Not all of them have the chocolate filling

COPYCATS
It’s said that imitation is the highest form of flattery, but why didn’t we feel flattered when somebody tried to copycat the Ovi magazine? On the contrary, we felt anger. It was not the anger you feel when somebody steals something of yours, it was the sort of anger that brings every possible swearword you learnt in all possible languages.

It’s said, and I can verify it myself, that when burglars rob your house you always have the funny feeling that somebody is still there. The feeling in Ovi magazine is much different, how did they dare to do that? How did they really? In a first communication with somebody Ari something Paskanen, the excuse was…we didn’t know and we checked the Net, but we didn’t see anything. I suppose that’s the problem with the Internet in Alpha Centaury, bad connections.

Here on Earth, Google, Yahoo, AltaVista and other search engines find Ovi magazine sometimes up to 180,000 times. Most of them have Ovi magazine second or third when you search for ‘Ovi’ and guess what? When you try Finnish words like ‘Ovi Lehti’ or even ‘Ovi Sanomat’ Ovi magazine is magically there first!

When Mr. Jone Nikula decided to open the Ovi (Ovi in Finnish means ‘door’) of imitation and copycat he probably didn’t realize that he had opened Pandora’s Box. It’s only left for us to see if his Pandora’s Box has viruses and monsters just like the original did. So, inspired by all this we decided to make this month’s issue a special about copycats.

Going through the articles we have written to cover this issue of copycats I drew one conclusion and I hope you will excuse me because I can find no better words to express myself: People who commit imitations and copycats are doing nothing more than masturbating with their failed ego. That’s enough about copycats because at this very moment there are more important things happening that we should concentrate upon.

While writing this editorial Israel continues the demolition of Lebanon. I don’t care for the excuses, actually they sound very poor and sad - I care for the poor kids and innocent people who die every moment. I care that Israel, a victim of genocide, has turned to mass murderer ignoring any civil right. I care that the west is closing their eyes creating more anti-terrorist excuses for their policies.

I care that the Arabs are ignoring the number of deaths that are rising as they take care of the price of oil. I care that 30 years have passed since the Turkish invasion of Cyprus and nobody seems to be doing anything to punish the criminals. On the contrary, they ask the victim of the rape to negotiate and finally, like one of my blog-friends wrote: I care about what happened with justice, simple human justice.

Thinking about all these things while bombs were falling in Beirut, I found out that I could – not that I didn’t want to – I could not write anything about it. The reason is very simple, the two scared kids I was watching the other day crying in front of their house in pieces might not be alive next week. I’m not becoming melodramatic; I’m just saying something that is possible. And that sunk me. Sunk me into desperation. My only defense, my only weapon is my pencil and using it once a month then it becomes blank.

You see that’s what I meant before when I said that I didn’t want to talk anymore about these masturbators of their ego because there are more serious problems and I want Ovi magazine to fulfill its reasoning by expressing and screaming opinions when things happen, since that’s the only weapon we have. We are thinking about it and soon we will act and I promise you will be the first to know.

Anyway, from this issue we welcome a new writer, Jane Eagle, a cybermate I met in the wonderful world of blogs, who will be writing a column called ‘Jane of Thought’. By the way, I think in the near future we must have an issue about blogs, since I made many and wonderful friends in there, people who have too much to say and they are always invited to join us in the Ovi Project.

We have all the usual suspects enriching our Ovi magazine with their work and some more to come in the near future. Actually, I started dreaming again and we promise that surprises will come soon from the Ovi Project.

Enjoy the issue

Thanos
"You’re Sixteen, You’re Beautiful, and You’re Mine!" Yes, we have reached issue sixteen and are legally permitted to consent to pretty much anything you want to throw at us….just, just be gentle and nothing too kinky.

Firstly, please accept my apology for a slight delay between the published release date and the actual appearance of the magazine, but we have been hooked to our comfortable sunbeds, coconut suncream and chilled Pina Coladas served to us by sultry Finnish girls; the sunstroke does seem to be easing off gently. It hasn’t all been sunworshipping though.

The past six weeks have also been filled with a raspberry cream cake, piles of presents and an intimate party all because my daughter reached her first birthday, which made both Mummy and Dad extremely proud of their efforts thus far. Nobody could resist saying how fast the year had gone and our egos were boosted by comments about her advanced developmental skills, including walking before the big number one.

The first year of parenthood has been like eating a bowl of soup on a trampoline - messy, a little dangerous, but ultimately fun, especially if Mummy is the one who has to clean up. Katie has brought out strengths in Mum and Dad that have reassured us that we aren’t incompetent asses at this child-raising lark, even if Daddy does have a tendency to be too chilled about everything, "She’ll be fine!"

While preparing this issue about copycats, I have come to realise that Katie is the best copycat that has ever entered my life. I’m sure many of you know about our anger and shock over the announcement of a new free Finnish magazine deciding to use the title ‘Ovi’, so when I watch my daughter imitate actions and sounds it thrills me to the paternal core.

Currently, Katie is the exception to the rule because copycats are a breed that very few of us can tolerate, especially when it comes to our own work, but the world is filled with them; some who do it openly and others who are shameless sneaks. How far are we willing to let somebody ride on our idea? The flattery of imitation wears off quickly when you see the success and praise they garner from your brain and brawn.

Both Thanos and I have encountered copycats before in our lives, but this time it has struck us deeply because Ovi has become a child for us. We have poured our hearts into sixteen issues of this non-profit magazine and over 40 other contributors have done the same since its inception last year. The Ovi copycats have pushed us to start making some changes in our online magazine and you will see the fruits of these labours in the coming months. We hope you will stick around and see our little Ovi head off to college...

Asa
Sometimes reading the profiles of parties nowadays - especially the major parties - you can get confused, not only because they say similar things but because they often adopt positions the others had used in the past.

You find out that the difference between what Labour’s Tony Blair says in UK about the free market and what the Republican George W. Bush says about the same thing in the USA are closer to what the Conservatives say. On the other hand, reading the Conservative manifesto you feel that Red Arthur from the ‘80s is the one who wrote it.

You find that the left European parties now still hold on to their theoretical roots, but in the last few years. If you listen to the Finnish prime minister talking about the changes he’s planning for unemployment you will think that you are hearing a social democrat of the ‘70s and not a conservative leader. Next you hear what the more radical leader of the Green Party has to say about the free market you might fall into coma and pray that this is a time travel and suddenly Margaret Thatcher is speaking Finnish.

What’s going on? Probably there is no mystery behind it. Before the end of the communist regimes in East Europe the lines were obvious and simple became blurred and despite the myths behind the reality about the all equal East European regimes the left European parties lost their identity. Even the strong Italian communist party went through a long crisis that hasn’t ended yet and obviously it will end with the disappearance of the word ‘communist’ from their title.

All the European socialists and in general center-left and left parties are multi-collective, hosting gay and environmental movements to Trotskyites and euro-communists under the same roof, plus they even have most conservative former center parties members and from their mainly agricultural and union background have become urban parties where their voters are mostly middle-class people.

It is noticeable that Tony Blair is not exactly a union man, more a country club person drinking tea while checking his stocks in the market and oddly enough starting with the former Prime Minister John Major the majority of the Conservative leadership have a working class background. It is like they exchanged backgrounds.

From the minute the conservative parties found its ideas being copied by the socialists and Labours they did exactly the same. Now you find the conservatives behind the unions while the socialists and Labour try to control them. How confusing is that for the electoral body?

Tony Blair is the perfect example. Despite his total conservative turn calling it the New Labour and having a more socialist approach than the conservatives, the Labour Party won the last few elections and Tony Blair became prime minister for the third time. People probably think that despite his conservative mask he is a Labour man or that the Conservatives, despite their Labour mask, will never change their face and behind the mask there is only one face and that is Margaret Thatcher’s.

There is a pejorative shadow around the term, as if it were somewhat sinful to indulge in copying, but each of us owes his or her actual existence to the faithful capability of our DNA to reproduce the triumphs of evolution. We produce a viable life form capable of withstanding the continuous onslaught of environment to reduce us to an uncoordinated mass of protein available to other more successful forms as dinner.

To be original, unique, totally novel may confer, on rare occasions, the capability to overcome the daily pitfalls that the universe of predators subjects each of us to in the continuous battle to stay alive and effective. But to venture out on the fragile shaky limb of being totally unconventional is bad practice for a primate food of swinging hand to hand from sturdy trees. A slight spice of the original is much safer and so we live our creative lives utilizing the much more comfortable tool of comic. And, in a society that quickly responds to the faintest glimmer of the novel, the tweak can most times be not only sufficient but capable of eliciting generous applause.

Some tweaks take a healthy mouthful of the unknown to chew and digest. Einstein gobbled Newton, Maxwell, Gauss, Lobachevsky, Riemann and a couple of others to formulate his version of the universe. Picasso plundered several of his contemporaries plus the good old African art to structure his new landscape. When Picasso was asked if he ever stole ideas he forthrightly declared that of course he did since he had the good sense to perceive what was worthwhile.

But we all still live in a basically conservative society. Underlying our appetite for new and unusual things is the general rule, if it ain’t broke, don’t fix it. It has just been revealed that the previous pope had cautioned the theoretical physicist Hawking not to inquire too deeply into the origin of the universe as this was exclusively God’s business and mankind who had tasted of the apple from the tree of knowledge had already had its nose bonked for sticking it where it didn’t belong. Hawking expressed relief that the Galileo solution was not still in force. And daily we are reminded that the bulk of humanity is still aversive to accept that, in spite of the fact that well over 90% of our DNA is a copy of the same DNA possessed by chimpanzees, they are somehow closely related to our ancestry.

Outside of American university students who have been seen to swipe huge portions of their submitted papers from public sources without giving credit where it is due, copying proceeds in our daily routines as a basic necessity of living with no negative implications. But perhaps we might apprise it as not a major violation of social ethics. Instead of calling it copying, we could diminish its negative effect by calling it copymice or perhaps copybedbugs.
Love stories and music greed!

By Thanos Kalamidas

When I was a young teenager and before the first bitch ripped my heart in pieces, I used to express my feelings to the girls I was falling for every second week with music. I was one of the lucky ones to have a ‘stereo’ at home. Well, that’s how we used to call the big wooden coffin that had a record player inside and another metal box that combined a cassette player and an amplifier.

That sat on the top shelf. Now, depending upon how much your family loved music, what kind of music they liked and how much they liked the idea that you liked some music they definitely hate, below the stereo were records. Here I was lucky once more. Next to Frank Sinatra and good old Ludwig van Beethoven in total harmony laid Roger Daltrey and Jim Morrison, with my all time favorite ‘Let Emly Play’ from The Pink Floyd.

I was lucky with one more thing: I played music. In the beginning it was a harmonica, my all-time favorite sound and then it became a guitar, which made me popular with sixteen-year-old girls! - I said that was when I was a teenager!!! I had two ways to express my heart, one was when playing music and always dedicating the most passionate song to the girl I was after and second was to make a cassette with my favorite songs, which accidentally had hidden messages: “I love you yeah, yeah, yeah!” or “You are the sunshine of my heart!” . These and other equally sensitive and pathetic messages were all designed to end up with the almighty kiss; bed was too far in my targets.

Then a couple of them, of course after saying thank you and how great but you know I’m in love with the school’s football star, said that my cassettes were really mega hit of mine!! I had two ways to make my famous cassettes. That sat on the top shelf. Now, depending upon how much your family loved music, what kind of music they liked and how much they liked the idea that you liked some music they definitely hate, below the stereo were records. Here I was lucky once more. Next to Frank Sinatra and good old Ludwig van Beethoven in total harmony laid Roger Daltrey and Jim Morrison, with my all time favorite ‘Let Emly Play’ from The Pink Floyd.

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Copy about cats
By Asa Butcher

This issue’s theme of ‘copycat’ has inspired me to write about a different kind of cat: the domesticated tabby. I became a reluctant cat owner almost two years ago after finally giving in to my wife’s continual persistence that we should have all our possessions covered in hair. However, we have many possessions and one cat just couldn’t do the job fast enough, so we adopted two brothers, Del and Dave.

Last night I watched ‘Ishitar’, the classic box office flop starring Warren Beatty and Dustin Hoffman (see iKritic for the review), and was surprised to discover how much it bombed upon its release in 1987. The US domestic gross totalled $14,375,181, which barely paid for the blind camel (see the film) as the budget was $40,000,000. During the research for my iKritic I noticed that a number of recent remakes have also been financial disasters.

Cinematic copycat
By Asa Butcher

One of my favourite topics over the past few months has been the lack of inspiration at the cinema, with its mindless remakes, pointless sequels and TV-inspired insipidness. A quick look at the schedule for our local multiplex reveals the sad picture: ‘The Pink Panther’, ‘The Omen’ and even ‘Lassie’ are all cashing in on the success and reputation of their predecessors.

Hollywood will never learn its lesson and will continue its ‘spit and shine’ job on the classics that the film industry was built upon. The day Tinsel town holds open auditions for ‘The Godfather’ remake then Tinsel Town will implode in a nasty way; it will happen, just you wait, because somebody may make an offer that can’t be refused.
Da Vinci’s copycat

By Thanos Kalamidas

According to the news, in a court room in London the author of the book ‘Da Vinci Code’ Dan Brown was found innocent of copying and straightaway all the cinemas around the world started screening the new Tom Hanks’ film with the same title.

Any book needs research, it doesn’t matter if it is total fiction, science fiction or whatever else and that is the difference between literature and pulp fiction. Reading all Dan Brown’s books you can see that the man has done his work, damn well I would say and research means reading books within the same subject field. It means finding people with the knowledge of the subject and even referring to essays written on the subject.

This applies to nearly everything, even I need to search the internet when I write an article, any article. In this case it is natural that some of these resources will influence your writing. The same applies to every writer from Homer’s era to the most contemporary writers, and it applies to Mr. Dan Brown. Actually, it especially applies to Mr. Dan Brown who wrote a book with a lot of references to a known artist and the most popular book in human history, the Bible.

Now we have made that clear let’s move on to another issue regarding Mr. Brown’s book. The myth about Maria Magdalena is not a new one; on the contrary, it is as old as the Bible. Being Greek I was lucky to have read Nikos Kazantzakis’ ‘The Last Temptation’.

Winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature Nikos Kazantzakis talks about the relationship between Christ and Maria Magdalena and if you haven’t read it I would definitely suggest you do so. Andrew Lloyd Webber does the same thing in his pop musical ‘Jesus Christ Superstar’ and coming to the Holy Grail there are full libraries talking about it, not to mention the whole of English mythology and the Monty Pythons. Coming now to the artist and the invisible hero of the book, Leonardo da Vinci, his connection with secret associations has been claimed for a long time now and often from the Masons. His need for secrecy and symbolism was known as well. Imagine, the man was a scientist who could not say that the human body was a perfect mechanism and that the Earth was round without endangering himself to die via the fire. Actually, Dan Brown’s talent lies in taking all these well-known facts and myths and putting them all together, adding a lot of writing talent, to create a good action and mystery book. Nothing more, nothing less. Lee and Lincoln, the British writers of the book ‘The Holy Blood and the Holy Grail’, who took Brown to court didn’t write any of the above, since their book was a result of the same research and akin to Brown’s book will be part of future book research.

Till now everything is well and I hope the court was very clear in its decision and I’m glad Mr. Brown has finished with this case. The questions start now. In my research to write a book I find that all the material I need is in Dickens’ books, since I’m writing a drama about an orphanage. I write a book, changing characters’ names, updating but using similar situations and going much further by adopting to well recognized Dickens’ writing style. What’s that then?

The Internet has literally opened the gates of paradise for all kinds of researchers. The memory of my final essay in my college years still haunts me. It was 60 pages, with another 90 pages of bibliography that had actually been read and that was not all. I probably read another couple of hundred books before I finished with the ones I finally chose. Now, it will probably take a week’s research on the internet to find anything you need, including works of literature.

Lately I became a blogger. An unbelievable amount of people express themselves on the net. Most of them are bad, some are good, few are brilliant. Who protects these people? In the end a court is not enough. I think, and I will always believe, that the greater judge for copycats is ethics and somehow I believe that blogs show the way. There are some masterpieces in these blogs, of course a lot will feel envy and would like to have written the posts themselves but the only thing they do is add a comment and most of the time how much it touched them on a personal level.

Dan Brown found himself on a court adventure that most likely will be the central scene of his next book. He was guilty, if you could call it guilt, for only one thing: using elements of another’s work. In this sense Leonardo da Vinci was guilty as well for using everything he learned from the Greek classics. What Dan Brown didn’t do was to steal the idea and that’s what makes the copycat and that’s why he was found innocent.

Unfortunately here at Ovi magazine we are facing a similar problem, somebody stole the idea, perhaps hoping that it will steal part of the popularity. As I mentioned in this lengthy article, these people didn’t steal an element but the whole idea having the recklessness even to steal part of our announcement on our target and aims, which in the end is embarrassing for them and we are pretty sure that the people who read it will punish them in the write way. But more about it in other articles.
I’ve got you now. I have a nice collection of postcards from all the art galleries I have visited all around the world. Other people can either enjoy a glass of wine or beer glasses from different places, but I collect painting postcards. Personally I wouldn’t mind having a couple of my favorite paintings in my study and I would definitely like to have the originals, but since I don’t have the billions I could compromise with a good copy.

Back in the ’70s it seemed popular for housewives to recreate known paintings with a thread and needle, while waiting for the master of the house to return from work. Giacometti had been one of the most popular of the time followed by Oscar D’Arci and one of my favorites, Mattise. I was thinking I would enjoy having a couple of my favorite paintings in my study and I would definitely like to have the originals, but since I don’t have the billions I could compromise with a good copy.

I am impressed that so many people shelling with communication through a screen adopt perceptions of such type. Take a cyber look and note: Which forum, chat or blog doesn’t stream with sentiment?

I am not against communication under any form, so long as the content of the discussion doesn’t involve personal passions and emotions because in that case holts, tender touches and genuine hugs are required. There is serious difference from giving a real kiss to an individual in real time to its equivalence in net which is presented as “xxx”.

I am impressed how easily the word “love” is splashed about in cyberspace, while between real life people - retain a better veritable - weigh out the desire of saying: “I love you”. I wrote my opinion at the particular blog but it got mangled. Each and everyone shouted out loud how much caring needs in his/her heart for one commentator or the other. Admit that no one is truly what he presents to net. How can you believe in the friendship, the affection of someone you never took a dip into his eyes? The philosophy of cyber communication (blogs, forums, chat rooms) is working in general as an occupation, an escape from giving a real kiss to an individual in real time to its equivalence in net which is presented as “xxx”.

It is hardly explained in another way - that is accused by the rest of spoiling the romantic mood. His comments are still deleted even when it does not offend anyone but their “aesthetic”. They just repeatedly pick up on one’s personal passions and the likes, loves them or leave them with the quote: “Too bad”! It seems like they are not enough.

At least in my collection, painting postcards or wanting a copy of an original painting for £240 would be a reminder of what I felt standing in front of Mattise’s “Snail” in the Tate gallery. That’s something I can not describe. The harmony and beauty of the colors was talking straight to my soul. The soft balance of the shapes was making my spirit fly.

I wasn’t just feeling envy for the painter, I still feel embarrassed even to mention that I do paint. Mattise, with this painting, crosssed the line of talking to the eyes and talked with his heart to our souls. And this is what makes it unique. The postcard is just our souls. And this is what makes my spirit fly.

In my painting postcard collection I haven’t got any painting that I haven’t seen myself. I have a few art books with pictures of paintings that I haven’t seen in real life, but they are just pictures!

Using the word ‘soul’ when I’m referring to an original painting I’m not trying to show you my hidden superstitious side. I’m not superstitious. I feel that words are so poor to describe the feeling of an original painting like the ‘Snail’ transmits and only a spiritual and mystic word can represent the feeling.

The spirit of the original is exactly what is missing in the copycat painting or whatever else you want to call it. Just like the classic fairytale when the creator gives life to his creation through his tears…life to his creation! Just like it happened when Ana and I saw the announcement in the Finnish media that somebody called Jose Nikula and another named Ari Halttunen decided to steal the idea of the Ovi magazine and try to copy the spirit and soul of the our painting.

I doubt if Jose Nikula knows that Mattise is not the name of a heavy metal group, that Halttunen knows that the ‘Snail’ is not a toothpaste brand and they both have no idea where this Tate Gallery is, but I don’t doubt that they know that the original Ovi magazine is everywhere in the internet!!!

I am a train. You come on come on. Alone a condom accompanied by inkle. And you underneath me. I fall on you. Jannis Xenakis. Were you not the one who listened to his music in the dawn? All cables. He left. He’s a Poet, isn’t he? He sure does seem like a Poet. He’s a Poet, isn’t he? He sure does seem like a Poet.

I am a train. You come on come on. Alone a condom accompanied by inkle. And you underneath me. I fall on you. Jannis Xenakis. Were you not the one who listened to his music in the dawn? All cables. He left. He’s a Poet, isn’t he? He sure does seem like a Poet. He’s a Poet, isn’t he? He sure does seem like a Poet.
An article recently caught my eye that highlights one of the biggest problems facing air passengers today. The story detailed the drama of a Spanish-speaking man who was misunderstood by fellow passengers on a flight to Hawaii. Misunderstood means that they believed he was going to strangle a three-year-old child, so four passengers decided to tackle the poor man to the ground.

In the 1980s, aircraft seemed to be regularly hijacked, or is that since then. nail scissors have become a lot sharper. 1970s and ‘80s…I guess the nail files and a host on inane objects are confiscated from our hand luggage because that little old lady may suddenly take an air hostess hostage and demand the window seat instead. Funny how nail scissors are terrifying on a plane, but if somebody threatened you with a pair in the street you would laugh and walk away.

If you think the situation is bad, then you don’t have the “look” of a terrorist. Yes, all terrorists now look like they are from the Middle East and we must fear them all because we have no freedom of thought. How much stress must it be for any follower of the Koran to decide to fly today? It would certainly make me think twice, especially with the fear of one wrong word or action meaning sometime with airport officials.

When you now wait to board the plane you examine the faces of those queuing alongside trying to determine if you will be able to subdue them should the need occur. After the passengers on United Airlines Flight 93 fought back, we would probably want our kids to have a taste of the original country they come from. They probably went there with a father who had filled them with stories and myths, and they had probably spent the month before dreaming about it. What is left of them? An Israeli bomb.

In the end the only thing that comes to mind after watching all the news from Lebanon is a gigantic why. Why do things like that always happen? Why doesn’t somebody stop them? Why can Israel do whatever they want and nobody says anything? Why Hezbollah leaves innocent lives to be killed in the worst way? Why has Iran become involved? Why did Syria arm Hezbollah? Why do America give us lessons in humanity and the right to live and then turn a blind eye to this catastrophe? Why has Lebanon once more become a battlefield? Why, why, why?

The answers could be simple, at least for my naive mind, give the Palestinians a land to live and give them the right to rule their own destiny. Treat Israel equally like any other country, after all they are committing a crime this moment and justice should be blind. Stop all these meaningless wars that only cost innocent lives.
The real intolerance in Finland

By Edward Dutton

Foreigners living in Finland are a disparate bunch, many of whom get by in English. They are here for a variety of reasons, frequently because they’ve ended-up marrying a Finn. It can be very difficult being a foreigner in Finland especially as, if many of it’s tiny number of English language news sites and magazines are to be believed, Finns really don’t want foreigners in their country at all.

A June 2006 and article in an Oulu (Northern Finland) English-language web-newspaper 65 Degrees North, exemplifies the way that articles in some of Finland’s English-language media seem to portray Finns. Nigel Watson’s article on why he left Oulu - “Good Bye Oulu” paints Oulu (and by implication the whole country) as a collection of unfriendly, intolerant racists.

Mr. Watson’s main reason for leaving Oulu is that he felt ‘not accepted, let alone welcome’ and that there is a general Finnish attitude that you should adopt a Finnish way of life or leave. In my experience, the people of Oulu bend over backwards to accommodate me as an Englishman. “Ouhulaiset” are more than happy to speak in English, which is hardly a sign of not welcoming foreigners. In fact, younger Ouhulaiset tend to be so enthusiastic about speaking in English that I’ve basically stopped trying to practice my Finnish. When I have had to use it, with elderly Finns, they have been perfectly amiable and have slowed right down.

My elderly Finnish neighbour always chats to me. I’ve no idea what he’s saying half the time but if he is saying, “Go back to your own country! You people make me sick!” he’s saying it in an extraordinarily friendly way, frequently with offers of coffee. I was once told (in English by a young man) to “Go home! This is not your country!” This was in a branch of Ako in Kokkola (a tiny country town) while a friend and I were speaking in English. Every Finn to whom I have recently been speaking in English, which is hardly a sign of not welcoming foreigners.

Good or evil, the only intolerance I have ever experienced in Finland is when I wrote an objective article about “Black Hare Oulu” people thought of the Prophet Mohammed cartoon furor for 65 Degrees North. I was accosted, by one Oulu reader, of being “racist” and “Nafr” just for pointing out that some people – not even necessarily myself – disagreed with his or her views. That is intolerance, fundamental intolerance, which is far more worrying than some idiot telling me to “Go home!” Indeed, SixDegrees has been heavily criticised amongst Finnish nationalists. One discussion forum contributor claimed that: “SixDegrees has a constant theme that it’s always hammering home: Finns are ignorant, stupid, ugly, evil and racist, and the only way they can ever be accepted by the rest of the world is to open the borders for everyone to come here (although, of course, Finland is such an awful country and the Finns are such racist bigots that no-one would want to come here anyway, which is why we must welcome the thousands or hundreds of thousands clamouring to come here)” (Stormfront, a White nationalist discussion forum).

Other Finns on the forum chorused agreement. And it is this kind of attention that is worrying. The problem with many of the articles in SixDegrees and Nigel Watson’s article in 65 Degrees North is not just that they reflect what is basically an extremely intolerant form of an ideology. They distort the way that Finns see foreigners and foreigners see Finns. For a foreigner reading SixDegrees, Finns are racists (albeit not too openly) and aren’t nice enough to them. In reality, neither is generally the case. So the magazine’s slant is bad for race relations. It helps to separate the foreigner from the Finn. It is this intolerance, and not racism itself, that may indirectly lead to racial problems in Finland in future. Finland, in my experience, is basically a welcoming and friendly country. There is probably some racism, but far less than in some countries in Europe. The creeping intolerance in Finland is not racism. It is the view that if you don’t (rigorously promote a certain ideology then you need to be publicly attacked and ostracised or even worse. It is the same intolerance that led, for example, to Professor Tilu Vaithanen (the Finnish Prime Minister’s father) being “investigated” (basically intimidated into shutting up, because he was never prosecuted) for publishing the Mohammed cartoons. Like any ideology taken to extremes, the multiculturalism of SixDegrees reflects a lack of dissenting opinion... intolerance that could have some very nasty consequences in Finland in the future.
Never trust the perfect!

By Thanos Kalamidas

Reading in the Finnish newspapers about the government’s negative reaction over a demand from the Brussels to change the monitoring system for EU supports, I remembered my last trip in Lapland.

Most of the people I met had one thing to say, unemployment. Unemployment is so bad that it forces the youth to leave Lapland in search of a better future in south Finland. Naturally my first reaction was to ask, if EU helps and at this point I had to face a familiar smile.

However much of a foreigner you are after some time you start realizing that despite what everybody says, including the Finns, there is a body language in Finland and this body language gives away the truth. Finns in general have only one attitude: we will never say anything that might embarrass the mother land to foreigners.

If you carefully study their history you will understand their reasons and probably excuse them to a certain point. The feeling among the Finns is so strong that it includes all the media without exceptions; they prefer not to do their job than publish one article that could embarrass the country.

The EU expressed a logical demand: Where the hell is all this money going and why has nothing changed? Why are people still fleeing from Lapland and the unemployment is still so high? But if you add to that the smile you come to the conclusion; right, money comes, some take it, few use it and all probably goes into the pocket.

This is not the first time the EU asks the same thing and as a result the commission froze 5.4 million euros in support from the European Social Fund to Northern Finland in March earlier this year. What the commission wants is rather simple, the Commission wants the Ministry of the Interior to take administrative control and more closely supervise the activities of the Ministry of Labor which is responsible for the Social funds. However, the Finnish government commented that they don’t want to create a culture in which one ministry vets the expertise of another ministry! Really?

Finland is very proud to be top of the list between countries with minimum or no corruption at all and I’m sure that Italy, Greece or France are really proud not to be in the same position. So they have decided to obligate the smile to sleep—sorry follow a seminar for four hours a day, what’s that? Education?

All my life when I heard the words perfect, too good to be true, I was always suspicious and that smile was there to remind me of that. I think one of the problems is how you determine corruption. Corruption is when a civil servant gives you a favor, after you push money under the table. If the very same civil servant, with the excuse that there is a seminar in Lapland, goes with all the family to a luxurious hotel in Lapland, eating and enjoying the entertainment all for free with only the obligation to smile—sorry follow a seminar for four hours a day, what’s that? Education?

I don’t think any country enjoys giving evidence of corruption to any surveys from the EU, but when they are doing so, they admit the problem and they are trying to find a solution. By having a continuing conspiracy for covering up they just worsen the problem and the day will come when the evidence will transform into a tsunami that can have an effect on the economy. Think of that before you become so negative, after all, at the moment the EU only has suspicions.

Why Finland wants to join NATO?

By Thanos Kalamidas

A year before the next parliament elections in Finland and at the beginning of a very critical EU period, where Finland is the president country, some people started the conversation about NATO again: Should Finland join NATO?

In the past I have written a long article trying to explain what happens with my country that is a member of NATO. I tried to explain that despite many millions spent on weapons under the instructions of NATO and built by companies that NATO has - what shall I call it - a ‘friendly’ relationship, which coincidentally are all American.

When it came to NATO fulfilling their obligations to a member country by helping with an invasion against a member state they just pretended they couldn’t hear anything, NATO suddenly became deaf and blind, so in the latest way NATO has proved to Greece to be a damaging factor for the country’s finances and has proved to be an untrustworthy ally.

30 years after Turkey’s invasion of Cyprus and the occupation of the Cypriot land, Turkey continues its hostile and aggressive attitude against an ally member of NATO with the latest incident the Aegina incident that cost the life of a pilot. To that you can add provocations, spying and anything else that could only constitute a declaration of war by Turkey.

Going even further, during the invasion there are suspicions that the Americans often informed the Turks about the Greek army’s movements. If that’s true—and the truth will come in public one day—the information from the fact that NATO ally invaded another NATO member and nobody in the NATO alliance did anything to stop the war between the two countries, except supply both countries with weapons, the leading member country practically committed treason against an ally.

Is this the alliance that some Finns want to join? Let’s go a bit further and this is something that I have also written about often in the past. What’s the reason NATO exists? NATO was the North Atlantic military organization to answer any military plans from the USSR. Dear Finnish politicians at the time that cost the life of a pilot. To that you can add provocations, spying and anything else that could only constitute a declaration of war by Turkey.

Add to that the neutrality that Finland kept so carefully during the hard years of the Cold War, isn’t it all this trouble a waste? The Finns stood bravely between two superpowers and even though they were threatened nearly daily with destruction they just stood there forcing everybody to accept their neutrality. Why would a country that made neutrality part of their constitution want to join an army alliance that they were dead for over a decade.

It all leads to the last thing. NATO was from its very beginning a gigantic weapons’ hypermarket with only one supplier: the American weapon’s industries. In NATO’s hypermarket you can find everything from the defensive Patriot missiles, powerful F16 war planes, Apache helicopters to M6 rifles. The hypermarket needed an exhibition center, so they called it NATO, and a testing ground, which has had different names including Iraq and Afghanistan. Finally they needed arms dealers, the right personnel, which they found in the leagues of generals and general patriots.

Take a closer look at that, from one side you have fat ex-generals with huge salaries who lobby for American weapon companies and from the other side you have ex-generals or generals a couple of years before retirement in Finland that insist that the country should join NATO. Do I need to add anything more? Can’t you make the connection? Come now people, it is not that difficult!
Mr. Erdogan appeared as the self-proclaimed leader of the Islamic world and representative of them emphasizing that Islamophobia should be considered a crime against humanity just like anti-Semitism. Nobody would disagree with that, but he might want to give some thought about the two missing elements.

Firstly, anti-Semitism and the genocides of the Jewish people from the Nazis must ring a bell with Mr. Erdogan because Turkey did exactly the same with the Armenian people. Therefore the first thing Turkey has to do is to apologize publicly to the Armenians for what they suffered under the Turks, then he must apologize to the Greeks, the Cypriots and all the Christians for what Turkey did to them and finally Turkey must stop the genocide against the Kurds.

The second element is the best friend and ally of Turkey, also known as the other Islamic ruthless dictatorship, Iran. Iran not only recognizes Israel but constantly threatens and wishes the total destruction of Israel. You see Mr. Erdogan, before you start giving advice you must check what’s happened in Israel, Mr. Erdogan, before you start giving advice you must check what’s happened in Iraq. Undoubtedly since the scary dictatorship of Iran, its puppet president and his parasites in the country and abroad become liable for negotiations? A few months ago the American Pentagon was wondering what kind of missiles they should use; the question was if they should be nuclear or just B61-11 and if they should hit only the nuclear factory or other facilities as well.

Negotiating with Iran
By Thanos Kalamidas

Just before Finland took over as president member of the EU and start a critical period for Turkish membership to the EU, the Turkish prime minister Mr. Erdogan took the chance of a long meeting in the European Parliament in Strasburg to give a long speech with the theme ‘freedom of speech and religion freedom’ that should be noticeable from the current European members on how Turkey is planning to deal with membership.

During the race problems in USA or all through the MacArthur period in the USA, people found protection in Europe. The almighty leadership in the USA has left an impression in Europe. The almighty leader Ayatollah Homeini was sheltered in France for over a decade to become the worst enemy of anything European after his return in Teheran.

If Turkey and Mr. Erdogan want to have a future in Europe they must do something fast and forget all the excuses because all that little sheep one day will cry wolf and nobody will go.

What happened for the USA to seriously think about sitting at the same table with the “force behind any kind of terrorism”? According to the White House recently, there was only one way to get rid of the dictatorship and the Ayatollah’s regime from Teheran and that was war.

The EU sent a long letter to Teheran with all the propositions regarding the nuclear program of Iran and for the first time in this long negotiation nothing became public; surprisingly, equal secrecy was kept by the other side too. Obviously the strong part of this letter was the absence of more threats and the logic of old and new and more realistic propositions.

Obviously the EU proposals include the idea of Iran having nuclear power just for energy reasons, but as long the suppliers are the westerners, probably EU and that they will terminate the long ongoing financial embargo and finally support the membership of Iran to the international commerce organization, something Iran has wanted for a long time, but has had the USA veto it 18 times.

The USA has to keep face, so they demand the termination of any kind of nuclear research and are ready to join the EU in any kind of negotiations, which is a good sign. Teheran seems to be taking the silent threats seriously, since they don’t want to upset the EU which has kept a neutral position and is a key partner for the international community to accept the dictatorial regime.

What really did help the USA soften their position with Iran is what happened in Iraq. Undoubtedly the non-presentation of any kind of proof that Saddam had any kind of weapons of mass destruction will haunt the American and British administration for a long time and will probably cost at least Tony Blair all his future dreams.

2,000 inspections from the international organization for atomic energy power haven’t brought any solid proof and America realizes that Iran is right to worry about the future of oil resources, since the USA has exactly the same worries and the American president has often expressed them publicly.

Russia and China have every understanding for Iran, for their own reasons, but they are there to support an ally – don’t forget that Iran is a member of the new Shanghai alliance, the new anti NATO experiment. Aside from that, the only liable allies of the USA in Iraq have proved to be the Shahites allies of Iran and the Americans need allies in Iraq.

The latest inflammation of passions and the hundreds of deaths, mainly little kids in the Middle East, the destruction of Lebanon and the involvement of Syria and Iran, gives hints that new surprises and turns can be expected in this long twisting story. There is nothing else left for us except to wait and see.
According to a study commissioned by the Finnish newspaper Aamulehti, more than seventy percent of Finnish men decide not to take advantage of extended paternal leave, and even fewer take the opportunity to be the primary caregiver.

Don't they realise what they are missing by returning to their desk and paperwork before the umbilical cord stub has even fallen off?

The study discovered that the large majority of new fathers use less than 18 days of paid parental leave despite the law allowing them to share 158 days with their partner. Working as a freelance writer from home has meant that every day has been spent in the company of my newborn daughter and it has brought us closer together. My wife is also at home on maternity leave so having both parents providing continual stimulus has proved beneficial for her development.

However, I am not going to detail how it has helped her because this is a self-indulgent article about how great staying at home with my daughter has been for me. I am there when she wakes up in the morning, she can see me working at the computer while she has breakfast and she wanders in and out of the office throughout the day with special presents, such as the remote control we had lost.

Being at home during her first few months allowed me to become involved in her bathing and nappy changes, which are important to a father when the mother develops a bond via breastfeeding. Nobody knows for sure how influential the early months are for a person’s character, whether they form the foundation for the years to come or are forgotten, but I did not want to miss out on the memories of my first child’s early months.

What is more important than spending time from work engaging with your offspring? Would you rather be stood around the water cooler gossiping or sat cross-legged on the floor teaching your child how to blow a raspberry? Do men rush back to work to avoid changing nappies and helping around the house or are they terrified of children?

I say ‘terrified’ in the sense that they don’t know how to interact with a baby. They don’t know how to play with one, they don’t know how to talk gibberish to one, they feel self-conscious making silly noises in public, they have no imagination and they just feel safer in the work environment instead of learning these skills that will help them in the future.

There are men in the UK who also struggle to overcome this self-consciousness, but Finns have a reputation of being introverted and do not enjoy being centre of attention, which can be difficult when your baby is crying on a bus. Listening to a whining baby on a bus, train or plane journey is irritating for other passengers but when it is your baby I always say, ‘**** them!’

Your first thought should be for your child, not what other people think of the situation, which is why men should say, ‘**** work!’ and spend as much time with their newborn child. Remember that this is time you will never get back and you are missing out on some amazing moments... time to go, I can hear my phone ringing from the bottom of the laundry basket, so that’s where she put it!
Letter from the USA

By Rob Jenkinson

Well summer is finally here in the Midwest USA. It took a couple of false starts, but we’re finally here.

A few things have surprised me about the American summer. First, it’s hot. Not just a bit hot, it’s really, really hot and humid.

Secondly, there are mosquitoes everywhere. I’m sure that as you live in Finland that this doesn’t seem like such a big deal, well for an Englishman, it is. I liken it to this; for the mosquitoes around here, it’s like they’ve been feeding on stale bread for years and years and then pizza comes along, I am the pizza and they’re hungry.

Last but not least, in America, Summer = Parades. I seriously thought that I’d seen all the weirdness that America had to offer me, I tell you, my friends, I was wrong.

The first parade came on Memorial Day, a day to remember all the veterans who have served in America’s numerous wars. So off we went to the local Main Street and waited. More and more people turned up, more prepared than me, with their portable seats and sun parasols and set themselves up. We then waited some more and the sides of the street slowly packed up with people.

Now, in the UK, we don’t really celebrate anything. We’re very moody and cynical people and any effort in doing anything community based is usually left down to the Christians. So I was very surprised at the fact that everyone had turned up to watch this spectacle (as I was beginning to believe it must be, surely it must be something fantastic for all these people to turn up). Just as I was beginning to get hot and pissed off, I heard some drumming coming from the other end of the street.

Slowly, the parade approached where I was. Then it arrived and kept coming and coming. Now, there were some decent things to look at, like Miss Lake Villa and the runner-ups, but that was about it. Mainly it was just a load of companies advertising themselves.

Sounds odd? Well, they happen practically every other week for apparently no reason at all. I just don’t get it.

To be fair, the 4th of July parade was a bit more. There were bands playing on floats, people showing off old cars and a company who sell lawn mowers did a musical version of ‘Breaker Mountain’ with lawn mowers and sheep. Seriously, I’m not joking.

So what’ve I learnt from all this? Americans are over worked and bored. So if they want to break the boredom by walking down a street, then that’s fair enough.

Anyway, before I go, I promised you an anecdote about seeing real street crime. This was one of the scariest moments I’ve had in the USA… so far. I’d driven down the airport to drop the Missus off and had just set off home. The domestic airport in Chicago is in a decidedly dodgy area called “Cicero”, you may know the name from the musical Chicago. Anyway, I’d just got back on the main road and then this people carrier came shooting past me, almost hit the person in front of me, got into a spin and then hit the kerb and flipped over. A couple of seconds later a teenager came crawling out of the window and started running towards my car. I immediately slammed on the brakes and locked all doors, this would have been scary enough in the UK, but here there’s always that chance of getting your face blown off.

Luckily, scary youth decided to turn around and run the other way and then another car pulled up and scary youth jumped in the window and they sped off. It was like watching an episode of ‘Police, Camera, Action’ right before your very eyes. Ace stuff.

If just a little scary.

I Spy L

By Asa Butcher

Luck, well what else would call losing on the lottery last night? We judge luck by the immediate results and not by its long-term effects because there is a possibility that if I had won the jackpot I would have purchased a high performance car and received a ticket for speeding at some point. I dodged that financial bullet, huh!

Forget about Lady Luck because if she does exist then she is a two-faced bitch that merely plays one party against another until neither is happy with the outcome. She knows that your reaction to an encounter with her depends upon your outlook on life; the optimists will say she was a stunning one-night stand, while the pessimists wait for the genital itching to begin… anyway, she always fancied my brother more than me.

Breaking a mirror results in seven years bad luck, but so does being impeached for fraud – at least one of those offers the chance of parole.

Black cats, lucky rabbit foot from an obviously blessed bunny, the number seven, a pair of old socks you wore the night your virginity was finally taken, they all become embodiments of luck in our warped minds that are desperate for that elusive break.

We use the word ‘luck’ to disguise adjectives that would be far more appropriate in the situation, for example when a linesman fails to spot a goal scored offshore we say the team were lucky, but the truth is that the linesman was either inapt, biased, daydreaming, corrupt, stupid or blind. The fault is with the linesman and not the fictional Lady Luck.

This imaginary lady takes credit for our own good judgement and subconscious forethought, while also shouldering the blame for our shortcomings and monumental mistakes, especially on the football pitch. “No, we weren’t unlucky; our shooting skills were embarrassing and the goalkeeper’s Venus de Milo impression was to blame.”

When stars align, when a butterfly flaps its wings, when the neighbour leaves her curtains open, whatever the reason that fate deals us those cards - from a marked deck for those that believe in kismet and serendipity - we should have confidence to trust in own ability to shape or screw up our own destiny.

‘Lady Luck’ is simply a feeble alias for the laws of probability, which determines our existence in a way that only a mathematician can understand. Whether it is 1 in 10 or 1 in a million, they are both odds that a bookmaker will happily give you for a £10 to win bet, although on some days you just know that ‘each way’ still won’t be enough.

Do you want to know the underlying truth of luck and how to turn the odds in your favour? Well, it is quite simply because of…I have to get almost missed the start of my favourite TV show - now that was lucky.
Fast Chicks
By Mike Jennett

I went to a speed-dating event in Washington DC on Monday.

Yes, I know, maybe that little admission makes me sound like a loser, but is it any worse than trucking the bars trying to pick up a half drunk twenty-something out on the town with her friends?

Besides, as I’m no longer twenty-something myself, or thirty-something and, sadly, a little too close to not being forty-something, where would I go? Know of any old foggie’s singles pub? Places without a dress code, just a requirement to have no knowledge of modern music whatsoever and an out-dated sense of fashion?

At least I don’t have to sit alone at the bar, pretending my reason for being in the pub is to have a quiet drink or eat to watch the TV - or spin some other tale concocted to cover the fact that I’m out on the razzle.

Nor do I generally have any form of success in the standard face-to-face pick-up drama, which is why an organized event seems so attractive.

Anyway, I digress.

Cupid is but one company who organize such sessions, although they call them pre-dating, as if the word ‘speed’ has lost favor. I suppose it has. Speed-dating puts me in mind of a cockeyed back-street Londoner with a barrow-boy accent and cloth cap, hands thrust deep in pockets, rasping, ‘Yeah mate - did 6 chicks last night.’

The concept is pretty simple but, for those who’ve never heard of it, this is how it works. A small number of those who’ve never heard of it, interested how much red wine you can drink in two sets of 6 minutes.

Hung around after the event, leaning on the bar until Kathy came back and he’d gone - but so had she. Collected my fee, went to see which of their partners is free but the FBI agent (yes, there really was one, clean-cut, white-shirted, tie-clad, pistol-packin bastard) who was her final partner wouldn’t leave.

She returned my glances occasionally, but what did those flirtive looks mean? Was she secretly wanting me to rescue her?

So, the session began and woman number 4 was my first. Never mind thenumeric confusion, it made some at the time. Number 4 looked like she’d recently emerged from prison, but she claimed to be a practicing nurse, so who was I to doubt her? I made a clever wine-spilled quip about something practical she’d need before doing it for real, but something got lost in the translation from English to American and my great wit was simply ignored.

Things got worse from there and the 6-minute slide towards the bell felt like a week.

After that, there was Gloria from Peru, who speaks an accent and many uncomfortable pauses and I sensed that, once-upon-a-time, she might have been a real stunner. But that was once-upon-a-time. Next to her was Debbie with the confused hair, who’d spent nine years as a nasiy diva, looked it, sounded like it and gave the impression she was still it.

Then there was Kathy at table number 7. After her, the others simply didn’t exist. Kathy - attractive, blonde, neat, witty and intelligent. Hikes, bikes, dances, drinks, runs a software company and spent a year in London. Didn’t ask her age, of course – couldn’t be so rude - but figured she must be at the young end of the scale, looking for a slightly older man. Like me.


Six minutes vanished into a puff of desire as I realized we had so much in common, but then I had to leave, helped away by the foot of the next male in line, tapping the leg of the chair. Sad.

Kept looking back at table number 7 during the remainder of my sessions - including the two enforced empty-table periods. Tried to catch her eye, but she was too polite, pretending to be engaged in conversation with whoever number 4 was my first. Never mind the numeric confusion, it made some at the time. Number 4 looked like she’d recently emerged from prison, but she claimed to be a practicing nurse, so who was I to doubt her? I made a clever wine-spilled quip about something practical she’d need before doing it for real, but something got lost in the translation from English to American and my great wit was simply ignored.

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Is homosexuality a disease?
By Asa Butcher

Canadian scientists announced a few weeks ago that a man’s sexual orientation may be determined by conditions in the womb, which asserts that biological and not social factors make men gay. When you read about a research study such as this you begin to question the scientists motives because it makes homosexuality sound like a disease that needs a cure.

What does it matter if our sexuality is decided by the “maternal memory”? that these scientists claim or if our mother enjoyed a cheese sandwich while we were developing in the womb? Will the gay community be happier to know that their lifestyle choice is due to genetics of cheddar? Will it give them strength to fight the prejudice or will it give the prejudiced groups more ammunition against them?

Labelling it “maternal memory” has merely given this discovery a name, but it sounds like a politico name for a disease. Now the name and cause has been given perhaps scientists can start work on a ‘cure’ that will allow parents to avoid the horror of having a gay child, “Two tablets a day, Mrs Brown, and your baby boy will grow up to be a real Casa nova.”

Research is all very well, but what message does it send that says a woman’s body sees a male foetus as foreign and this sometimes prompts an immune reaction making you gay. You had no control over your mother’s body rejecting you…at least you can be happy that I am accepting you now.”

Oh, I don’t mind! I read a study that says a woman’s body sees a male foetus as foreign and this sometimes prompts an immune reaction making you gay. You had no control over your mother’s body rejecting you…at least you can be happy that I am accepting you now.”

What does it matter if our sexuality is decided by the “maternal memory” that these scientists claim or if our mother enjoyed a cheese sandwich while we were developing in the womb? Will the gay community be happier to know that their lifestyle choice is due to genetics of cheddar? Will it give them strength to fight the prejudice or will it give the prejudiced groups more ammunition against them?

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As often happens in these surveys, they forget to add a series of minor details. One of these minor details was that most of the European and American countries didn’t participate leaving the organization to use either past information sometimes decades old or not mention them at all.

Finland is a very poor country that very cleverly tries to export education as a product and personally I wish Greece had done exactly the same for a long time now. After all, it is embarrassing for people to study for their Master’s or Ph.D. in Philosophy, Archaeology or History in any other country than Greece.

Unfortunately even Greek students prefer to do their degree abroad after all the P.R. some countries have done. As amazing as it sounds somebody told me that the best degree in New Greek literature is in the University of Edinburgh in Scotland!

So what’s wrong? If you ask the Finnish people, after you manage to put aside their pride of being the best education system in the world according to that often-mentioned survey, they will tell you that three things worry them mostly: unemployment, health and education. If you ask any citizen of the 25 member countries in the EU, one way or another they will give you the same answers.

For the last forty years Greek ministers and specialists tried to make the difference by copying education systems from different countries and ending up on an endless carousel. They copied the French system that had copied the German system that had copied the Greek system. The choice of the countries is random but not far away from the reality.

I’m not going to analyze the new mania of the Finnish education system, every education system of every country has its good parts and its wrong parts, and every one of these systems is a result of historic and social reasons that would be good to know before starting to imitate.

Copycat education models
By Thanos Kalamidas

It is four years now, I think, that I found myself often asking questions about the Finnish education system. It all started when an organization came with a survey saying that Finnish students are the best educated in the world.

I do agree with the idea of teaching Ancient Greek in Greek schools, after all this is a part of the Greek identity, but I totally disagree with the teaching of religion in Greek and Finnish schools. In a multicultural society this is firstly against the constitution that guarantees freedom of belief and the European Charta of Human Rights.

I do like the idea that the teachers in England can choose between a variety of books that they are going to teach in their classroom and there is not one book for all the kids in the whole nation, like it happens in Greece and Finland. I like that in Finland health and sports is part of the education system and kids have to participate in sports events.

You see, I think that having a united Europe is a good thing, as long we make good use of it. Why do all the members share their knowledge in anti-terrorism measures and create laws that are the same in every European country and they cannot do the same with the education system?

Every one of the members has an education system with good and bad points, why don’t they try by taking all the good points and try to harmonize them for every member? After all, a well-educated future is the best future. I have never come across the Estonian or the Polish education system, but I’m sure that there is something worth noticing there too. Why don’t all these ministers who meet so often excurse their meetings with something that can become part of history and make the difference?

Instead of copying models why don’t make the simplest thing, use the models to create! That’s the idea of a model not the copycat!
Yanks in capes and jumpsuits

By Matti McCambridge

X-Men: The Last Stand (2006)
Directed by Brett Ratner

It is summer, blockbuster season, and studios want your holiday euros. A stalwart in past years has been the comic book film. But, while ‘Fantastic Four 2’, ‘Hulk 2’, and ‘Spiderman 3’ are still being shot or written, ‘X-Men: The Last Stand’ is already offering us a fresh fix of Yanks in capes and jumpsuits.

X-Men, forty-years-old, presents a growing minority of genetically mutated supergifted – feared, envied and recopt by the ‘normal’ populace – who must choose between attack and peaceful self-preservation. The aggressives are led by metal-bending Ian McKellen (Magneto), and the peaceful, the X-Men, by überpsychic schoolteacher Patrick Stewart (Charles Xavier).

Historically most of this is inherited from Wiltmar Shirras’ hit novel ‘Children of the Atom’, in which mutant kids are born to power plant workers after an explosion. In real life atomic radiation causes tumours and twisted limbs. But, as every good fanboy knows, science fiction mutation is a sort of fantastical evolution. X-gene fly, spit fire, or grow new limbs.

The first two X- films were about preventing disaster, but X3’s disaster has already arised. Phoenix, for instance, is about as subtle as a hurricane hitting a barn. Her ‘evil insanity’ consists of red mascara, sticky out lips, and couched eyebrows. And the X-cure is a syringe-shot from plastic guns by soldiers with bad aim. Even old villain Magneto is reduced to cheap theatrics, like flying the Golden Gate Bridge to Alcatraz. Give the special effects team something to do!

Grief and loss is handled with as much grace as a storybook. The film feels stretched between trying to shock and provoke, and displaying the characters. It attempts both at length, but does neither well.

Director and staff writers. The film contains 34 short stories that follow the adventures of Wooster’s ‘foppish foolhardiness’ and Jeeves, the quintessential gentleman - valet to you and me - sorting out his master’s messes.

This collection of stories was published over a period of forty years (1919-1959), but you don’t really notice this other than a distinct plot formula that begins to appear, Wodehouse suggests in his introduction that you take it easy, spread it out and assimilate it little by little; there is even a tongue-in-cheek reading menu as advocated by a well-known West End physicist - ‘Bertie Changes His Mind’ is the only story narrated by Jeeves.

The interaction between Wooster and Jeeves is sublime and there are times when you forget that one is master and the other is valet. Bertie repeatedly vows never to question Jeeves’ advice, yet he always breaks this promise eventually requiring the help of his bowler-hat wearing valet. The stories have extremely intricate plots, but we just sit and wait because nothing is too formidable for Jeeves to solve.

The building of complication upon complication is one of my favourite aspects of the stories. When the outlook looks bleak for either Bertie or one of his friends, such as Bingo, Gussey or Tuppy, then this is when Jeeves is at his brightest. Occasionally he uses brawn, sometimes he has inside information and there is the odd time he employs a certain je ne sais quoi, but he will always come out on top.

Who hasn’t heard of the literary duo Reginald Jeeves and Bertram Wooster created by the comedy genius Sir Pelham Grenville Wodehouse KBE? They have been immortalised in television series, on radio, on the stage and one even lent his surname to a search engine, but, as Wodehouse himself wrote, ‘Jeeves knows his place, and it is between the covers of a book.’

Very good, Jeeves

by Asa Butcher

The World of Jeeves
by P.G. Wodehouse
Harper & Row, New York, 1967

Wouldn’t there be a Bennet sisters’ search engine? They have been immortalised in television series, on radio, on the stage and one even lent his surname to a search engine, but, as Wodehouse himself wrote, ‘Jeeves knows his place, and it is between the covers of a book.’

The World of Jeeves is an Omnibus Book published thirty years ago to celebrate the 90th birthday of the author and contains 34 short stories that follow the adventures of Wooster’s ‘foppish foolhardiness’ and Jeeves, the quintessential gentleman - valet to you and me - sorting out his master’s messes.

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‘Bertie Changes His Mind’ is the only story narrated by Jeeves in the series and it gives us an insight into how this incredible mind works. We see how much Jeeves cares for Wooster and reveals what lengths he will go to ensure that the status quo of their relationship does not change, which is surprisingly quite far. This story is considerably different to the others, but it is better that Wooster is responsible for narrating the rest, since he is much better at waffling.
The Baltic, Bob and a boat

By Asa Butcher

To the Baltic with Bob
Griff Rhys-Jones
Penguin, 2005

Many of you will know Griff Rhys-Jones as one half of the comedy duo Smith and Jones from their 1980’s sketch show ‘Alas Smith and Jones’ (or ‘Lunta tupaan’ as the Finns called it), while those who have never heard of this Welsh comedian will know him from the following iKritic.

‘To the Baltic with Bob’ follows three men as they sail around the Baltic Sea in Griff’s boat for four months during the summer of 2002. The book is written in the style of a travelogue, but despite not being quite as funny as Bill Bryson it has some amusing moments - the “At least three good jokes on every page” phrase quoted by the Mail on Sunday is vastly exaggerated.

My primary grievance with the book is the heavy doses of nautical terminology and boating descriptions that Griff naturally uses throughout the book. It is understandable since the majority of the action (if that is the right word) takes place onboard the boat and each journey between destinations demands an explanation, but since I am among the genius of people who just don’t get the idea of sailing these passages became a little wearisome in the end.

The book didn’t really help me comprehend the fun of sailing because it seemed that the whole trip was one long moan about a lack of space, the arguing travelling companions, the lengthy hardships and countless other niggles that Griff faced on his adventures. It certainly didn’t tempt me to re-evaluate my thoughts about sailing, which would be hard because I have a healthy fear of drowning.

Firstly, the MTV network of channels is totally commercial, so obviously somewhere in the central administration they realized that a lot of ads were coming from Finland so they decided to do something about it. The second excuse might be the language barrier, but that is a poor excuse if you think that the majority of the people who watch MTV are young and do speak English. MTV Finland has added Finnish subtitles to about 10% of its programs, but the majority of the programs are contemporary music videos with NO subtitles, so we return to the first excuse that makes more sense.

MTV is a successful commercial television channel with international influence in the music scene. Over the last ten years at least, most of the pop stars are creations of MTV, such as Britney Spears and Justin Timberlake, while some rock groups like Aerosmith owe a great deal to MTV; Madonna and Michael Jackson probably owe them everything. These artists would not have had the exposure they enjoy today if it hadn’t been for the heavy promotion from MTV and I’m not going to judge their music.

Pink Floyd and The Beatles became popular by touring around the world, giving concerts in every single city, while the only thing Madonna has to do toays is film a video clip that exposes her meat, pretending to jump up and down like a ballerina, so instead of listening to her music you are thinking what the hell is that? In the end she succeed, she sells thousands of records, sorry CDs, nowadays and adds more billions to her already fat bank account.

Despite all that, MTV was a source of information regarding contemporary and pop music. In my late forties having grown up with The Beatles and The Rolling Stones, I feel comfortable listening to Pink Floyd, Cat Stevens, Thin Lizzy, Jethro Tull and Led Zeppelin and in my very private moments I’m listening to jazz from the ‘50s and ‘60s and lately rap and hip-hop music. How did this happen? MTV, of course.

Even though a radio fanatic myself, I often checked MTV to see what’s going on and somehow I’ve kept informed on latest things. MTV showed me rap music and somehow MTV forced me to listen carefully to the lyrics and understand what’s really behind these monotonous rhythms. Imagine that now I have rap CDs, including a couple with 50 Cent; I have even gone so far to realize the connection between rap music and R&B, and all that thanks to MTV.

What’s really going on with MTV Finland if the quality has dropped so badly? Well the adverts are still there, but I’m not sure for how long. It will come to an end when the seventeen-year-old will find out that there is more to life than buying ringtones and ‘Like a Virgin’ is not the latest Madonna hit, so they will just…stop watching MTV Finland.

The audience disappears, so then the adverts will stop. Do the administrators of MTV internationa-I believe that Finns are so naïve and so behind that they don’t get any other information? Do they believe that Finns are idiots and they will eat whatever they serve them or have they decided to get the money fast and reap the fruit of MTV Finland as long as it lasts? The last answer sounds more likely, but is that the future of MTV?
What happened that night?
By Asa Butter

It Happened One Night (1934)
Directed by Frank Capra

Urban legend says that when men watched this film in 1934 the sales of undershirts dropped by seventy-five per cent because Clark Gable was not wearing one. Whether this is true or not does not matter in the slightest because we are here to review this classic piece of cinema and not discuss the difficulties underwear manufacturers faced in the 1930s.

One of the strange aspects of watching a film made over 70 years ago is the knowledge that virtually everybody involved in its production is dead. Once you have overcome this macabre observation you can begin to appreciate why ‘It Happened One Night’ became the first film to win the Oscar “Grand Slam” - Best Picture, Best Actor, Best Actress, Best Director and Screenplay - at the 7th Academy Awards in 1935.

According to the trivia surrounding this film, it was never supposed to be a hit. Clark Gable was on loan to Columbia as punishment for his raucous off-camera behaviour and Claudette Colbert only accepted because director Frank Capra promised he would double her salary and she would be done in four weeks. How many recent Best Picture winners were completed in four weeks?

The film was based upon a short story by Samuel Hopkins Adams and follows Ellie Andrews (Julie Andrews), a daughter of a rich father, who escapes from his control, and immediately stops a car: “I’m going to the East where I become a doctor,” she says. “I’m tired of being the tail end of an umbrella. I want to make something of myself.” The hitch-hiking scene that is most commonly associated with this film. After trying to impress Ellie with his tried and tested thumb techniques and then failing in practice, Ellie walks to the side of the road, hitches up her skirt to reveal her stockings and immediately stops a car: “Well, I proved once and for all that the limb is mightier than the thumb.”

It Happened One Night is a gentle romantic comedy that sometimes the talent of Gable, Colbert and Capra, plus a number of other dead actors, back in an era when the consensus forbade married men and women to be shown in bed together - did you say ‘those were the days’?

The reason that the film took the four top awards is because of one man: Frank Capra. This was the first of three Best Director awards that he eventually won and he is one of my top five directors. “Mr. Smith Goes to Washington”, “Lost Horizon”, “Mr. Deeds Goes to Town” and ‘It Happened One Night’ are just a few of the classic films that Capra directed; each has its own magic and deserved place in movie history.

“The walls of Jericho” is a memorable scene from the movie and it was Capra's response to Claudette Colbert refusing to undress in front of the camera. However, it is the hitch-hiking scene that is more commonly associated with this film. After trying to impress Ellie with his tried and tested thumb techniques and then failing in practice, Ellie walks to the side of the road, hitches up her skirt to reveal her stockings and immediately stops a car. “Well, I proved once and for all that the limb is mightier than the thumb.”

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Luke, Mary and Hitch
By Asa Butter

Torn Curtain (1966)
Directed by Alfred Hitchcock

Cool Hand Luke and Mary Poppins in an Alfred Hitchcock film - what could be more intriguing? A spoonful of suspense helps the medicine go down, or at least it should have been a sour taste in the mouth.

This was Hitchcock’s fourth to final film as director and it isn’t terrible. The hitch - if you excuse the pun - is that the benchmark of quality had been set with ‘North by Northwest’, ‘Psycho’ and ‘Vertigo’, so when you are presented with Paul Newman as the leading man and Julie Andrews as his co-star you imagine quality of the highest order.

The plot follows Professor Michael Armstrong, an American rocket scientist (Newman), who defects to Eastern Europe, but the defection is a fraud. His true aim is to obtain the missing mathematical formula from inside the head of a professor in East Germany. Armstrong’s fiancée, Dr. Sarah Louise Sherman (Andrews), becomes suspicious of her husband and follows him to the East where she becomes caught up in the plot.

Julie Andrews, straight off the back of her Academy Award nominated role in ‘The Sound of Music’ is cast as the assistant of a rocket scientist, which is just plain wrong. She looks bored and underused throughout the whole film, with the occasional, “Oh Michael!” thrown in for good measure. It was sad to her wasted like that, especially after Doris Day’s performance in ‘The Man Who Knew Too Much’.

Paul Newman later said about the movie, “We all knew we were working on a dog while we were making it,” and you can see it clearly. For some unknown reason, half way through the film both Newman and Andrews play a secondary role to a number of other actors; it was though they had suddenly become the supporting cast or even extra at one point. You start wondering if another film has begun when they meet the desperate Polish countess because it has nothing to do with the overall story.

These sudden tangents damage the film, making it leave your brow firmly furrowed in confusion, although Hitchcock does serve up a couple of incredible set pieces. ‘Torn Curtain’ has the honour of containing one of the most disturbing murder scenes I have ever seen. When Newman has to kill Gromek (Wolfgang Kieling), his East German bodyguard, in a farmhouse it takes such a long time that you have chills by the end.
FIFA’s hypocrisy

By Asa Butcher

Before the England and Portugal’s quarterfinal, David Beckham and Luis Figo both emotionally pleaded with football fans across the world to stop racism on the terraces. There were reports represented FIFA’s policy of ridding the sport of this ignorant practice, but this is the same FIFA that punished Spain with a laughable fine following racist taunts during England’s friendly in Spain in November 2004.

FIFA finally brought in anti-racism legislation in March that can mean match suspensions, point deductions and disqualification from competitions as possible punishments against acts of racism. Uefa spokesman William Gaillard said that it would be unfair to kick out a whole club because of the behaviour of a few fans, but what about the ’80s when all British clubs were banned from Europe following the Heysel disaster.

After the disaster, only British clubs were made to suffer; there was no fine for Juventus or Uefa for selecting an unsuitable stadium. Today we are made to listen to FIFA and Uefa announce plans to fight racism, plans that British football have implemented for the past few years, with the police, footballers and supporters all actively involved.

When FIFA decided to fine the Spanish FA, just £65,000 and now expect fans to listen to statements read by our international captains, FIFA and Uefa had the chance and blew it, and Kio Ferrinian reacted by saying, “It is time for Uefa to stop paying lip service to the problem.”

Spain should have been given a warning in November 2004 that if abuse happens again in their country they will be banned or have points deducted from the next international competition, which would have been the 2006 World Cup. It did happen again in a La Liga between Barcelona and Real Zaragoza in February of this year.

Samuel Eto’s, the Cameroon international and Barcelona striker, had to be stopped from leaving the pitch after suffering abuse from the Real Zaragoza crowd. The Spanish Football Federation inflicted an embarrassing £9,000 fine on the club, which simply reflects how serious everybody is really taking this problem in their domestic leagues.

Following the Eto’s incident one player commented that he had been abused at other grounds in Spain but players need to rise above this. I disagree with his ‘sticks and stones’ attitude because the abuse should not occur in the first place. Being a man and rising above it does not work for everybody, and why should they have to?

The UK takes racism in football seriously and it is stamping it out of the game, we have to do the same. The Italian FA, under the football associations and use them to light a bonfire on the racism in our game.

According to what is said from Zidane, the people who were around the event or know first-hand what happened, the Italian Mara Materazzi provoked Zidane all during the game insulting his family and his Algerian roots. In this World Cup we saw that often and it seemed that the only way some teams could find to keep the opposition strikers was to force them make a stupid mistake and get a red card. The Portuguese were the first to do it with Wayne Rooney, who found himself being sent off for an early show during a very critical game for the English national team.

Rooney was a victim of his macho reputation that the media had built for him, but we’ll never know if that reputation influenced the referee to hand him a red card after he alleged intentional stamp. Worst case scenario, Wayne should have get a yellow card, but Zidane deserved the red card all the way. He should have never reacted like that to any kind of insult or provocation, yet what a sad end that was for the best football player in the world for the last ten years.

What an end for a player that taught ethics in international football, which is proud of his poor background and did everything possible to help others. All performed in his familiar quiet style without advertising his actions and motives. Something unusual in a sport that is manipulated totally from P.R. companies, so much to create world famous players who don’t know how to play football like the almighty star with a spice girl wife.

Zidane will pay for his action in many ways over the years to come, but what happened with the other one who played apart in this incident? Why is nobody going to punish Marco Materazzi?

I would not be surprised if after a few years we will see a film coming out entitled ‘Being Zidane’. Nobody will ever know what really happened that evening in the final of the World Cup in the Olympic stadium of Berlin when one of the most famous football players of our time headbutted the Italian defender.

Didn’t he deserve a red card as well? Why if I use verbal violence I could be charged and led to a court room and Mr. Materazzi just walks out of it like nothing happens?

The same applies to C. Ronaldo, after all the theater that he performed during this World Cup, why doesn’t FIFA protect the players he tried to cheat, so we don’t have incidents like that in future World Cups.

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The same applies to C. Ronaldo, after all the theater that he performed during this World Cup, why doesn’t FIFA protect the players he tried to cheat, so we don’t have incidents like that in future World Cups.
For safety’s sake

By Asa Butcher

Some of you may have seen the full-length version of this old email forward, but here is an edited highlight for the unacquainted:

“For those born 1930-1979: We survived being born to mothers who smoked and/or drank while they were pregnant. We were put to sleep in our tummies in baby cribs covered with bright coloured lead-based paints. We had no childhood licks on medicine bottles, doors or cabinets and we rode our bikes without helmets. We would ride in cars with no car seats, booster seats, seat belts or air bags. We fell out of trees, got cut, broke bones and teeth and there were no lawsuits from these accidents. The idea of a parent bailing us out if we broke the law was unheard of. They actually sided with the law.”

I usually delete most email forwards without thinking, but this one caught my eye because we had just begun outfitting our home with safety gear in order to protect our young daughter. Part of me wanted to safeguard my inquisitive precious girl, but another part didn’t want to wrap her in cotton wool and make her seem too fragile for the world in which we live.

How far is too far when it comes to protecting your child from the dangers in your home, garden, street, neighbourhood or county? You walk a line of mollycoddling and neglect; it is a fine balance between securing the obvious dangers and then relying upon your parenting skills to guide the child past the rest. For example, you can easily child lock the cupboard containing the household cleaners and cover the electrical sockets, but should you invest in soft corners for the coffee table or even buy an infant crash helmet?

The range of safety gear is overwhelming and it is a game of con-science while stood in the baby section of the store. The guilt surges through your parenting nervous system and your hand clutches tighter to your wallet, but then you read the above email forward and begin to consider how much of this is necessary.

There is no way you will ever eliminate all the dangers of the house. All you have to do is remember the stories about your own childhood accidents and think how they could have been anticipated or even prevented. The problem that many parents face is the do-good neighbour or friend who spots a bruise or scratch on a baby and does their duty by informing social services. It is the overzealous and suspicious nature of social services and not the neighbour’s fault at what can then occur. I have been told many stories about false accusations and parents defending themselves against lies. One friend told me that Finland’s social services find it suspicious if a baby under twelve months has a bruise and will investigate, which is unbelievable considering our daughter began walking at eleven months and moved with the grace of a drunkard.

Bumps, bruises and scratches are an everyday occurrence for babies and children, but we now live in an over-protective world that some say is good and others bad, either way we must negotiate our way without the bureaucracy overruling our parental gut feelings. For those born from 1930 to 1979 the world has become a vastly different place with more dangers lurking around every corner, but becoming nostalgic over email forwards will not help matters.

There is another side which believes that humanity came from the rib of a man, but the weirdest part is that Darwin doesn’t discount the existence of a god in the sense that there maybe a god who sends the hurricanes to punish people and show them that he’s angry, like they used to believe thousands of years ago.

125 years after Darwin’s death, his theory - actually the only theory that has been proven correct with experiments - is causing problems once again. This turn to religion in the last few years and especially in USA proves that in the country of science, in the century of science, science is not taught or at least is taught as one side!
A 46-year-old man is accused of assaulting his wife with a carrot, causing her to lose sight in one eye.
Damn, he missed the target!!! Lower next time, dude!

Meth abuse continues to fuel an increase in crimes (in USA) like robbery and assault, straining the workload of local police forces despite a drop in the number of meth lab seizures, according to a survey.
What about Republicanism? No survey about that? Doctor, doctor, is it lethal?

The National Enquirer apologized to Britney Spears in its British edition Tuesday for reporting that she was ready to divorce Kevin Federline.
And I’m sure all the 16-year-old Lebanese really appreciated this!

Gov. Bill Owens signed a measure banning child brides, ending an uproar sparked by a court ruling that said 12-year-old girls could enter common-law marriages in Colorado.
By the way, what’s pedophilia called in Colorado?

Nearly 6,000 civilians were slain across Iraq in May and June, a spike in deaths that coincided with rising sectarian attacks across the country, the United Nations said Tuesday.
George, did you see this report? Just wondering!

Pam Anderson will be putting a new twist on “Home Improvement.” US Weekly is reporting that the 39-year-old star is set to marry her on-again, off-again fiancé, Kid Rock.
I didn’t really get this…home improvement, has it got anything to do with the size of her breasts again?

The Walt Disney Co. is restructuring its studio division to emphasize blockbuster franchise films over more adult fare, a move that will mean slashing 650 jobs worldwide, the company announced Tuesday.
It was all Mickey Mouse!!!

Microsoft Corp. plans to license a technology for manipulating three-dimensional images as part of the company’s efforts to make more money from its in-house research and development.
Damn Bill, are we going now to crash all the time in 3D?

At least 55 civilians have been killed in Israeli air strikes in Lebanon.
What f@#kin’ comment can you make here?

A heatwave affecting much of Western Europe has resulted in several deaths, health officials say.
And what the f$#k can I say here?

A plan to create rapid reaction teams of border guards to deal with European Union immigration crises has been unveiled by the European Commission.
Is this going to keep stupidity escaping from Europe as well?

Chile has opened its newest art gallery, housed in a police station where security forces eavesdropped on dissidents during military rule.
That’s a chilling joke.

Did you read the Ovi magazine?
I mean the one and only, the original Ovi magazine, doesn’t matter if you want to call it Ovi magazine or Ovi Lehti is just one and the same.