de Villepin. This is unthinkable even to say it.

If the Centre Party from the other side wants to reduce President Halonen’s power and since they are the party
that governs they can ask Prime Minister Vanhanen to ask for a change in the Finnish constitution and not use
the EU constitution as a Trojan horse.

As I have said before in other lengthy articles, Finland must change the constitution if for no other reason but
to escape from the Cold War background. Part of it might be to reduce the president’s power and involve-
ment in every day politics but it will definitely em-
power the dignity that is necessary for the position and avoid mistakes like that.
Free Aung San Suu Kyi
By Thanos Kalamidas

After having personal experience with what ‘junta’ means, I am pretty sensitive when it comes to dictatorships or any kind of militaristic regimes. I include states like Pakistan and Iran, even though Iran suffers a theocratic dictatorship which makes it even worse; countries where the army is hiding behind puppet politicians like in some South American or African countries and countries like Turkey where the army hasn’t realized that they should stay in their barracks with their mouths shut, instead of beholding the democratic future of the country.

However, things seem to get worse in another country, Burma. The military rulers of the country announced their decision to extend the house arrest of the democratic opposition leader Mrs. Aung San Suu Kyi. Hopes were even from the UN that the period of expiration of her house arrest would lead to her freedom and a series of changes. It was in vain!

Oddly enough, even the UN Secretary General Kofi Annan appealed to the leaders of Burma’s military junta, especially to its president, another general, Pervez Musharraf? The man came to power in Pakistan, after a military coup, imprisoning and killing any political opposition to his ego. But you see, he is an ‘ally’ in the war against terror even though his country is host to the Taliban and any other radical Muslim, it seems being the ‘ally’ gave him holy forgiveness!

What about Iran’s leaders? They made a political mistake by not joining the war against terror because they would have seen how democratic they would have been, an immediate baptism. There they don’t imprison their opposition, they just make it vanish! Send them the last way to Allah!

Weird as it sounds, the awareness of Mrs. Aung San Suu Kyi’s situation and the worry for democracy in Burma has started from the international Music Television channel and the efforts of U2 singer Bono. However strange it sounds, the awareness of Mrs. Aung San Suu Kyi now, give democracy back to the Burmese people and Mrs UN Secretary you don’t need to appeal because you have the power the nations have given to you. Use it for a good reason for once and do it now!

Free Mrs. Aung San Suu Kyi now, give democracy back to the Burmese people and Mrs UN Secretary you don’t need to appeal because you have the power the nations have given to you. Use it for a good reason for once and do it now!

Games over the Aegean Sea
By Thanos Kalamidas

For over thirty years there has been a war on the borders of Europe that nobody wants to admit. For thirty years, generations of Greeks and Turks are waiting for one thing, the day they will wake up and have to run into a war. For thirty years, war games leading to madness and the result of all that is something we saw a few weeks ago over the Aegean Sea.

For thirty years the people of both countries are just losing. There is no winner in this war. Both people are losing their chances for a better tomorrow, investing everything in weaponry and defense systems, into airplanes that each cost the same as both countries spend for primary education. Turkey suffers more than all that. A country with sky high inflation and a society under change with problems in every sector - please I don’t want any mails for Turkey for proof just read the online English version of Turkey’s newspapers or check the international financial organizations.

Much worst, the whole thing is not only spending money and is a barrier in front of the improvement of both countries, but it costs human lives as well. An incident has shown. What happened a few weeks ago had been predicted for a long time now and actually everybody was surprised how it had never happened till now.

When tens of fully armed war planes take off with only seconds warning nearly every hour from both countries and engage in war games and maneuvers over the Aegean Sea it is certain that something will happen one way or another. With the frequency these things happen they have definitely crossed any line in statistics involving air accidents and it is a wonder how nothing has come out yet concerning the pilots’ stress, physical or mental health.

There are differences between the two countries. A few months ago we found that there are differences between Canada and Denmark; there is the Cyprus issue that, to my opinion, is an embarrassment for the international community and the EU, having a part of a member country under occupation, but this is the reason the international community created the international courts.

The cost of human life, any human life is much higher than the national and occasionally chauvinistic pride.

What happened over the Aegean Sea? A Turkish RF-4 spy plane was flying to Crete to photograph the defense system of the Greek island and was accompanied by two Turkish F-16s. The reaction from the Greek defense forces was natural, yet the question lays else where. Why did an ally country, a fellow member of the same alliance NATO and candidate for the EU send a spy plane into an ally’s airspace? Would it be normal if the French did the same with England or Germany? What would have happened if Finland had sent a spy plane over Sweden? What’s the meaning of actions like that?

If Turkey feels threatened or that it has rights that Greece ignores, why didn’t they go to the international court in Hague? If Turkey thinks that they have the right to expand their airspace borders everywhere, especially in the Black Sea, from six miles to ten miles, but then thinks that Greece does not have the same right in Aegean Sea, they can go to the international court in The Hague.

Both countries paid the cost of a few who cannot see clear into the future, but live in the past. As I have said from the beginning, the worst part is the cost of human life. In my opinion, both countries have to do something and soon before something more dramatic happens. Turkey has to stop all these dangerous games and if they feel that Greece is not right they should go to the international court in The Hague. The Greeks should stop complaining to the EU council and the UN, complaints that after thirty years nobody bothers to read anymore, and just go to the international court in The Hague.

Ending I’d like to add something from personal experience. I grew up in the middle of this period with Cyprus very alive in my memories and what happened then, I did my national service in the Greek army, a very tense period that nearly led to another war between Greece and Turkey. Since I was a kid, Turkey and war were combined in my mind and I went through phases to finalize with me saying out loud, “Well, if a war is to happen, let’s do it.” Some will be killed, but at least it will be peace in the end. The whole thing scared me then when I said it and it scares me now I’m writing about it. A solution has to be found here and now, in no way I want my kid to think the same thing, never again.
American stories
By Thanos Kalamidas

Have you seen the film ‘Escape from L.A.’? It’s a John Carpenter film and sequel to ‘Escape from N.Y.’, which has the same style and the same star. In this case, L.A. has been turned into a prison after an earthquake separated the city from the mainland.

After moving the capital from Washington to his home place, the president of the USA looks more like a dictator in the film, sends drug addicts, alcoholics, people who say their opinion, homosexuals, AIDS carriers, red meat eaters, smokers, people who don’t like his face and the list is endless to this island prison. Does this ring a bell?

I have always thought that the American administration was there to defend the rights of every single American - it doesn’t matter if they agreed or not. Actually, I always thought that the American constitution is one of the most inspiring constitutions regarding the protection of individuals’ rights. If you haven’t read it, do it now, you can easily find it online or in libraries.

In this very same country things seem to change in a way that doesn’t exactly respect this constitution. In the beginning it was the abortions case. There are plenty of cases where abortion is not just a moral question. Rape victims, something that the USA is quite familiar, 204,370 were reported during 2003/04 - pay attention, they were reported, nobody knows how many were not reported.

A percent that reaches 40% are underage victims. Just think of it. Do you expect these women to continue a pregnancy if it happens? What happens to these kids will constantly remind them of the most horrific time of their life or do you think a rape is like falling from a chair? Here I brought only one argument. I think the most obvious but there are plenty more to prove that you can not make abortion illegal but it is the individual’s right to decide.

The next step is the commitment of the president to stop gay marriage with his one and only argument that a family consists of a man and a woman. I have gay friends and I assure the American president that they are much nicer couples, more dedicated to each other than most of the heterosexual couples I know. Since when does the expression of love become an issue of law? What’s the next step, making homosexuality illegal? From the minute you accept that all your citizens are equal with equal rights you must accept their differences as well, otherwise you don’t have a country but a computer game.

The American administration refused to vote for the increase of money going to the UN’s office that helps AIDS victims, but I suppose in their little brain they only think homosexuals get AIDS, so what’s the best way to get rid of them, let them die from AIDS. Shocking?

According to UNAIDS, 1.1 million kids are orphans in Zambias because their parents died from AIDS, 90,000 of them are children of HIV positive. George Bush’s vice-president’s daughter is openly gay. In the last American presidential elections 4% of the voters were openly gay, 25% of them supported George W. Bush.

Surround as it sounds, the people who totally agree with George W. Bush are the multitudes in Iran, in Taliban in Afghanistan and Bin Laden! The good news? Obviously senators do read the American constitution and stopped George Bush, so nothing passed and the guys can still consider a family in the USA. The bad news? This little word, “still”, since till the elections I’m sure that George will try again. Please somebody give him the American constitution to read.

Probably that happens due to its connection with the expansion of the Europe which we don’t like it or not. With Finland taking over after Austria from June 1st, things are more interesting. Obviously the poorest citizens with illiteracy problems, minor education and help from the state, help in basic things like health and financial support; these are part of Turkey, which unfortunately is a big one. Don’t forget that Turkey has the population 16 times the population of Finland and is still growing during the period of the Ottoman Empire where polygamy and crimes of honor were a reality.

Then there is the militant Turkey, the ones who make policy each time in the name of protecting the state and can make a militant coup by taking over and imprisoning anybody who has the slightest difference with them. Activating these criteria when the Turkey agrees will give exactly the excuse he needed.

According to a survey conducted in the last few months, all around Europe and mainly in France and Holland - the countries who were the first to declare the ‘no’ vote - the negative answer in percentages has increased. This is not totally connected to the Turkey issue and that is understandable since the expansion of Europe is connected with the future of this union and not only many years ago but also the 2010s which everybody is the president of the EU. Xenophobia has increased in Europe and Muslim-phobia as well, especially after 9-11 that became a turning point for the whole western world. We should never connect this with the negative attitude to Turkey’s membership. Actually by doing that the only thing we manage is to give more excuses to Turkey to avoid a candidate membership brought and they can not fulfill for different reasons.

The series of criteria established for every candidate country in the EU is not something we should look at narrowly. These criteria should be a base for every single country in the world, probably should be criteria for the international community. Has anybody any objection that the aim of the international community should be a world with states respecting human rights, giving equal opportunities and transparency?

Turkey lives in three different contexts simultaneously. One is the poorest citizens with illiteracy problems, minor education and help from the state, help in basic things like health and financial support; these are part of Turkey, which unfortunately is a big one. Don’t forget that Turkey has the population 16 times the population of Finland and is still growing during the period of the Ottoman Empire where polygamy and crimes of honor were a reality.

Then there is the militant Turkey, the ones who make policy each time in the name of protecting the state and can make a militant coup by taking over and imprisoning anybody who has the slightest difference with them. Activating these criteria when the Turkey agrees will give exactly the excuse he needed.

There is the sensitive part for Europe, Turkey’s membership has to be a political decision and not simply: you didn’t pass the test, so you don’t enter. Europe needs to have strong and democratic neighbors. Turkey is at this moment the only Eastern borders. Turkey wants to avoid another general Evropean style dictatorship in Turkey and all that followed. Aside from all the above, Europe and, in general, the west wants Turkey to become a country model for all the other Arab countries and prove that democracy can work even there.

From the other side, Turkey has realized that the way to crises and solution has not worked and from the other side Turkey has the power to veto decisions of the democratically elected government and all that threatens that they will come out of their barracks. If that was not enough, the militants control a big part of nationalistic para military groups leading them often to provocations and illegal actions as a fear a murder. This part, the most powerful of Turkey is living still in the beginnings of the 20th century and Kemal Ataturk’s era.

Finally is Recep Tayyip Erdogan’s Turkey, the prime minister and even though his religious background he is the only hope at the moment for any modernization and democratization in this country. The last years his party was in government a lot of changes have happened in Turkey, not all of them easy and probably most of them only on a superficial level. It is a good beginning. The process is difficult and it will need time, far more than the few months Europe gave to Turkey.

The prime minister is balancing between the demanding, illiberal militants who know that they are going to lose their power if Turkey enters European Union and the Turkish people who see Europe as their only hope for a better tomorrow.

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In the sense that everybody promises them help but in the end prime ministers are just humans and are there for a time of term, depending on the vote of the people and they all need the approval of their people for one more reason: they want to make sure their legacy. It doesn’t matter what Tony Blair says, when the time will come he’s going to tell his British people to vote exactly the same thing he will do when the UK decides to join Euro.

Back to the European Union, in the last meeting the foreign ministers decided to activate another part of the criteria, the one that says that a candidate will be accepted only if the European Union is ready for that. This new part is noticeable because its explanation can be very...flexible. President Jacques Chirac has often assured Prime Minister Erdogan of his support to Turkey and its candidacy but at the bottom it is just politics.

Activating these criteria when the time comes, President Jacques Chirac will express the support of France but because the people of the EU are not ready he will postpone the membership for another five centuries. The new criteria give exactly the excuse he needed.

The Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan must understand that this time works against Turkey. The EU membership could be the excuse but not the target; the target should be the modernization of Turkey and its membership to a better democratic world. Changes must start showing soon; Turkey doesn’t have time, especially since the recognition of Cyprus should have happened already, a good relationship without militancy onwards and as the neighbors should also have already started. And then even the most skeptic citizens of this continent might think again.
I do understand the geographic-political reason that led to a decision like that and I respect them, so long as Turkey will keep its promises into putting aside a militaristic, Pakistan-style state, with the army deciding who can participate in the elections and who can make the foreign policy of the country creating a transparent democracy. The amazing thing about the whole issue is that the hopes of everybody, especially for the Europeans and the Americans who want Turkey a member of the EU, lies in the hands of a religious oriented government.

General Kemal Ataturk was the big reformer of the Turkish state, the man who took a country from the dark Ottoman period and led it into a western style state (going as far to change the written language and using Latin characters). The man was a reformist and was a bright chance for Turkey, but still with today’s values and a militant dictator that uses the army to force a society into a radical change in just a few years. The result was Kemal Ataturk left the army as guardians of his work.

Times have changed but Turkey’s army continues their obligation to their founder by occasionally abusing the power Kemal had given them. They have become a holy institution that nobody can touch, an institution that has the legal powers to make a coup anytime they want and take over the politicians, imprison and manipulate the Turkish society. They even began a genocide of the Armenians a century ago and we can only pray they don’t do the same to Kurds today.

However, the politicians didn’t help either. Most of the government is totally corrupted, accepting and obeying the role of the army becoming puppets with only one aim, to add more money to their bank account. Even the first woman prime minister became a symbol of corruption with a relationship with the Turkish mafia.

When the 21st century came and Turkey had to reform once more, but this time the reform has a catch, they have to accept and live with the mistakes of their past and they have to accept that in the name of democracy that there is another side you can not demolish or imprison. Recep Tayyip Erdogan became the messiah of the new transformation for Turkey having ironically exactly the same dream with Kemal Ataturk and one opposition, the guardians of Ataturk’s heritage, the Turkish army.

The army is missing the reality that the world around them has changed and after 9-11 changes have become faster and more radical, geopolitical statues and balances have changed, even alliances have changed and old enemies have become the closest friends and old friends dangerous enemies. Provocation has been their expertise for a long time, like organizing and using paramilitary gangs as the Gray Wolves and other groups that I mentioned in the last issue of Ovi magazine.

The latest incident was the emergency message to the public from Erdogan that was the latest incident was the emergency message to the public from Erdogan that was an institution that has the legal powers to make a coup anytime they want and take over the politicians, imprison and manipulate the Turkish society. They even began a genocide of the Armenians a century ago and we can only pray they don’t do the same to Kurds today.

In many articles I have written my opinion about Turkey’s candid for membership to the EU. I think Turkey is not a European country and if Turkey has the right to be a candidate in extent the same right comes to countries like Morocco, Israel, Georgia and Armenia. If that happens, the European Union should change its name and become United Nations, which already exist by the way, so there is no reason to have a second version of it.

According to the Shiite traditions, the ruling cast in Iran, Mahdists, al-Mahdi or simpler Mahdi, an Imam who disappeared mysteriously a few hundred years ago is supposed to return one day and bring back safety and peace for the Muslim nation, and then destroy all its enemies. I suppose here we can include, according to the ayatollahs and their puppets, three-quarters of the globe.

Mr. Erdogan’s answer to all that was tough, saying that there is only one aim of all these paramilitary gangs, which is to stop Turkey’s way to democracy, adding louder that all these gangs that are covered behind nationalist values are not going to succeed; on the contrary, people can see now their real faces.

For the good of all of us, but mostly for the best of the Turkish republic, let’s hope that Mr. Erdogan will manage to bring all the necessary reforms and that the army won’t do something desperate like they did just fifteen years ago with an army coup led by General Evren.

According to all these bloggers, Mahdi is coming and when he comes the USA and Israel are going to vanish from the map. The EU will be Muslim and we will all live in peace. I’m sure you think that all this is laughable and you are probably think if it is worth continue to read, since the whole thing sounds like pulp fiction. Well, it is getting better.

Ahmadinejad claims that he communicates with Mahdi. The bloggers don’t make it clear if they communicate through a satellite telephone or with text messages, or even e-mails and Skype, but he does! According to Ahmadinejad’s conversations, they have a ‘private communication channel’ and that does not include Al Jazeera to their great disappointment. Are you on the floor laughing? Wait, more is coming.

According to these bloggers, good old Ahmadinejad is intentionally provoking USA so they will invade Iran and Mahdi will come earlier to save his believers. You see Mahdi is watching CNN and when he will see the green screen and bombs exploding, he will pick up his newest NOKIA, call Ahmadinejad and then, riding his white horse, will attack the Americans.

Please take it seriously. Mr. Ahmadinejad, the joker president of Iran, asked all his ministers, advisers, etc., in the Iranian administration, a.k.a. ‘board of little dictators’, to sign a declaration of commitment and obedience to Mahdi.

While Iran’s mullahs and the west are thinking about the next step after the proposals for Iran’s nuclear program from the EU, an Iranian friend of mine - not the known parasite and informer of the mullahs, he’s not a friend of mine - sent me some information coming from Iranian blogs, supporters of the pathetic president puppet Mr. Mahmoud Ahmadinejad.
Good advice 12 months early
By Tony Butcher

This is my first anniversary of writing for Ovi Magazine. My first article was titled “Sell in May and go away”; it is a stock market adage which has been exercised to the fullest extent in the last thirty one days. All of the major stock markets have given back their gains since the start of the year and commodity markets have retraced from their multi-year highs earlier in the spring.

The FTSE 100 UK market fell 5% in May, the biggest monthly fall since January 2005. Gold is $100 off its highs, Silver and Copper have had large corrections as well, but gold remains above $70 a barrel. Last month I said: “Cruise cruised to around $75 a barrel late in April and this could provide the dampening effect which I still feel is well overdue.” This is a significant part of the story.

The large increase in commodity prices over the last 12 months has seen inflationary pressure starting to build in all the major economies of the world. The United States have pursued a constant tightening of monetary policy for 16 meetings in a row and rates currently stand at 5%. This policy looks set to continue for another month while the US Federal Reserve get a grip on inflationary pressures in America. The recent Fed minutes of their May 10th meeting focused on the uncertainty of how much more tightening was required after the most recent hike.

It is a similar story in Europe as the European Central Bank get set to increase interest rates on the 8th June. There are rumours this move may be a larger 50 basis point hike, which would be more aggressive than the recent 25 b.p. moves. I feel the half point hike would be more likely if the Euro was not showing the strength it is against the dollar.

Some equity friendly news which has been developing over the last few days is the United States warming to talk with Iran regarding their Nuclear Programme. This looked set to become very heated a few months ago, but recent comments from Foreign Secretary Rice have opened the door to negotiations. The world waits to see if Iran will take the olive branch being wafted in their direction.

Just enough time for a quick word on the United Kingdom economy, this has continued to plod along. Interest rates look set to stay unchanged for the time being, although the next move will likely be an increase. There was news out from the treasury which said the government have over paid some tax benefits by as much as £4 billion over the last two years. Imagine the scandal if this had been a FTSE 100 company!
Letter from the USA

By Rob Jenkinson

Let me bring you up to speed:

I’m English and have been living in America, just north of Chicago, Illinois to be exact, for exactly seven weeks (at the time of writing) and am still not allowed to work. Why am I here? Well, my wife is here, we decided it would be good for us to sort out a visa for me and try living here after two and a half years of married life in London.

Despite having a visa, I can’t work until my work permit comes through (basically it’s another $180 and more paperwork on top of the visa I already have), so I’ve come to making my own (cheap) entertainment by getting to know the country and get used to it’s little quirks which I’ll then relay to you, dear reader, every month.

Getting used to living in another country took a while. Anyone who has emigrated will appreciate that the first month is a bit like having severe learning disabilities. In the first week of being here it took me close to 45 minutes to mail a letter, I put my bus ticket in where you’re supposed to stick your dollar notes and almost caused a collosal accident at a stop sign (of which there are way too many in the US). People were treating me like a simpleton, which was more than a shock when I realize that I’m giving a load of abuse to a 35 year old woman with three kids in the car when they finally drive by.

The other trick in product marketing in the US is to simply put “America’s Favorite *insert product here***. Surely there should be a law against this. Practically every product uses this slogan to promote themselves. I know I’d be pissed off and I saw a billboard with “Walmart – Rob Jenkinson’s favorite supermarket”, for one it’s not true. I despise them. They’re part of the reason why there isn’t any town centres in suburban America anymore.

ANYWAY, that’s it for now. I promise to have a more coherent letter next month. For a start I witnessed a real life joy rider crash his car, flip it and then leg it this morning. But I’ll tell you more about it next time.

How’s that for a cliffhanger?

I Spy V

Vertebrae, those 33 pesky little bones that comprise of the spine and allow mammals to walk, run, stroll, meander, bounce and a hundred other tasks that we take for granted until one day we are struck down by back pain and lose them.

One last observation (I promise there’ll be a proper anecdote next time), it seems like if you’ve got a mediocre business, all you have to do to make it work is stick the word “Americana” in the title and it seems to do well. For example, there’s a mattress chain here called “American Mattresses”, are the mattresses in there American made? I sincerely doubt it. In fact I’m going to go in there and if I see one “Made In China” tag I’m going to complain. It’ll pass a couple of hours at the very least.

The doctor word for it is ‘dorsopathy’ and it usually strikes without warning feeling as though you have been shot in the back by Cupid’s evil twin, who then comes and twirls the arrow for good measure. You collapse in three uncontrollable stages after the arrow hits its mark first, you collapse onto a chair, then fold over and finally end up closely examining the floor, which is where you stay until somebody comes to help.

Once aid has arrived, you are gently transported to a bed which will be home for the next three days. Back pain is a bitch because unlike many other illnesses you cannot just fight through the symptoms or try to walk the effects off. The only option is plenty of rest. Painkillers, anti-inflammatory tablets, heat treatments and acupuncture will only take you so far, the rest is down to time and remembering to always lift with your knees.

Once the spasm has faded, you are gently transported to a bed which will be home for the next three days. Back pain is a bitch because unlike many other illnesses you cannot just fight through the symptoms or try to walk the effects off. The only option is plenty of rest. Painkillers, anti-inflammatory tablets, heat treatments and acupuncture will only take you so far, the rest is down to time and remembering to always lift with your knees.

The early stages of back pain is crippling because you can’t sit, lift or move faster than one movement per minute. This is particularly challenging when you have a three-month-old daughter running around the house causing all types of mischief and then you suddenly realise that yesterday’s meal is inclining its way to freedom - one of those times you are so terrified of the coming pain that you don’t soil yourself.

The chance to spend a day in bed watching movie after movie sounds like a dream day, but it loses its charm when it is one of the few things to do. You can’t bring yourself to read a book, since the pain makes you too sick to concentrate, and most other activities require a sitting position. I think the final tally of movies in three days was 15 and that included the complete Lethal Weapon series.

Once you are able to walk further than three metres you may decide to visit a professional and have some proper spinal treatment. When you arrive at the chiropractor they say the problem is you have too much cash in your wallet and it is damaging your lumbar region, so they kindly take £50 for twenty-minutes. Do you know what the real bastard of it is? They are worth every penny. They are amazing, the noises they make with your spine are terrifying, yet they get you walking like a Homo Sapien again. Saints!

Once the wife’s curse’s patience has worn thin, then it is time to venture back outside and resume life. You are proud of your accomplishment until a one-legged little old lady hobbles past and mutters something about “slow arse” under her breath. You just can’t move fast, whether it is due to the residual pain or the fear of a relapse, you just dare not risk it. You finally have time to stop and smell the roses.

Everybody you meet begins asking about your absence and how you injured your back, so you lie by saying it was caused through sexual misadventure - two pages of the Kama Sutra were stuck together and matters something about “slow arse” under her breath. You just can’t move fast, whether it is due to the residual pain or the fear of a relapse, you just dare not risk it. You finally have time to stop and smell the roses.

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Lordi, Finland and ‘the Sacred’
By Edward Dutton

One friend of mine summed it up quite well, ‘If Lordi wins the Eurovision Song Contest then Finland will go mad.’ Some might say that she is a master of the understatement. On the night of the monster-masked, heavy metal band’s success, Finnish engineering students danced naked in a famous Helsinki fountain and Lordi’s home-town of Rovaniemi partied all night.

Since then, Lordi have become con-gratulated by the Finnish President and Prime Minister, returned as conquering heroes to a Helsinki Rock Concert and have been the subject of various ‘twenty page Lordi sections’ in Finnish national newspapers. You’d think that Finns would want to know what their new heroes – who jealously guard their real appearances under mon- ster masks – looked like.

But Finns have reacted with fury at the magazine Seisko publish- ing a ten year-old photo of the band’s lead-singer Tomi Putaan- suk. Newsagents have obscured the cover, the cover was blurred out in a recent TV report on the con- troversy, the magazine has issued a public apology and many Finns have even called for the journalists to be sacked. So why should one photograph set off such intense an-ger in the Finnish public?

For many Non-Finns, it’s only a ten-year-old photo. The British Daily Mail, the German Bild-Zeit- tung and the Spanish El Semana Digital have all published, without make-up, photos of present or past Lordi members. Nobody in any of these countries really cares. So why has the publication set off such intense anger?

For many years, there has been discussion among experts on Finn- ish culture about how Finns, or at least the overwhelming majority that are Finnish-speakers, reflect a kind of national ‘inferiority com- plex’ which is a legacy of hundreds of years of oppression. It has been reported on in Britain’s Sunday Times, in The Economist, Travel and Leisure Magazine - just ‘goog- le’ the key words.

From the medieval period until 1809, Finland was ruled by Swe- den. The language of the Finnish elite was Swedish while Finnish was mainly the language of peas- antry. Being a Finnish speaker car- ried a sense of stigma and even now there remains the phrase ‘Swedish Folk, Better Folk.’ It was then ruled by Russia until 1917 and effective- ly controlled by the Soviet Union throughout the Cold War. Even after independence from Russia in 1917, and a gradual rise in status for the Finnish language, the peo- ple that ran the country were main- ly Swedish-speakers and almost all of Finland’s significant historical figures were Swedish-speakers.

In the nineteenth century, accord- ing to Finnish historian Nina af Eithjelm, Finnish-speakers were widely considered to be a differ- ent race from the Swedish-speak- ers. Swedish-speakers were ‘white’ while Finnish-speakers were seen as ‘mongol’. There is a legacy of oppression which has resulted in the kind of low self-esteem which tolerates ninety-five percent of the country (Finnish speakers) hav- ing to learn Swedish at school, the language of five percent, when it is not even the country’s native lan- guage.

This is perhaps why the reaction has been so strong. When there’s low national self-esteem an achieve- ment like Eurovision becomes even more important.
Take your seats
By Lee Thorkhill

Last month I went to the hospital - nothing very serious - I was accompanying my girlfriend for a check-up.

As we arrived at the department we both observed the waiting area. There were nine seats in total, three chairs on each of the three 'wings' left, right and centre. Imagine them numbered one through to nine from left to right.

Two people were already seated, an elderly Asian lady (seat three) reading one of the old Hello magazines provided by another patient and a younger very scruffy man (seat six) who seemed to be quite happy just to stare into space. It did occur to me that he may have strolled in to the waiting room completely by mistake and would be surprised when a patient's name was called instead of the arrival time for a train or bus. Anyway, they were of course sat on the different wings which left the third wing vacant for us (seats eight and nine).

This was the start of a perfectly English custom of forming equidistant boundaries between people in non-social situations. I mean, how many people have ever walked into a waiting room, of any kind, and gone to sit right next to the only other person in there? I'm telling you if someone did that to me I would leave the room very quickly and by the nearest exit then proceed to increase my speed of departure down the corridor out onto the street and down the main road for fear of them being a serial killer.

Back in the waiting room we now had each of the three wings occupied and then the next person arrived. An elderly gentleman walking with the aid of a stick, who would not even have to think about the 'code of seating when in a waiting room', in one swift moment he surveyed the nine seats and took his place in seat one, thereby maintaining the minimum one seat gap between all parties involved. Nobody in the room had made eye contact, there was nobody directing people to their seats - at some point in our lives we had been subconsciously conditioned to the method of choosing a seat in a room full of people you do not know.

The next and thankfully final person to enter the seating area was a young girl, dressed for the warm weather she looked self confident and generally happy with the way the morning had progressed so far. She did however pause when entering the waiting room. She did not have the same split-second evaluation as the old man had done. In her obvious inexperience it took her longer to see she could not sit in the vacant seats without sitting next to someone.

Then she did the most English ritual in the rule book. She took some time to browse the table of old magazines, then after selecting a glossy magazine with Madonna on the cover, she sat in seat four. This was next to the Asian lady clearly because she could not justify taking a seat next to any of the males in the room, especially the bus/train guy who was now quite clearly looking around the room for the ticket office window.

As she sat down she made momentary eye contact with the Asian lady, this must have been to apologize for the space which she had just invaded (something as English as having to say thank you after something is given) and then sat in a defensive pose with arms and legs crossed praying no one else would enter the room.

Then the Doctor came to call in the first patient which was the elderly gentleman, and as he slowly followed the doctor down the corridor the scruffy chap picked up his bag without waiting and left – obviously planning a letter of complaint to the transport director. It did cause enough distraction to allow the young lady, when changing magazines, to shift one seat sideways to rebalance the room to the 'one-seat-space' status, which allowed us to relax a little more once again.

The Greek muslim minority

As many of you know Greece has a muslim minority, however what most people don't seem to know is the fact that there are three different and distinct groups of muslims in Greece not a single one. The first two groups live in the general area of Thessaloniki. However not all of them define themselves in the same way. Some of them define themselves as Greeks, while some others define themselves as Turkish. The Greek constitution is very specific about this, "Everyone is free to define himself/herself however (s)he pleases". So both of them fully receive the Greek citizenship status and the benefits and obligations that come from this status. They are all free to attend any public school and university, they are free to teach and learn the language they feel native, they are free to operate any kind of legal operations and businesses (including of course the media) and of course they are free to become candidates in parliamentary and general elections. And as Greeks they are obliged to serve in the army and vote. Yes in Greece voting is not a privilege or right, it's an obligation as the law says but this is a different topic. However these two groups are no more than 30% of the total muslim population in Greece. The remaining 70% consists of economic migrants (mostly living in the big cities) but talking about migrants will get me off topic so we will pass them for now.

The political parties

and how they interact with this minority

There are five "big" parties in Greece. The leading liberal party, with some 35% of the votes. The opposition socialist party with some 40% of the votes. The communist party with about 5% of the votes. The "coalition" consisting mostly of leftists, "greens" and other "non aligned" parties with some 3% of the votes and the christian democrat party that was formed after the last elections but that polls give them some 7-8% of the votes as much as they received in the euro parliament elections. The rest of the votes come from smaller parties that never make it into the parliament. However there is no minority party and this mostly has to do with the fact that the three leading parties always have muslim candidates and some 3 or 4 of these candidates always get elected but this is not the main factor, the main factor is that the minority is divided between the existing parties because of their individual political interests just as any normal party!!

So why all the fuzz?

Up until now no party would propose a non-christian candidate mayor in the Thracic cities. The muslim minority is large enough to elect their congressman but within the local population they still remain a minority. A minority well divided between the existing parties not to mention the support of a specific candidate from a specific party. If you add up the above information it's easy to understand that a muslim candidate mayor is not the most promising choice especially if the party that makes such a choice doesn't have a very good election result history in the area in question. Keeping in mind that the Greek muslims have never elected a female congressman before you see how doomed such a candidate mayor would be. Yet the socialist party proposed such a candidate. But why? I have questioned my self with that and the most reasonable answer I could come up with was that the socialist leader and ex foreign minister understanding than there is no good or bad publicity, publicity is publicity and he definitely succeeded in getting a lot of that. Other than that I can't find any other logical excusus for such a step. However the best point about this candidacy is the debate it steered up and the "change of view" it proposes.

Let's just wait and we will see what comes out of that....
What’s too far?

By Asa Butcher

How far is too far? Would you discuss sexual positions with your grandparents? Would you dry yourself with an old muddy towel in a changing room? Would you wash your face with an old floor cloth? Would you dry the sweat from your forehead on a stranger’s jacket? Many sound like drunken dares, but some people have done some or all of these.

Television shows, such as Jackass, Wildboyz, Extreme Daashinot and Dirty Sanchez, show that there are some individuals that recognise very few boundaries, either physical or morally. There are countless websites dedicated to hosting funny videos that highlight the boundaries of taste across the world - yesterday I saw a video of a man drink a pint of lager, vomit back into the glass and then drink it back down again.

Why would he do it and why would I watch it? I guess the first answer would be ‘alcohol or money’, but the second question is a little more complicated. My own boundaries of taste and decency are flexible, as you may have seen from past DiV articles about S&M. The answer must lay in the morbid curiosity that we all have experienced, whether it is looking at a sick image online or a road accident.

Human nature has a very dark side and we all have one. It lives through jealousy, envy, hate, aspects of ourselves which we are not proud. We are instilled with a set of rules, such as respect and integrity, as we grow up and are taught the difference between right and wrong. However, there is sometimes a middle ground between right and wrong and that is where the web comes in.

Who says what is right and wrong? It is through this debatable area that the web caters to all tastes and leaves it all out there too. You can joke about all the twisted stuff you have seen online, but the line of decency is drawn at children…every time...no question. Aside from those who suffer from that sickness, we all have an in-built need to protect children from the warped people in this world and it is one uniting aspect that unites us. We share a level of conduct when children are involved and we can only pray that never changes.

The danger has become that we are becoming increasingly desensitised to life. On the aforementioned websites you can watch all manner of people injure, abuse and kill themselves, which leaves you numb after the umpteenth download. There is a loss of reality; you begin to forget that the people on your computer screen are real, they have families and friends and lives, but there they are for 30 seconds entertaining you with the idiotic antics.

Take a moment to think of the most shocking sight you have ever watched online, a video or picture that made you hit the back button before you realised you had hit the back button. Was it the image of a suicide victim or a video clip of the tsunami? Was it security camera footage of an old woman being mugged or somebody mutilating their body? It is all out there waiting for a single click, and that click pushes the boundaries of your decency, morals and taste back further each time.

What is happening to the British charts in the 21st century because over the past six and a half years there have been an incredible 189 number one singles? To put this into context, over the same period in the ’50s there were 84, the ’60s had 130, the ’70s had 110, the ’80s had 124 and the 1990s had only 105. Nearly 190 number ones, not quite 190 different artists, but the length of time each song spends at the top is regularly brief.

From these 189 number one singles, 118 have stayed in the top spot for just one-week and by the following week they are fading into obscurity like Vanilla Ice, although even he managed four weeks at number one. 37 singles have enjoyed a second week before dropping, 18 have had a hat trick and 15 spent a month in the top spot.

Only four singles out 189, including Gnarls Barkley’s ‘Crazy’, have spent five weeks or longer heading the UK Top 40. The Black Eyed Peas’ ‘Where Is The Love?’ stayed at the top for six weeks in 2003, while in 2005 James Blunt’s ‘You’re Beautiful’ had five weeks and Tony Christie’s ‘(Is This The Way To) Amarillo’ notched up seven in the same year.

The start of 2005 saw Britain’s thousandth number one and it was none other than an Elvis Presley re-issue followed by two more Elvis re-issues also going to number one. Even Tony Christie’s recent number one was a re-issue from 1971 when it only charted at number 18, but 35 years later it has become one of the most successful singles of the last eleven years.

Over twenty cover versions, including Band Aid 20’s ‘Do They Know It’s Christmas?’ and Gareth Gates’ ‘Unchained Melody’, have hit the top spot suggesting that new bands and singers are relying on the tried and tested single rather than original songwriting. Hits such as Crazy Frog’s ‘Axel F’ are a frightening example of the future of the UK Top 40 - a ringtone at number one for four weeks was a sobering reality.

We are just over half way through the decade and there have been 185 number ones, which beats the total for the entire decade of the ’50s, ’70s and equals the 1960s. The ’80s had 189 and the 1990s had 205, both totals that will be beaten within the next year. Why can’t a song stay at the top for longer than one-week? Do the British public have short attention spans and are easily bored by the country’s best single? What should be done to halt the devolution of the UK Top 40 and don’t you even care?

Then you go buy them!”

- Let’s Push Things Forward - The Streets

“You say that everything sounds the same

Top of the charts

By Asa Butcher

After nine weeks at the top of the UK Top 40, Gnarls Barkley’s ‘Crazy’ was knocked off the top spot by Sandi Thom’s ‘I Wish I Was A Punk Rocker (With Flowers In My Hair)’, which marks the end of the most impressive number one run since Wet Wet Wet’s 15-week hit ‘Love Is All Around’ in June 1994.
**Cool as f*****

By Asa Butcher

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Only Forward

By Michael Marshall Smith

HarperCollins, 1994

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What is the coolest book you have ever read? I mean a seriously stylish book that made you say, ‘Wow! I wish that was me’? A book which threatens serious damage to your optic nerve because you can’t read fast enough and causes sleep-deprivation as you desperately want to reach the climax.

I’ve read the book and some months ago I wrote an iKritic about it and I haven’t still seen the film and I’m not sure if I want to see it. No, the film is not a satanic instrument and I don’t want to see it, it is simple. I enjoyed the book and I don’t want the film to spoil it. As I said before, the film is not the instrument of Satan but the instrument of Hollywood and its target is nothing other than your pocket and your money.

According to all the critics I’ve read, the film is nothing big, just the usual Hollywood stuff with a lot of small and big problems, including extended and boring dialogues. There are very few action scenes and even the ones that are included, such as the car chase, are covered with more dialogue. Enough with the film because I haven’t seen it and the only thing I’m doing here is copying what others have said.

The book was good, it could keep you after one point and I think nearly everybody read it at least knows what happened in that book. Unless you are one of those who believe in conspiracies, that Elvis is alive and UFOs have kidnapped you at least twice, you will understand that this is a novel that cleverly mixes reality with imagination. Even reading the book you understand that the hero is as much a scientist as Indiana Jones is an archeologist; it doesn’t matter how limited your knowledge in archeology you will follow the plot.

The amazing thing is that next to the people who believe that Elvis is alive and that they have been kidnaped by a UFO twice are the other people who took it too seriously. They were the church, led by the Pope and the Patriarch, who turned a pulp fiction and page-turner book for the summer into something mystic and serious. It was like the Pope telling us that Superman is real and every time you feel you are in danger you are expecting a man with red underwear to come and rescue you.

The church called it heretic, but Dan Brown is not the first to write about Jesus’ other life: Kazantzakis wrote the “The Last Temptation” and the Swedish Academy awarded him the Nobel Prize. I hope Dan Brown’s followers don’t expect the Swedish Academy to do the same because Ian Fleming is much better; Kazantzakis’ book also became a film and the church still tried to excommunicate and ban the film.

The Greek Orthodox Church had Kazantzakis excommunicated and thirty years ago had to apologize in public admitting their stupidity and dogmatism, so why are they ready to make the same mistake? Don’t they learn? Isn’t the possibility that Jesus had something going on with Maria Magdalena something we even talked about when we were in high school? Isn’t pure and honest love a holy feeling?

You end up believing that there was a conspiracy between the producers of the film and the church. If the church hadn’t reacted like they did only a few houses would have the book in their bookcase. Nowadays even people who bought books with titles like “10 ways to start small talk”, “Marriage for dummies” and “How to write the perfect CV” have Dan Brown’s book decorated their newly bought bookcase. You see they had to buy the rest of his books, if they’ve read them that’s another case.

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Da Vinci’s cope

By Thanos Kalamidas

The Da Vinci Code

By Dan Brown

Doubleday, 2003

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Most likely everybody has heard about the film “The Da Vinci Code” or at least heard about it from the news, an intellectual show or in the church, especially if you are a believer. Most of the time people who haven’t read the book or haven’t seen the film argue about it in the most aggressive way, so what is the truth with this code?

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The name of that book is ‘Only Forward’ and it was the incredible first novel by Michael Marshall Smith, who offers a vision of the future that triggers a bitter envy of fiction al characters and an imagination of such quality that you are jealous of the man’s writing talent. You may have guessed that this is one of my favourite books of all-time.

If memory serves, this is the first book I have ever read more than once and it one of the few books that I just can’t put down once started. Everything from the electric, blue cover with its far-future/rewind icons, to the slogans ‘Ever wondered where you go to dream?’ enthuse you with anticipation before you have had a chance to reach the first sentence.

The story begins when somebody is kidnapped from the Action Centre, a Neighborhood for people who have to be doing something ‘all the time’, and Stark is hired to find him. Stark is a troubleshooter who knows how to solve problems, fit in and has an immaculate taste in shirts, plus he knows how to get into Jeamland, the place we go to dream. And that is all I am going to tell you.

Stark is one of the coolest main characters you are ever likely to encounter, well, until you read ‘Sparres’, another Michael Marshall Smith book, then you have two. Stark lives his life through countless Plan Bs, or even Plan Zs on the odd occasion. He knows how to get things done, will tell you information ‘if it’s relevant’ and has contacts in all the Neighbourhoods.

Yes, that is neighbourhood with a capital ‘a’, which is the first part of this perfect future. The City covers the country from coast to coast and is divided into different Neighbourhoods, each catering to the desires of its inhabitants. People who don’t house live in Sound, the super-rich live in Brandfield, computer nerds live in Natsci, cats live in Cat and the criminals live in Red Neighbourhood, and most have walls to either keep people out or keep people in.

Another aspect of this perfect vision of the future is the personalities that the author gives to inanimate objects, such as the BugAnaly™ that has feelings and sulks when Stark gives it a hard time. I love the idea of CloazValet™ and the Gravbenda™, while the flu bomb sounds like one of the worst weapons ever conceived.

All the characters are people you would love to meet, especially Ji, Shelby and Zenda, but there is a special place in my heart for Span, Stark’s cat. You must read ‘Only Forward’ and then you will truly understand my feelings for this novel, although be warned: once you start, it will be hard to stop.

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Imperiumi
Lumina Polaris
(April, 2006), Valo Records

Lumina Polaris are part of one of the most peculiar sub-genres in music: Christian Heavy Metal. Many bands in such obscure sub-genres (whether ‘Christian Pop’ or ‘New Age Folk’) tend to be pretty mediocre within the broader genre and destined only to be heard by those that happen to share their worldview. This may ultimately be true of Lumina Polaris... but it certainly shouldn’t be. The Finnish band’s first album – Imperiumi – is pretty hot stuff.

Vocalist Veli-Matti Väisänen has a raw but also emotive quality. This makes the songs melodic and rich, rather than the usual shouting that listeners to heavy metal might have become accustomed. And there are some great guitar solos from Markus Vainio-öpää and Timo Jauhiainen, highly reminiscent of Iron Maiden. Through, these might be seen as unintentional they are certainly of evidence of considerable talent in what is only the band’s first album. The 1980s comparison also works in the way that they dress: long hair, trainers, wrist bands and blue denim jeans (who wears these now outside of Russia?).

The album is well put together, tight... a high quality finished product with interesting use of sound effects. The band might be compared to Iron Maiden not just because of the guitar solos but also the imaginative way that the album tells a story. In this case, it seems to be the story of man from the Bible. The first track is ‘ Falling’ then ‘To the Desert’ then ‘Corpsie’ and then ‘Empire.’ The narrative follows through ‘Rome,’ ‘Renaissance’ and so on and each track merges into the next.

Lumina Polaris are certainly not just aping bands like Iron Maiden. There is something more brutal about them, like Megadeth perhaps, and something unrelentingly darker and colder about the music. All of the lyrics are in Finnish which might be seen as a disadvantage. However, not understanding the lyrics makes the songs appeals to base emotions and gives them a haunting, mysterious quality. It also shows that the band is not prepared to sell out and risk being one of that pitiable breed (like Finland’s ‘Technicolor’) that spend their careers singing in English to their own countrymen in the vain hope of international recognition.

Clearly, though, they are a highly imaginative group. They are based in Oulu. This city is in northern Finland but not quite the Arctic Circle. Hence the name ‘Lumina Polaris’ (Northern Lights), a phenomenon which is visible this far north. The Latin doesn’t actually make sense, but perhaps this is deliberate. The word ‘Lumen’ can also mean light as in ‘Enlighten,’ so the name could be a reference to some kind of evangelical mission that the band believe their music to be part of.

But, whatever their motives, Lumina Polaris have something to say to heavy metal fans outside of Finland’s Christian network and even outside of Finland. If you like Iron Maiden but want something a bit darker and more cutting then Imperiumi is definitely worth listening to. And, to top it all off, the band thanked Jesus Christ in the credits. How can anyone not be tempted to buy an album that the Son of God himself has helped to make?

Imperiumi can be purchased on the band’s website – www.luminapolaris.net – and also from selected stores in Finland. The website also gives details of forthcoming live performances.

‘BASEketball’ stars the creators of the ‘South Park’, Trey Parker and Matt Stone, so you approach the film knowing that minimal intellect and the bare minimum of brainspower are going to be required. There was never any danger that this movie would be appearing in Academy Award category, in fact, Yvonne Rabeau was nominated Worst Actress and Jenny McCarthy Worst Supporting Actress at the 1999 Razzie Awards.

Don’t let that fact taint your image of the film because the South Park guys do all the great work, with some help from the ‘little bitch’. I am not a huge fan of Cartman, Stan, Kyle and Kenny, but I have thoroughly enjoyed all Trey and Matt’s Hollywood stuff, such as ‘Orgazmo’ and ‘Team America: World Police’, because they are just so offbeat.

Taking their style of comedy and mixing it with David Zucker, the director of ‘The Naked Gun’, means that the comedy is occasionally subtle, sometimes in the background, but often it is impossible to miss. How often do you get to see an actor personally licking clean a vibrator found in a drawer? How often do you laugh at a child drinking a tequila before a major liver operation? The humour is in your face and balancing precariously on the edge.

The movie follows Coop & Remer (Parker & Stone) as they invent a new game that combines basketball with baseball rules. The game becomes a huge success thanks to a billionaire Ted Dunsworth (Ernest Borgnine), but when he suddenly dies one of the other team owners begins pushing for major rule changes that would result in lucrative deals.

A simple plot, some excellent subplots and a great supporting cast, albeit for the two ladies nominated for the Razzie Award. A special mention must be made about Dian Bachar, who plays Kenny ‘Squeak’ Scoblar, a.k.a. ‘little bitch’, who suffers endlessly at the hands of Coop and Remer throughout the movie. He endures interactions, such as this:

Remer: Your bed is over here. [indicates a dog bed]
Kenny: Dude, that is so fuckin’ weak! How am I supposed to get a chick in that?

An honourable mention must go to Robert Vaughn in his hundredth film role, as the scheming team owner who wants a major rule change. He truly enters into the spirit of this crazy film and you sometimes wonder if he real is licking the headaches he gets after talking with either Coop or Remer.

Cooper: If you want unanimous consent, you’re gonna have to get it from one of the other owners.

‘BASEketball’ is an excellent piece of popcorn munching, laugh out loud, ogle the half-naked girls, hangover cure that we have all searched for on those lethargic Sunday afternoons. Watch it, pop an aspirin and then order some takeaway pizza.
Mr. Annan starts his editorial with the words, “The fact is that the World Cup makes us green with envy, as the only game in the world that is played in every country and by the people of every race and religion, football is one of the few institutions that is as exceptional as the United Nations.”

The General Secretary definitely made Asa and I go green with envy after reading his first words. We have said similar things often, but we have never phrased them in a paragraph so well. Mr. Annan continues pointing out that FIFA, the international football association, has 205 member countries comparing it with UN that has 191 countries, adding that “for months everybody on the planet will talk about the World Cup.”

The General Secretary wished people would discuss development issues, health, education, AIDS and so many others topics as seriously as they will discuss about their team’s performance and they could show the same knowledge in the most unbelievable details. “I wish countries would compete with each other on respecting human rights, that they would try to outdo each other on the survival rate of children or to shine in education,” he said.

How odd that just a few days ago the American president suggested cuts in the UN’s program for AIDS and everything the UN suggests has to go through a series of vetoes and changes.

Mr. Secretary points out something else by bringing the example of Angola and the Ivory Coast. Both countries have been suffering from misery and civil wars that have torn them apart for years now. Their national teams gave them something no UN or no other force has managed to give them till now: national unity and hope for a new start. What is more valuable than that?

“I wish we had other things that leveled the playing fields the way football does, where only talent and team spirit matter, such as freer and fairer trade,” he added. Fairer trade? Sorry to be cynical, but this sounds like an oxymoron, how you can have trade and fair together? In any level, you just need to give a look at what’s going on between USA and Iran nowadays.

Greece and Turkey have never been the loving neighbours, but the last few years there are a few Turks playing for Greek football teams. I think that says everything regarding the boundaries football has crossed.

Mr. Annan said it was “a special honor” for Ghana, his home country, to have qualified for the World Cup for the first time and that for each African nation taking part every single team, for every single national for the whole planet, even for the countries that don’t have a representative in this tournament.

I think that taking part in this tournament has a special meaning for every single team, for every single national for the whole planet, even for the countries that don’t have a representative in this tournament.

The latest allegation of Michael Schumacher deliberately stopping at the penultimate corner of the Monaco track in the dying seconds of qualifying does not come as a surprise to many F1 fans. It matters little whether Schumacher is innocent because after his coloured history on the track very few people would give him the benefit of the doubt.

Schumacher is an athlete that admirably pushes the boundaries of all aspects of his sport, but the sad part is that this includes the code of decency and conduct. Argentinean footballer Diego Maradona was another that tarnished his reputation forever, but it isn’t so much the goal he scored with his hand against England rather his reaction in the years that followed as he defended and celebrated his act of cheating.

This act of championing cheating is the cancer of sport; there is nothing worse in my opinion. How is sport supposed to maintain its dignity when footballers, such as Roy Keane, write in their autobiography about intentionally injuring an opponent? He admits to waiting three years to exact revenge on a player and we then see kids wearing a replica shirt with his name on the back… disgusting.

At the end of May, San Francisco’s Barry Bonds moved past the legendary Babe Ruth into second place on the all-time home run list, but this is a man under suspicion of steroid abuse and has claimed that he never knowingly used performance-enhancing drugs. Yet somebody like “Shoeless Joe” Jackson has never been induced into the Baseball Hall of Fame due to his alleged participation in the 1919 World Series scandal.
Hollow atmosphere
By Asa Butcher

Where are the flags on the cars? Where are the football shirts? Where is the air of anticipation? Does anybody seem to care that the World Cup has arrived? Finland failed to qualify for the finals again, so it is only natural that the atmosphere is rather muted. Therefore, I consider it my personal mission to shock the country back to life - Nurse, hand me the defibrillators.

My heart is thumping in my chest and I can feel the ringle down the spine already, and I have no idea how any football makes it through all the way to the final. When England played Portugal in 2004 European Championships everybody in the room was numb throughout the whole game and I know we frightened my Finnish in-laws who decided to watch the game with us. The pain of losing was further compounded when a Finn later said to me in a bar, “We beat you!” After I had poked him in the eye, I explained that is quite fine to adopt a team throughout a championship but don’t go too far otherwise you will become a Cyclops. If your country has not qualified for the World Cup and you don’t want to support England, may I suggest that you choose either Netherlands or Ivory Coast because they play in Ovi orange. The bar in which to watch England’s first group match against Paraguay on Saturday has been decided, so it is time to dig out the red and white face paints, memorise the words to ‘God Save the Queen’ and have my first beer.

Come on, England!

What’s the story? There is this almighty Greek family with a lot of money. This happens sometimes in small countries like Greece, where the state is damn poor, the number of people living in poverty is damn high and unemployment is booming. Greece is one of these poor countries that have some Greek names on the richest people on the globe lists. I was really careful using the phrase “Greek name” because after all, people need to become rich they usually pretend that they are not Greeks. However, that doesn’t count for this certain mystery family, but I thought it was a good place to make the hint.

This certain family owns many things: Panathinaikos’ football stadium, athletic centres and Michael Owen’s wonder goal against Argentina, while still feeling the bitterness of coming so close every time - ok, except 1994. Old England songs have been playing in an attempt to fire up the adrenaline, with ‘This time we’ll get it right!’ and ‘Three Lions on a shirt’ playing on the stereo.

I can feel the passion growing now. Can you? The HWA just announced that Wayne Rooney is back in training meaning that the expectation levels have returned to the dizzying heights before his injury and that is before we have even passed the group stage. England - please, please footballing God - must get to the next round and then we will have the pleasure of meeting Germany, Costa Rica, Poland or Ecuador - that’s when the fun really starts.

My heart is thumping in my chest and made me attach the balloon to the football on Friday morning and my wife kindly brought me an England shirt, but more needed to be done to enthuse myself first. While I was back in the UK last month the flags were already flying and you could feel the excitement building, but when you have your own oasis of England in east Helsinki things are a little harder.

I have been watching ‘Best of FIFA World Cup’ DVDs and becoming nostalgic over Gascoigne’s semi-final tears and Michael Owen’s wonder goal against Argentina, while still feeling the bitterness of coming so close every time - ok, except 1994.

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After years of hunting, the Americans finally got Zarqawi.

Let’s hope that they didn’t create a martyr and we will see one, two, three or many Zarqawis coming.

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Sheikh Kada in Jordan regards Zarqawi as a hero, a martyr who died in the name of Islam.

Kada is next on the list.

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Iran is not playing versus USA for the World Cup.

Damn! And I was going to enjoy that.

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Don’t forget Ovi magazine is the one and only, anything else is just a copycat or just a bad imitation!

Just making sure that we remember!!!

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A device which may pave the way for robotic hands that can replicate the human sense of touch has been unveiled.

Are they scared to say Viagra?

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Difficult test, guess who’s next after Zarqawi.

Two words: the first starts with the letter ‘B’ and ends with ‘in’, and the second starts with ‘Lad’ and ends with ‘en’!!!

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Russia has handed the Bosnian authorities a suspected Serbian war criminal accused of the rape and torture of Muslim women during the early 1990s.

It’s like the Eurovision Contest; former communist countries exchange criminals instead of points.

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Jewellery and other objects owned by the late Princess Margaret are being put up for auction by her children. The money raised - expected to be about £3m - will be used to help pay off inheritance taxes on her estate.

First question: How much did she own to pay £3m? Second question: Are they going to give any of the excess to kids with AIDS in Africa?

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